Exploring leadership talent practices in the Australian rail industry

by

Janene Piip

Graduate Diploma of Business (Administrative Management), Bachelor of Education (In-Service), Diploma of Teaching

School of Education

Division of Education, Arts and Social Sciences



University of
South Australia

December 2013

Contents

List of Figures vi
List of Tables vii
Summary viii
Declaration x
Acknowledgements xi
1 Introduction 1
Chapter outline 1
Overview 1
The research problem 2
Aim of the research and research questions 5
Establishing the Australian rail industry context 7
The researcher 13
Thesis chapter outlines 15
2 Literature Review 18
Chapter outline 18
Background 19
Talent management literature 20
Theorising ‘talent management’ 25
Leadership talent 27
Identifying leadership talent 33
Becoming a talented leader 42
What skills will be developed? 45
Reflections on the literature 61
Chapter summary 62
3 Leadership talent framework 64
Chapter outline 64
Rationale 64
How the framework is organised 66
Theme 1 – Environmental contexts of leadership 70
Theme 2 – Defining leadership talent 73
Theme 3 – Communicating the strategy and approach 74
Theme 4 – Identifying leadership talent 75
Theme 5 – Developing leadership talent 77
Theme 6 – Evaluating and continuous improvement 80

Chapter summary 80
4 Methodology 82
Chapter outline 82
Introduction 82
Research design 84
Methodological context 88
Research participants 89
Methods 96
Information analysis and interpretation procedures 107
Ethical considerations and characteristics of ‘good’ research 115
Chapter summary 122
5 Presentation and analysis of information 124
Chapter outline 124
Overview 124
The external and internal environments 128
Defining and communicating leadership talent 134
Identifying leadership talent 149
Developing leadership talent 162
Evaluation and improvement strategies 183
Summary of leadership talent practices in rail 185
6 Discussion 188
Chapter outline 188
The purpose, policy and practices of leadership talent management in rail 190
How is leadership talent identified in rail? 206
How are rail industry organisations developing their leadership talent? 213
Progression of ideas about leadership talent management in rail 228
Chapter summary 230
7 The model of talented leadership 231
Chapter outline 231
Why is an outline of ‘model’ leadership needed? 231
The model of talented leadership 234
The leadership talents 241
Areas for development by leadership level 249
Chapter summary 260
8 Implications and conclusion 262
Chapter outline 262

The relationship between the research problem and the current literature 262
Significance of this study of leadership talent management in rail 263
The main findings of the research on leadership talent management in rail 265
Implications of these findings for leadership talent management in rail 269
This study's limitations 270
Recommendations for future work 271
References 278
Appendix A 309
Relevant talent management articles by publication from 2000 – 2013 309
Appendix B 310
Most cited authors 1998 – 2012 310
Appendix C 311
Leader attributes as indicators of self-development 311
Appendix D 313
Challenges and implications for leadership development at all levels 313
Appendix E 315
Leadership talent management framework with reference to the literature 315
Appendix F 318
Email sent to organisations outlining the research project 318
Appendix G 319
Description of the Research Project – information to organisations 319
Appendix H 320
Executive and HR leader questions 320
Appendix I 322
Middle and Frontline leader questions 322
Appendix J 324
Information sheet for interview participants 324
Appendix K 326
Consent form to participate and collect information 326
Appendix L 327
Topic guide for interviews 327
Appendix M 328
Survey 328

List of Figures

Figure 1: Changing age structure of the Australian population 4
Figure 2: Expected workforce participation trends from 2012 – 2044 5
Figure 3: Some influences on talent management 7
Figure 4: Human capital influences on organisational performance 13
Figure 5: Literature Review outline 18
Figure 6: The agricultural, industrial and knowledge economies 19
Figure 7: Talent management articles by year 22
Figure 8: Leadership talent or potential is future focused 26
Figure 9: Management and leadership 28
Figure 10: Changing models of leadership 29
Figure 11: Potential performance of two employees selected in an organisation 31
Figure 12: Three domains of leadership 32
Figure 13: Segmenting key positions 34
Figure 14: Visible and hidden dimensions of potential 40
Figure 15: Barriers to use of human capital data in organisations 41
Figure 16: Stages 3, 4 and 5 of constructive development theory 44
Figure 17: Two key abilities of leadership 47
Figure 18: Developing leadership capability – 70/20/10 approach 49
Figure 19: Chapter layout 66
Figure 20: Six components of the organisational framework 68
Figure 21: Model of the research design 85
Figure 22: Information collection activities 102
Figure 23: The researcher's interpretation of relationships in rail 114
Figure 24: Example from the analysis of the survey 115
Figure 25: Years of frontline leadership experience in rail (from survey, N=30) 133
Figure 26: Reorganising teams at the top 134
Figure 27: Views on the importance of the identification of future leaders 150
Figure 28: Performance appraisal and leadership aspiration discussions 157
Figure 29: The most influential leadership development activity 171
Figure 30: Rail leadership through four economic phases 191
Figure 31: Hierarchical rail organisation structure 193
Figure 32: Three new types of business arrangements 194
Figure 33: Contexts of leadership 197
Figure 34: Reaction to change by levels of leadership 198
Figure 35: Areas of organisational function 200
Figure 36: Consideration of leadership roles in the model of talented leadership 234
Figure 37: Tangible and intangible skills related to leading people 237
Figure 38: Model of talented leadership 240
Figure 39: Views on whether leadership talent can be developed or is innate 250

List of Tables

Table 1: Citation analysis of key studies, undertaken in 2013 23
Table 2: Exploring talent management through theoretical foundations of HRD 24
Table 3: References to multinational companies in the talent management literature 25
Table 4: HR Framework to support talent identification 35
Table 5: Meta-competencies as described in leadership capability frameworks 36
Table 6: Three dimensions of potential 37
Table 7: Adult learning theories and their application to leadership development 54
Table 8: Comparison of some talent development approaches 60
Table 9: Organisational framework for identifying and developing leadership talent 69
Table 10: Characteristics of organisational settings 92
Table 11: Components of the semi-structured interview instrument 98
Table 12: Concepts covered by research questions 99
Table 13: Development of the analysis framework 109
Table 14: Development of sub-themes 109
Table 15: Matrix of theme and sub-theme by levels of leader 110
Table 16: Interview information for themes 111
Table 17: Summary of information from each theme by level of leader 112
Table 18: People related skills for 'good' leaders 112
Table 19: Profiles of leaders 113
Table 20: Human resources leaders – level of importance 113
Table 21: Types of qualifications by level of leader 113
Table 22: Location of interview responses on conceptual framework 127
Table 23: Responsibility for developing leadership talent strategy and procedures 135
Table 24: Executive management team profiles in three case study organisations 138
Table 25: What current leaders thought about the qualities of other leaders 148
Table 26: Approaches to Performance Appraisal by organisation 156
Table 27: How executive leaders rose to their current position 162
Table 28: Number of differentiated approaches for leadership development 219
Table 29: Leadership talents for all leaders 239
Table 30: Potential leadership development approaches for leaders 250
Table 31: Areas for development of executive leaders 251
Table 32: Areas for development of middle level leaders 254
Table 33: Areas for development of frontline leaders 256
Table 34: Areas for development for HR leaders 258
Table 35: Summary of key areas of development for leaders 260

Summary

Leadership talent is a highly sought after people capability for organisations in a global economy. Talented leaders are able to guide people towards business goals, conceptualise novel problems in innovative ways and enable teams to reach their full potential. Talent management has evolved as a product of the knowledge economy where large, multinational companies dominate worldwide trade. Research related to talent management and the management of talented leaders is conducted predominantly in these high-level environments. There have been few studies that focus directly on leadership talent management in particular contexts, and none in the Australian rail industry. Little is known about the way in which leadership talent is valued, identified and developed in this environment.

The goal of this thesis was to analyse how Australian rail organisations are managing their leadership talent considering changing business arrangements in the local situation. One main research question: How is leadership talent identified and developed in the Australian rail industry? and three guiding sub-questions relating to the purposes, policies and practices of leadership talent management were also developed. The study adopted a qualitative, interpretive case study approach and collected data within three organisations using blended methods. Semi-structured interviews were undertaken with four levels of leaders from executive, middle, frontline and human resources areas, as well as an online survey.

The skills and abilities needed for Australian rail leaders were widely understated in this study but critical for organisations in transitioning change. The data demonstrated that current leaders in rail favour the technical areas of knowledge where there are specified solutions and outcomes, many had issues with the 'people-side of the business', and with the understanding of the external, global impacts on rail. Greater understanding of the diverse range of capabilities required for leadership in rail organisations today could enable stronger connectedness of leaders with the organisational purpose and the potential of both current and aspiring leaders to be realised.

Contributions to new knowledge have been made through this study. It enabled the development of a conceptual framework for leadership talent management. The framework comprises two elements of decision-making including organisational and

individual components. The organisational component of the framework describes structural considerations of leadership talent management while the individual components of the framework are presented as ‘leadership talents’ required by rail executive, middle, frontline and human resources leaders. These individual talents are summarised in six key themes. Perspective talents enable leaders to scan the external and internal contexts of leadership to identify and assimilate changes that influence their role. Personal talents allow leaders to define self in their leadership role. People talents contribute to relationship building with others at the strategic, team and one-on-one levels. Performance talents are required to set directions, monitor progress and enable others. Learning and development talents are necessary to diagnose contemporary learning strategies for self and others, while evaluation talents enable continuous improvement of current leadership practice.

The model of talented leadership illuminates these talents by describing a number of underpinning capabilities and then highlights areas of learning and development for leaders.

Declaration

I declare that:

a. to the best of my knowledge, this thesis contains no material written by another person except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis

b. the material in the thesis has not been the basis of the award of any other degree or diploma except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis

c. all substantive contributions by others to the work presented in the thesis, including jointly authored publications, have been clearly acknowledged.

Janene Piip

Signature:  Date: 16 February 2014

Acknowledgements

Without the assistance of my supervisors Professor Roger Harris and Dr Tom Short, I would not have been able to undertake and complete this thesis. Their wisdom, friendship and insight have been my guiding light over the four years of this incredible journey.

I would also like to thank the CRC for Rail Innovation for supporting my candidature during this time and allowing other opportunities including access to rail organisations, presentations at conferences and the moral support that has made this thesis possible.

The guidance of other University of South Australia staff including Associate Professor Michele Simons, Dr Tom Stehlik, Dr Peter Willis and Dr Lisa Davies is greatly appreciated.

Lastly, the support of my family has been unconditional and unwavering during this time even though I have paid more attention to my writing and my computer than to them over the last four years.

1 Introduction

Chapter outline

This chapter:

1 establishes the purpose, context and location of the study;
2 explicates the research problem, the main research question and three guiding questions with the intention of exploring leadership talent management in rail;
3 establishes initial ideas about leadership talent management in the context of a contemporary business environment;
4 positions the background and experiences of the researcher within the study; and
5 explains the purpose of each chapter and its contribution to the study.

Overview

The opportunity to explore my question about leadership talent came to the fore after years of speculating. I wondered how individuals were able to rise through the ranks to senior levels or even become the Chief Executive Officer. A career turn in 2009 enabled me to join the Cooperative Research Centre for Rail Innovation (CRC for Rail Innovation 2013) and the University of South Australia workforce development projects where I have undertaken this thesis. What makes people highly valued for their unique skills or chosen over others to lead is a perplexing and enduring question. Nonetheless, since the beginning of early civilisations, leaders have collectively harnessed the talents of people in examples such as the building of the Egyptian pyramids, where heavy blocks were moved along supports and ropes to the point of placement (Cunningham 1988). In these early times, transferring goods in this way is an early interpretation of the modern rail industry. Individual workers were highly valued, and their worth correlated to units of payment or money called ‘talents’(Tansley 2011), based on unique gifts and abilities. Going forward, modern Australian rail organisations are facing

unprecedented people and leadership challenges in harnessing their modern-day talent. Never before in the 180 year history of the industry (Campbell, Brougham & Caldwell 2009) have those in charge been confronted by such complex drivers of change – emanating from new technologies, global financial insecurity and complex social situations. It is now recognised that to embrace these issues; leaders require certain skills and abilities to connect the 'human capital' of the organisation with new business directions in these changing environments (Hahm & Leisy 2010, p. 1).

The research problem

The people-related issues in Australian rail encompass difficulties in attracting, developing and retaining motivated leaders and employees (Australasian Railway Association Inc. 2008; ManpowerGroup 2011; Wallace et al. 2010). Continuously changing external environments mean that, for individuals, a leadership career can be tenuous with a high degree of responsibility and on-going commitment. One of the greatest challenges for rail organisations into the next decade is one of enabling talented leaders to see the relevance of the industry for a career in rail (Pricewaterhouse Coopers 2006).

The CRC for Rail Innovation (CRC for Rail Innovation 2013) and the Australasian Railway Association (Australasian Railway Association Inc. 2008) have prioritised these leadership issues through consideration of the future impacts on the overall rail industry workforce. The leadership challenges for rail are outlined in the report, *A rail revolution: future capability identification and skills development for the Australasian rail industry*, published in 2008, where leadership is described as the third highest risk to the ongoing viability of the industry. It has been claimed that six key risks will be 'highly likely' to impact the capacity of the industry to deliver its objectives, should rail leadership, in particular, continue to be understood and enacted in its current, long-established ways (Australasian Railway Association Inc. 2008, p. 13). A précis of these six risks highlights the current situation, prioritised as follows:

1 A shortage of engineers and tradespeople (including new entrants such as women and youth) and high competition from other sectors for the same employee profile (p. 13)

2 A fragmented approach to rail skill development based on differing state regulations, lack of across industry approaches and insufficient evaluation of return on investment of skill development approaches and methodologies (p. 13)
3 The need for major cultural change in rail based on contemporary understanding of leadership, change in leadership positions and recognising the impact of empowering employees to contribute to change initiatives (p. 14)
4 Loss of specialised knowledge as current leaders retire and new recruits take time to develop specific underpinning rail industry knowledge. Limited flexible working arrangements means employees including older workers and employees with caring responsibilities have limited flexible working options (p. 14)
5 Workforce shortages in regional and remote areas due to access to skilled workforces, attractiveness of location and limited number of skilled migrants (p. 14)
6 Stakeholder commitment to changing the current culture from unions, employees, managers, executives, industry bodies, training providers and government (p. 14)

The Australian rail industry is characterised by predominantly male employees where there are strong, historical traditions and many family links to rail. The limited diversification in the rail workforce indicates that women occupy less than 12 percent of the total rail careers, predominantly in customer service, sales and clerical roles (Mahendran, Dockery & Affleck 2007). Senior experienced rail leaders and managers hold the majority of leadership roles while there is a significant leadership gap in the younger age groups (Wallace et al. 2010). Compounding external events such as the enduring turbulence in global financial markets and rising costs of living have further impacted some leaders' decisions to maintain their positions and postpone their retirement (Brennan et al. 2009).

Boedker et al. (2011b) express how leadership beliefs and behaviour have an effect on employee engagement with work. Co-related, leadership perceptions and the high number of older workers in rail have a significant impact on the motivation and enthusiasm of younger employees aspiring to a leadership career in rail. Time to wait for succession is one of the key reasons cited by employees leaving the industry because visible career pathways are stifled. Rail is often viewed as an 'old fashioned' industry by younger employees (Pricewaterhouse Coopers 2006, p. 12).

The changing demographics of the Australian population have further highlighted how potential rail labour supply will be reduced in the next 30 years (Productivity Commission 2005). The findings reveal that the total workforce will comprise older as well as younger workers with a shrinking middle-age sector. Critical analysis of how rail workforces will be maintained for key roles such as engineering, information based roles and leadership positions suggest that organisations will need to make the most of their current assets because the potential labour pool is changing (Mahendran & Dockery 2008). In the 1920s, the age of the potential Australian population workforce, shown in Figure 1, demonstrates that the majority of the population were below age 35 years of age or in the prime working years of life. In these times, after age 55 years, the age expectancy of the population declined rapidly. By 2000, there is a marked decline in the birthrate and the potential pool of workers over the next twenty years is slowly diminishing. By 2045, the largest age group of potential employees will be aged between 45 years and 55 years, there is a low birthrate to replenish the population and a high proportion of the population will be living into their eighties.

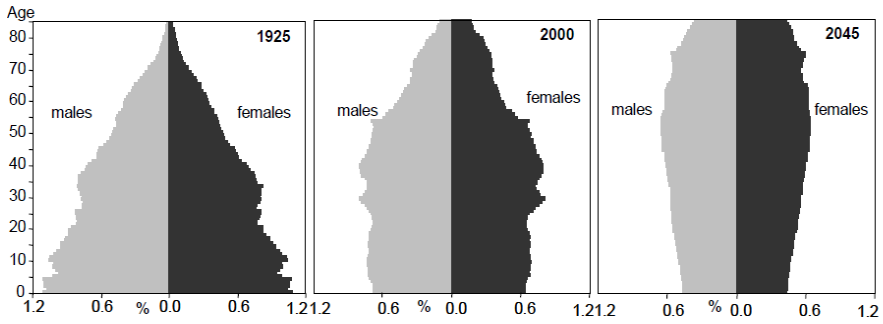


Figure 1: Changing age structure of the Australian population

(reproduced from Productivity Commission 2005, p. XIV)

Even though there will be growth in the age of the population by 2045, there will be a decline in the contribution of older people to work. The total number of older people working will not meet the growing needs of the rail industry, especially in new job areas with increasing skill needs. In Figure 2, the workforce participation rate of the population in 2004 is shown to be around 65 percent but will decline to around 56 percent by 2040.

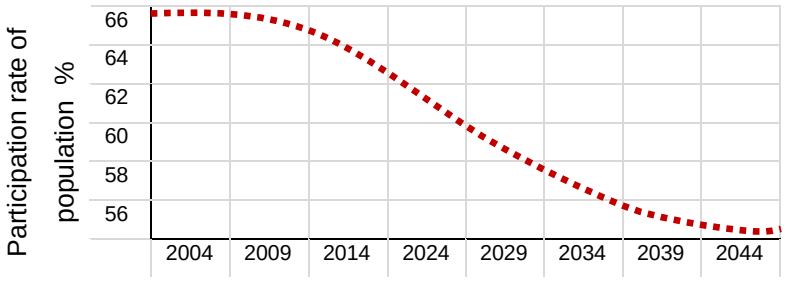


Figure 2: Expected workforce participation trends from 2012 – 2044

Source: Productivity Commission (2005)

The rail industry in Australia is a significant employer, estimated to be around 50,000 people employed directly in the industry and another 60,000 people in supporting industries. The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Labour Force Survey for 2006 recognised that the median age of rail industry workers was higher than the general working population – at 44 years of age compared with 39 years of age (Australasian Railway Association Inc. 2008).

In the light of these trends, recent studies identify that projected rail workforce difficulties (Wallace et al. 2010) will be impacted by leadership ability and the new currencies required for sustained commercial achievement in a knowledge based economy (Agarwal & Green 2011). Leadership and commodity exchange tools of customer service and information are facilitated by human capital and knowledge, increasingly key tactical resources in business strategy (Dickie & Dwyer 2011). However, a defining characteristic of the current rail industry is the predominant concentration of the total rail workforce in job roles and occupations that have 'elementary to intermediate skill levels' (Mahendran, Dockery & Affleck 2007, p. 8), often without formal qualifications. In many rail companies, traditional, fixed-employment workforces are juxtaposed with a hybrid of contractors, making up new workforce profiles. Leadership talent management in rail must consider an approach framed for the 21st century to meet these multifarious workforce demands.

Aim of the research and research questions

The exploratory research undertaken in this study sought to make meaning of the current situation in rail by investigating leadership related problems that were not clearly defined (Creswell 1994; Merriam 1998). As a researcher, I accept that the ultimate findings from this project may reveal that the practices already in place in

Australian rail industry organisations cannot be easily changed or may already be meeting leadership and workforce needs. However, such a study has value in providing insight into the current leadership talent situation by illuminating and documenting how existing practices are valued and managed. In doing so, the project set out to explore how organisations are identifying and developing their current and future leaders with the overarching research question: How is leadership talent identified and developed in the Australian rail industry? Three guiding sub-questions were developed to guide the study as follows:

1 What are the purpose, policy and practices of leadership talent management in Australian rail organisations?
2 How is leadership talent identified in the Australian rail industry?
3 How are rail industry organisations developing their leadership talent?

Constructing reality in a postmodern world

The basic assumption of a leadership talent management approach or strategy is that the concept or definition holds the same meaning for everyone. This includes organisations as well as leaders enacting the strategy. However, from the constructionist perspective (Berger & Luckmann 1966), there is a belief that what is perceived and experienced is largely made up of social interpretations rather than the same awareness of reality (Stake 1995). It could be construed that a concept such as 'leadership talent management' may hold different meanings for different people (Lewis & Heckman 2006). Complicating different interpretations of talent management, organisations in a post-modern world are influenced by multiple influences, competing demands and the absence of 'traditional signposts of meaning and certainty' (Han, Kuchinke & Boulay 2009, p. 54). This research accordingly attempts to explore the reality of individual meanings (Merriam 1998) by comparing the research data with an identified conceptual framework, derived from the literature, in order to interpret the phenomenon under investigation (Radnor 2002).

The initial ideas about talent management (in Figure 3) depict the main dimensions to be investigated and the presumed relationships between these dimensions at this early stage of the study. To commence the investigation, the key factors anticipated in leadership talent management have been depicted in a purposefully simplistic diagram as the relationships are not yet obvious, and the other factors impacting the phenomenon

are unknown (Creswell 1994). The diagram shows both closed and partially closed circles to represent different meanings. The closed circles are the main subjects of the investigation. The partially closed circles are thought to be factors that could influence the subjects under investigation. It is acknowledged that what is known now may change as further dimensions emerge from the inductive research strategy, resulting in a more sophisticated framework being developed (Creswell 1994; Merriam 1998).

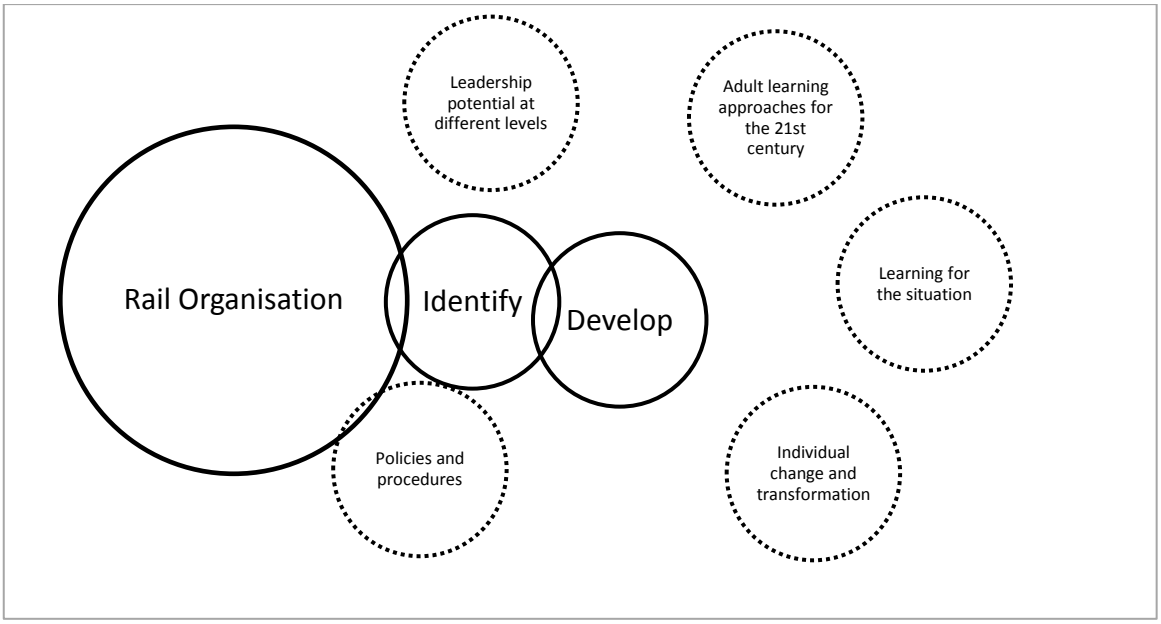


Figure 3: Some influences on talent management

Establishing the Australian rail industry context

The historical context

In just over 180 years, the Australian rail industry has witnessed remarkable progression (Department of Infrastructure and Transport 2011), adapted from a vastly dissimilar English environment with the arrival of the first fleet on January 26, 1788 in Sydney (Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade 2011). Innovation and entrepreneurism were both evident in these earlier times in the development of the coal, timber cutting and agricultural industries in the Newcastle (New South Wales (NSW), Australia) area. Convict labour was utilised to expand the fledgling primary industries using rail transport (Zierer 1941) but when labour difficulties arose (unmotivated, unskilled convict labour with poor performance), The Australian Agricultural Company took over management of the company from the ruling government. Hence, the first efficient and privatised railway in Newcastle, New South Wales was developed from the initial coal

mining operation because existing convict labour was deemed ‘inefficient and troublesome’ (Bigge 1822, cited in Campbell, Brougham & Caldwell 2009, p. 146).

Timelines in Australian history document rapid advancements in this early period, culminating in Democracy at Federation in 1901 (Davis 2008; Minns 2004) and the establishment of a Public Service to consolidate the six colonies into one nation. There was intense debate over the responsibility for rail services and infrastructure, which was left to the individual states when no consensus could be reached. Consequently, each state delivered rail services until the 1990s (Everett 2006) because variations in track gauges had a major impact on defining an individualistic and uncoordinated approach at state boundaries (Edwards 2009). As a result, Australian governments have always been perplexed about how best to deliver public services and infrastructure because rail has been a cost-intensive service compounded by distance (Blainey 2001; Everett 2006).

The international movement of globalisation and world marketisation, occurring since the late 1970s (English 2005; Tight 2002), delivered Australian rail to a new era during the 1990s. Government investigations (Hilmer 1993) identified that the majority of state owned rail providers were incurring large losses, were not commercially viable and unable to sustain future operations in this way (Everett 2006; Hensher, Daniels & Demellow 1995). In other countries, rail was experiencing similar issues, mainly as a result of poor management of physical and human resources, leading to rapid structural and economic decline (Angulo 2013). Australian industry became part of sweeping changes known as New Public Management (NPM) which then became deregulation and then privatisation (Hensher, Daniels & Demellow 1995; Hilmer 1993). In these disordered times, rail industries across the world rationalised their workforces. In Australia, cuts of up to fifty percent of the total workforce were made between 1991 and 2001 (Mahendran, Dockery & Affleck 2007) as a way of managing these problems. On reflection, the issues of decline had a lot to do with poor management of precious resources.

After many years of rail history, the Australian industry is experiencing resurgence, buoyed by intense investment from Australian governments in rejuvenating the rail landscape. National rail infrastructure expenditure to develop a comprehensive rail and road network, over a six year period from 2008/09 to 2012/14, is expected to be in the vicinity of $36.2 billion (Department of Infrastructure and Transport 2013). This major

financial investment will fulfil the vision of an environmentally sustainable, major national transport system for Australia that is of critical importance to the long term, economic growth of the country (Deloitte Access Economics 2011).

Results of market driven approaches

Australia's manufacturing and rail sector was one of the biggest employers and loss-makers before deregulation, operating in a highly protected, rigid and unresponsive environment with an unskilled workforce and hostile trade relations (Phillimore 1997). Restructuring in the rail business environment came at a time when recognition of the knowledge-driven economy was growing (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) 1996). Often called the 'third age' (Toffler 1980), the significance of knowledge is linked to ideologies of free trade in open markets and the importance of leveraging individual knowledge and skills (Tight 2002). This philosophy is vastly different from the importance of tangible assets of the industrial economy (Phillimore 1997).

How this impacts workforces

The way organisations meet customer needs now requires a high level of conceptual thinking, and ever increasing knowledge that is not limited by real or imaginary boundaries. The transformation in these new environments is from physical labour to 'mind work' (Kegan & Lahey 2009, p. 24). In modern-day business environments, talented employees are viewed as organisational assets and there is an emphasis on transformation through learning. Emerging environmental factors highlight the need for ongoing learning for work to enable employability skill sets to match new market needs (Braithwaite 2008).

Workforce productivity through leadership and management

Driving workforce productivity, increasing workforce participation and reaping the rewards of the effort are key government agendas brought about by new economic models of the global economy (Samson 2011). A sustained thrust in Australia to meet these needs has endured since deregulation in 1993, buoyed by the initial findings of the Karpin Report (1995). Karpin predicted that the external environment would dramatically influence leadership in Australian workplaces in the ensuing 30 years, resulting in shifting cultural norms, behaviours and social attitudes. He predicted that

different models of leadership would have to be developed to cope with the changing environment (Parry 1999; Samson 2011).

In recent years, new Australian reports highlight that leadership and management skills are still on the productivity agenda because previous 'hands-off' strategies by the government and policy-makers have not had the desired results (Cutler 2008; Samson 2011). From these deliberations, the Australian Federal government has established the Centre for Workplace Leadership as a mechanism to continue development of leadership, management and culture in Australian workplaces, as more empowerment of workers would encourage workplace innovation and problem solving. Steve Vamos from The Centre for Workplace Leadership sums up his ideas about the current state of leadership in the online version of *The Financial Review*:

> The challenge ahead is to unwind more than a century of Industrial Age mindsets at work which are controlling, mistake-averse and 'know it all' and evolve them into mindsets that are enabling, learning and willing to try new things and fail (Vamos 2012).

Focus on learning, education and training

Aside from leadership, Australia has a systemic ideology through the vocational and higher education system for developing people to contribute to the economic productivity of the nation (Keating 2003). This system prescribes a defined qualification framework for traditional and skilled trades (Agbola & Lambert 2010) and non-trade and para-professional occupations such as business and management (Knight & Karmel 2011). This structured approach underpins the Australian government's objective for sustained future economic growth because the skill of each worker in each business or organisation contributes to the combined productivity of the labour force (Agarwal & Green 2011; Department of Treasury 2010). Australian government commissioned management studies show that higher-level skills and education levels for managers are now required, and the ability as a leader is positively correlated with superior management practices in workplaces (Agarwal & Green 2011; Boedker et al. 2011b; Green et al. 2009).

The last twenty years

Translating social policy to the Australian rail industry environment over the last twenty years provides the opportunity to assess the challenges and current practices affecting leadership. Since deregulation in 1993 (Edwards 2009; Everett 2006) and planned

microeconomic reform (Keating 2003), rail industry organisations have experienced major transformation. Once predominantly public sector entities, the majority of rail organisations are now conglomerates of commercially focused businesses (Department of Infrastructure and Transport 2011). Economic globalisation is reflected in the rise of transnational corporations such as Bombardier, Serco, Asciano and other companies in Australia (Anderson, Brown & Rushbrook 2004, p. 237). While masquerading under other names more reflective of Australian culture and past familiarity, these multinational and transnational companies receive protection and benefits of a strong, regulatory, government framework to provide services to the public. The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (1996, p. 186) described multinational companies as those that:

> usually comprise companies or entities whose ownership is private, state or mixed, established in different countries and so linked that one or more of them may be able to exercise a significant influence over the activities of others and, in particular, to share knowledge and resources with the others. The degree of autonomy of each entity in relation to the others varies widely from one multinational enterprise to another, depending on the nature of the links between such entities and the fields of activity concerned.

As deregulation progressed through the 1990s, the rise of transnational companies, different to multinational companies, became apparent throughout the world and in Australian rail partnerships. The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development website (2012) subsequently described transnational companies or corporations as:

> An enterprise comprising entities in more than one country, which operate under a system of decision-making that permits coherent policies and a common strategy. The entities are so linked, by ownership or otherwise, that one or more of them may be able to exercise a significant influence over the others and, in particular, to share knowledge, resources and responsibilities with the others.

The complexity of transnational companies is in identifying the parent company of an associated enterprise, as it is possible for a company to be associated with more than one transnational company. These changes have fuelled an extraordinarily complex rail structure in Australia.

The CRC initiative

Since 2007, the establishment of the Cooperative Research Centre for Rail Innovation (CRC for Rail Innovation 2013) has enabled researchers from Australian universities to investigate a wide range of important workplace issues for the rail industry, supported by a $100 million budget comprised of $40 million from the Commonwealth

government and $60 million in in-kind contributions from the consortium of rail companies and universities. The CRC research program comprises six research themes focusing on different industry problems: Climate Change and the Environment; Safety and Security; Urban Rail Access; Performance; Smart Technologies; and Workforce Development (CRC 2013). The Australian government recognises that if solutions to particular issues can be found, productivity of the industry and the wider labour force in general will be lifted. In particular, the Workforce Development theme of research aims to identify a number of innovative strategies around education and training resulting from the human resource challenges facing the rail industry at this time. Existing partners in the Workforce Development theme of which this research on leadership talent is a component, as well as the leadership and management (Short et al. 2011) and the coaching and mentoring projects (Short et al. 2012), comprise nine rail companies. These companies represent a mix of public sector and private sector organisations. This thesis emerges from and draws upon, the two projects of leadership and management, and coaching and mentoring.

Exploring leadership and learning for contemporary rail business

Rail industry organisations are defined by their unique infrastructure and high capital and service costs (Mahendran, Dockery & Affleck 2007, p. 17) but government and rail freight, passenger and niche industry service providers have identified many reasons to continue investment in this transport system. Sustainability, climate change and cost-effective freight and travel are all sound reasons for rail in participating in a low-carbon economy as a preferred transport provider.

The evolving nature of work, rapidly changing technology and the new ways of conducting business (Hensher, Daniels & Demellow 1995) have increased the need for rail employees to become part of work systems that are productive and meet business targets (Nixon, Harrington & Parker 2012). In this respect, development of the human capital, and in particular leadership, that supports the organisation is identified as the key most important factor in the implementation of a business strategy (Buller & McEvoy 2012; McMillan 2010; Sheehan 2012). Extensive writings in the human resource management (HRM) and human resource development (HRD) fields identify the link between organisational strategy, internal practices and performance that is now widely acknowledged (Buller & McEvoy 2012; Sheehan 2012). This link is depicted in the diagram in Figure 4.

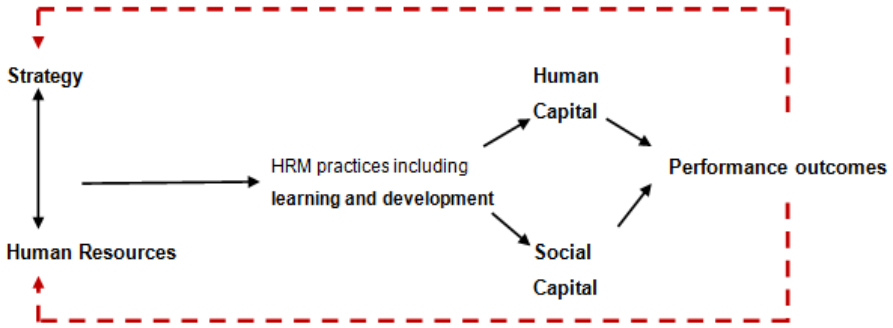


Figure 4: Human capital influences on organisational performance

Source: Buller and McEvoy (2012)

In a globally connected world, human capital remains a key source of competitive advantage when organisations have decreasing benefit from physical and organisational capital and assets (Holland, Sheehan & De Cieri 2007). Hence in the rail industry, flexible approaches to learning and development that add value to business objectives are needed (Nixon, Harrington & Parker 2012) because technology and competition now require ongoing, higher levels of learning (Kegan & Lahey 2009). The development and maintenance of skills have become as much the responsibility of the individual as well as the organisation with these demands calling for greater capacity for self-management, personal responsibility and self-direction (Kegan & Lahey 2009). Drucker (1993) suggests that the power lies with the individual in a global economy because organisations need individuals who possess particular knowledge, skills and insights. Talented individuals can use that talent for their own benefit – whether it be within the organisation or in their own entrepreneurial pursuits (Brown, Hesketh & Williams 2002). In respect to leaders, these skills must be constantly developed and maintained because new challenges and problems are constantly emerging (Illeris 2011). The major thrust of most research on leadership talent management has been explored with a focus from the 20th century business perspective that has not in the main accounted for what, where and how leaders will be required to learn – and it has not been explored from the rail industry perspective. This thesis addresses this gap.

The researcher

Arriving on a research journey after a career in the education and vocational education environment, my pathway of practice and experience underpins many years of insight to the research process, data collection and subsequent data analysis. While this experience

is valuable, this familiarity could be perceived to cloud my judgement (Radnor 2002). High involvement in the CRC for Rail Innovation environment, and associated workforce development research over the last four years, are two of the reasons. It is acknowledged that many of the experiences evident in the study have been lived by me, albeit in different settings, and may contribute to possible bias in the findings. I will provide a short précis of my experience that may influence my personal beliefs and values.

I grew up in rural Australia as a member of the fifth generation living on the same family farm where I still live today. My age group is the 'Baby Boomer' generation. In the era of the 1970s, a desirable aspiration for young women was to become a teacher or a nurse if early indications showed talent for study. Teachers and nurses had high status at this time in Australian history because most girls left school at 15 years of age or before, for unskilled careers in retail or another service. Pursuing a career in the teaching or nursing fields was deemed to be at the height of respectability, meaning that finding a job when one had a family was possible. In a country town, consideration of this intended pathway some years prior was the first step, as a move to boarding school in Adelaide, and then teacher's college, was necessary for several years. Such pathways also ensured one's family benefitted. My parents supported three girls and subsequently one teacher and two nurses resulted.

My sense of adventure, interest in diverse groups of people and career as a teacher was established in 1979. I was offered and accepted an appointment to Bamyili School in the Northern Territory. Prior to this, I had completed practice teaching at Nhulunbuy in the Northern Territory – a mining community in remote Arnhem Land. After this time, I worked in a range of schools in rural and city South Australia. Once my children were born, our family moved back to the family property and the children became the sixth generation to live on the same farm. My career never stopped as I continued to work, becoming involved in community activities, committees and groups. I enjoyed the action of the power of people to initiate change. I moved employment to the vocational educational sector in the South Australian government at the turn of the millennium. I progressed in seniority as a manager because I had completed further post-graduate business qualifications. My role was to manage staff in regional and remote campuses across more than ten locations.

For some time, in this career stage I was conscious of my potential to develop further and my need to keep learning. In the next phase of my life, I became a student again, undertaking research for my Doctor of Philosophy in Education and working on the CRC for Rail Innovation projects of leadership and management, and mentoring and coaching. Balanced by this experience as an individual in the natural and social world (Radnor 2002), my approach to learning and interpretivism is to take a world view. Through this thesis, I intend to participate in as many opportunities as possible during this journey and observe from the edge to the best of my ability.

Thesis chapter outlines

Chapter 1 – Introduction

The Introduction has provided the context for the Australian rail industry study that is to follow in the next seven chapters. In the opening section, the research problem, aims of the research and the research question have been outlined, as well as a description of the Australian rail industry context. Situating the study is important in providing the historical background of the Australian rail industry and the impacts of wider policy and market impacts of workforce development at this current time. In addition, the personal situation and context of the researcher are made known to acknowledge any possible bias or limitations that may be perceived in the course of this study.

Chapter 2 – Literature review

The literature review investigates writings about leadership talent management with a human resource development frame of reference. In doing so, a global view of the literature is undertaken. This establishes the timeline of talent management articles, key works and theorists and widely held assumptions found in the literature. The review locates a number of definitions of talent and leadership talent to identify the skills approach to leadership development, consistent with the paradigm to be pursued in this study. Two main considerations in the literature review were followed as a result of the research question, forming a major part of the review. Firstly, identifying a definition of leadership talent uncovers multiple dimensions of talent that are not always obvious. The review then explores how talent is identified. Secondly, the review moves into an investigation of the development of leaders, considering contemporary approaches. At the end of the review, a précis of the literature has enabled consideration of suitable

research methods for the research design and ideas to develop a leadership talent management framework.

Chapter 3 – Conceptual framework

In Chapter 3, the leadership talent management framework is presented, based on key ideas identified in the literature. The concepts have been developed into an overarching framework that guides the context of how strategies and approaches around leadership talent are defined, communicated, identified, developed and evaluated in an organisation. In this chapter, each of the six themes and sub-themes is expanded with a brief explanation. A table indicating references to the literature underpins the conceptual framework. It is available in Appendix E.

Chapter 4 – Methodology

The methodology in Chapter 4 explains the research problem in detail and the rationale for the research design. It then moves to an explanation of the chosen methodological paradigm for the qualitative case study, the blended methods and description of the instruments. This chapter also identifies the role of the researcher and considers qualities of 'good' research, ethics and limitations in the research approach.

Chapter 5 – Presentation and analysis of information

In Chapter 5, the leadership talent management framework presented in Chapter 3 is used to analyse the information collected from leaders in three rail organisations. The findings are then presented according to the same themes and sub-themes of the framework to illustrate what happens around leadership talent management in rail organisations. This comprehensive section includes excerpts from interviews and the survey with rail leaders at four different levels.

Chapter 6 – Discussion

Chapter 6 addresses the main research question and three guiding sub-questions identified in the research design, segmented by the key ideas of the questions. In the section on the purpose, policy and practices of leadership talent in Australian rail, a number of themes emerge about the Australian rail leadership practices including what talents are valued for leadership of others. In the next section, the operational practices employed by current leaders for identifying leadership talent are discussed by each level of leader. The last section explores how rail industry organisations are currently

developing their leadership talent, highlighting a number of preferred approaches identified in rail organisations.

Chapter 7 – Model of a talented leader

This study presents a model of a talented rail leader for a contemporary rail organisation in Chapter 7. The model is derived from the findings of the research and presents an in-depth summary of the talents required by leaders at the four levels of executive, middle, frontline and HR in rail. This chapter also explicates areas for learning and development to guide practitioners.

Chapter 8 – Implications and conclusion

At the end of this study, Chapter 8 draws together the significance of the journey. It revisits the main findings of the research and implications for policy and practice in Australian rail organisations. As the study ends, a number of recommendations are made for future research that has arisen from this exploratory study on leadership talent management in rail.

2 Literature Review

Chapter outline

This chapter:

1 identifies the global talent management literature, and historical and landmark talent management studies, considering the initial ideas about leadership talent management established in the Introduction (see Figure 3);
2 explores the meaning of leadership talent through a narration of various influences described in the literature;
3 outlines considerations for identifying leaders in organisations; and
4 investigates the development of leadership talent through a human resource development and adult education lens to highlight theoretical ideas and gaps for exploration (Willis 2010).

The literature review is presented in four main sections. Figure 5 outlines these sections: the talent management literature, theorising talent management, identifying leadership talent and becoming a talented leader. Torraco (2005) claims that literature reviews such as this one, that are undertaken in a way that combines existing knowledge on a topic (as highlighted by the different sections), often result in the creation of new frameworks and perspectives.

Leadership talent management			
Section 1 - pp. 20-25 The talent management literature	**Section 2 -** pp. 25-32 Theorising talent management	**Section 3** – pp. 33-41 Identifying leadership talent	**Section 4** – pp. 42 – 60 Becoming a talented leader
Historical, landmark and contemporary studies	Leadership, talent and leadership talent definitions Synthesis of terms	Contemporary practices for identifying leadership talent Problems in practice	Adult learning and development, constructivism, learning strategies

Figure 5: Literature Review outline

Background

The rise of the knowledge economy highlights the vast difference between new approaches to business and those employed in the industrial economy (Boedker et al. 2011a). As a result, profound changes in the workplace (globalisation, internationalisation, the rise of the knowledge society and new technologies) have highlighted increasing focus on commercial success in business. Hills (2008, cited in Dickie & Dwyer 2011, p. 239) suggest that these external changes have had an associated effect within organisations where there is now a direct relationship between people and leadership. Talented leaders in the 21st century are said to be able to steer organisations through new perspectives of business (Barab & Plucker 2002). Figure 6, shows the three economies of agriculture, industry and knowledge described by Boedker (2005). The key features of economic production are vastly different in each economy. The figure demonstrates the importance of leveraging knowledge at the end of the 20th and beginning of the 21st century.

	Pre-1800	18th – 20th Century	20th Century onwards
Economic activity	**Agriculture**	**Manufacturing (Industry)**	**Knowledge and leveraging of knowledge**
Factors of economic production	Land Land owners and workers	Labour Machinery Raw Material	Relational capital Structural capital (processes to support and enable human capital to function) Human capital

Figure 6: The agricultural, industrial and knowledge economies

Source: Boedker (2005)

The business situation faced by organisations in a knowledge economy is stated to include definable contexts (Damon 2007) that affect how leaders perceive and interpret the external environment to make business decisions (Hay Group 2011; Porter & McLaughlin 2006). The value of human capital cannot be viewed in isolation from the context, comprising six key themes:

1 Operating in a global environment,
2 A changing world that responds quickly to economic and political stimuli,
3 Sustainably protecting today's environment while addressing stakeholders' needs,
4 Managing a generational workforce,
5 Managing diversity, and
6 Leading in technology based environments (Damon 2007).

From this search of the literature, it is apparent that talent management is a "product" of the knowledge economy (Brown & Tannock 2009, p. 377). It is a practice carried out by organisations to meet the demands of unpredictable business territories in a global economy (Stahl et al. 2012; Stahl et al. 2007).

The first section of the literature review will investigate the many sources of talent management writing including historical, landmark and contemporary studies.

Talent management literature

To initiate the literature review, more than eighty journals were scanned. A summary of the publications' titles are presented in Appendix A. The scope of the talent management search was predominantly on writing from 2006-2013, but earlier works were also included because of their importance in the initial talent management concept (for example, Boudreau, Ramstad & Dowling 2003; Busine & Watt 2005; Chambers et al. 1998; Michaels, Handfield-Jones & Axelrod 2001). This first pass of the writing highlighted the global viewpoint with articles on talent management written from international perspectives and the interconnectedness of the world (Scullion, Collings & Caliguiri 2010). The overwhelming domination of literature with an international focus (Sheehan, Fenwick & Dowling 2010) provided the opportunity to reflect on the importance of the research about to be undertaken in the Australian context.

The terms "talent" and "talent management" were used to locate relevant writing from 1998 because "leadership talent" and "leadership talent management" returned limited results. In the time of this thesis, more articles have come to the fore but time and the boundaries of the study meant that it was not possible to capture every source. Therefore, a number of screens were applied to review articles including journal type and focus, year of publication, application to the Australian rail industry, cultural context, methodological consideration and topic, to locate literature relevant to the research question (Fink 2005). This approach quickly identified that a number of search approaches would be needed to gain the appropriate views on the specified research question.

Timeline of articles

The reviewed articles were organised by year to identify patterns in their year of publication, frequency and source of origin to inform the structure of knowledge on the topic (Hart 1998).

A timeline emerged from 1998; with the pioneering study of Chambers et al. (1998) and subsequent publication of the book, *The War for Talent* (Michaels, Handfield-Jones & Axelrod 2001) to the present time. This timeline is confirmed by fifteen of the total eighty talent management articles reviewed; all concurring that the study commissioned by McKinsey (Chambers et al. 1998) is the starting point of the discussion on talent management. Since then, many authors describe talent management as "popularised" (Iles, Preece & Chuai 2010) because there has been limited follow-up research further theorising the topic (Lewis & Heckman 2006). McDonnell, Stanton and Burgess (2011, p. 20) also identify the lack of research from the Australian context and call for increased 'empirical work in the area of talent management'. Even in Chambers et al. (1998) original work, the methodological base is not described in detail. More current talent management studies (Stahl et al. 2007) identify a broader collection of methods used to explicate the talent management concept, but this literature does not incorporate the human resource development (HRD) frame (Kim & McLean 2012). A study of the progression of global scholarly debate around talent management confirms renewed interest in exploring talent management since the Global Financial Crisis (GFC). This concern signals more need for vigorous discussion and research as the business world continues to face chaos and upheaval in many international contexts (Beechler & Woodward 2009; Blass 2007; McDonnell 2011; Stahl et al. 2007; Storberg-Walker 2012).

Since 2007, talent management writing is more frequent. Recent articles were considered to have a more purposeful approach to managing human capital (Collings, Scullion & Vaiman 2011; Tarique & Schuler 2010; Whelan, Collings & Donnellan 2010) than previous more "idealistic" models, as authors mature in their consideration of talent management. Some reveal their shock in articles written from 2008 onwards about some business decisions made by seemingly talented leaders prior and post the GFC crisis (McDonnell 2011). The 2008 aftermath indicates that prior to the downturn, there were limited threats for business in engaging key, talented people, with unprecedented commercial growth and favourable times (Goh & Bullen 2010).

Citation analysis

To further plot the relevance of works on talent management, citation analysis, or visible signposts that authors are credible in their field (Weida & Stolley 2012), was undertaken using Google Scholar in April 2011, in January 2012 and then at the end of the study in February 2013. The objective of identifying the number of citations was to provide an indication of the impact of the work of varying authors on the topic of talent management because evidence of scholarly publication assists in the contribution to knowledge, being as 'vital to the research as the actual investigation' (Herther 2009, p. 363).

Citations were plotted by year on a bar chart to identify their impact and use by other authors over the last thirteen years. The results of the most cited authors are charted in Appendix B, indicating the writers' significance in the field of talent management. Early work by Chambers et al. (1998) and Michaels, Handfield-Jones and Axelrod (2001) confirm their importance, with the highest number of citations. Their year long research study comprised interviews undertaken in 77 large organisations with 6,000 managers. It was supplemented with case studies of 20 companies (Beechler & Woodward 2009). As a result, the initial discussion on talent management from 1998 until 2012 has given rise to criticism that current research has a shallow empirical base, needing further robust research (Collings, Scullion & Dowling 2009; Scullion, Collings & Caliguiri 2010; Tarique & Schuler 2010). In Figure 7 below, the numbers of reviewed articles are depicted by year, showing small numbers from 1998 to 2006 and an increase from 2007. After 2009, the topic of talent management gains different foci, discussed in more detail shortly.

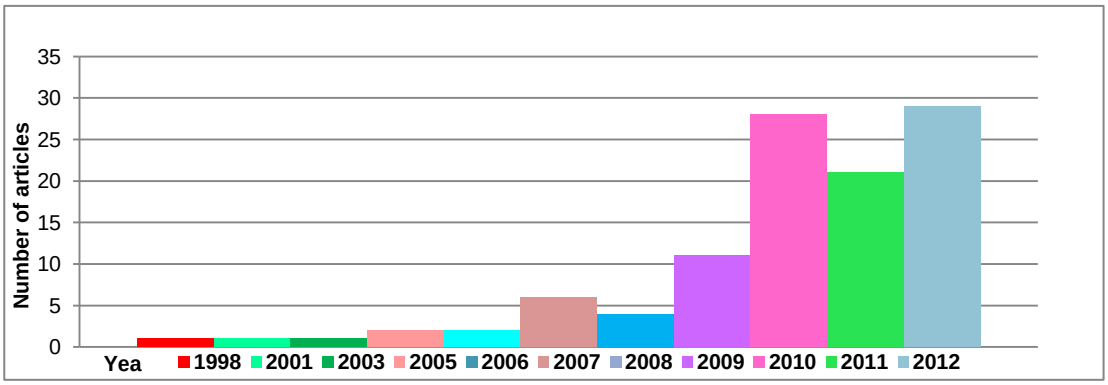


Figure 7: Talent management articles by year

What and who are the key works and theorists?

Articles of note include early writing by Boudreau, Ramstad and Dowling (2003) on talent management, strategy and success in business; and Lewis and Heckman (2006) on defining talent management in stable business environments. Prior to the global turmoil, Blass (2007) and Stahl et al. (2007) put forward reports from studies with more defined and robust methodologies, appropriate for their time, which include case studies conducted in a range of organisational settings and with a number of differing levels of managers. To consolidate the number of citations, Table 1 lists the most cited authors including Chambers et al. (1998), Michaels, Handfield-Jones and Axelrod (2001), Boudreau and Ramstad (2005), Lewis and Heckman (2006), Blass (2007) and Stahl et al. (2007). One key observation of this task is that recent discussion follows newer, broader and scattered topics and that while there is writing that is more frequent, offering varying viewpoints, these articles have not been widely cited yet.

Table 1: Citation analysis of key studies, undertaken in 2013

Year	Article	Number of Citations
1998	Chambers, Foulon, Handfield-Jones, Hankin and Michaels 1998	325
2001	Michaels, Handfield-Jones and Axelrod 2001	615
2005	Boudreau and Ramstad 2005	129
2006	Lewis and Heckman 2006	182
2007	Blass 2007	16
2007	Stahl, Bjorkman, Farndale, Morris, Paauwe, Stiles, Trevor and Wright 2007	33

Assumptions in the literature

The talent management literature was considered against a human resource development (HRD) frame because the discipline is constructed from theories with an 'economic, systems and psychological' base (Swanson & Holton 2009, p. 102). HRD is broadly accepted as a discipline with the purpose of improving individual performance within an organisational context (Clardy 2008). Table 2 outlines these theories.

Table 2: Exploring talent management through theoretical foundations of HRD

Human resource development is founded on three theoretical bases		
Economic theories	**Systems theories**	**Psychological theories**
- Scarce resource theory - Sustainable resource theory - Human capital theory	- General systems theory - Chaos theory - Future theory	- Gestalt psychology theory - Behavioural psychology theory - Cognitive psychology theory

Source: Swanson and Holton (2009)

Talent management writing has a focus on HR not HRD

Most of the talent management articles were portrayed from an economic and systems frame, and the importance of human capital (McDonnell et al. 2010) in multinational or transnational scenarios. However, the connection of the talent management literature to the development of individual knowledge and skills, expected to be portrayed in writing from the psychological viewpoint (a key component of HRD), was lacking. Kim and McLean (2012) agree, citing that most talent management articles are found to be written from a human resource management perspective and the development of personal abilities is overlooked. However, in recent writing from 2012, talent management takes a new turn, picking up this insufficiency in an increasingly complex business environment. For example, this writing considers aspirations of individuals and performance management (Aguinis, Gottfredson & Joo 2012), the development of leaders (Stahl et al. 2012) and managing Generation X and Y (Thompson & Gregory 2012). These are integral parts of managing talent, but there are still limited articles on developing specific areas of talent such as leadership. Hence, further investigation of specific leadership talent literature from an HRD perspective was required to uncover how organisations identify and develop talented leaders.

Writing has an international focus on multinational companies

Talent management articles provided a primary viewpoint from an economic or business base incorporating three key sub-themes – talent as a scarce resource (Iles, Chuai & Preece 2010; Meyskens et al. 2009; Tansley 2011); talent as sustainable, competitive advantage (Hartmann, Feisel & Schober 2010; Holland, Sheehan & De Cieri 2007; Whelan, Collings & Donnellan 2010); and talent as human capital (Beechler & Woodward 2009; Scullion, Collings & Caliguiri 2010; Tarique & Schuler 2010). Articles were confined to North America and Europe with a small number of articles

from the Asia Pacific region, predominantly Australia. Of the more than 80 articles reviewed, 19 articles discussed research with humans functioning in productive multinational corporations (MNCs) and transnational (TNCs) systems. MNCs and TNCs base their talent management strategy on a systematic approach where there is more likelihood of well-structured human resource architecture and practices, more so than in smaller, domestic organisations such as Australian rail organisations. Table 3 shows writing by authors about MNC cases and the frequency of the studies. While it is not possible to locate every article, this précis provides an indication of the importance of multinational companies in shaping talent management strategies.

Table 3: References to multinational companies in the talent management literature

Year	Authors	TOTAL (n= 23)
2007	(Blass 2007; Scullion, Collings & Gunnigle 2007; Stahl et al. 2007)	3
2008	(Mabey 2008)	1
2009	(Beechler & Woodward 2009; Collings, Scullion & Dowling 2009; Shen & Hall 2009)	3
2010	(Burbach & Royle 2010; Farndale, Scullion & Sparrow 2010; Hartmann, Feisel & Schober 2010; Makela, Bjorkman & Ehrnrooth 2010; McCartney 2010; McDonnell et al. 2010; Mellahi & Collings 2010; Schuler, Jackson & Tarique 2010; Tarique & Schuler 2010)	9
2011	(Lawler et al. 2011; Martin 2011; Williamson 2011b, 2011a)	3
2012	(Garavan 2012; Sheehan 2012; Stahl et al. 2012)	3
2013	(Meyers, van Woerkom & Dries 2013)	1

The second section considers the meaning of ‘talent’, ‘talent management’ and ‘leadership talent’.

Theorising ‘talent management’

The use of the word “talent” has a history of more than one thousand years, originally assigned to a denomination of weight (Kroll 2008), and then to units of silver for currency and exchange (Tansley 2011). Talent is associated with a commodity of high value (Michaels, Handfield-Jones & Axelrod 2001) or balance (Greek balance weights) (Kroll 2008). In early societies that were reliant on human movement through foot traffic and maritime activity (Kroll 2008), talents (currency or coins) were used as instruments of trade and exchange. Over time, the understanding of the term “talent” became correlated with the ability of people. In the New Testament, the word “talent” reinforces these arguments as units of value – described as a “gift” or “skill” (Matthew 25: 14-30).

In recent times, Michaels, Handfield-Jones and Axelrod (2001, p. xii) describe talent as "a sum of a person's abilities", an aptitude or ability found in a person's makeup which may be innate or learnt, or developed through different experiences. Boyatzis (2008, p. 8) portrays talent as a behavioural manifestation or 'an intelligence' which is observable, related to physiological makeup, adding value to the individual's personality and developed by life and career experiences. Behaviour and other factors which influence talent (capacity, ability, health, intelligence, education, motivation, job satisfaction, opportunity to perform, working conditions) suggested by Boyatzis (2008, 2011), must come together in certain combinations to affect performance outcomes (Collings & Mellahi 2009). However, using the word "talent" is misleading in a business setting because only a few people are born talented, but everyone has the ability or potential to develop further (Tansley 2011).

For these reasons, viewing talent through a future focused frame (see Figure 8) is more realistic as this means existing in possibility or capable of development (Silzer & Church 2009). From this position, unlocking individual potential brings about new possibilities based on learning, growth and change (Kegan & Lahey 2009; Kegan & Lahey 2010).

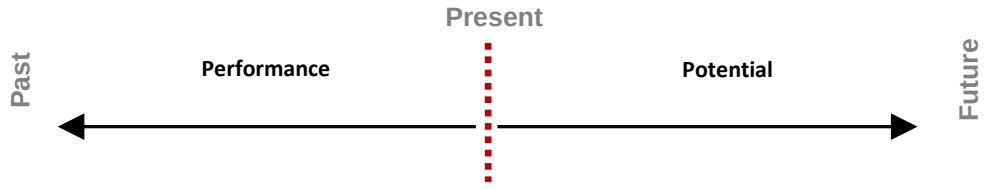


Figure 8: Leadership talent or potential is future focused

Source: developed by author based on concept of talent as potential (Tansley 2011)

Nevertheless, the writing confirms that an organisationally specific definition of talent (Blass 2007; McCartney & Garrow 2006) precedes the ability to unlock individual potential (Hartmann, Feisel & Schober 2010; Makela, Bjorkman & Ehrnrooth 2010; Silzer & Church 2009). This is because there are many conceptual and contextual variables to consider in defining talent. McKinsey's early study has a widely used definition of talent based on the behavioural aspects of talented people:

> … his or her intrinsic gifts, skills, knowledge, experience, intelligence, judgement, attitude, character and drive and the ability to learn and grow (Michaels, Handfield-Jones & Axelrod 2001, p. xii).

During the pre-2000s, talented people were believed to be capable performers, already at the peak of their expertise (Smart 1999). Talent management was correlated with hiring the most accomplished individuals. Recent talent definitions demonstrate clear paradigm shifts from the early studies because the business world has changed dramatically (McDonnell 2011). It is now thought that organisations must clearly state what they mean in regard to "talent" with a contextualized definition (Stewart & Harte 2010) for their particular industry type, nature of work and situation. Not only is specifying the definition of talent important, but it highlights the intent and transparency of the message with everyone in the organisation to ensure they are all working from the same script (McDonnell 2011; Silzer & Church 2009). Talent management may include recruitment or identification of people with talent, organisational and HR strategies that are effective in managing talent, and development of talented people (Cascio & Aguinis 2008).

Leadership talent

The literature did not describe "leadership talent management" as a term. Talent management writing assumes talented people also demonstrate some attributes of "leadership" or are leaders in their field. Leaders who occupy a formal leadership role are the subject of this study so to probe what contemporary leadership means; a search of the literature identified a number of key points. Leadership has been necessary for societies for thousands of years to foresee the future and enable direction of others (Grint 2011). With the rapid rise of manufacturing and industrialisation in the 20th century, unstructured approaches to controlling groups of people gave rise to new, systematic and formalised practices of "management" (Taylor 1911). Within the management function there are thought to be five priorities: planning, organising, commanding, coordinating and controlling (Fayol 1949). Now, with increasing work and life complexity, a greater need for people orientation through leadership is required to guide and connect with people (Alimo-Metcalfe & Alban-Metcalfe 2008). "Management" (Fayol 1949) alone cannot always sustain people in modern, workplace settings.

Early thinking (Zaleznik 1977, p. 127) was that managers and leaders were 'very different types of people' and their "style" or "approach" to work was distinct. Leadership is now viewed as a relationship with people that has change aspects while

management requires strong technical skills to achieve routine tasks, maintain order and stability (Northouse 2010). Now, it is considered that although there are clear differences, the 'two constructs overlap' (Northouse 2010, p. 11) with extremes on the continuum, and both leadership and management called upon in different situations (Boyatzis 2008, 2011; Northouse 2010). Figure 9 outlines the relationship between leadership and management:

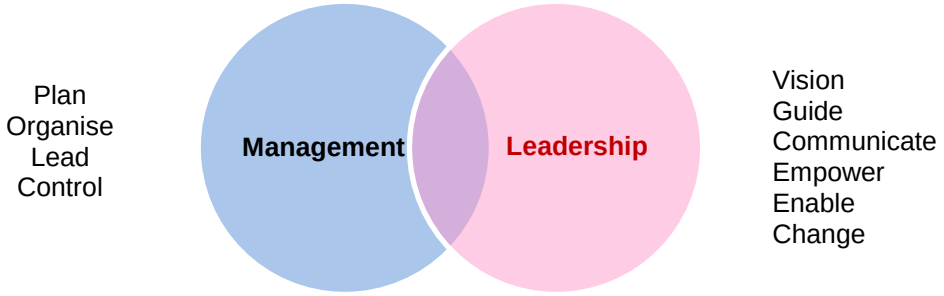


Figure 9: Management and leadership

Source: developed by author from the ideas of Toor (2011)

Evolution of the leadership profile

Taking a snapshot of leadership from 1990 onwards, numerous ideas were located in the prolific writing as follows:

- a leader as 'a fully functioning person' (Hitt 1993, p. 4);
- frontline leaders becoming more humane, from 'cop to coach' (McMahon 1993, p. 113);
- identifying what personal abilities and skills are needed to become a leader, 'the characteristics of managerial careers of the 21st century' (Allred, Snow & Miles 1996, p. 17); and
- the five minds of a manager, 'the ability to synthesise insights from different mindsets into a comprehensible whole' (Gosling & Mintzberg 2003, p. 1).

The articles show the progression of opinions about what is needed to lead in an increasingly complex world. In the search for current leadership talent management writing, there was limited information on what is meant by "leadership talent", especially with relevance to the Australian rail industry context. Previous work from the project P4.104: Developing a Leadership and Management Capability Framework (2011, p. 18) did identify that there is now an 'inter-relationship of leadership approaches because leadership is contingent on situations and people'. While this may

be true, it further highlights how leadership contexts are ever evolving and what was suitable at one time in the past may not be relevant today. Kegan (1982, 1994) adds to this idea, suggesting that leadership has moved through what he calls traditional, modern and post-modern stages. The Boston Consulting Group developed a pictorial representation of leadership changes over the last fifty years that is shown in Figure 10, overlaid with the leadership eras suggested by Kegan (Kegan 1982, 1994).

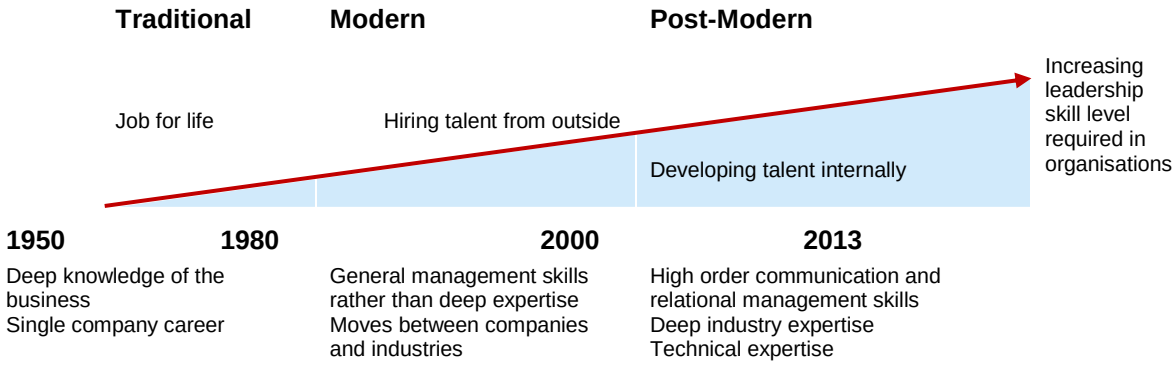


Figure 10: Changing models of leadership

Source: developed from Boston Consulting Group (2006) and Kegan (1982, 1994)

In the traditional era (1950-1980), a single company career was considered typical, and individual leaders developed a 'deep knowledge of the business' (Nicholson & Nairn 2006, p. 5). A scan of this era reveals globalisation impacts were negligible, contributing to the limited diversity of people in the workplace, and there were periods of economic and social stability (Karpin 1995). From 1990 onwards, globalisation, deregulation and privatisation of major public assets impacted stable organisations, and sourcing talented leaders from outside was considered advantageous to business knowledge and growth (Nicholson & Nairn 2006). However, since the GFC, worldwide economic instability has increased uncertainty in business, increasing the need to develop the productivity of existing human assets.

The importance of leadership talent

The literature did not categorise leadership talent, leadership talent management or potential but what is apparent is the interchange of the terms manager, leader and leadership in talent management writing. This confirms the crossover in the management and leadership constructs (Beechler & Woodward 2009; Makela, Bjorkman & Ehrnrooth 2010; Tarique & Schuler 2010). A more critical analysis

indicates that organisations are searching for managers, experts and specialists or 'thought-leaders' (Tansley 2011, p. 270) who have the ability to see the future and to take the lead in challenging situations (Schuler, Jackson & Tarique 2010; Tarique & Schuler 2010). Although numerous articles refer to leader ability as a component of "talent", most are unable to define what this means because there are contextual variables that impact each point of view. Bear et al. (2005) claim that managing the potential of all leaders in organisations is necessary because of growing interconnectedness aided by information and technology in a knowledge based economy. As a result, companies that develop their leaders to have an "agile mindset" will have a distinct business advantage (Bear et al. 2005, p. 33).

Leaders' effectiveness, or the potential to become a better leader in a global, knowledge economy, confirms two ideas. Firstly, in leader-centred perspectives on leadership (or those approaches based on skills and competencies), knowledge and abilities are stated to be able to be developed (Clarke 2013; Morris & Williams 2012; Northouse 2010). Secondly, in complexity approaches, leaders in globally focused organisations benefit from understanding the interdependencies of these systems, and how the external and internal worlds affect their leadership role (Morris & Williams 2012). Hence for the purpose of this study, the research takes the viewpoint of the complexity (Uhl-Bien, Marion & McKelvey 2007) as well as the skills-based approach of leadership (Northouse 2010) in managing leaders' potential. There are many other perspectives of leadership including the trait theory of leadership based on fixed and innate characteristics (Kirkpatrick & Locke 1991; Stogdill 1974). There are others, but leadership talent in rail is explored through the complexity and skills approach lenses.

Following this line of thinking, managing potential is particularly important for rail organisations with large numbers of existing employees. Rather than hiring new leaders with unknown abilities for leadership roles from outside, managing the potential of leaders from inside the organisation is a sound strategy. It can strengthen highly specialised, rail specific roles by succeeding people to existing positions since they are already employed within the organisation. In Figure 11 a comparison of two employees, both new to leadership roles, shows the trajectory of performance when one employee (A) is selected and developed from within the organisation, and the other (B) is hired from outside. In an unfamiliar setting, there is often found to be a marked decline in performance of the new leader (Manderscheid & Freeman 2012), taking as long as five

to ten years to rebuild within the new context (Beechler & Woodward 2009; Tansley 2011). The consideration of developing existing potential was first highlighted in the Introduction on demographics of Australian workers. It exemplifies that within organisations, there is a pool of employees often with untapped talent.

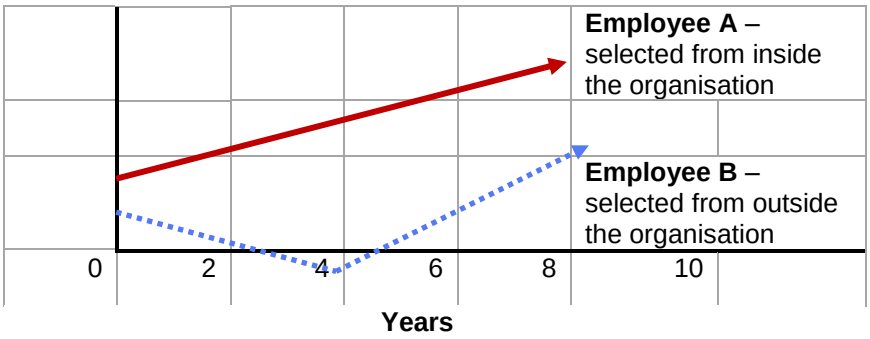


Figure 11: Potential performance of two employees selected in an organisation

Source: developed from the writing of Beechler and Woodward (2009) and Tansley (2011)

Task, human and conceptual domains of leadership

Scholars through the years have identified various ways of describing leadership with the skills-based approach of leadership one of those approaches (Katz 1955; Northouse 2010; Yukl 2010) (shown in Figure 12). It is widely demonstrated that leaders can 'accomplish' these skills (Northouse 2010, p. 40) and these particular domains can be developed further. Boyatzis (2008) describes this leader-centred approach as related to a theory of performance. A simple categorisation of the domains, useful in the rail context, is described by Yukl (2010) and Northouse (2010) as the:

- Task oriented (plan, clarify, monitor) domain
- Human relations oriented (support, develop and recognise) domain
- Change oriented (conceptual ability to innovate and persuade) domain

Katz (1955) was the originator of the skills idea, identifying varying foci for each domain area by different levels of leadership. Other scholars have also added to this idea (see articles by Hooijberg, Hunt & Dodge 1997; Mumford, Campion & Morgeson 2007). While the skills approach is still relevant today, environmental conditions, organisations and leadership circumstances have become more complicated. Scholars including Uhl-Bien, Marion and McKelvey (2007) advocate also for the inclusion of complexity approaches to the management of leaders. In relation to the varying skill and domain areas, executive leaders' focus on the task area is stated as being less than for

human relations and change/conceptual areas. At the middle level of leadership, the skills areas are stated as equal across each domain while, at the frontline level, the skills required are stated as more in the task or technical domains. In Figure 12, the skills approach concept is replicated from the literature for reference throughout this study.

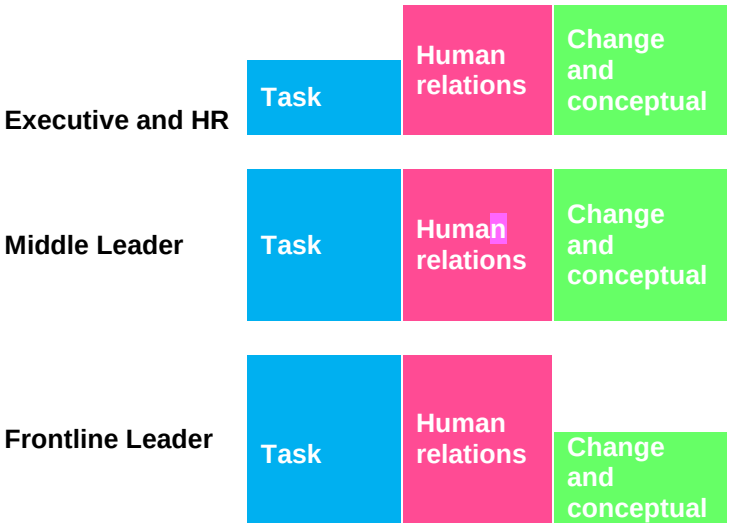


Figure 12: Three domains of leadership

Source: Katz (1955) cited in Northouse (Northouse 2010)

It is thought that a leader's influence on their team and the organisation to achieve performance is demonstrated by using the task, human relations and conceptual domains of the skills approach in two ways: 1. through leaders' management style and personal leadership practices, and 2. through the impact of their style and practices on employee behaviour (Boedker et al. 2011a; Short et al. 2011). This is particularly important considering the increasing productivity outcomes of rail organisations as being largely dependent on the leader's ability to motivate, engage and retain employees (Green et al. 2009).

At the end of the second section, points to consider in the ensuing study highlight the importance of defining leadership, the difference between leadership and management, and leadership and sustaining people in a changing world. In the third section, the talent management literature is analysed to ascertain considerations for identifying leadership talent.

Identifying leadership talent

Potential talent for key positions

Recent talent management articles show insightfulness and questioning approaches to talent management, not found in McKinsey's initial study (Chambers et al. 1998). The early work did not consider the complex business environment and diversity of people. Many new articles highlight sharper talent tactics, often described for the situation of multinational companies (Burbach & Royle 2010; McDonnell, Hickey & Gunnigle 2011; McDonnell et al. 2010) yet with implication for smaller companies. Articles highlight that systematic talent management strategies, when applied across the entire organisational network, aid competitive advantage through a consistent approach to managing talent (Lepak & Snell 2002). Many US based organizations use the nine box framework to map individual performance against perceived leadership potential (Schuler, Jackson & Tarique 2010). In the study conducted by McDonnell et al. (2010) of multinational corporations operating in the low-tech/low cost sectors, a systemised approach to managing talent was found to be their most important business differentiator. Although articles did not describe an entire explanation of 'how' to identify talent, the review highlighted that there might be at least three aspects to consider:

1 identifying the job role and position,
2 developing the structures to support identification of the person for the position, and
3 defining the skills, knowledge and competencies required for leaders.

The review considers these three points in the following paragraphs.

Identifying the job role and position – Recent talent writing still has a predominant focus on HRM approaches rather than on HRD (Kim & McLean 2012). However, segmenting organisational roles by job and hierarchical position (McDonnell 2011; Silzer & Church 2009) is one idea relevant to this study on leadership talent in rail. Consistent with a skills-based perspective of leadership (Northouse 2010), Lepak and Snell (1999, 2002, 2003) assert that as individuals have different potential, organisations would benefit from having different approaches to identifying and developing that potential for different job roles. Others scholars (Boudreau & Ramstad 2007; Collings & Mellahi 2009; Lewis & Heckman 2006) logically claim that organisations are then able to identify and develop employees to fit these roles (Makela,

Bjorkman & Ehrnrooth 2010). This guiding approach to talent management defines a way for organisations to consider (Ashton & Morton 2005). In Lepak's model (1999, 2002, 2003), key job segments are suggested such as by knowledge based employment, leaders, employment for certain roles such as technical areas, and roles that could be outsourced (contractors). This segmented approach is depicted in Figure 13.

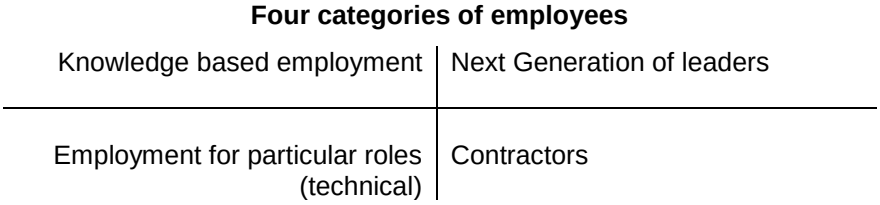


Figure 13: Segmenting key positions

Source: adapted from Lepak and Snell (1999, 2002, 2003)

Lepak and Snell (2002) posit that human capital can be unique to the industry situation, difficult to replace and not readily transferable. In knowledge-based employment, (for example, engineering), organisations are more likely to invest in enhancing individuals' unique skills. Cohen and Levinthal (1990) also observed this phenomenon when external factors such as deregulation forces organisational change. The development of the tangible areas such as operations, technology and infrastructure often receives more attention than intangible areas of people, leaders and culture. When skills are more general, individual skills may be both unique to the industry (through workplace experience and access to organisational intellectual property) but also transferrable. A consideration for identifying rail leaders might be to identify the specific rail knowledge required for leadership at each level to fulfil this requirement.

Developing structures to support talent identification – The second key idea identifies that a robust architecture is necessary to support the talent management strategy and process (Blass 2007; McCartney & Garrow 2006). Talented people can be either identified internally or hired externally, but as stated previously, this study will focus on identifying internal talent. Tansley (2007) suggests that there are various points, both for and against, developing talent internally. Limiting the diversity of the talent pool and replicating the same types of people are two negative effects of this approach while recognising the aspirations of people and developing their abilities are positive outcomes (Tansley et al. 2007).

In regard to structures to support talent identification, Blass (2007, p. 6) revealed 18 'operational dimensions' common to talent management systems. These included HR infrastructure, performance management processes and information technology tools to record and document talent information. The framework described in Table 4 has three main components – defining talent, developing talent, and structures and systems – and a number of sub-components to assist in identifying talent objectively. However, the framework does not describe identifying internal talent in detail.

Table 4: HR Framework to support talent identification

Talent support framework		
Defining	***Developing***	***Structures and Systems***
1. Size of talent pool	1. Development pathways	1. Performance management
2. Entry criteria	2. Development focus	2. Talent management processes
3. Decision process	3. Support	3. Use of technology
4. Permanency of definition	4. Influence on career	4. Systems flexibility
5. Recruiting talent	5. Connected conversations	5. Ownership of talent
6. Transparency	6. Organisational values	
	7. Risk	

Source: Developed from ideas of Blass (2007, p. 6)

Defining leadership, skills, knowledge and competencies – Further to the development of the architecture to guide strategic talent decision-making, defining what skills, competencies and knowledge organisations require in their leaders is essential (Townsend & Cairns 2003). A leadership capability framework, such as the one developed for the CRC for Rail Innovation project P4.104 (Short et al. 2011) and the example from the South Australian Executive Service Public Sector (Department of Premier and Cabinet 2012) provide examples of simple frameworks with a focus on what competencies the organisation values (McCartney & Garrow 2006). Table 5 shows both examples. Such frameworks may comprise individual (core) competencies and high level competencies (meta-competencies) (Brown 1993), clusters of behavioural capabilities as well as descriptors of the capability (Sanghi 2007). In the two example frameworks, the core and meta-competencies are simple action-oriented statements with more detail in accompanying documentation to guide the user. There are numerous benefits for identifying what leadership skills, knowledge and abilities are desired by organisations (Chartered Institute of Personnel Development 2011; Haskins & Shaffer 2010; Wellins, Smith & Erker 2008), a message considered for this study.

Table 5: Meta-competencies as described in leadership capability frameworks

SAES Competency Framework South Australian Executive Service Framework from the South Australian Public Sector (Department of Premier and Cabinet 2012)	**Project P4.104** Developing a leadership capability framework (Short et al. 2011)
1. Shapes thinking and strategic change 2. Achieves results 3. Drives business excellence 4. Forges relationships and engages others 5. Exemplifies personal drive and professionalism	1. Builds relationships with colleagues 2. Uses a range of communication skills effectively to achieve successful outcomes 3. Uses a heightened level of self awareness to reflect, learn and connect with people

In project P4.104, 'Developing a Leadership and Management Capability Framework' (Short et al. 2011, p. 167), three overarching competencies of relationship building, communication and self-awareness skills were identified as important for rail leaders. The study also identified six capability clusters that defined the 'desired attributes and behaviours of effective leaders in a rail setting'. These leadership capabilities were described as: 1. strategic; 2. organised; 3. results-driven; 4. caring; 5. authentic; and 6. inclusive (Short 2010; Short et al. 2011). This thesis builds on these initial findings while considering the complexity and the skills approach of leadership (Katz 1955; Northouse 2010).

Dimensions of potential

Structural methods assist organisations develop processes to identify talent. The leadership knowledge, skills and attributes rail organisations desire and seek to identify should be further defined, according to the needs for each setting. However, the literature does not describe this well or with enough detail to inform the study of the four levels of leaders in rail. It is evident that recent talent management writing also comes to this realisation, highlighting that defining the attributes of talent is a critical step in achieving the best organisational talent decisions and judgements. A number of writers are starting to make links between leadership talent, sustained achievement and knowledge (Calo 2008; Stahl et al. 2007). Some suggest attributes such as mental ability (or intelligence) and the potential to learn are strongly associated with the leader's conceptual abilities (Beechler & Woodward 2009; Reichard & Johnson 2011). One article by Silzer and Church (2009), highlighted a model that differentiates talent identification by incorporating three aspects of talent and potential: foundation, growth and career dimensions, believed to be either stable, fixed or able to benefit from growth

and development. The model presented by Silzer and Church (2009, p. 401) is outlined in Table 6.

Table 6: Three dimensions of potential

Foundation dimensions	*Growth dimensions*	*Career dimensions*
Cognitive abilities - Conceptual or strategic thinking - Breadth of thinking - Intellect, cognitive ability - Dealing with complexity/ambiguity	**Motivation** - Drive, energy, engagement - Aspiration, drive for advancement, ambition - Organisational commitment - Results orientation - Risk taking	**Leadership skills** - Leadership capabilities, managing and empowering people - Developing others - Challenging the status quo - Change management
Personality - Interpersonal characteristics - Sociability - Dominance - Maturity, stability, resilience	**Ability to learn** - Adaptability, flexibility - Learning orientation - Interest in learning - Openness to feedback	**Performance** - Career relevant track record - Leadership experiences
		Knowledge and Values - Technical /Functional skills - Mobility - Diversity - Cultural fit
Consistent and stable *Unlikely to develop or change*	*Indicators of whether a person will develop further*	*Indicators in early career of ability for specific roles*

Source: Silzer and Church (2009)

Foundational dimensions

Concerning an individual's makeup, there are foundation dimensions such as personality and intelligence that are stable and unlikely to change over time. Foundation dimensions are an innate part of a person's make-up (Silzer & Church 2009), affecting how a person learns or develops skills. These dimensions are visible, providing an indication of leadership potential and suitability for a leadership role on the first assessment.

Growth dimensions

In Silzer and Church's model (2009), growth dimensions are related to potential or talent as they provide indications of whether a person will develop further as a leader. These dimensions are related to learning ability and motivation, within the locus of control of the individual (Lefcourt 1991), and related to the degree of influence an individual believes they have over internal or external events. Growth dimensions are not immediately visible, needing the right conditions before coming to the fore. It is now understood that the ability to apply learning from first time experiences (Silzer &

Church 2009) is a strong predictor of leadership talent, a desire for high achievement and the need to understand more about self (Boyce, Zaccaro & Wisecarver 2010). In the light of these findings, new research identifies that while intelligence is fixed, the brain, within its own boundaries, has a certain plasticity that can allow it to be reconfigured to meet new learning and skill demands at work (Rumsey 2011). These findings suggest leaders are never too old to learn. Appendix C further describes the characteristics of motivation for leadership.

Career dimensions

Silzer and Church (2009) believe that indicators of an individual's skills and orientation to leadership are demonstrated early in the career through supervisory experience or leadership roles. The career dimension is not always fully apparent because the potential of the individual (talent) needs the right conditions and opportunities to be realised. Silzer and Church (2009) claim that, within the career dimension, there are three additional areas that provide important signposts for organisations such as rail seeking to identify potential leaders. These include:

1 *leadership skills* (capabilities, empowering others developing, influencing, change),
2 *performance* (track record), and
3 *knowledge and values* (cultural fit, technical skills, willingness for mobility).

McDonnell (2011) suggests that while Silzer and Church (2009) have developed a valuable model, other factors such as understanding the extent, timing and level of the career factors and combinations must also be considered. Many writers (for example, Howe, Davidson & Sloboda 1998; Swailes 2013) acknowledge that ones' leadership experiences are progressive over a lifetime, through smooth and difficult passages along the career journey. Each level of leadership and experience requires personal change to negotiate the climbs, and transcend to the next level of mastery (Day, Halpin & Harrison 2009). Leadership not only includes growth processes on this trajectory, but processes of decline, gains and losses that shape the character and identity as a leader (Ibarra, Snook & Guillén Ramo 2010). Not all leaders will be successful in reaching senior levels.

Further to this idea, according to the 'three skills approach' of Katz (1955) described by Northouse (2010, p. 53), leadership talent and ability will be dependent on the level of leadership. This is because the focus of leadership across technical, human and

conceptual domains is different as the leader moves up the hierarchy, and to different roles. For example, Katz (1955) and Northouse (2010) confirm that executive rail leaders need more ability in human and conceptual areas rather than technical skills to undertake their role, while Mumford, Campion and Morgeson (2007) highlight the importance of cognitive skills at executive levels. The full extent of an individual's ability for this role would not necessarily be known at the beginning of their career because successful transitions are not always smooth (Manderscheid & Ardichvili 2008; Manderscheid & Freeman 2012) and the appropriate opportunities may not arise to consolidate certain talents.

There are also many other variables to consider in the career dimension. Added factors in rail might be that certain career goal aspirations are different for different generations. Some literature suggests that younger leaders may seek more work-life balance over their career than previous generations (Houck 2011).

While the complexity (Clarke 2013; Uhl-Bien, Marion & McKelvey 2007) and the three skills approach (Katz 1955; Northouse 2010) to managing leadership talent are the focus of this study, " identifying potential" must be teased apart a little more to arrive smoothly at the right destination. As previously highlighted, following one line of thinking or theory is thought to be restrictive at this stage of the study as it does not allow other theoretical possibilities to emerge (Eisenhardt 1989). Following the model of Silzer and Church (2009), the identification of leadership talent is a process of observing the visible features of behaviour and personality while uncovering the hidden aspects of the leaders' skills, traits and motives for leadership. The foundation, growth and career dimensions proposed by (Silzer & Church 2009) are applied by the author to the iceberg model developed by Sanghi (2007) to depict the visible and hidden dimensions of aspiration, abilities and potential. This concept is shown in Figure 14. Understanding the combinations of these leadership features is the precursor of correct diagnosis to enable leaders to realise their full potential (Silzer & Church 2009), and must be considered in the context of the particular organisational situation.

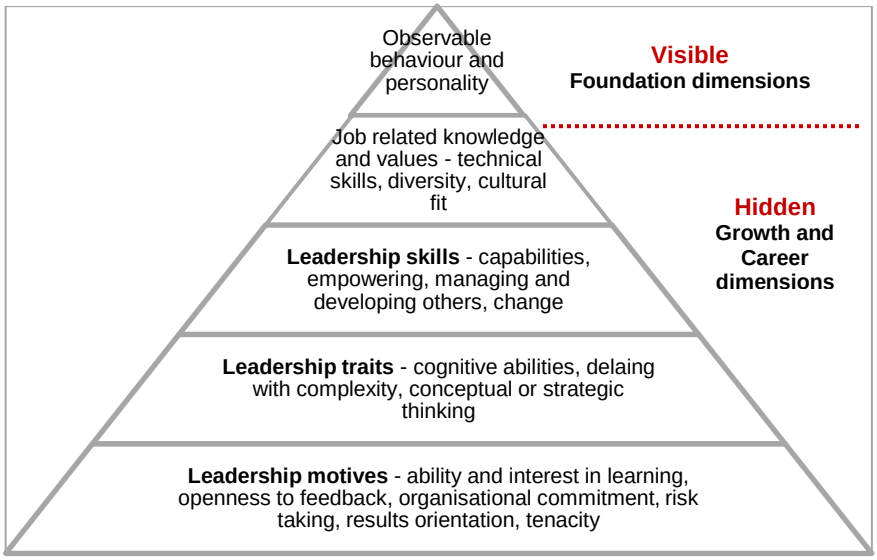


Figure 14: Visible and hidden dimensions of potential

Source: Developed from Sanghi (2007) considering the three dimensions of potential described by Silzer and Church (2009)

The organisational talent knowledge gap

In a rapidly changing business environment, the importance of identifying talent or the human potential, knowledge and skills base of the organisation should be of primary importance (IBM 2008; ManpowerGroup 2011). In most organisations, measurable details are documented about physical and organisational assets but this attention to detail is often lacking in regard to human capital (Davenport, Harris & Shapiro 2010). Many organisations are 'unable to identify who their talented employees are', their particular skills, 'where they are located' or even what it is they are looking for, because talent is seldom 'problematised' (Makela, Bjorkman & Ehrnrooth 2010, p. 135).

A Global Human Capital Study by IBM (2008), conducted with more than 400 organisations, identified nine barriers for organisations in understanding their human asset base. These barriers contributed to a knowledge gap about the link between talented people and performance. The most revealing insight expresses the lack of interest of senior managers in using human capital data to its full extent to understand the organisational human profile (IBM 2008), depicted in Figure 15. As a result, understanding the human capital profile is the starting point of any talent management system or process.

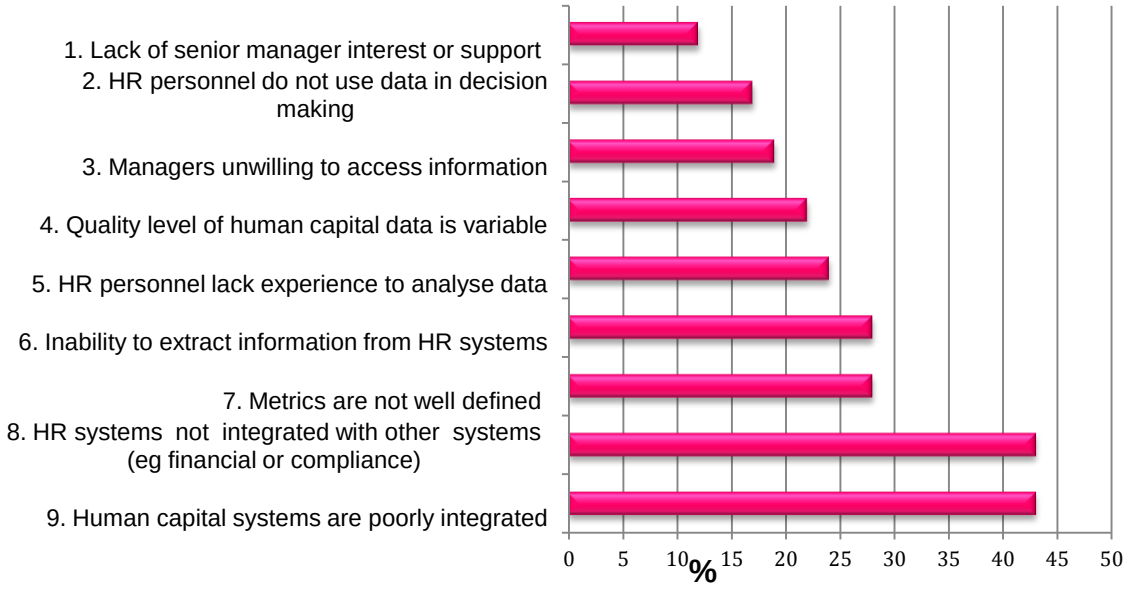


Figure 15: Barriers to use of human capital data in organisations

Source: IBM Global Human Capital Survey (IBM 2008)

A study conducted by the Institute of Employment Studies, in the UK, has lessons for rail organisation talent management, finding that the biggest impact on talent management is a mindset that involves interest and support from leaders in implementing such systematic approaches (Brown 2011). ManPower's Career and Talent Management Group (ManpowerGroup 2011) concurs, finding that more than 84 percent of employees from their survey of 40,000 organisations in 39 countries, discovered that individual talent and career aspirations are not identified, valued or acted upon by organisations and their existing leaders.

A summary of the third section of the literature review highlighted a number of considerations for leadership talent identification to minimise biased approaches. These points include the importance of structures to support the identification of leadership talent, the need to define the competencies for leadership positions, and consideration of the visible and hidden aspects of potential.

In the fourth section of the literature review, approaches to developing leadership talent are now considered.

Becoming a talented leader

There is a scarcity of information on learning and development written in the context of talent management (Kim & McLean 2012), and especially in regard to "leadership" framed as "talent". However, as previously highlighted, becoming an effective leader in the 21st century organisation is an ongoing passage (Karp 2013). Even in a period of ten years, there have been many impacts. Knowing how to lead people in business, knowing how to conduct leadership of others in ways consistent with achieving results (strategic thinking, business acumen, communication skills), and developing the knowledge of self (self awareness, authentic leadership, commitment to the rail industry environment) (based on APS capability framework Australian Public Service Commission 2011) are some of these impacts. In the next section, the review explores some of these considerations for leadership development.

Adult development theories

New thinking in leadership studies is constantly evolving (Alvesson & Spicer 2012). Many studies reveal that developing leadership skill, or the talent to be a successful leader, relates to personal development or stages of adult development. These ideas are consistent with Piaget's early work on theories of cognitive development, constructivism and learning (Piaget 1971). Piaget (1953) posited that an individual's knowledge is based on the degree of success and ability in adapting to change in the outside world, and the subsequent accommodation, assimilation and equilibration of new ways of knowing from existing mental schemas. Recently, constructive development theories (stage theories) have evolved from these influential traditions, incorporating adult development (Kegan 1982, 1994) and extending Piaget's concepts (Eriksen 2006; Traylor 2010). Constructive development stage theory proposes that adult development (incorporating an individual's personal and professional aims and goals as well as personal needs, capabilities) is not age linked (Chandler & Kram 2005). Rather, individuals progress to different stages as they evolve and develop a new ability for complex thinking, incorporating new knowledge from previous stages (Eriksen 2006).

Kegan's five stage model

Robert Kegan's constructive development approach (Kegan 1982, 1994) is based on the theory of the development of consciousness (identity) described in 'five stages' (Kegan

1994, p. 5). This theory is important in this study of rail leaders considering that leadership talent is stated as being able to be developed. In the process of learning, experiences from the external environment influence individual self-concept and understanding (Chandler & Kram 2005), the individual is transformed, and their views about the environment are perceived in new ways (Illeris 2007). Development takes place through an unfolding awareness and each stage of development 'transcends' the stage that precedes it (McGonagill & Pruyn 2010, p. 60).

Constructive development theory has another important implication for leadership talent management in this rail study where the different socialisation stages are described as traditional, modern and post-modern (Kegan 1982, 1994). Kegan (1994) states that many adults do not have the cognitive development to deal with the complexity of a changing world (lack of opportunities to learn and develop a strong identity); consequently, three individual frames of reality – traditional, modern and post-modernism – may operate simultaneously in the workplace environment. Day, Halpin and Harrison (2009) accept that before leaders can move to a more complex way of knowing, brought about by exposure to learning, they have to recognise that they firstly hold certain preconceived assumptions, principles and perceptions of the world.

Stage one and two – The first two stages of Kegan's model (1982, 1994) are primarily linked with childhood development, even though the theory is not age linked. Stage 1 (Impulsive) highlights how meaning of the world is developed through perceptions and immediate impulses while, in Stage 2 (Instrumental), the individual exists primarily in their own world with no sense of others' points of view (Kegan 1982).

Stage 3 – The socialised mind (traditional) – It is acknowledged that most adults are more cognitively conscious in the last three stages, moving through stages of complexity, something Kegan (1994, pp. 315-316) refers to as a state of mind or 'Orders of Consciousness'. Stage 3 (The socialised mind), is characterised by a focus on self and being able to understand other people's point of view, even when it might be different from their own. It is thought that the majority of adults reach this stage, but most feel the need for approval from their peer or social group to develop a sense of belonging (Kegan 1982). In the work situation, Traylor (2010) suggests that individuals at Stage 3 may place high importance on their own needs because the prime focus is on

looking after self. Figure 16 shows Stages 3, 4 and 5 of constructive development theory.

Stage 4 – The self-authorising mind (modern) – In this stage, there is evidence of the development of a self-created identify based on personal rules (morals and ethics). In the organisational situation, Stage 4 individuals demonstrate attributes of loyalty, reliability and commitment. As workplace diversity and complexity increases (Stevens, Plaut & Sanchez-Burks 2008), leaders need to consciously engage with all groups to ensure diverse perspectives of many people are considered and included (Traylor 2010).

Stage 5 – The self-transforming mind (postmodern) – In this stage, the individual comes to understand self, bigger systems and how self fits within those systems (Kegan 1982). The leader's commitment is central, and evaluation of cultural values and beliefs are based on global analysis (Traylor 2010). Leadership is demonstrated by self-initiating and self-correcting behaviour where the individual is aware of how certain 'systems' fit together (Illeris 2009, p. 47). The 'postmodern' leader also understands the limitations of those systems. They recognise the value in gaining a number of perspectives on 'multiple systems' to understand the world within those arrangements (Kegan & Lahey 2009, p. 16). In stage 5, individuals must have reached mid-life, at least, because experience and wisdom are needed to be aware of the multiple systems to which one belongs (Traylor 2010).

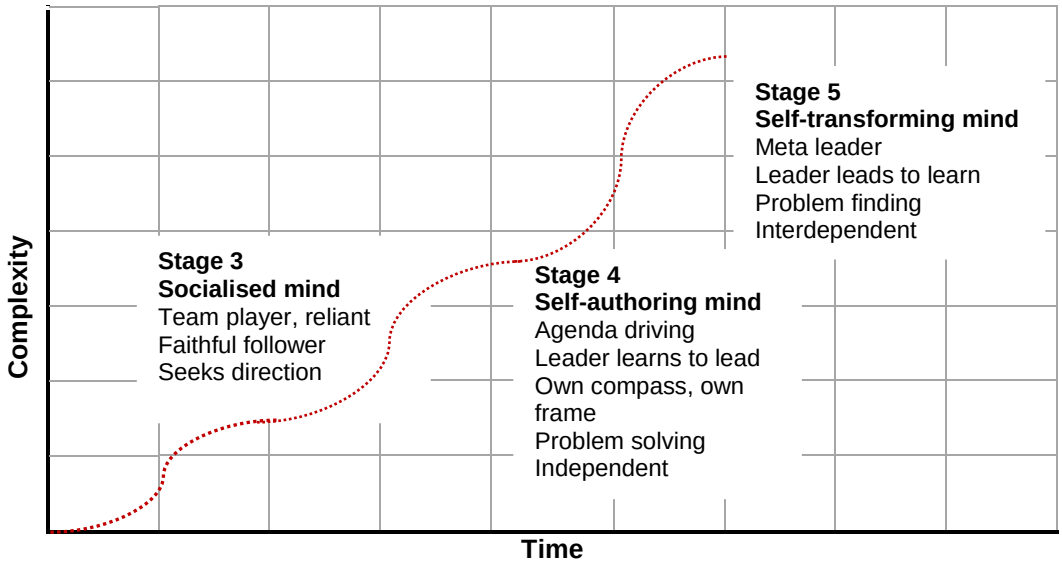


Figure 16: Stages 3, 4 and 5 of constructive development theory

Source: Developed from the concept presented by Kegan and Lahey (2009)

What skills will be developed?

Each leader is unique, has different skills and abilities (Karp 2013), and furthermore is expected to enact different leadership roles in this study on four types of leaders in rail. It follows that the skills needed for each leader will possibly be different, and the development of individual talents will be based on a range of learning opportunities (Hanson 2012). To find suitable literature on development approaches for leadership talent, the review consulted many sources where the literature highlighted numerous environmental challenges influencing leadership learning. For executive, middle, frontline and HR leaders, leadership programs can provide exposure to these potential environmental problems encountered in the course of work. Appendix D highlights these challenges and the implications for leadership development including those relating to strategy, organisational behaviour, personal skills and abilities, demographics, change and technology.

In the next part of the literature review, reference is made to Figure 12, previously showing the model first developed by Katz (1955), and expanded by Northouse (2010) and also Yukl (2010). The domains of leadership (task, human and conceptual) are presented for consideration within a leadership development strategy in rail organisations.

Task or technical domain

Yukl, Gordon and Taber (2002, p. 17) describe the 'task area' of leadership as requiring skills in using and deploying resources efficiently, building on the idea of Katz (1955) that leaders need to achieve or "accomplish" things (performance). In this domain, leaders need to be able to plan, clarify expectations, and monitor operations and performance (Yukl, Gordon & Taber 2002). Northouse (2010, p. 40) describes this domain as 'knowledge or skill in regard to a particular type of work'. For rail industry leadership, this domain might indicate information about the rail industry, knowledge of how to manage resources, and knowledge of how to lead at a particular level. Task or technical skills are thought to be correlated with the human capital of the individual (Northouse 2010; Yukl 2010), and derived from an intrapersonal base (Laker & Powell 2011) or within the person (Hogan & Warrenfeltz 2003). Successful rail leadership is not only about technical skills, as this domain comprises only one third of the three domains of leadership when considered from the skills approach. The two other domains of human and conceptual skills provide a balanced approach to leadership.

Human relations domain

The human relations domain of leadership is correlated with the foundation, growth and career dimensions of the model proposed by Silzer and Church (2009). Human relations skills are needed to engage with people as relationships usually have a two-way interaction (Northouse 2010). Day (2000, p. 584) identified that 'self-awareness, self-regulation and self-motivation' for reflection of leadership identity, contributed to harmonious relationships with others. The human relations domain is important in helping leaders accept and learn from feedback about how they are perceived in their role (Boedker et al. 2011b). These skills are interpersonal or described as skills for relating to others (Hogan & Warrenfeltz 2003).

Change or conceptual domain

High-level skills are needed to develop ideas, plans and visions as a leader (Yukl 2010). At the executive level, this domain is highly important in solving wide-ranging problems, through engagement with others throughout the organisation, and using personal skills within the human domain to develop new ideas. Leaders who make the most of these skills are described as having a 'transformation style' (Northouse 2010, p. 171). Such leaders recognise and consider the efforts of the team, seeking to maximise individual potential (Boedker et al. 2011a). It is known that transformational leaders delegate authority at times through different levels of leadership. They are able to conceptualise or appreciate the skills other leaders have to offer to wide-ranging problems (Chartered Institute of Personnel Development 2011). However, in highly regulated operating situations such as rail and where distance from the leader can be a barrier, it is acknowledged that directive styles based on safety requirements, not always inclusive of everyone, may be needed in many circumstances (Miller et al. 2011). However, Miller et al. (2011, p. 21) also believe that a directive approach is not sustainable and should not be a 'default setting'.

Overlapping domains but the combinations are less in the technical domain

While it would be uncomplicated for the skills domains to be segmented neatly, the reality is that the domains are somewhat intertwined and interdependent on each other. Skills required for human relationships and conceptual domains are derived from an interpersonal rather than an intrapersonal base, being interconnected with how the leader manages their interactions with others (Laker & Powell 2011). The fact is that the combinations of the skills domains are greater from the interpersonal base than the

intrapersonal base (Laker & Powell 2011), confirming once again that the task or technical area required for leadership is not the most important domain. This is an important point when considering identifying the potential of leaders and placing technical experts into roles where they are leading others, as the skills in the human relations and conceptual domains are critical in achieving sustained performance of teams. Underlying the successful use of the two skill domains are thought to be two key abilities, described by Day (2000, p. 585) as 'social awareness' and 'social skills', shown in Figure 17 below:

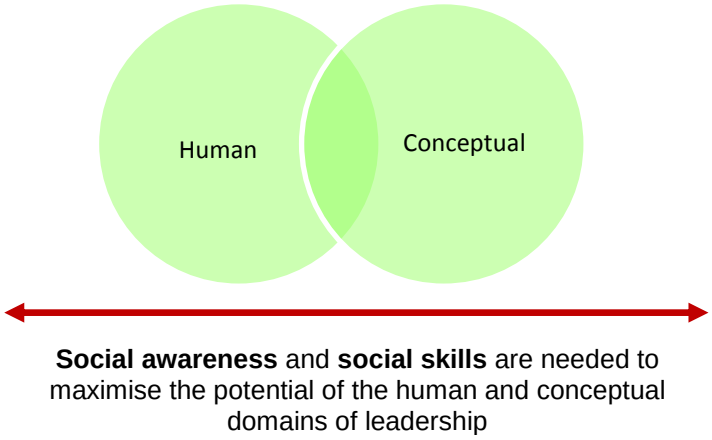


Figure 17: Two key abilities of leadership

Source: from Day (2000)

Self-awareness first before successful leadership of others

Following the idea that self-awareness has an important role in leading others, Day (2000) believes that personal development is needed as a first step before leading others. This includes providing opportunities to reflect on personal skills and qualities such as personality and characteristics (self-image, self-regulation, self-motivation) (Avolio & Gardner 2005; Day 2000). Additionally, Karp (2013, p. 135) believes that knowledge of self (as a leader) must consider 'the grounded self' and a number of other personal factors. These include what 'happened in the past' (underlying beliefs, experiences, how one learns, coping mechanisms); 'the true self' (how one exists in the present such as needs, drive, ambition, personal characteristics); and 'the possible self' (or how one can become in the future, personal understanding of reality, hopes, dreams, expectations and purpose). To lead others, aspiring leaders also need skills such as self-confidence and the ability to be in front of others (Day, Halpin & Harrison 2009).

In regard to these two critical areas for development, in much of the literature the distinction between the terms leader and leadership is not made. However, some authors do describe why explaining the terms is necessary (Alimo-Metcalfe & Alban-Metcalfe 2008; Day 2000; Mumford et al. 2000). Both leader and leadership development activities are required because individual skill-building and performance occurs within the context of a team and contributes to the development of the organisation in general (Alimo-Metcalfe & Alban-Metcalfe 2008).

Strategies for developing leadership talent

The types of learning and development activities relevant to industries such as rail in the era of the 1970s compared to 2012, highlight vast differences in methods of learning, participant expectations, industry needs and changing skill requirements (Uhl-Bien, Marion & McKelvey 2007). As a result, typical learning activities needed for a regulated rail industry environment in the 1970s may have focused on formal, classroom based education and training. This approach often develops only technical skills, compared to more holistic approaches (Storberg-Walker 2012) needed today in a deregulated environment. Understanding effects of ongoing change provides an aspect to leadership learning that is not always described in the literature, especially about what happens at the different levels of the organisation. These insights are necessary to understand the external trends and drivers that impact business so that the appropriate learning activities can be designed (Lombardo & Eichinger 2000).

Understanding how adults learn in the workplace underpins a successful leadership talent development strategy because contextual factors such as globalisation, technology and changing demographics are continually impacting learning environments (Illeris 2011). In the design of learning programs for leaders, HRD specialists and others must consider that learning is an acquisition process building on knowledge and skills that have already been developed over time, not just a process that happens in isolation (Fenwick & Tennant 2004; McGonagill & Pruyn 2010). Adult learners learn best through activities that help them to visualise, imitate and solve problems and develop new experiences (Lave & Wenger 1991; Lombardo & Eichinger 2000). McGonagill and Pruyn (2010) further state that learning is successful when it is reinforced in multiple dimensions at the cognitive, emotional, physical and spiritual levels. Other writers state that ongoing learning is related to success as a leader but requires motivation and

commitment, sustained effort, and energy to maintain (Kaiser & Hogan 2011; Kegan & Lahey 2009; Kegan & Lahey 2010).

In considering leadership development and how adults learn, it has been revealed that personal qualities and attributes are linked closely with motivation for self-development (Boyce, Zaccaro & Wisecarver 2010; Silzer & Church 2009). As a consequence, the most effective development approaches have a balance between strategies such as on the job learning, relationship based learning and formal or classroom based learning (Australian Public Service Commission 2011), shown in Figure 18. Lombardo and Eichinger (2000) describe this according to a 70-20-10 rule where most learning is in the workplace, some learning is undertaken through different relationships with others and less learning in formal settings.

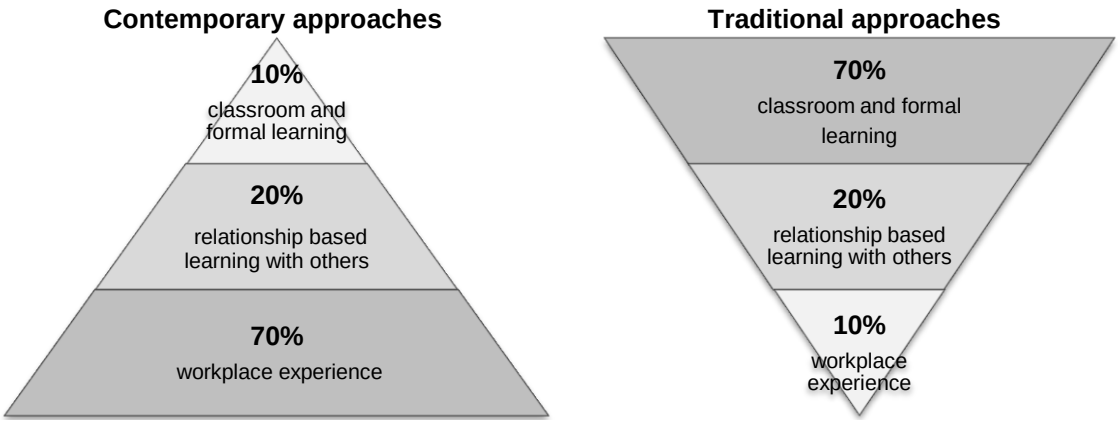


Figure 18: Developing leadership capability – 70/20/10 approach

Source: Developed from the ideas of Harvey (2010)

Workplace experience or on the job learning

Workplace experience or on the job learning is known to occur both in structured or informal ways in the workplace (Jacobs 2003; Sambrook 2005) where learning may be defined or not specified. However, when what is to be learnt is not pre-defined, informal learning tends to take place (Jacobs 2003). Aring and Brand (1998) found this in their study of seven organisations in the US manufacturing sector where there are important lessons for leadership development in rail. The study found that when employees needed to keep abreast of their work, they learnt informally to develop skills for both personal and organisational goals. Not only did this learning extend to new skills that benefitted their existing role but they also ‘learnt things that did not benefit the

organisation' (p. 44). These skills included practical ways to perform the job, intrapersonal and interpersonal skills, and positive and negative cultural ways. The authors also found that when employees understood the goals and intent of the business, they were more likely to 'consciously work towards utilising organisational resources to better educate themselves' (Aring & Brand 1998, p. 50), and less likely to fill in the gaps of unawareness with their own perceptions (Boedker et al. 2011a). Concerning this study to be conducted in rail, it could be construed that when learning about leadership is not defined, leaders will also fill in their own learning gaps.

Aring and Brand's study (1998) was found to be an informative account of informal workplace learning, applicable to this study in rail organisations. The detailed account of informal learning highlights numerous places including in teams, meetings, customer interactions, being supervised or managed, mentoring, shift changes (how information is communicated), communication with peers, self-exploration, conducting the job, and site visits. While more than fifteen years old, this study provides a level of detail and practicality not found in other writing about leadership or talent management. The study adds insight to the research task ahead because it confirms the notion that a conceptual structure or framework can enable practitioners in the field to develop a successful leadership talent strategy, should they have something from which to springboard their practice. In the next stage of this thesis, and presented in Chapter 3, the concept of a framework is developed considering rail organisations.

Other work on informal learning confirms that multiple experiences in the organisation, through work and other activities (as in situated learning, Lave & Wenger 1991) contribute to the development of knowledge, skills and identity as a leader (Day, Halpin & Harrison 2009; Day & Harrison 2007; Ibarra, Snook & Guillén Ramo 2010). The literature describes that in many organisations, learning and leadership development approaches are supported (or not supported) by senior staff (McCartney & Garrow 2006). Some favour more importance to traditional classroom and formal learning, more appropriate to the 'traditional' era of 1950 to 1970 (Nicholson & Nairn 2006, p. 4), when not as many complex skills were required for work. Now, the skills of individuals need to be developed across the organisation as they are 'critical for ensuring the success of the transformation process' from the traditional to the contemporary organisation (Jacobs 2003, p. 4). A higher focus on workplace learning, learning with others and informal learning (Ellinger 2005) is needed in a leadership talent

development strategy to ensure individual employees can contribute productively in traditional organisations such as rail that are becoming more competitive.

Relationship based learning

Learning about leading and leadership is also influenced by the networks and relationships arising from various contexts (Illeris 2011). The development of skills for leadership is further dependent on the social or 'relational' systems within the culture and community of the organisation (Day 2000, p. 583). For this reason, relational approaches to leadership learning encompass ways of building the social capacity of the organisation through activities such as action and group learning (Day, Halpin & Harrison 2009).

Formal learning

Formal learning is one strategy to develop leadership skills, encompassing training, development through short courses or learning in professional courses offered through the vocational or higher education sector (O'Toole 2010). Any of these approaches may increase the capability of the leader (McLagan 1989). However, the literature identifies few insightful articles on formal learning for leadership relevant to the Australian situation yet considerable theorising about informal learning for leadership in general (Marsick, Volpe & Watkins 1999; Marsick & Watkins 2001). The trend of absence in the literature about formal learning for leadership confirms that leadership is developed from a range of experiences, especially those experiences without prescribed solutions (McCall 2004, 2010b, 2010a). It is little wonder that many HR, HRD, and Learning and Development professionals may be confused about the terminology and the role and balance of formal learning in a leadership talent management strategy. To demystify this confusion, this review provides a little background about formal learning in the context of leadership development in the Australian rail industry.

In Australia, the government has an agenda to lift the productivity of the workforce through 'strong foundations skills' for a 'modern, knowledge-based society' (Standing Council on Tertiary Education Skills and Employment (SCOTESE) 2011, p. 2). Developing foundation skills for employment, to remain employed and to maintain social inclusion are all valid reasons to link foundation skill development (language, literacy, numeracy and communication skills) for 'effective participation in modern workplaces and contemporary life' (p. 2). Following this thinking, Australia has

systemised the development of industry specific skills (Australian Qualifications Framework 2013) through formal training with a job and skills focus (O'Toole 2010). As a consequence, the value of formal training to the Australian economy is high (O'Toole 2010), not only through revenue from providers delivering training but from increased productivity when workers have new skills. These industry wide practices lead to a competitive training market in Australia where there are many formal courses on offer (Harris & Short 2013). Innovative providers have also realised that 'unpacking' training competencies, and rebundling them in a myriad of ways can be a valuable way to offer short courses such as those for the development of leaders. However, the difficulty for small and large rail organisations alike is the ability to assess the most appropriate solution for specific leadership development needs. In reality, most of these courses are still generic, and not focused on individual requirements. These realities apply to both the vocational as well as the higher education sector.

The value of formal learning whether it is for a vocationally focused course or a professional course is that it can develop the foundation skills of individuals at all levels in the workforce (Storberg-Walker 2012). The trick for rail HR, HRD and Learning and Development professionals is to understand, and be critical of, what it is they are looking for in their leaders and leadership development programs (Harris & Short 2013). In spite of these distinctions, it is now believed that formal learning has much less influence over the transfer of learning (Day 2000). Performance of the skill in a real situation needs to be incorporated along with formal learning approaches (Lombardo & Eichinger 2000). Lancaster, Di Milia and Cameron (2013 p. 6) go further to suggest that only '10 to 15 percent of training content results in behavioural change in the workplace' based on their assessment of the work of Cromwell and Kolb (2004) and Lim and Morris (2006).

Much of the literature concurs that reflection and complex problem solving are needed for learning in the workplace situation. This allows the individual leader to develop a deeper understanding of their leadership capability through the continual improvement of leadership ideas (Barab & Plucker 2002). Training is a behavioural change process, based on the idea that behaviour can be changed through external stimulus, is competency based, and is undertaken to move the leader from one way of leading to another direction.

In Table 7, a number of adult learning theories are presented for consideration with the Behaviourist Theory, developed by Pavlov (1927) and Skinner (1953) described above in regard to training. This theory is outlined at the top of the table.

Table 7: Adult learning theories and their application to leadership development

Adult learning theories: application to leadership development

	Theorist	*Purpose of learning*	*Locus of learning*	*Facilitators role*	*Application in for adult learning*	*Application for leader or leadership development*
Behaviourist	(Pavlov 1927; Skinner 1953)	Produce changed behaviour in desired direction	External - intervention and stimulus from the environment	Arranges the environment for the desired response	Competency based education Behavioural objectives Skill development	**Leader development** - Developing individual skills - Competencies - Personality typologies and tests - Training events
Cognitivist (Gestalt)	(Lewin 1938; Piaget 1953, 1971)	To develop the capacity and skills to learn better through mental processes, memory, perception	Internal – through realignment of thinking based on feedback	Develops and structures the learning material and activities	Experiential Development of thinking abilities that build on past experiences Learning how to learn in own way	**Leader development** - Feedback on performance required - Challenging, individual assignments to build new knowledge about organisational problems
Humanist	(Knowles & Knowles 1955; Maslow 1943; Rogers 1951)	A personal act to fulfil potential to achieve self-actualisation and autonomy	Affective and cognitive needs	Facilitates the development of the whole person	Androgogy Self-directed learning	**Leader development** - Self directed learning - Developing individual skills - Developing of self concept, understanding personality in leadership roles
Social learning	(Bandura 1962, 1975, 1982, 1988; Rotter 1954)	New behaviours are achieved through modelling and interaction with others	Interaction of person, behaviour and environment	Models new roles and behaviour, others follow	Socialisation Social roles Mentoring Locus of control	**Leader development** - Coaching - Mentoring - 360 degree feedback
Constructivist	(Dewey 2009; Lave & Wenger 1991; Piaget 1971)	Construct new knowledge from the meaning of experience	Internal construction of reality by the individual	Facilitates and negotiates the meaning with the learner	Experiential learning Self-directed learning Perspective transformation Reflective practice	**Leader development** - Individual assignments - Reflective practices - Action learning
Holistic	(Jarvis & Parker 2005)	Systemisation, participation, and transformation through explicit, implicit and emancipatory knowledge (Yang 2003)	Occurs as a result between knowledge facets	Facilitate the process	Dynamic Holistic and dialectical perspective	**Leadership development** - Building social capital, networking - Team development - Action learning and research - Large group interventions - Planned organisational change

Source: Table based on Dunn (2011)

Developing the skills to lead others

Developing the skills to lead others is best undertaken through a variety of techniques, strategies and tools (Day 2000; McCartney & Garrow 2006; Silzer & Church 2009). In the next phase of writing, some of the adult learning theories from Table 7 will be considered and discussed in the light of a leadership talent development strategy.

Foundation skills through training

Constructivist points of view on training (shown in Table 7) consider that knowledge is constructed from exposure to new experiences, but as previously acknowledged, the learner needs further experiences and reflection of the learning to construct their own meaning of the experience (Dewey 2009; Lave & Wenger 1991; Piaget 1971). Reeves and Oakey (1996) and O'Toole (2010) reinforce these points for HRD specialists in rail organisations who plan leadership development activities that focus heavily on training. They state that training activities should include several other steps to allow the training experience to be successful. Perkins (1991) suggests that a concerted effort must be made to synthesise training through three stages that consider the retention of knowledge (training), deep understanding of knowledge (reflection), and the active use of knowledge (practise), at the outset of any programs. On another point, some authors suggest that the culture of the organisation and supervisor attitudes have a key role to play in the success of the training strategy and transfer of learning (Lancaster, Di Milia & Cameron 2013).

Self awareness through psychometric tools

In the previous section, the importance of understanding and knowing self (Karp 2013) before becoming a successful leader of others, was offered as a necessary step in developing leadership talent. Nonetheless, the literature identifies that many people go through life without wholly understanding self (Kegan 1982). In the case of organisations, psychometric tools can be used as a way to provide this initial awareness of leadership style and capability through the assessment of 'personality preferences', emotional needs, negotiation and learning styles (McGonagill & Pruyn 2010, p. 31). Psychometric tools offer a "mirror" on personal behaviour (Hanson 2012, p. 4), helping the individual to understand how they may be perceived by others (Day 2000), their motivation for leadership (Bandura 1982; Locke & Latham 1990) and their propensity for self-development (Reichard & Johnson 2011). Considering behaviourist theory

(Pavlov 1927; Skinner 1953) and that behaviour cannot be easily changed without sustained effort; psychometric tools have high value. The tools can identify fixed, stable or innate behaviour and characteristics and the conduciveness of the individual's personality to leading others (Silzer & Church 2009). Some of the widely known psychometric tests include the Stanford-Binet IQ tests (Terman 1925), the Digman Five Factor model of personality (openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness and neuroticism) (Digman 1990) and the Myers Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) (Myers 1962). Myers (1962) developed a measure of cognitive style, based on the work of Carl Jung's psychological types (Jung 1921), to categorise how people view the world and make decisions. The resulting Myers-Briggs Type Indicator is widely used to assess personal preferences.

Self awareness through feedback

While the author concedes that personal behaviours are difficult to change, it is necessary for successful leaders to receive accurate and constructive feedback from a range of sources on their personal actions. Feedback helps leaders become more "holistic", according to cognitivist (gestalt) theory (Lewin 1938). The cognitivist viewpoint considers that feedback conveys awareness of personal reality, enabling the leader to have greater insight into their approach with others (Hanson 2012). This awakening allows internal realignment of self-image with the truth and what the leader finds out about themselves (Alimo-Metcalfe 1998).

Feedback instruments such as performance management, 180 degree and 360 degree feedback tools (Alimo-Metcalfe & Alban-Metcalfe 2008) are commonly utilised talent developmental instruments (Ford, Harding & Stoyanova 2010; Yukl 2010). These tools provide a panoramic view of the leader from multiple stakeholders with the identification and enlightenment of leadership performance gaps (Alimo-Metcalfe 1998). The tools can protect the anonymity of performance raters, especially important in power relationships where senior managers can inhibit the real views of subordinates (McGonagill & Pruyn 2010). Feedback is a difficult task for most managers to give, and for leaders to receive. It is associated with delivering unpleasant news and the consequence of being disliked (London 2003). To overcome these difficulties, a strategy suggested in the literature recommends face to face feedback could be framed according to the 80:20 rule where 80 percent of feedback is targeted toward positive suggestions

(for example, personal and career development) and 20 per cent towards constructive ideas for improvement of work performance (Crane 1999).

Reflective practices

Leadership development benefits from reflective practices such as individual assignments, experiential and action learning, feedback, coaching and mentoring to enable learners to construct new knowledge from their experiences. Constructivist theories or perspectives (Dewey 2009; Lave & Wenger 1991; Piaget 1971) incorporate reflection, allowing learners to challenge the mental models and mindsets that they have and the way they react in certain situations through learning (Kegan & Lahey 2009).

Coaching

Coaching and mentoring are both reflective, 'practical, goal-focused forms of learning' (Day 2000, p. 588) which build self-knowledge and consideration of new behaviours through modelling and interaction with another person (Whitmore 2009). Coaching may be used in a variety of different ways in the organisation with internal or external coaches, and for varying durations of time. Coaching is often used to target certain skill gaps, 'with goals set by the learner' (Clutterbuck 2008, p. 9). Traditionally, coaching is a form of one-on-one learning but is now used in other formats and with teams (Berg & Karlsen 2012) to assist leaders analyse and reflect on personal performance, with the coach directing questions to a particular issue (Whitmore 2009).

The value of coaching for rail leadership development is in the ability of another person being able to view the leadership situation from a different perspective (Yukl 2010). Coaching is can be undertaken informally (Charnaux-Grillet et al. 2012) or formally with external coaches (Short et al. 2012). When coaches are engaged, there is a considerable financial investment for the organisation requiring the focus of the coach for intensive periods. When combined with other reflective methods such as performance management processes and 360 degree feedback, coaching can support the transitions of change for personal and career goals (Clutterbuck 2008; McGonagill & Pruyn 2010).

Mentoring

Mentoring usually requires the development of a 'longer term' relationship between the mentor and mentee in a formal or informal, advising or developmental relationship (Haggard et al. 2011, p. 293). Mentoring is thought to have two main goals – in

assisting leaders identify and fulfil career aspirations, and in providing the psychosocial support to achieve these goals (Kram, Hall & Bunker 2010). In organisations where many senior managers are on the cusp of retirement, mentoring relationships are instrumental in passing on organisational knowledge and values for those aspiring to leadership roles. In these situations, mentoring is beneficial in building loyalty for the organisation through the development of culture and values (McGonagill & Pruyn 2010; Peet et al. 2010). In these mentoring relationships, the aim is to extract, share and leverage knowledge (Calo 2008). A precautious approach to mentoring is needed because knowledge, skills and viewpoints that have been developed by managers from eras prior to deregulation in rail (Everett 2006) may provide a mismatch of understanding about what it means to be a leader when confronted in a mentoring relationship (Piip & Harris 2013). Notwithstanding these issues, research indicates that where there are cross organisational and out-of-organisational relationships, both mentors and mentees can benefit from the learning relationship (Crocitto, Sullivan & Carraher 2005; Haggard et al. 2011).

Workshadowing

In some of the literature, workshadowing is aligned with mentoring (Ford, Harding & Stoyanova 2010) because aspiring leaders are shown to benefit from shadowing more experienced, senior leaders to observe interactions on the job (McCartney & Garrow 2006). Workshadowing allows reflection of practice and exposure to workplace activities in a variety of contexts. This approach allows the conceptualisation of how leadership is enacted in situations where new contacts and relationships have yet to be tested (Blass 2007).

Workplace experiences

Workplace experiences are correlated with informal learning and force the leader to face the unplanned and unknown (McCall 2004). This approach is found to have the most impact on leadership development through opportunities to learn at, and in work (Sambrook 2005). In rail organisations, leadership workplace experiences might comprise small projects, structured projects or larger, more challenging assignments to develop leadership skill. McCall (2010a) describes that early work experiences, expatriate assignments or substantial increases in personal responsibility on large projects, restructures and new ventures are known to force leaders to develop new experience. Exposure to exceptionally bad managers and leaders, making mistakes and

losing one's job and significant personal events are all other significant events thought to shape leaders' identity (McCall 2004, 2010a).

In respect to leadership talent development in rail, it is believed that identifying the right workplace experiences for each leader is a process of trial and error and may take years to develop the right combinations (McCall 2004, 2010b). Not all these experiences can be thought through but what is revealed is that the bank of experiences are developed over time (Beechler & Woodward 2009). When organisations provide these experiences, the leaders' job embeddedness with the organisation is strengthened, and the psychological contract enhanced (Hall & Chandler 2007). Capturing what leaders learn from experience is another lesson that could be important for rail HRD leaders as this study goes forward.

Leaders who are perceived as talented are significantly more 'motivated by their career' (Blass 2007, p. 7). They benefit from short, experiential learning cycles at work that involve exploration, trial, establishment and mastery – leading to new learning in a new cycle (Hall 2002; Shen & Hall 2009; Tarique & Schuler 2010). It is estimated that prolonged workplace experience and problem solving develops individual leadership skill and expertise, with a generalisation that between 10,000 – 20,000 hours are required to gain this experience (Swanson & Holton 2009).

Evaluation of development approaches

A finding from the literature review is that the evaluation of the leadership talent management strategy and practices is needed to improve leadership talent development practices in the field. Evaluation frameworks such as Kirkpatrick and Kirkpatrick (2006), Nadler and Nadler (1994) and Owen (2007) are widely used to evaluate training programs and the impact of leadership development programs on individuals and their subsequent practice. When development is aligned with a defined framework outlining a strategy that includes success criteria, organisations are more likely to report that their approaches were successful (Chartered Institute of Personnel Development 2011). It is believed that continuous and rigorous evaluation at all steps of the talent management process is necessary to ensure that the learning and development approaches remain aligned with the business strategy, and the approach has achieved what it set out to do (Ford, Harding & Stoyanova 2010). While qualitative measures are useful, having quantifiable metrics strengthens success measures by:

1 forecasting the number of leaders to be developed at each level and the estimated costs of development,
2 estimating the costs against budget,
3 considering the time taken in individual development approaches,
4 seeking feedback from stakeholders, and
5 feedback from participants (McCartney & Garrow 2006).

Ford, Harding and Stoyanova (2010) found lessons from their research applicable to Australian rail organisations. They identified the top most effective talent development programs for early stage leaders were based on learning resources already available within the workplace including coaching and development utilising the talents of other leaders. The Chartered Institute of Personnel Development (2011) had similar findings. Table 8 highlights these favoured approaches. Other successful strategies utilised a range of activities based on the 70/20/10 model (Lombardo & Eichinger 2000) including project work, training, secondments, transfers and workshadowing opportunities.

Table 8: Comparison of some talent development approaches

Ford, Harding and Stoyanova (2010)	**Chartered Institute of Personnel Development** (2011)
- In-house development programs considering the context of the organisation - Coaching	- Coaching - In-house development programs - High-potential development schemes - 360° feedback

Ford, Harding and Stoyanova (2010) also discovered that many organisations were still not differentiating their development opportunities but rather were putting all groups of leaders through generic, external activities. Having the right coach/mentor, the right training course, opportunities for internal networking and managing larger teams rated highly in better quality leadership development strategies when combined with support from supervisors (Ford, Harding & Stoyanova 2010).

At the end of the fourth section, key points that emerged from the literature review on developing leadership talent include consideration of the development of both leader and leadership skills, and the many formal and informal approaches for development.

This now concludes the four sections of the review on talent management writing.

Reflections on the literature

A literature review, such as the one presented in this paper, enables evaluation of current sources of academic literature in a specified field. One outstanding observation from this review is that leadership talent practice has a primary focus on people, involving many stakeholders in the organisation, not just one person, with external drivers having a strong influence. The overwhelming focus on people provides insight into further methodological considerations for the next stages of the research. These considerations are required to explore the current practice of leadership talent management within the Australian rail industry.

Positioning myself as a critic of my own review, I could describe the story that I have presented so far as segmented or in numerous parts. However, assessment of the literature made it necessary to follow a number of pathways that all had essential insights to offer a leadership talent management study in rail. Torraco (2005) sympathises with this outcome, by stating that an integrative approach to a literature review often explores a mature topic or one that is emerging where the line of enquiry is not straightforward. This review followed both mature (e.g. leadership) as well as emerging (i.e. talent management) themes of the topic. As mentioned at the beginning of the chapter, the terminology of 'leadership talent management' has been constructed for the purpose of this study. For that reason, the ensuing narrative became necessary because none of the pathways were found to be sufficient by themselves.

What the journey did reveal, however, is the sharp resurgence of interest in talent management in recent times, fuelled by unprecedented complexity and difficulty in navigating a successful business through unpredictable territory. What emerged was that it is unknown how Australian rail organisations undertake the task of identifying and developing aspiring leadership talent in such a specialised industry. Although the body of literature on leadership talent management is scattered, a number of reflections can be made from what has been found so far. These reflections have been considered in shaping the research questions and framework for this study. A number of points have arisen from the review that highlight the critical importance of identifying the current human assets of an organisation, including the need to identify who these employees are, what their differing skill sets are, and where they are located. Without such information, it is almost impossible for an organisation to configure their business strategies, identify future leaders, place staff in key roles or shape associated

development opportunities for individual leadership aspirants. The benefits for Australian rail CRC partners from further research on leadership talent management was highlighted in this section because there is limited information in the Australian context.

Chapter summary

The literature review set out to investigate writing about leadership talent management for the Australian rail industry context with a human resource development (HRD) frame of reference. The review was undertaken through an HRD philosophy as it was searching for epistemological clues about leadership talent management for Australian rail. It found that HRD appears to be an all encompassing term in the literature but not widely used in the Australian learning and development field. Rather, Australia's policy approach is different to the writing found in the internationally focused literature on talent management and leadership. Instead, Australian workforce development is weighted heavily towards prescriptive training for industry areas. As a result, HR managers or Learning and Development staff in rail organisations would require an understanding of these differences if they took counsel from the literature to develop a leadership talent management strategy in their organisations.

To clarify these issues, a global view of the literature was undertaken to establish a timeline of talent management articles, key works and theorists and widely held assumptions about the topic. The review uncovered that leadership talent terminology is not widely discussed in the literature. "Talent management" was more widespread but tended to be an all encompassing term and some writers considered talent management to be more about placing people into positions rather than developing people. From the review, it became clear that the term "talent" could not be agreed on by authors, had developed from a consultancy base, and had wide variations in meaning. Moreover, leader, leadership and management as terms were found to be often intertwined and frequently used interchangeably.

The review followed two main lines of enquiry as a result of the main research question that was framed in two parts. Identifying a definition of leadership talent uncovered multiple dimensions of talent. A definition of 'leadership talent' must be well described and defined, or it is impossible to know what it is that organisations are looking for in their leaders. The review then explored approaches suggested in the literature for how

talent is identified. The next section examines contemporary approaches for the development of leadership talent, highlighting that workplace experiences and reflective practices have a key role to play in developing talented leaders. At the end of the review, a précis of the literature enabled the ideas gathered to be consolidated into a leadership talent management framework as well as a diagnosis of suitable research methods to be considered in the research design.

Chapter 3 further elaborates this leadership talent framework, developed to assist HR leaders, and Learning and Development specialists consider how they can contextualise and plan for a leadership talent management strategy in their own rail organisations.

3 Leadership talent framework

Chapter outline

This chapter:

1 develops and explains a framework for leadership talent management that has been constructed as a result of the review of the literature;
2 explicates the framework and the six themes of leadership talent management decision-making including: the context for decision-making; defining what it is that organisations are looking for in their leaders; communicating the vision; practices for identifying leaders at different levels; strategies for developing leadership talent; and evaluation of the strategies; and
3 describes the importance of the themes and sub-themes within the framework that will be used to analyse information gathered from rail leaders in organisational settings.

Rationale

The analysis of existing literature identified that a comprehensive leadership talent framework was unavailable. Perspectives from multinational and transnational case studies dominate talent management writing and the kaleidoscopic views presented in articles focus only on particular aspects of the whole process, and they certainly do not focus on the Australian rail industry context. Given this inclination in current writing, and the limited, robust research undertaken in specific industry contexts in Australia, the need to develop a guiding framework for a leadership talent vision in rail organisations is paramount if these organisations are to prosper in the 21st century.

The literature is dominated by discussions that provide multifarious ideas to expand talent management theory (Tarique & Schuler 2010). While this approach may help to advance the field of talent management knowledge, there is limited practical guidance

for leaders and human resource development (HRD) practitioners faced with implementing a leadership talent strategy in the Australian rail industry workplace. Human resource (HRM and HRD) specialists face multiple, competing demands on their time, and planning sound human capital strategies is a complex task in changing environments (Farndale, Scullion & Sparrow 2010). For these specialists, the difficulty is deciding on suitable approaches to meet these goals, and the time to devise and think through such frameworks. Industry often prioritises human capital management dilemmas by attending to the important, urgent and immediate tasks first. Other factors complicate competing priorities, including the impacts of dispersed locations and cultural differences, especially where there are many business locations and multinational influences involved (Kim & McLean 2012).

Envisaging how internal structures of jobs, roles and people may be configured into the future is perplexing and demanding (O'Brien & Robertson 2009). Strategies require sound preparation for environments that are increasingly uncertain and turbulent. Hence a conceptual framework, supported with current writing from the literature, is offered as a starting point for a talent management vision which could then be customised and contextualised to meet the individual organisation's needs. The literature confirms that such a framework should be flexible enough to meet the changing needs and contexts within which leadership is enacted (Stahl et al. 2012), being seen as a platform from which the organisation can define its own leadership direction and destiny (Ford, Harding & Stoyanova 2010). Australian rail industry organisations are at the starting point of this journey as the subject of identifying and developing leadership talent has not been thoroughly analysed.

The framework presented in this thesis is one way of considering a leadership talent management approach. It has not been developed in isolation but is cognisant of other research on workforce development, funded by the CRC for Rail Innovation (CRC for Rail Innovation 2013) and currently being undertaken by a number of Australian universities. Findings from other projects on leadership and management development (Short et al. 2011) and coaching and mentoring (Short et al. 2012) are considered in this framework's development. The growing maturity for contextualised leadership talent management in individual organisations means this framework will add to the future knowledge bank of rail research in the Australian context.

The framework combines aspects that have an influence on the capability of leaders in organisations through a guiding structure to analyse, systematise and monitor the key aspects of leadership talent management. The framework consolidates key components highlighted in the literature, designed to assist organisations to:

1 undertake a critical investigation of the external and internal, cultural environment in which leadership is enacted;
2 define and communicate a robust definition of leadership talent required for different levels of leadership throughout the organisation;
3 enact transparent identification and development processes for each leader; and
4 consider the evaluation and continuous improvement of leadership talent identification and development.

How the framework is organised

At this stage, an explanation is provided of how the framework relates to other sections of the overall thesis. In Figure 19, a diagram is shown of the intersections between a number of chapters.

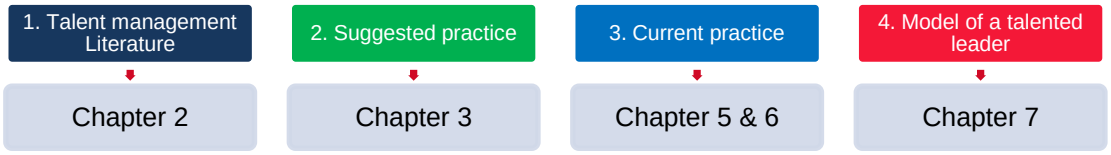


Figure 19: Chapter layout

In Chapter 2, a review and critique of the talent management literature informs the development of the framework. This information is consolidated and shaped in Chapter 3. The purpose of this framework is to present a systematic and integrated model for how leadership talent management could most appropriately be undertaken. In constructing the framework, a number of themes and questions are included to assist in the implementation. Chapters 5 and 6 present the findings of this study in the Australian rail context. Chapter 7 then consolidates the information from Chapters 2, 3, 5 and 6 into a model of a talented leader.

In Figure 20, an outline is shown of the framework, while, at Appendix E, the framework is described in more detail with supporting references from the literature to show how and where the model has been constructed.

Components of an organisational framework for identifying and developing leadership talent

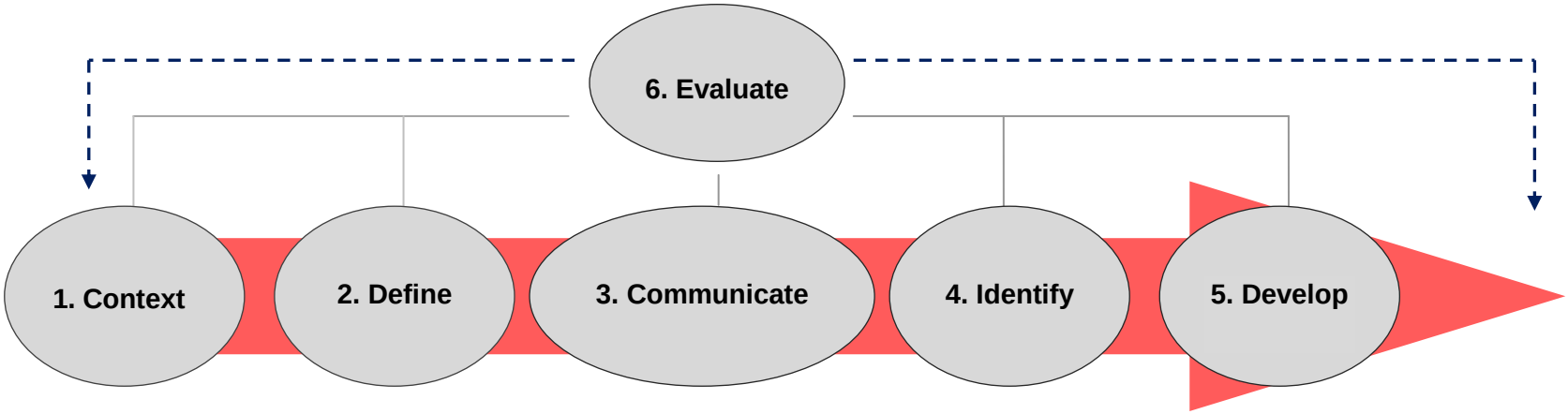


Figure 20: Six components of the organisational framework

The framework comprises six components to assist with leadership talent management decisions in organisations based on the findings from the literature. The framework is designed to assist organisations develop their own contextualised leadership talent strategy. The components are as follows:

1 The contexts in which leadership is enacted

2 Defining what it is that an organisation is looking for in its leaders

3 Communicating the vision through the organisation

4 Strategies and practices for identifying leaders at different levels

5 Strategies for developing leadership talent

6 Evaluation of the leadership talent management strategies

Table 9: Organisational framework for identifying and developing leadership talent

External	**Internal** →					
1	1	2	3	4	5	6
External contexts of leadership	**Internal cultural contexts of leadership**	**Define leadership talent**	**Communicate**	**Identify**	**Develop**	**Evaluation and continuous improvement**
Globalisation - managing an extended workforce	Generational - Veterans, Baby Boomers, Gen X and Gen Y	Importance of leadership talent for business strategy	Senior leaders own and endorse the talent management strategy	Senior leaders endorse, support and model the desired talent identification behaviour	Individual needs are identified and developed	Analysis of data against targets and strategy
Changing economic, structural (privatisation and government regulation) and social environment	Diversity - women, mature workers, different cultural groups	Difference between Management and Leadership is described and articulated	Rigorous, transparent written definition of leadership talent	Connected conversations between manager and employee to identify leadership talent, aspirations, motivation and potential	Who - current and future leaders because all have potential to further develop further	Observation of what is happening
Sustainability - economic, environmental and social impacts of leadership	Technology and leading in a technology based environment	Define the desired leadership characteristics and competencies at different levels- executive, HR managers, middle managers, frontline managers, employee for the present while considering the future	Clarity and consistency of the message and performance expectations	Individual knowledge about rail systems and the business environment knowledge is identified	What – values, behaviours, skills, knowledge and competencies for executive, middle and frontline leadership	Participant feedback and improvement strategies
				Individual performance including results, relationships with others, drive and integrity is identified	How - Balance of methods e.g. formal learning and informal workplace learning	
					Self awareness through psychometric tools, coaching and mentoring and 360 degree feedback	
					Workplace learning, projects, workshadowing and opportunities	

In this next section, the importance of the themes and sub-themes within the proposed leadership talent management framework is explained. The discussion considers points and questions organisations and leaders may pose when designing their own strategy for their particular organisational contexts, based on the framework presented. The literature identified that even if a model or framework is developed, those using it need some underpinning "signposts" and rationales to help them focus their discussions and to consolidate what it is they are trying to achieve. Haskins and Shaffer (2010, p. 13) describe this approach as self-examination to assess the "organisational will" for talent management, or like conducting a focused internal research project.

The discussion is structured in relation to the themes, shown in Table 9. For a more detailed analysis, Appendix E identifies the many writers who have contributed ideas to the framework. The discussion has a short summary, provided in italics, about the importance of each theme and why it is included in the leadership talent management framework. This synopsis will recur in the analysis of the information in Chapter 5 as a contextual reminder. The sub-themes are then expanded in more detail within each theme. They describe what organisations should consider in their leadership talent planning.

Theme 1 – Environmental contexts of leadership

In considering this leadership talent framework, it is recognised that leadership does not occur in isolation but is impacted by contextual factors from the external and internal environments (Damon 2007; Porter & McLaughlin 2006).

External

The external contexts comprise the global business environment where rail organisations operate and the changing environmental conditions brought about by interconnected markets. Within these complex situations, leaders have an important role in connecting people to the organisational vision and purpose.

Consideration of the external environment is included in the leadership talent management framework as globalisation now has one of the biggest impacts on organisations (Ashton, Brown & Lauder 2008). Many large corporations that are part of a global economy are characterised by 'distributed' and 'flexible' rather than 'co-located' compositions where key employees may be located across geographically

dispersed boundaries (Oppenheim et al. 2011, p. 154). Multinational (MNC) and transnational (TNC) companies characterise this environment and work in any one local context may have its own culture and peculiarities (Brett 2012; Oppenheim et al. 2011). 'Glocalisation' is one term that has been used to describe organisations such as those Australian rail companies that work in the local context for such multinational and transnational companies (Robertson 1994, p. 36).

Key questions that organisations need to ask in the development of their leadership talent management strategy and framework relate to new types of business models and alliances, the impact of globalisation and change on the Australian rail industry organisation's human capital needs in the domestic setting. Some of these questions might comprise the following:

1 What is it that we are looking for in our leaders to understand these multiple systems, to scan the external environments for opportunities and threats to our business, and to synthesise these findings into our business practice?
2 What is needed by a multinational company to operate efficiently in the local environment?
3 How can we capitalise on the vast pool of highly skilled human capital who can operate competently in global environments (Ashton, Brown & Lauder 2008); how would this impact our rail organisation's structure, and how can our leaders manage and lead their operational business units successfully considering these external contexts?
4 How can our current organisational bureaucratic structures be more cost-effective, flatter, post-modern structures so that we can meet new requirements of customers, stakeholders and employees (Green 2007) in a global marketplace?
5 What are the leadership skills needed in this new era where greater technological and multicultural fluency, relationship expertise and strategic thinking (McDonnell et al. 2010) are needed?

Australian rail organisations operating in a highly regulated and changing environment face a myriad of challenges in aligning people with a leadership talent management approach that is sustainable for the present, as well as into the future. Haskin and Shaffer (2010) assert that asking numerous questions assists in formulating the philosophy behind the leadership talent management strategy, the context of the talent

management approach and assessment of what is already in place. Not only does questioning set the scene for the guiding principles of leadership talent management practice but it also sets up a culture of questioning, evaluation and continuous improvement for the strategy.

Organisations need to consider that sustainability and leadership are synonymous with the responsible management of current organisational resources and workplace practices in a changing environment, meaning that there are economic, environmental, social and people dimensions for consideration. Sustainability has a stewardship aspect – a keeper of the resources – to ensure that the leadership assets are in the best possible shape for the next generation (Miller et al. 2011). In rail, the planned management of leadership talent, through reference to a defined framework, could enable consideration of strongly held traditions and history while developing the knowledge pool of talent in ways required for the current iterations of the business.

Internal

The internal, cultural contexts of leadership comprise elements that influence the leadership talent framework. Leaders who can reflect on how these contexts affect the business strategy are increasingly important to organisations in a global economy.

The internal contexts of organisations are considered in the leadership talent management framework for a number of reasons. For the first time in history, there are likely to be up to four generations in the workforce and each generation has different attitudes, aspirations, values, knowledge and skills about education, career and work (Houck 2011). Leaders require high-level intrapersonal skills and knowledge about how to motivate, inspire and tap into the expertise of different generational groups in ways that maintain high engagement and commitment to work (Boedker et al. 2011a). Organisations need to recognise that the skills and knowledge of different generations enhance and contribute to leadership at all levels, considering strategies to recognise these groups in their leadership talent framework. In times past, in traditional hierarchies of knowledge, the power may have been with leaders with the most seniority and expertise in the organisation (Boedker et al. 2011b). In a new workforce talent framework, organisations need to identify and leverage the talent of the entire workforce, no matter what their age or demographic profile (O'Brien & Robertson 2009). To manage talent, organisations need to consider how people with leadership

aspirations can be identified across the generations to maximise the entire capability of the business. However, many traditional male dominated industries such as rail have struggled to attract a diverse cross-section of employees from non-traditional employment pools such as women, mature workers and diverse cultural groups into leadership roles (Wallace et al. 2010). In a leadership talent management framework, organisations would need to consider their current profile and raise questions about the future demographic profile of the organisation, including strategies to encourage and foster ways to support and value the diversity of these different groups.

Technology is now readily accessible in all organisational environments, but it is how technology is used by organisations to capture and leverage information about leaders that is vitally important (Wiblen, Dery & Grant 2012). Successful organisations understand that technology allows collection and collation of stakeholder, customer, supplier and competitor information as well as information about individual employees. Technology assists with planning current and future organisational strategies. Consequently, questions such as does the organisation's HR systems have the capability to capture leadership skills, aspirations and capabilities should be considered in the development of the framework.

Theme 2 – Defining leadership talent

Stating the importance of leadership, defining what it is that organisations are looking for in their leaders, and articulating the leadership skills and knowledge required by the organisation, is at the very heart of a leadership talent framework. These declarations enable a general understanding of the goals and purposes of the leadership talent approach at all levels of the organisation.

Defining leadership talent is included in the framework as an important theme since a transparent approach enables all employees to understand what 'leadership talent' means within the context of their organisation. Following this rationale, organisations would then be able to objectively state that leadership, and identifying and developing new leadership talent, is critical for ongoing sustainability of the business strategy (Stahl et al. 2012). A clear explanation of how and why leadership talent contributes to organisational success with clear goals that align with the strategy is subsequently incorporated into other people-focused practices throughout the organisation (McCartney & Garrow 2006). Questions that senior leaders in organisations would need

to ask in the development of their leadership talent strategy centre on the skills and knowledge needed by leaders at each level, whether the organisation is using its talented leaders effectively across the business, and how they can do this better (Haskins & Shaffer 2010).

The leadership talent framework considers that, in this study, rail organisations will require both managers as well as leaders. Managers will have strong technical skills, built from the history, culture and wisdom of solving routine, day-to-day rail industry problems. However, in the development of the framework, it is acknowledged that rail organisations and leaders at each level will encounter situations of increasing organisational and environmental complexity, where there will be a need to enact the human and interpersonal aspects of leadership (Australian Public Service Commission 2011). For these reasons, organisations would need to recognise and communicate the difference between management and leadership, helping managers and leaders to understand the skills required for each function.

Reflection on the values, behaviours, characteristics, skills and knowledge required for leadership at different levels of the organisation is considered necessary and would be able to be changed, based on emerging contexts and constraints (Ulrich & Smallwood 2012). By further defining the characteristics and competencies for leadership at each level, the organisation can align the leader's skills, performance and abilities with the organisational business intent (Boyatzis 2011). A written competency profile, contextualised for the organisation, allows all employees to view what it is that the organisation is seeking in its leaders. During periods of volatility in the external environment, ongoing questioning is needed to shape this aspect of the framework including: Do our leaders have the right skills? Who is not performing? How can we develop leaders further to lift their performance? (Stahl et al. 2012).

Theme 3 – Communicating the strategy and approach

Communicating how the strategy and approach support the vision of leadership talent management formalises the organisational intent to ensure that current and future leaders reach their leadership potential (McCartney & Garrow 2006).

Communication of the strategy, approach and definition is included in the leadership talent framework as senior leaders, who have the greatest influence in promoting and

supporting the leadership talent strategy, understand that the organisation must communicate their talent message widely (Boedker et al. 2011a; McMillan 2010). The importance of having a clear leadership talent message contextualised for the individual organisation is endorsed and modelled by senior leaders. They understand that this approach precedes the ability to unlock individual talent and potential within their organisations (Hartmann, Feisel & Schober 2010; Makela, Bjorkman & Ehrnrooth 2010; Silzer & Church 2009). Effective organisations will need to question their approaches and definitions continually, in order to ensure transparency, unlawful discrimination and bias are minimised (Swailes 2013). A leadership talent management framework includes processes for open communication to all stakeholders so that employees perceive that the actions of the strategy are fair. This means the organisation needs to articulate clearly how the strategy works, the benefits for the organisation (differentiated at each level) and details of leadership performance expectations at each level of leadership competency (Tansley et al. 2007).

Senior leaders delivering and enacting a consistent leadership talent message builds employees' confidence and confirms trust in the leaders (Yukl 2010). In developing their leadership talent strategy, organisations would need to question whether their approach is communicated clearly to all employees so that what is perceived by the individual is the same as the espoused organisational approach (Carless, Wearing & Mann 2000). Organisations also need to assess whether the purpose of their leadership talent approach is inclusive of women, generational, cultural and other diverse groups and to check that no employee is alienated, insulted culturally or excluded from being a part of the strategy (McCartney & Garrow 2006). Questions that senior leaders would need to ask include: Is our leadership talent message clear and consistent? How can we support specialists such as HR and HRD leaders operationalise our leadership talent management message? Do teams have the appropriate resources? Moreover, how can the senior leadership team further embed the leadership message within the overall business strategy? (McCartney & Garrow 2006; Stahl et al. 2012).

Theme 4 – Identifying leadership talent

Identifying talented leaders at all levels of the organisation is facilitated by an objective, clearly articulated and communicated leadership talent framework and definition.

Identifying leadership talent is included as a key theme in the leadership talent framework for reasons relating to alignment of talented leaders with the business strategy (Lewis & Heckman 2006). The unique elements of leadership talent, when successfully identified, result in organisational performance and productivity outcomes for the organisation. As a result, Collings, Scullion and Dowling (2009) acknowledge that correctly identifying leadership talent is a major constraint for businesses today. For this reason, organisations need to query continually whether they are endorsing, supporting and modelling the strategy, whether they have identified and positioned the right leaders, and whether they enable the talents of others to materialise (Ulrich & Smallwood 2012). The development of a well-structured leadership talent management approach allows individual talent and career aspirations to be identified, valued or acted upon within the organisation (Brown 2011). It is crucial that organisations can match the aspirations of hopeful leaders within each particular setting with what they are looking for in their leaders (Silzer & Church 2009). The leadership talent framework considers that organisations should schedule regular discussions as an important component of the identification process within the strategy.

Existing line managers and leaders are instrumental in shaping these conversations through day-to-day interactions. Performance appraisal or performance management discussions also facilitate the identification of talent processes. HR managers have a key role in supporting line managers and the identification processes of the strategy, by developing the tools and processes for interactions between aspiring leaders and line managers (McCartney & Garrow 2006). Organisations would consider the role of HR managers in contributing to the leadership talent management strategy and framework.

Identifying and developing internal, talented leaders who possess specialised, rail knowledge and skills, strengthens the knowledge base of the organisation. This approach has been confirmed in talent management frameworks (Williamson 2011b, 2011a) as a way of transferring knowledge from one generation to the next in industries such as rail where there are ageing workforces (Calo 2008). Organisations can benefit from identifying leaders with specific industry knowledge, skills and experience for leadership roles (Lepak & Snell 1999) as they develop their leadership talent management strategy. This approach enables employees to have the knowledge, values and cultural fit of the organisation already at heart (Silzer & Church 2009).

Theme 5 – Developing leadership talent

Development of leadership talent is an ongoing journey, embracing an individual approach for each leader with both formal and informal methods (Haskins & Shaffer 2010). The framework of identifying and developing leadership talent advocates that development is based on the principles of adult learning, considering prior learning and work experiences, personal contexts, the work situation, career aspirations and work stage (Nilsson & Ellström 2012).

Identifying individual leadership development needs allows learning experiences to be customised to individuals and documented in a tangible, living action plan within the context of an individual's career. The concept of personal development planning is included in the leadership talent framework because it allows organisations to develop each employee based on individual goals, strengths, skills or competencies, educational attainment, future learning and development needs. Personal development planning identifies steps to follow so that personal career goals can be achieved (McCartney & Garrow 2006). The primary objective of the individual plan for leadership development is to understand leadership in the context of the current job role, and to review, plan and encourage personal learning (Quality Assurance Agency 2012). This approach enables focused development needs and goals to be documented and discussed with a range of career influencers, so that support can be provided to achieve those goals (McCartney & Garrow 2006). Organisations need to understand that both current and future (or aspiring) leaders benefit from ongoing development opportunities because all leaders have the ability or potential to develop further (Tansley 2011). As environmental influences change, ongoing leadership development is necessary to meet increasing needs for new knowledge and expertise to meet these challenges.

In regard to this framework, it is acknowledged that rail organisations will have a set of values and practices described as the 'culture' or particular ways of doing things that are shaped over time. Employees may not even notice this organisational culture because it is comprised of beliefs, habits, a working language, systems and symbols that form the basis of perceiving, thinking and feeling (Schein 2004). The culture of the organisation is impacted by leadership practice and the way employees perceive the fairness and transparency of what happens in the organisation (Boedker et al. 2011a). In the development of the leadership talent strategy, organisations would need to accept that

there is not only one organisational culture but a culture for different levels in the organisation, and there may even be sub-cultures within cultures (Clayton et al. 2008). As a result, leadership development approaches would recognise and consider these varying cultures to synthesise a more harmonious workplace to address imbalances.

Healthy organisational cultures are exhibited by characteristics of high involvement of employees in innovation, problem solving, learning and decision-making, and the development of individuals to reach their full potential (Boedker et al. 2011a). The 'what' of leadership talent development entails the development of values and behaviours that represent the espoused culture and values of the organisation contextualised for different levels of leaders. Knowledge of, and belief in, these unique values is necessary for leaders to interact successfully with employees, markets, customers, regulators and other stakeholders in complex environments (Haskins & Shaffer 2010). These considerations would be incorporated into the leadership talent strategy by organisations.

Leadership talent development involves learning through a variety of methods, based on the needs of the individual, with both formal and informal approaches. Consolidation of formal learning would be supplemented with opportunities to practise skills and develop knowledge, provided in the workplace through a range of experiences built into existing job roles (Jacobs & Park 2009). The leadership talent management framework recognises that leadership learning strategies such as those that develop knowledge of self (Day 2000; Karp 2013), relationships with others (Clarke 2013) and foundation skills of leadership and management will be required. Samson (2011) highlights that foundation skills of management, instigated firstly at the frontline, develop the abilities of leaders in supervising others and viewing old problems in new ways.

Effective organisations recognise that leaders benefit from understanding self, their personality preferences and the impact of self on others. Psychometric tools can be utilised to indicate preferred learning styles and to guide choices about leadership career pathways (McGonagill & Pruyn 2010, p. 31). Coaching and mentoring can also develop knowledge of self and relationships with others, within and outside of the organisation. Both practices would be included in the leadership talent strategy because they facilitate the transitions of change in personal and career goals for current and potential leaders (Clutterbuck 2008). While coaching allows for individual, targeted feedback and

opportunity for reflection of practice, mentoring can provide deeper, psychosocial support to achieve these goals (Short et al. 2012). When senior coaches and mentors are included in these relational development processes, reinforcement of their commitment to identifying and developing current and future leaders is visible and confirmed to others (McCartney & Garrow 2006).

Effective organisations recognise that feedback is necessary for leaders to understand the results of their performance, the effects of their personal leadership style on others and the importance of providing tailored feedback to individuals (Takala, Winegar & Kuusela 2009). Feedback can be offered informally in relational learning such as coaching and mentoring to identify talent aspirations, development needs and progress on leadership performance goals. However, structured feedback processes are also necessary including ways to gain an overview of interactions with superiors and peers at various levels of the organisation and can include one-on-one, 180 or 360 degree feedback tools (Ford, Harding & Stoyanova 2010).

The leadership talent management framework recognises that different, experiential development opportunities would be included because they extend the ability of the leader in unfamiliar situations and build on learning from formal situations (Misko 2008). As a result, organisations need to provide opportunities for leaders to reflect on practice while developing new skills from projects and assignments at work (Haskins & Shaffer 2010). Experiential learning opportunities are ones that arise from the situation and place of work (Jacobs & Park 2009; Lave & Wenger 1991) or those that are planned such as action learning projects (Revans 1980). Included in this suite of experiential learning is workshadowing, an often overlooked informal but reflective practice, where exposure to the day-to-day activities of more experienced leaders enables conceptualisation of how leadership is enacted in new and more complex situations (McCartney & Garrow 2006). Aspiring leaders can develop wider relationships in new environments and situations through organisations building workshadowing into the framework for leadership development (Blass 2007).

All these informal strategies reinforce formal leadership development and training in the workplace when opportunities are provided for skill building from theory based instruction (Conger 2010). The leadership talent framework recognises that aspiring leaders benefit from exposure to as many workplace learning opportunities as possible

to develop a broad skill base. This is consistent with the idea that competencies in the career domain are ‘malleable’ and can be developed by learning (Tarique & Schuler 2010, p. 127). Organisations need to identify these learning opportunities, developing cases where leadership learning can be undertaken in the context of the workplace (Nilsson & Ellström 2012).

Theme 6 – Evaluating and continuous improvement

Evaluation is a significant component of the leadership talent framework to ensure that organisations undertake continuous improvements to shape their leadership strategy.

Organisations need to recognise that a leadership talent strategy would be based on a plan that has set targets for different levels of the organisation. The organisation would then be able to meet these targets, analyse resulting outcomes, data and information against the documented plan (Davenport, Harris & Shapiro 2010). The talent management framework involves senior leaders, line managers and other stakeholders observing, and reporting on how the strategy is evolving through regular meetings and forums. This proactive approach checks whether leadership targets and identification and development processes are on track and can help resolve problems as they arise (McCartney & Garrow 2006). Stakeholder suggestions can be incorporated into enhancement strategies and updated as environmental conditions change. The organisation would incorporate ongoing evaluation strategies with questions such as: Is the strategy meeting our business needs? Where do we need to improve? What else can we do with our leadership talent identification and development approach? (Haskins & Shaffer 2010). The framework also recognises that feedback from individual participants about leadership talent strategies is essential to solving on-the-ground difficulties and problems, while identifying areas for further development.

Chapter summary

This chapter has outlined an approach to identifying and developing leadership talent that could support Australian rail organisations to focus their talent management efforts. The ideas for good practice were developed from the literature into a comprehensive framework with two purposes in mind. The first purpose is to set a framework to explore to what extent these practices are already undertaken in rail organisations. The

second purpose is to help organisations undertake the leadership talent management journey. The key themes of the framework include:

- Contexts of leadership
- Defining leadership talent
- Communicating the strategy and approach
- Identifying leadership talent
- Developing leadership talent
- Evaluation and continuous improvement

The next chapter describes the research design of this study, with the objective of investigating what happens around identifying and developing leadership talent in three rail organisations.

4 Methodology

Chapter outline

This chapter:

1 outlines the research methodology undertaken to explore leadership talent practices in three Australian rail settings with four levels of leaders;
2 describes the research problem, research design, methodological context and methods undertaken to explore the research problem;
3 outlines the characteristics of the participant organisations, how the organisations and participants were chosen, and the process of recruiting participants;
4 describes the information collection procedures, information analysis and interpretation procedures; and
5 explains the possible ethical, validity and interpretation issues that may have been encountered in the course of this study.

Introduction

This study of leadership talent management practices in Australian rail organisations comes at a time when examination of leadership challenges and the role of leadership in change is essential to 'change the industry for the future' (Australasian Railway Association Inc. 2008, p. 14). Leaders with the expertise to envisage future opportunities will be highly sought after as rail business operating environments remain unpredictable, and current leaders retire. Recent rail industry reports (Australasian Railway Association Inc. 2008; Mahendran, Dockery & Affleck 2007; Short et al. 2011) highlight the long history of public ownership and recent mergers and takeovers of companies by international conglomerates. These changes are contributing to uncertainty about how best to develop leadership talent for new workplace configurations.

This leadership research has been undertaken during a period when there is a focus by the Australian government on identifying and supporting research for wide ranging industry challenges, not only in rail, but in many other industries because of the underlying importance for widespread economic productivity through combined, national industry's output. The CRC for Rail Innovation (CRC) was established as one of 44 Co-operative Research Centres (CRC for Rail Innovation 2013) to collaborate with industry in investigating these particular challenges. As a result, the participation and contribution of rail industry partners in the research allows for maximum benefit to the sector because the issues explored are real problems that have long-term consequences for future industry growth and output. The workforce development program supported by the CRC comprises a number of main themes including learning and development, sourcing and retaining staff, management and leadership, and competence assurance. Research on the projects 'Developing a Leadership and Management Development Framework' (Short et al. 2011) and 'Mentoring and Coaching' (Short et al. 2012) left questions unanswered about leadership talent management in the current rail industry context. As I had been involved as a student researcher on these projects, I took up the challenge of further investigating this topic for my thesis from August 2009 - 2013.

My research set out to investigate leadership talent management in the rail industry and to draw lessons from the actual practice and experiences of current leaders. The overarching question for this research study was: How is leadership talent identified and developed in the Australian rail industry?

Conceptualisation of the key issues (Stake 1995, p. 17 cited in Creswell 2007) in and around leadership talent management in Australian rail industry organisations, and consideration of what the literature reveals about leadership talent management in the current business environment, then enabled the development of three sub-questions to guide the enquiry:

1 What are the purpose, policy and practices of leadership talent management in Australian rail organisations?
2 How is leadership talent identified in Australian rail? and
3 How are rail industry organisations developing their leadership talent?

Maxwell (2005) highlights that the process of developing research questions to investigate a perplexing problem such as the one that I faced, must be cognisant of the contextual environment within which the research is situated including, for example:

1 *Goals of the research:* why the study is needed, personal goals, perceived problems, participant concerns as well as the goals of the funding body;
2 *Conceptual framework:* how the problem is already perceived and the ideas that will be drawn upon to investigate the problem;
3 *Methods:* the approaches to be undertaken to obtain the data considering ethical standards, the research setting and the skills of the researcher;
4 *Preferred style of research:* the research paradigm; and
5 *Credible approaches:* whether the research design and the information gathering process leads to credibility and believability of the findings.

The research questions which arose from these considerations enabled development of a research design with appropriate methods to garner what was to be learnt from the study (Creswell 2007; Maxwell 2005).

Research design

The design adopted an interpretive approach with one case study in three settings, and information to be collected through blended methods. These methods comprise analysis of documents and reports, semi-structured interviews and an online survey. Resultant findings have been interpreted in themes using the framework described in Chapter 3, and compared against the existing literature on leadership talent management. For the purpose of providing an illustrated framework of the research approach, a model of the design is presented in Figure 21.

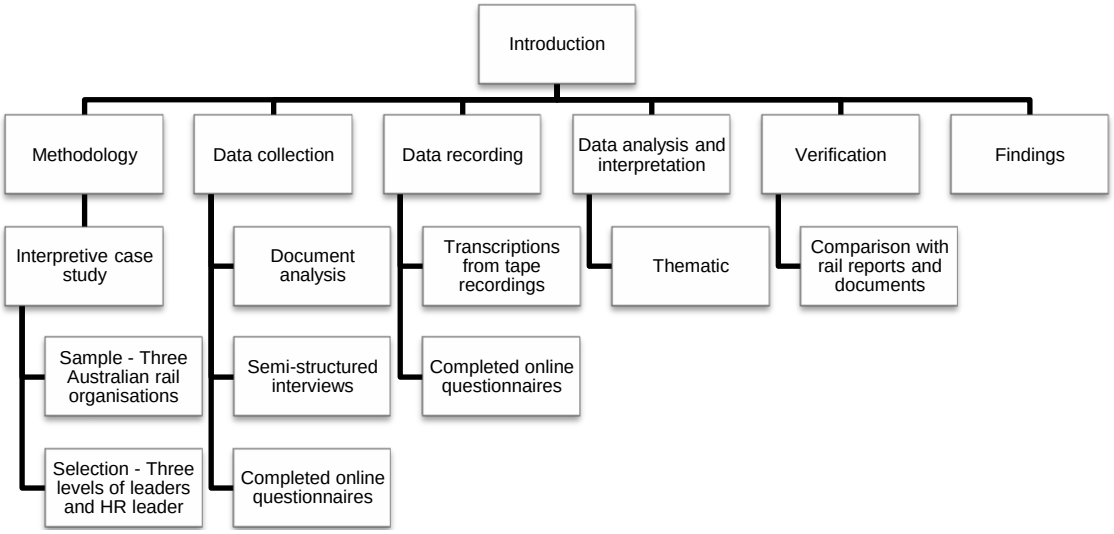


Figure 21: Model of the research design

Rationale for the design

This study was designed to investigate leadership talent management practices in Australian rail organisations with a methodology that was appreciative of how current practices are experienced and understood by those directly affected (Bastalich 2011). The interpretive approach was aimed at understanding and making meaning of currently used practices, framed within the construct of the respective organisations (Holloway 1997). Exploring leadership talent management practices was the purpose, where interpretive sense making results from the comparison of the theories and constructs outlined in the literature (Welch et al. 2011).

The perceptions of individuals about current leadership talent practices is significant in this study because varying life experiences of leaders are thought to differ vastly (McLean 2012). Personal values and beliefs are believed to contribute to different perceptions and understanding of the situation, practice and place (Lave & Wenger 1991). The research design aimed to identify common elements in these experiences within the variety of sub-groups of leadership in the individual rail settings (Bastalich 2011). Interpretive, qualitative research provides the most appropriate approach to be undertaken for this study, following the philosophy ‘truth and reality become constructed in everyday life’ and knowledge and meaning are interpreted from these constructions (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson 2008, p. 93).

A case study research design was chosen to illuminate leadership talent management because it enables the investigation of a 'contemporary workplace phenomenon within its real-life context' (Yin 1994, p. 13). At this early stage, the boundaries between the phenomenon and the context were not yet clearly defined or evident (Eisenhardt 1989; Stake 1995; Yin 2003). Hence, a case study approach was selected because it is a richly detailed story (Dooley 2002) about a specific situation described by Clardy (1997) as an empirical enquiry that outlines who, what, where, when and how. The study set out to gather information from three diverse rail industry organisations using multiple, blended methods (Thomas 2003) to co-construct individual experiences (Stake 1995). The information was subsequently analysed and interpreted in terms of themes using the framework developed from the review of the literature.

Possible limitations of the research design

This study was confined to four levels of leaders in three Australian rail industry organisations, conducted in a four year period. The research was restricted to participant partners of the CRC workforce development projects and did not include all Australian rail organisations. However, selecting a diverse cross-section of organisations best represented a range of leadership views within the industry. It is recognised that a small number of settings have been selected when compared with the whole rail industry in Australia, but the resource constraints of the study limited the time available and the amount of information that could be collected. While the specific project outcomes cannot realistically be generalised across the whole industry, the study has provided a rich, detailed account of how leadership talent management has been enacted in the chosen organisations from 2009-2013.

The research design using a case study approach has advantages because information can be collected, analysed and compared utilising multiple methods in an enclosed or 'bounded' system such as the Australian rail industry context (Creswell 2007, p. 73). At times, case study designs have been critiqued as less vigorous research because the sheer volume of information, and varying accounts of different occurrences can contribute to bias in the findings (Yin 2003). However, using three settings provided a range of variety and the opportunity to collect different kinds of information, but required careful interpretation and explanation of the possibilities when unexplained patterns occurred (Creswell 2007). While these issues were considered at length, the overriding consideration was the benefit of presenting and analysing cross-sectoral

information from three rail locales (Darke, Shanks & Broadbent 1998). While a small sample means that the project cannot realistically be generalised across the entire industry, the study has provided a rich, detailed account of how leadership talent management has been enacted in these organisations from 2009-2013.

It is acknowledged that the influence of personal beliefs and values of participants in the study, including those of the researcher, may have contributed to possible predispositions or biases towards certain viewpoints in the findings (McLean 2012). Underpinning theoretical concepts may also contribute to fixed ideas that lead to predictable outcomes from the research because they can 'funnel' thinking by aligning outcomes to theory (Dooley 2002). Four key tests were applied to the research design to determine its quality, or trustworthiness, as described by Angen (2000). Quality relates to the research design's 'authenticity' (Are different voices heard?); 'credibility' (Are the results an accurate interpretation of the participants' meaning?); 'criticality' (Is there a critical appraisal of all aspects in the research?); and 'integrity' (Is the researcher self-critical?) (Whittemore, Chase and Mandle (2001) cited in Creswell 2007, p. 206). Furthermore, Richardson and St. Pierre (2005) described that, in studies that consider the postmodern angle in organisations (such as this one), the various perspectives of many people requires an approach that allows continual focus on the central image. In this study, the focus will be on leadership talent management, while considering the multi-facets of the organisational situations.

All things considered; the research design was developed to provide a rigorous plan (Cameron 2012) that the researcher considered was thorough, accurate, confirmable and ethical in all aspects of the research process and the subsequent publication of the findings (Andrew & Halcomb 2009). In regard to how the four key tests of authenticity, credibility, criticality and integrity were applied to the research design, a short outline of these considerations is provided at the end of this chapter in the section on ethical considerations and characteristics of 'good' research (p. 114 of the thesis). Acknowledgement has been made of a number of limitations, and these known limitations are presented later in the chapter.

Methodological context

Theoretical research paradigm – an interpretive approach

In a study such as this, the quality of the research outcomes and the nature of the resulting information are dependent on the 'worldview or paradigm (a basic set of beliefs that guide action)' (Creswell 2007, p. 19) initially selected for the research design rather than the 'technical correctness of the methods used' (Hathaway 1995, p. 537).

Guided by findings from the literature review, two main interpretations emerged. Firstly, the focus of existing literature clearly identified the impacts on leadership talent management as being from both the external and internal worlds where globalisation, change, technology and financial drivers are juxtaposed with the complex dynamics of people in organisations (Marquardt, Berger & Loan 2004). These challenges provided insight into possible research paradigms and methodological considerations that allowed for the collection, exploration and analysis of the perspectives of a diverse range of participants where meaning was to be made of individual experiences (Berger & Luckmann 1966). Secondly, discussion in existing literature confirmed a variety of qualitative approaches as well as the need for more blended, broad-based techniques (Tarique & Schuler 2010). These methods included documents, interviews and surveys to collect information (McDonnell et al. 2010; Schuler, Jackson & Tarique 2010; Tarique & Schuler 2010), but there is little available research that can be correlated with the geographical diversity of the Australian rail industry context. As a result, this study sought methods that could successfully explore individual leaders' views at all levels of the organisation in dissimilar and geographically difficult to access locations. The paucity of similar studies in the literature provided little indication of how this might occur. Understanding leadership talent management from the Australian context, and the individual participant's point of view highlighted an underlying ontological belief for qualitative research in the paradigm of interpretivism because individual reality is local and co-constructed (Cohen & Crabtree 2006; Creswell 2007; Hathaway 1995).

In an interpretive approach, the researcher develops a pattern of meaning about a phenomenon, rather than starting with a theory (Dooley 2002). Meaning emerges from the research process (Creswell 2007) and dialogue (Cohen & Crabtree 2006), and the findings and knowledge are created as the investigation proceeds. In this study, the

purpose has been to explore the organisational world in which the participants are located (Schein 2004), to interpret their socially constructed reality (Berger & Luckmann 1966) and to analyse their individual perceptions, their culture, their situation and their relationships with other people (Yin 2003).

Beliefs about physical and social reality

Interpretivism enables discovery of findings that are mostly a perception of the individuals involved (Crotty 1998), holding particular meaning for the person in that particular context. As a result, versions of reality may be similar or dissimilar to those of other people, and there may be multiple claims to knowledge (Cohen & Crabtree 2006). An interpretive research approach can illuminate how factors such as 'power, authority and domination', in both the external and internal worlds, are intertwined with the individual's co-construction of their long-held beliefs, values and experiences (Creswell 2007, p. 248). This philosophy was considered important for this study because the rail industry environment has evolved rapidly since deregulation of the industry in 1993. Many employees have experienced various forms of the organisation through their working lives. Organisations, once public sector entities, are now changing ownership, with new and different business agendas (Department of Infrastructure and Transport 2011). An interpretive approach, involving a critical evaluation of the social reality under investigation, was chosen in order to explore how participants construct their own reality based on their personal experiences in these new environments (Creswell 2007).

Research participants

The purpose of this study has been to explore the different leadership talent management experiences of four levels of leaders in three settings to identify the interconnected 'relationships' and themes (Dooley 2002, p. 336) in a 'bounded system' (Creswell 2007, p. 73). Blended methods enabled collection of information and evidence from a number of sources. The rationale for using a range of methods to co-construct individual experience is to provide authenticity in the resultant findings (Eisenhardt 1989). This was undertaken with a social constructionist, interpretive approach or epistemology (Stake 1995) that included three design features for the case study (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson 2008):

1 An emergent design which allowed for questioning to emerge as themes were identified (Miles & Huberman 1994);
2 One sample case (in this circumstance, the case is the Australian rail industry with the study conducted in three rail settings) (Yin 2003);
3 Analysis and interpretation of themes undertaken within the settings in the case (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson 2008).

Participant organisations in the research

In the next segment, a short précis of each of the participant organisations provides context for this study (the real names of the companies and their locations have been de-identified to ensure confidentiality).

Sample organisations

Municipal Transport Authority of Australia (MTAA) – was established in July 2001, combining metropolitan transport, and local, regional and school business services (all previously operating under government ownership). MTAA has the responsibility for delivery of public transport for the following services:

- Rail, bus and ferry services in the metropolitan area
- Public transport services in regional centres
- Coach and rail passenger services to regional areas; and
- School bus services

as well as the design, building and maintenance of transport infrastructure. On 30 June, 2010 when the information was collected for this study, MTAA employed 1463 people.

Innovative Rail (IR) - At the time of this research the company was known by a previous name and was subsequently absorbed by a larger, multinational corporation after the information was collected. The company had undergone a series of six restructures over the last 15 years, prior to the recent changes, and these transformations are listed below:

1996 Solely government owned

2000 Privatised

2005	Company funded by a high risk Infrastructure Debt Leverage Model that collapsed during the Global Financial Crisis (2008)
2007/2008	Problems with cashflow in GFC, managed by a holding company
2010	Company was transferred to another Infrastructure provider
2011	Taken over by a multinational company to become Innovative Rail

Innovative Rail is a small company with 260 employees, providing rail access services to companies with locomotives to transport wheat, iron ore, alumina, caustic, coal and wood. The company has a 40 year lease from the Government to manage track infrastructure, describing its key business as managing assets and the intellectual property of its people. On 17 August 2011, Innovative Rail was taken over by MNC Infrastructure Partners who own and operate transport, energy and timber assets in America, Australasia and Europe. Innovative Rail controls over 5,100 kilometres of rail infrastructure and track and expects to double freight volumes within the next five years through rapid expansion.

City Trains (CT) – is a state based joint venture or public/private partnership between three rail industry organisations. These organisations comprise two multinational corporations and a local rail franchise established for the purpose of operating and maintaining the city train network as one entity in partnership with the state government. The combined experience of the partners provides expertise in the operation of the entire rail system, management of rolling stock, rail infrastructure maintenance and delivery of major capital works programs. City Trains employs 3,700 rail professionals including train drivers, mechanical and electrical engineers, network operations specialists and customer service representatives. The company provides services for around 400,000 commuters each day with 150 six-carriage trains across 15 lines and 212 train stations.

How the settings were chosen

The three settings were selected from the current nine partners in the ‘CRC for Rail Innovation Workforce Development Program (Leadership and Management Project)’ (CRC for Rail Innovation 2013), conducted by the University of South Australia. This provided ease of access to companies that were participating in CRC research and were already known to the researcher (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson 2008). An early

consideration in the selection of participant organisations was the impact and wider dissemination of the research findings once the study was completed, facilitated by selecting diversity in participant rail organisations. This was considered to be an important means of adding to the research contributions currently undertaken in other projects, and supported by the CRC, for other rail industry partners (CRC for Rail Innovation 2013; Short et al. 2011).

As mentioned previously, the selection of settings within the overall case study was important in controlling unconnected dissimilarities, serving to define the limits for emergent themes in the findings (Eisenhardt 1989). Hence, organisations were selected based on their industry characteristics to provide a case study with a range of similar attributes (being all in the rail industry) but different business variables that would influence their contextual situation including talent needs. This included their state base, size of organisation, sectors and types of rail business operations, as well as their accessibility from a South Australian base (the researcher's location). This selection provided a broad cross-section of Australian rail industry organisations, a large geographic reach and the potential to provide different perspectives on the research problem. The relevant characteristics of the three settings are summarised in Table 10.

Table 10: Characteristics of organisational settings

	Municipal Transport Authority of Australia	**Innovative Rail**	**City Trains**
Type of Service	Passenger services including train, bus and ferry and infrastructure maintenance and development	Track infrastructure and train control (despatch) services in remote Australia	Passenger rail services in metropolitan area
Sectoral representation	Public sector	Private Sector	Public/Private partnership
Location (city and rural)	City and rural	City and rural	City
Size (staff numbers)	1,463	238	3,700

In selecting the organisations, consideration of each rail industry organisation's profile, which determines the individual strategy, service provision charter and approach to business, was important (Rainey & Bozeman 2000). Strategy comprises a number of considerations including the long-term direction of the business, the markets the business competes in, business activities, resources required to compete in the

marketplace and the internal strategy affecting the business's ability to compete (Kourdi 2009). Both private and public sector rail organisations were chosen for the study to provide opportunities for a range of opinions on leadership talent in cross-setting situations (Yin 2003).

Selection of participants

The study set out to identify the perspectives of leadership talent management from four types of leaders, setting knowledge claims within the 'conditions of the world today' (Creswell 2007, p. 25), and the findings viewed from a post-modern perspective. Postmodern perspectives in HRD research and practice have important contributions to make as globalisation, change and the knowledge economy highlight the requirements for ongoing learning for organisations, leaders and individuals (Lepak & Snell 2003). However, Han, Kuchinke and Boulay (2009, p. 55) claim 'postmodernism has had no attention' in HRD research, and HRD writing and practice is mostly viewed through a functionalist paradigm. Garavan et al. (2007) has two years earlier stated that HRD theoretical perspectives are dominated by four paradigms – functionalist, social constructionist, postmodern and critical. Functionalist approaches aimed at achieving economic goals and productivity of the organisation are the main viewpoint (McGuire et al. 2007); the social constructivist perspectives are 'emergent'; and 'postmodernist and critical theoretical perspectives' are pursued only by a small few (Garavan et al. 2007, p. 3).

Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Jackson (2008, p. 76) claim that postmodernism came to intellectual attention in 1984 through the publication of the work of Jean-Francois Lyotard in *The postmodern condition: a report on knowledge* (1984), and through the 'development of ideas of Derrida and Foucault'. Lyotard (1984, p. 3) described how knowledge is altered as 'societies enter the post-industrial age and cultures enter the postmodern age'. His writing highlighted computers and technology as key catalysts of change. Lyon (1999) was of a similar opinion, describing how post-modernity was evolving rapidly from modernity (from the late 1700s through to the collapse of communism in Europe around 1989). With this new freedom in thinking advanced by technology and new business models, individual 'actors' in organisations (Fenwick & McMillan 2010, pp. 3-4) began to 'increasingly employ their own methods of sense making based on their circumstances at hand, using the tools of understanding at their disposal'. Therefore, how leaders know about leading, and their perception of

leadership talent in a postmodern organisation, is their own construction (Berger & Luckmann 1966), based on influences from the external and internal worlds (Storberg-Walker 2012). No singular view of leadership talent can be the only truth, as some individual points of view may be stronger than others, and each may have their own biases (McLean 2012). As a result, the four levels of leaders selected for the study comprised executive, middle, frontline and HR leaders in each rail setting to provide individual perceptions about leadership talent from their own unique position.

In the selection of interview participants, different levels of leaders were central to the study. Executive level leaders from both public sector and private sector rail organisations were chosen because they have a high degree of responsibility in translating the strategy set by political communities or shareholders to achieve business outcomes (McGraw & Peretz 2011). It is how executive level leaders consider leadership talent in the entirety of their unit and business strategy that has been explored in this research.

Middle level leaders were selected because they enact the goals set by executive leaders, translating objectives into action across this middle, operational level. Such leaders may be responsible for leading other leaders by cascading, interpreting and implementing the business strategy through the organisation (McCartney & Campbell 2006). Their perceptions of leadership talent have been considered as the mid-tier in the leadership hierarchy.

Frontline leaders are responsible for coordinating business operations at the frontline or operational level of the organisation (Barratt-Pugh & Soutar 2002) for the day-to-day delivery of functions and services to the public. Frontline teams are characterised by one leader enacting the organisational strategy through the filter of several levels of leadership, to enable employees to complete task focused activities (Oppenheim et al. 2011).

Human resource leaders enact the organisational people strategy, forming part of the executive leadership team in some instances. Human resource leaders are included in the scope of the research project because they are involved with people development strategies in organisations. In this study, HR leaders are considered the gate-keepers of organisational information, providing access to key interview participants and organisational information necessary for the research (Creswell 2007).

Process of recruiting the organisations and problems encountered

The selected organisations were partners in the CRC (CRC for Rail Innovation 2013) and understood the nature of projects currently being undertaken in the Workforce Development stream. Prior to developing the proposal and ethics application for this research, five rail settings or organisations (from a total of the nine participant CRC companies), were identified with the profile that was sought for this study. From this point, personal calls to contact people (the HR leader) in rail organisations were made to seek interest in participation in the research study. A number of stages resulted, with a description of the stages following.

An outline of the project, the purpose and benefits of participating, and the expected commitment of the organisation to the research were outlined to each organisation. This information included details of how and when the data gathering would be undertaken; the methods of collection (documents, semi-structured interviews and online survey); and the approximate timeframes for when this would occur. This first enquiry provided an indication of the delegation levels for approval by organisations, as well as the approximate timeframes for approval. This information about approval processes was especially important for the researcher because in the public sector organisation there are formal processes to follow. Appendix F presents an example of the email sent to organisations.

The ability to rely on the good faith of the contact person to follow-up the research request for participation in the research study was tenuous, demonstrated by the first attempt to gain commitment. The research proposal was discussed with a large public sector rail organisation. A follow-up email outlined instructions for confirming organisational participation but after ten days, no acknowledgement of the email request had been received. A further phone call was made but in time, the request was disregarded and no correspondence was received, neither confirming nor declining the offer to participate.

In the next approach with another organisation, the research request was declined because the organisation was undergoing an organisational restructure due to losing a major contract.

The next organisation contacted enthusiastically pledged commitment to the project on the telephone. They followed up with an email confirming the participation once the

introductory documents were sent. From here, two more organisations were contacted. The first organisation, a private sector infrastructure and access rail provider, accepted the offer to participate in the research. The second organisation, a public sector rail provider, also accepted the offer to participate in the research study. Both were willing to contribute to the study, citing the benefits for their own organisations in informing their own leadership talent practice and strategy. A follow-up letter was sent to each organisation describing the project, and an example of the letter is provided in Appendix G.

It was envisaged that the securing of commitment for the research investigation would have been relatively straightforward. Organisations were mostly known to the University of South Australia and the researcher through ongoing research projects supported by the CRC. However, recruitment of research organisations was not as straightforward as first imagined, and important lessons for future research noted especially about major, internal changes with business activity. These lessons include undertaking a scan of available information on company activity, media information and assessment of other external impacts on the organisation from a distance before contact is made with the organisation.

Methods

Two types of information collection instruments were developed: two sets of semi-structured interview questions and an online survey, all available in the Appendices. Executive and HR questions are available at Appendix H, middle level and frontline leaders' questions are available at Appendix I. The information sheet for interview participants is available in Appendix J, the consent form in Appendix K and the topic guide in Appendix L. The survey is available at Appendix M.

An instrument was not developed to collect information from documents, as the documents were either findings and reports from research already conducted or workplace policies and procedures, developed by the case study organisations.

Semi-structured interviews

Previous studies exploring individual experiences about talent management demonstrated limited ways in which information was collected, especially where there were multiple sites (Lewis & Heckman 2006; Mabey 2008; McDonnell, Stanton &

Burgess 2011; Stahl et al. 2007; Tarique & Schuler 2010). Methods such as face-to-face interviews have not been used widely because this course of action is time-consuming as well as costly (Makela, Bjorkman & Ehrnrooth 2010; Mellahi & Collings 2010). Consequently, methods that are more impersonal such as interviews by telephone have been used to contain time, as well as costs (Mabey 2008). These approaches highlighted the need for face-to-face approaches to build trust with research participants, especially for a beginning researcher (Radnor 2002). As a result, semi-structured interviews conducted in person at the site were chosen as the most appropriate method. This allowed information to be collected in the themes of the main research question by interviewing different levels of leaders with similar but tailored questions for each group (Bell 2010; Radnor 2002).

In developing the semi-structured interview schedule, the whole process was considered – from the research questions, gaining consent for participation, the interview logistics, analysis of responses, writing up of the findings and then dissemination of the findings (Radnor 2002). The rationale of the design of the instruments was to ensure that the gathering of information was as complete as possible in one attempt and to ensure that research questions for this study could be answered after the analysis (Bell 2010).

The instrument development was envisaged to be a two-stage process – firstly, the development of the semi-structured interview questions, and secondly, the online survey, because of the need to follow up emergent themes from the interviews. In the first instrument, the role of the researcher was considered crucial in setting the scene for the interview, building trust with participants and maintaining encouraging body language. Therefore, the instrument included a pre-prepared script or topic guide (Appendix L) coupled with a pre-rehearsed, active listening technique to facilitate the discussion. This approach was well thought through to ensure the interviewer would encourage discussion of questions but not become personally involved. At this stage, it was important to ensure that the interview schedule and timeframes were maintained, while gaining the best outcomes from the overall process (Radnor 2002; Universities of Essex and Manchester 2012-2014). The researcher estimated approximate timeframes for each question so that the interview could be conducted within the stated timeframes. These timeframes were to be given to the interview participant at the outset of the interview. This strategy was considered an important component of maintaining credibility with the interview participant.

In this study, approximately 15 interview questions were planned for each of the four levels of leaders, contextualised for each group. The style and composition of the questions provided the opportunity to explore, re-arrange or re-phrase the intent of the inquiry as the interviews progressed, based on the flow of conversation. In this approach, the researcher was able to direct the questioning, the format of the interview and the use of language level to meet the literacy level and understanding of each participant, aided by the pre-prepared topic guide (Bell 2010; Radnor 2002). This strategy was necessary because it was perceived that opportunities might arise to formulate spontaneous questions as the interview progressed. This would enable the researcher to follow up leads from inarticulate or recalcitrant interviewees (Creswell 2007; Universities of Essex and Manchester 2012-2014). A proactive interview technique was thought to add to the depth of understanding in the analysis because it enabled emergent themes to be seized during the interview, and the scope for identifying extreme or out of the ordinary examples to be highlighted (Miles & Huberman 1994; Radnor 2002). Five aspects of the instrument were developed to facilitate the interview process (see Table 11).

Table 11: Components of the semi-structured interview instrument

Components of the instrument	**Provided to**
An overview of the research study An information sheet was developed, outlining the purpose of the research, funding bodies (CRC for Rail Innovation, supported by the University of South Australia), details of the ethics approval and contact details of the researcher and supervisors.	Executive leader Middle leader Frontline leader HR leader
Consent form This included the information sheet and other details: questions relating to participant's understanding of the nature and purpose of the research project, their voluntary involvement in the research, their understanding that the project would be audio-taped, their ability to withdraw from the project, their age as being over 18 years, the findings to be non-identifiable and confidential and their signature of consent.	Executive leader Middle leader Frontline leader HR leader
Introduction to the interview Setting the scene for the interview, a script was developed to put the participants at ease with an overview of the purpose of the research. It included why a consent form was needed and some information about me as a researcher. The format of the interview was explained with the composition of the questions and approximate timeframes for the complete interview. Also included was the reason for the tape	Executive leader Middle leader Frontline leader HR leader

recorder, why answers would be prompted at certain times and the ability of the interview participant to add other information once the interview was finished.	
Interview questions Four sets of questions were developed; one for each set of managers, using tailored questions and appropriate level of language and comprehension.	Executive leader Middle leader Frontline leader HR leader
Topic guide Suitable prompts for each question were listed to draw out interesting points of discussion that required further enquiry. These points were documented against each question.	Researcher

Developing the questions for the semi-structured interviews

Interview questions resulted from the main research question and three sub-questions. They were formulated into single statements, commencing with 'how, rather than why', to encourage the interview participants to explore their own personal experiences about leadership (Creswell 2007, p. 110). To ensure all parts of the research questions were covered, a simple plan was drawn up showing the six areas of questioning:

1 About you
2 About other leaders
3 About organisational policies
4 About teams – identification
5 About teams – development
6 About the rail industry

The question themes, shown below Table 12, broadly aligned with the conceptual framework from Chapter 3.

Table 12: Concepts covered by research questions

Conceptual framework	Internal	External	Define and communicate	Identify	Develop	Evaluate
Question themes	About you	About other leaders	About organisational policies and procedures	About teams - identification	About teams – development	About the rail industry – ideas or suggestions

The interview questions are presented in Appendices H and I.

Online survey

Confirming the authenticity (Creswell 2007) in the semi-structured interviews was considered by the addition of an online survey (Appendix M) to collect further views and follow up information from the interviews. This was developed for a wider pool of leaders at executive, middle, frontline and human resources levels, in addition to the original 12 interviewees, with the goal of expanding the pool of information about leadership talent from within the target groups and settings.

While typically used in quantitative research, the inclusion of an online survey in social, qualitative studies is useful in allowing consideration of multiple viewpoints and cross-checking of findings (Bell 2010; Stake 1995). This approach was confirmed through use in previous CRC Workforce Development projects (CRC for Rail Innovation 2013; Short et al. 2011). It was found to be an efficient method of collecting information from a large number of participants who were geographically located across vast distances. Such blended approaches provided the opportunity to understand the dynamics of leadership talent management in a variety of other settings and by other leaders (Burbach & Royle 2010; Eisenhardt 1989). The online survey tool, Survey Monkey (Survey Monkey 2011), was developed as the second instrument for the research by purchasing a subscription based version of the instrument (Hamid et al. 2010). The extra functionality provided from a paid subscription allowed enhanced survey design and layout, increased the appeal to users, enhancing the scope for textual analysis of the findings and emergent themes from the information.

In the literature, the use of surveys features in several studies on talent management but were confined predominantly to research in large, multinational corporations where there were multiple sites (Tarique & Schuler 2010; Whelan, Collings & Donnellan 2010) or flexible, around the clock work arrangements. A survey was identified as being able to address the gaps found in the literature about what happens in smaller companies such as some rail organisations.

Developing the questions for the online survey

In the development of the survey questions, there was an opportunity to identify and incorporate emergent themes from the semi-structured interviews to provide some flexibility to this component of the method with two distinct information collection

phases (Yan et al. 2011). The online survey questions were based on the interview questions with the incorporation of additional questions such as:

- Is the difference between a talented leader and an average leader something that can be developed?
- How can organisations identify people with leadership potential?
- Are there talented people in the organisation who are not currently in leadership roles who would make good leaders?
- Is the interest in becoming a leader or furthering leadership skills, discussed in the performance management process or discussions with managers?
- What was your most important learning experience in developing leadership skills?
- What was learnt from the experience that has been applied to your leadership practice at work?
- What formal activities have been offered for leadership skill development?
- Describe one of the most influential formal leadership development activities (for example, training, courses or other activities organised at work) for your career.

There was an expectation that between 30-40 further responses would be received if 10-15 individuals from each of the three organisations responded to the survey invitation, adding to the information about leadership talent management in rail organisations. Therefore, the development of the survey questions considered how participants would complete and remain engaged with the survey task to ensure as many responses could be collected. This task was thought to be successful if voluntary participants were able to complete the questions in their own time, in the online format (Evans & Mathur 2005). In hindsight, this was an excellent strategy, as the survey, in combination with on-site interviews and observations, provided an opportunity to allow further exploration of information gained from the 12 interviewees' responses (Eisenhardt 1989).

Information collection

This section outlines how information was collected using the two main methods: semi-structured interviews, and an online survey, complemented by railway industry documents and reports for contextual purposes.

Figure 22 provides an overview of the phases of the information collection process that are interrelated, but not always sequential (Creswell 2007). Locating case study organisations and participants who were willing to participate in the research was dependent on building trust and rapport in the initial contact stages of the project, but it was expected that problems could arise if participants withdrew their voluntary participation. For this reason, clear guidelines and objectives of the research and information collection were clearly outlined on each contact with the organisation and individual participant.

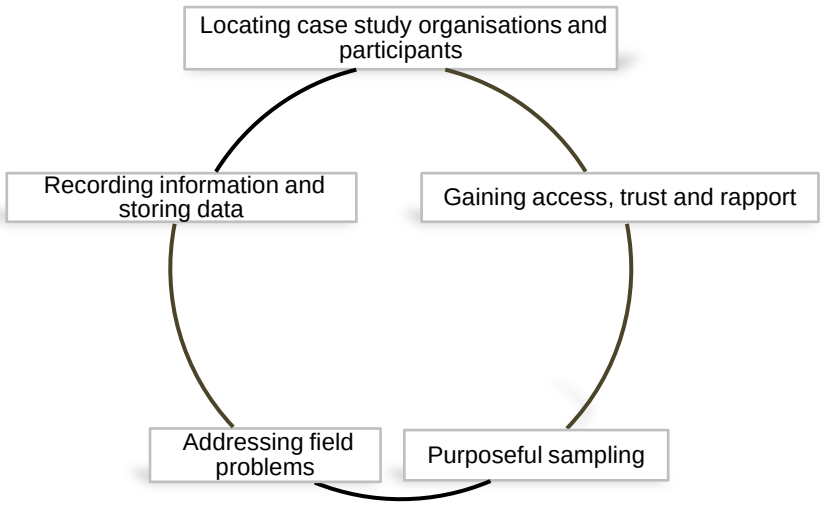


Figure 22: Information collection activities

Source: Developed from Creswell (2007, p. 118)

The information collection procedures were as follows:

Rail industry documents and reports

The examination of socially-situated, written texts or workplace documents is based on widely accepted approaches of information collection and analysis in qualitative research (Scott 1990). Such public documents for this study comprise information and texts such as a survey and interviews from the CRC research program (Short et al. 2012; Short et al. 2011). In addition, they include reports and scoping studies (CRC for Rail Innovation 2013) as well as workplace policies and procedures from the three organisational settings. The first group of documents were collected and analysed from original files, documents and findings of the CRC Workforce Development project P4.104, of which I was a student researcher. Collection of other workplace documents

occurred at the visit to each rail organisation setting when the semi-structured interviews were conducted, although there were limited documents relating to talent management.

Semi structured interviews

Planning to conduct the semi-structured interviews commenced as soon as the research proposal was approved. Prior experience gained in conducting interviews for the CRC project, 'Developing a capability framework for leadership and management' (Short et al. 2011), identified that the interviews required adequate time to plan because they were being conducted face-to-face at each organisation. Situating myself within the rail organisational environment would enable observation of the organisational surroundings, including the culture of the workplace and the body language and non-verbal communication cues of interview participants (Dey 1993). This approach gave cause to consider the impact of my visit on the organisation. Participation in the study was entirely voluntary, so care was taken not to impact on the workplace schedule at each site (Corbin & Morse 2003). I was aware that the collection of appropriate information at each interview was crucial to the success of the research study based on my ability to gain access through the 'gatekeeper' or contact person (Creswell 2007, p. 120). Establishing trust and rapport by telephone with an unknown person was the foremost concern before the interviews could be undertaken (Creswell 2007). The first step comprised discussion of any special circumstances of the case study organisations with the researcher's PhD supervisors, based on their contextual knowledge of the organisations. From here, telephone contact with the key person in each case study organisation identified possible interview times. In each organisation, the contact person was the organisation's contact person for CRC Workforce Development projects.

Considering that the interviews had to be conducted in a number of Australian states, over a period, careful scheduling of interviews was essential. A focused timeframe enabled the contact person to match organisational plans with the information collection requests, so as not to impede current business activities. In each instance, the suggested timeframe was suitable, and interviews were scheduled around current organisational plans. The phone call request was followed up with an email outlining the date and details of the request for participation from four levels of leaders. The contact person identified names of leaders for the interview schedule against each level of

management. All interviews were scheduled within a period of three weeks to allow consistency of the interview procedures in each setting.

Pilot interview

Prior to conducting the main interviews, a pilot interview was conducted in a similar type of organisation. This was arranged with a frontline leader for the purpose of identifying issues with the interview questions or process. If there were difficulties in the comprehension of the prepared questions, this would be more likely identified with a leader in this type of role. The objective of the pilot interview was to enable the participant to discuss freely their responses to the questions without prompting or explanation from the interviewer. In particular, the structure, wording and flow of the semi-structured interview questions and the appropriateness of the prompt questions were tested. The physical layout of the room and recording equipment for maximum flow of the participant's responses were also trialled and analysed.

It was important for rapport to be established quickly with interviewees (Creswell 2007, p. 123) to enable them to be comfortable enough to freely 'tell their story' (Corbin & Morse 2003, p. 338). The pilot interview had a pleasing outcome, confirming the flow of questions, appropriate wording but also gave an indication of one particular question to reconsider. The question that asked about surprising examples of leadership from a team member proved to be difficult for the interview participant to answer. It was decided to leave the question in the interview schedule, as it was a key point to explore with all levels of leaders. The question provided an indication of how leaders cope with unfamiliar situations (DeRue & Wellman 2009) and extend their perceived capacity in their current roles (Ghosh, Haynes & Kram 2013). In time, this question needed further prompting in almost every interview. In hindsight, reflection indicated that leaders did not understand the significance of opportunities to demonstrate leadership expertise in unfamiliar situations, team members' latent leadership potential nor the importance of recalling these examples.

Other interview questions did not require major adjustments and the time allocated was appropriate. The pilot interview was taped for further transcription and analysis of the discussion.

Conducting the interviews

Twelve interviews were undertaken, comprising four interviews in each of the three case study organisations. Three executive staff, three HR managers, three middle managers and three frontline managers participated in the interviews where semi-structured questions of an open-ended nature were asked of participants. Prior to the interview, questions were circulated through the HR leader (contact person) in each organisation to the interview participants. Circulation of questions well in advance of the interview enabled the participants to consider the questions, prepare any responses and complete the attached consent form that sought permission for participation in the study. The framework of the interview was outlined at the commencement of each discussion. This provided an opportunity for the interviewee to ask questions, have any concerns clarified and set the scene for the dialogue. The researcher outlined how the questions were clustered into six main parts (outlined previously in Table 12). This summarising approach, identified and checked in the pilot interview, confirmed that the participant was able to become a confident, active participant in the interview discussion (Radnor 2002).

The interviews were framed by a 'topic guide' so that interesting points of enquiry could be followed if the need arose (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson 2008, p. 143). The particular focus in the interviews was drawing out and illuminating insight of leaders' perceptions and opinions about leadership talent practices with an uninterrupted flow of conversation to provide accuracy to the discussion (Kvale 1996). Consideration was given to ensuring the interview environment was conducive to attaining the best responses from interview participants (Rabionet 2011). This included a private room for the participants, no interruptions, and in their own surroundings at the respective organisation. The interviews were audio-taped to ensure legitimacy of the discussion in each instance and to ensure bias in the process was minimised (Yin 2003). The audiotape was turned off at the closure of the interview and in some instances; the interview participants added other points. Notation of these further points by the researcher enabled inclusion in the interview.

Information recording procedures

The main concern in conducting the interviews was to collect information from each interviewee that represented an accurate account of the discussion in one clean sweep (Corbin & Morse 2003). A small, unobtrusive digital tape recorder that did not interfere

with the discussion was utilised to tape the interviews with each leader after their consent was confirmed. The purpose of recording the interviews was to prepare for the analysis of the discussion, but it also had several other purposes (Kvale 1996). The main purpose was to allow the researcher to concentrate on the interview participant at all times to observe the interview process. A secondary purpose of using the tape recorder was to observe visual clues of the 'two person conversation' (Radnor 2002, p. 62). A tape recorder also provided other important benefits to the information collection process such as the ability to save and replay the voice file, unachievable if only notes were taken. This enabled the interview to be listened to again, so that the tone of the voice and emphasis on words could be explored in the analysis phase (Kvale 1996). At the end of the interview, voice recordings were saved for transcribing, for conversion from a sound file to text for analysis.

Online survey processes

Dissemination of the survey to a wider, leadership audience within the same four target groups of leaders, within the same three settings, enabled the study to follow up emergent themes from the interviews. It confirmed in the researcher's mind where to go next; verifying already discovered findings from the literature, the document analysis and the semi-structured interviews while enabling consideration of other points. There were four parts to the survey: demographic information, about other leaders, about current organisational practice for identifying leaders, and about current organisational practice for developing leaders. The survey was designed to capture participants' interest quickly and to be completed in around 15 minutes. The survey was not tested but in hindsight would have reinforced that the themes and questions were appropriate.

Seeking commitment from key contact people in the individual settings to run the survey was not as successful as was hoped but useful responses were collected from 33 respondents. One organisation utilised the survey as part of frontline management training, where all participants were in one location, at one time. Participants completed the survey in a paper-based format and the responses were entered into the survey tool by the researcher. Another organisation gained commitment to the survey by canvassing leaders individually.

Information analysis and interpretation procedures

Case study research provides the opportunity to collect information and conduct analysis in an iterative process which moves back and forth between steps until the findings are reached (Eisenhardt 1989). Analysis of the information commences at the beginning of the research when initial ideas start to be formed, progressing over the span of the study. Creswell (2007, pp. 150-151) depicts the information analysis process in qualitative research as a spiral. It begins with information collection and management, reflection, describing, reflection, categorising, reflection and representing or visualising the information in a 'matrix, tree or proposition'. This process was used by the researcher to make sense of what was found through immersion in the study over a period of four years (Stake 1995), since at the beginning of the study there were no concrete assumptions. Two methods of analysing information were finally undertaken. In a case study, Creswell (2007, p. 163) describes analysis of the information as 'pulling it apart and putting it back together in more meaningful ways'. The analysis process of leadership talent management in the Australian rail industry context was undertaken in this way. The semi-structured interviews and an online survey used thematic analysis while content analysis was utilised for the workplace documents.

Analysis of semi-structured interviews

Yin (2003, p. 109) described the analysis of case study information as one of the most undeveloped and the most 'difficult aspects' of the study to conduct. The researcher concurs with this statement. This study required several approaches over a length of time, in order to develop a suitable structure to analyse the information and order it into themes. The large volume of information from just twelve interviews with around fifteen questions, at first appeared to be overwhelming, demanding that a number of attempts had to be made to consider the output and identify themes. It was initially feared that, by interpretation of the face value of the information alone, important meaning may have been overlooked, and interview participants misrepresented.

To commence the analysis, transcripts of the interviews were read a number of times and notes made in the side column, consistently in each interview. This process covered the twelve interviews and followed a process of textual analysis (Creswell 2007). The sound files from the interviews were also replayed where clarification of the tone and intent of the discussion were considered. This step set out to sift out a broad number of

themes from the interviews (Creswell 2007). This initial 'broad brush' analysis identified a limited number of key themes – 'five or six' in the first instance rather than a large number of categories (Creswell 2007, p. 152) – that were expanded as the analysis proceeded. The themes were in general, related with themes identified in the literature. Later, they were expanded to include the other categories from the conceptual framework as the analysis proceeded (Creswell 1994). At this point, the analysis had the purpose of categorical aggregation following a process of searching for a number of instances from the information (Stake 1995). Still no tangible approach had been decided upon as the analysis had reached a stalemate with no clear way forward.

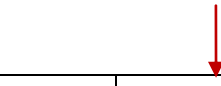
Around this time, the questions and responses for each of the semi-structured interviews were replicated from the transcripts of the interview. They were then loaded into the online Survey Monkey instrument for each level of manager. The purpose of this strategy was to examine the responses for each question from each leader, undertaken by manoeuvring the replies around and comparing answers across the settings. The goal was to reveal some themes or patterns in this process. Survey Monkey does allow textual analysis of the themes apparent within the questions, but this is dependent on the researcher initially identifying these themes. Taking the analysis from another direction, cross setting comparison occurred by tabulating the questions and exporting them to an Excel file. This approach also proved fruitless.

In time, a breakthrough occurred through reflection of Creswell's (2007, p. 152) discussion on identifying a limited number of themes to 'winnow the data'. He suggests this as a way of the first pass to order information while being cognisant of the literature, even if the themes are altered in due course. Wolcot (1994) also suggests ordering and contextualising of the information in a framework, developed from the literature. Yin (2003, p. 111) writes of other ways that he cites from Miles & Huberman (1994), such as putting information into different 'arrays', making a matrix and placing the evidence into categories or using a 'chronological, temporal or sequential scheme' to order information, amongst other approaches. Sometimes in research, it is found that the researcher becomes totally immersed in what they are doing, becoming too close to what is happening and cannot move forward. At this moment in time, my analysis had also fallen into this trap. On reflection, a framework had been commenced for the analysis when considering my initial research question that had two key parts – identify and develop (leadership talent). These two themes became the start of the analysis tool

and were subsequently expanded with the other themes identified from the literature (external and internal environment, define, communicate and evaluate). Table 13 shows the themes. They were previously suggested in Table 12 in the development of the interview questions.

Table 13: Development of the analysis framework

Identify	Develop



External environment	Internal environment	Define	Communicate	Identify	Develop	Evaluate

Addition of the sub-themes within the main themes evolved over a period of weeks. The analysis framework subsequently was developed into a model for leadership talent management, presented in Chapter 3 and strengthened by findings from the literature for each component. Table 14 outlines the initial themes and sub-themes, that were consolidated further as the analysis proceeded.

Table 14: Development of sub-themes

1 External environment	1 Internal environment	2 Define	3 Communicate	4 Identify	5 Develop	6 Evaluate
1 Globalisation	1 Generations	1 Importance of leadership talent for business strategy	1 Senior leaders endorse the strategy	1 Senior leaders support the identification of future leaders	1 Individual needs are identified and developed	1 Analysis of information against targets and strategy
2 Change	2 Diversity	2 Difference between Management and Leadership	2 Written definition of leadership talent	2 Connected conversations	2 Who - current and future leaders because all have potential	2 Observation of what is happening
3 Sustainability	3 Technology	3 Definition of leadership talent	3 Consistency of the message	3 Specific rail systems knowledge	3 What – values, behaviours, skills, knowledge and competencies	3 Participant feedback Improvement strategies
				4 Identify individual performance including results, relationships	4 How - Balance of methods eg formal and informal learning	
					5 Psychometric tools,	
					6 Coaching	

7 Mentoring
8 360 degree Feedback
9 Projects and assignments
10 Workshadowing
11 Workplace opportunities

Once the framework was established, the next stage of the analysis process proceeded more smoothly. Numbers against each step describe the eleven processes as follows:

1 Each section of the framework was given a code (e.g. 1, 1 Globalisation).

2 Over 30 small plastic bags were labelled with a code from the framework (e.g. 1, 1; 1, 2). In time, some of these bags (themes) were incorporated to provide fewer themes.

3 Each interview transcript was coded by organisation and level of leader (e.g. Innovative Rail, Executive leader).

4 The interview transcripts were re-read, and responses for each question examined.

5 The responses were cut from the main transcript with scissors, labelled by respondent and placed into the appropriate bag. The master copy of each transcript was also printed to ensure the responses could be checked so that they matched the appropriate leader and organisation. Once this painstaking process was completed, the full set of bags was arranged into the main themes – 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6.

6 Large sheets of paper were identified with the main theme and sub-theme (e.g. 1, 1) and divided into twelve sections as shown in Table 15.

Table 15: Matrix of theme and sub-theme by levels of leader

Theme 1,1 Globalisation	**Organisation A MTAA**	**Organisation B Innovative Rail**	**Organisation C City Trains**
Executive			
HR leader			
Middle level leader			
Frontline leader			

7 The information from each plastic bag was then pasted into the appropriate space for an overall indication of the comments from the interviews in each theme.

8 The comments from each leader were collected in bags, considering the framework in Table 14 (p. 109 of this thesis).

9 Once the information had been collated, the next task was to analyse what was revealed in each theme.

10 The information was then pasted back on sheets under the key themes, with one main sheet for each theme by each organisation (see Table 16).

Table 16: Interview information for themes

Responses

1, 1 – Importance of leadership talent for business strategy

	Innovative Rail	MTAA	City Trains
Executive	Strategy of people is very important to our organisation Growth of Innovative Rail from 20 millions tonnes 5 years ago, currently 50 million and in two years 70 millions tonnes. This meant we were lacking experienced people particularly engineers and engineering types. Made big changes to our structure with certain people taking on different roles,	Responsibility is the corporate executive Have quarterly meeting to discuss The People and Organisational Development team do the work and create the direction	Need to build our systems from the ground up because we are only 1 year old, particularly our HR systems and skills database. Concept is good but need the processes put in place and then populate We're just not at that point in time HR is responsible for developing the policy and strategy and as managers we buy into that process Its critical that we

11 The information for each theme was summarised into key points in a table for each level of leadership (see Table 17).

Table 17: Summary of information from each theme by level of leader

4,2 – Connected conversations at all levels between manager and employee to identify leadership talent

Exec- I keep a close contact with individual teams, attend monthly meetings and keep a close eye on the leaders in those groups and assist with their development, the nature of the organisation and priorities changing overnight eg the government announcing the building of a new stadium at Burswood, People can see the logic of the PM, Lack of systems determine that we don't really have a performance management system. The process is the hard thing to determine, part of it would determine their development needs

HR - Should be about how you are doing in your job (performance management) and career development (how you are doing in your profession), We don't have the in your profession bit – its very ad hoc.

Middle - You should know your people so there should be no surprises – good or bad leadership – there should be no surprises, Performance management has negative connotations, performance is something managers should constantly be reviewing, We

Initial interpretation

At the end of the analysis, creation of a number of diagrams and tables of the most pertinent information found in this stage served as markers of what had been discovered so far. Table 18 shows the first and most overwhelming interpretation about people related skills. Each leader spoke of different people related skills in their image of a 'good leader'. This table was replicated for each level of leader with the comments about leaders' human skills.

Table 18: People related skills for 'good' leaders

Qn 7 Can you think of a leader you have admired at work? What made them a good leader?

Executive	Technical	Human	Conceptual
		Confidence in what they want to undertake Takes people with them rather than push or coerce	Good intellect Clear about the organisation's vision Very clear on goals and targets

The next significant interpretation was about leaders' individual profiles, shown in Table 19.

Table 19: Profiles of leaders

	Age group	Time in role	Qualifications	General
Executive	55 – 62 years (Baby Boomer)	1 x < 7 years 2 x < 3 years	3 x Bachelor of Engineering	Need to hire more people like us with strong engineering, accounting and financial backgrounds from outside Look across other industries for transferrable skills (technical) Create in own image
HR	50 plus (Baby Boomer)	<less than 3 years indispensable	No formal qualifications in Human Resource Management Experience	Focus on IR Compliance training held in Safety and Compliance area Role to ensure training occurred Limited access to records

In interpretation number three, the importance of the human resources role was less than for other leaders, shown in Table 20.

Table 20: Human resources leaders – level of importance

CEO	Commercial	Finance	Infrastructure	Business Development	Human resources

In interpretation number four, the types of qualifications held by different levels of leaders were strong in technical areas, with no leaders possessing formal management qualifications. Table 21 shows this interpretation.

Table 21: Types of qualifications by level of leader

	Technical	Management
Executive	Yes	No
HR	No	No
Middle	Yes	No
FLM	No	No

At the end of the analysis of the interviews, a diagram shown in Figure 23 depicts the relationships and power structures interpreted by the researcher.

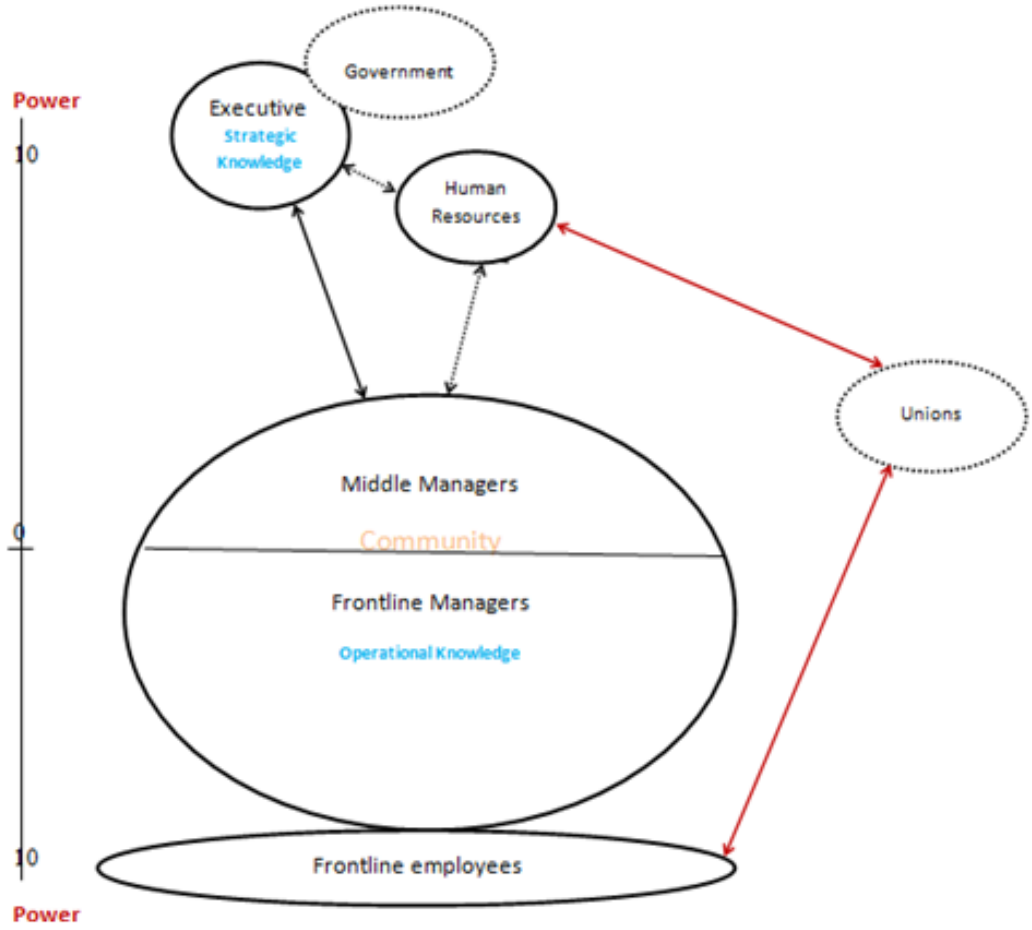


Figure 23: The researcher's interpretation of relationships in rail

The researcher interpreted that the majority of the organisation comprised leaders and employees at the middle and frontline. While not mentioned widely in the interviews, unions provided a strong influence on establishing workplace conditions within companies for the benefit of all employees. Executive leaders were highly influenced by external bodies such as the government and Human Resource leadership roles were predominantly about maintaining the sound industrial relations within companies.

As I moved forward to the next phase of the analysis, I filed these pictorial representations.

Analysis of the online survey

Survey Monkey provides reports in a variety of formats to aid the analysis of information. These reports include a summary of question responses and charting of the responses for each question. Building on this functionality, a comprehensive report was collated in a separate document for each of the 25 survey questions. The document incorporated the 33 responses from survey participants, a chart or diagrammatic

representation of the analysis and annotations about each question based on initial interpretations. Figure 24 provides an example question from the report. Interpretation of this information occurred together with the information from the semi-structured interviews.

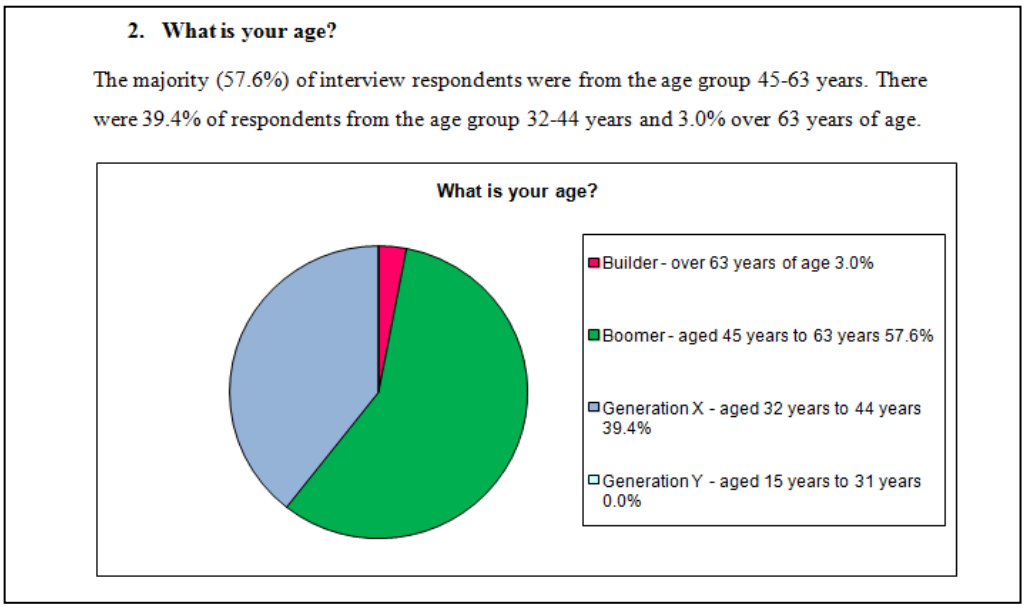


Figure 24: Example from the analysis of the survey

The analysis of the information from documents, interviews and the online survey highlighted a number of findings. These findings are reported in Chapter 5.

Ethical considerations and characteristics of 'good' research

Ethical principles must apply to research conducted on humans (Australian Vocational Education and Training Research Association 2011). Following such principles ensures that the approach to information collection is at all times mindful of unintended consequences of the investigation, there is no potential for harm to participants, and personal information is maintained in a confidential manner. The last section of the methodology chapter describes some of these considerations.

Researcher's role

In July 2011, ethics approval to conduct the research was obtained from the University of South Australia's Human Research Ethics Committee. This step confirmed approval to conduct the research study, but the outcomes of the study would be entirely dependent on the relationships developed with the individual rail organisations and

research participants (Radnor 2002). I realised that I was entering the organisational world of the 'cultural insiders' (Hatch 2002, p. 65) and that respect must underpin the use of organisational resources and participants' time (Creswell 2007). HR managers were considered to be the key people for the study because they would facilitate access to the research participants (Creswell 1994). Their willingness to assist with the scheduling of interview participants would enable streamlined access to information collection. Reciprocity applied to research participants as I was taking up their time and probing into personal insights. Consequently, I set out to ensure that they were also able to gain something from the research by providing interview transcripts to verify and summarised outcomes of the findings on completion of the research study.

Voluntary participation and freedom from coercion or subtle pressure

Participants were recruited for the research with an approach made by written request to the contact person (the HR manager) for each organisation. The request explained the nature and purpose of the research and set out the conditions of voluntary participation with the ability to withdraw from the research at any time. While this could have inconvenienced the researcher should individuals choose not to proceed, a contingency plan enabled other participants to be approached. Where a participant declined or withdrew from the study, the HR manager identified a substitute from the same organisation and leadership level.

Informed consent

Interview participants were provided with a written overview of the purpose of the research study before the information collection procedures commenced. Combined with a verbal explanation of the purpose and nature of the investigation, any concerns or questions were able to be clarified before proceeding, were participants still unsure (Radnor 2002).

Risk of Harm

Interviewing a diverse range of participants in organisational settings could have brought forth a number of scenarios that may have raised issues. Sharing information of a personal nature in a one-on-one interview was anticipated to invoke strong emotions that may have had unforeseen impacts on both the researcher and the research participants. Consequently, strategies to minimise the risk of harm to willing participants were planned ahead of the information collection phase. These strategies

involved providing the interview questions well in advance of the interview to the participants by email, gaining trust with the interview participants at the commencement of the interview and outlining how the interview would be structured. This was particularly important because none of the interviewees were known to the researcher, and their personal circumstances were not known (Corbin & Morse 2003; Radnor 2002). The researcher outlined that the outcomes of the study would be available to all rail partners of the CRC and that individual identities would be protected to ensure no long-term repercussions (Corbin & Morse 2003). There were no conflicts of interest, as the researcher had not previously worked for any of the rail organisations nor had knowledge of their operational activities.

Confidentiality

The importance of explaining to research participants how the information gained in the course of the study would be kept confidential was considered to be of high importance, and undertaken at the beginning of the interview. Participants were informed about how records would be kept in secure locations and about the process for de-identifying interviewees (Corbin & Morse 2003). They were also advised that the tape recordings would be deleted once they had been transcribed, and pseudonyms assigned to organisations.

Anonymity

The researcher set out to protect the identity of participants and organisations using pseudonyms in the reporting of the findings. Anonymity of the participants within the semi-structured interviews could be maintained in this process. However, participants of the online survey did not have to provide their name. High consideration was placed on anonymity especially where there may have been imbalanced power relations and the prospect of stereo-typing participants into certain roles (Hatch 2002).

Characteristics of 'good research'

At the beginning of the methodology chapter on the section about the research design, four tests were stated as being applied to the research design to enable a focus on the central research question. The tests related to the authenticity, credibility, criticality and integrity of the study (Whittemore, Chase and Mandle (2001) cited in Creswell 2007, p. 206). Furthermore, Creswell (2007) describes "validation" of good qualitative research in terms of "validation strategies" or an attempt to describe accurately the findings of

the research. A short outline of how the four tests were considered in the research is now provided, considering the validation strategies proposed by Creswell (2007) and others (Maxwell 2005; Whittemore, Chase & Mandle 2001).

Authenticity

The intention of the research design was to undertake an in-depth analysis of the leadership talent phenomenon from the perspectives of four levels of leaders with an interpretive methodology, and methods that would facilitate the design outcomes. The research design considered the complexity of rail organisations in a changing business environment. Collecting the views of leaders at all levels of the organisation was paramount and alleged to contribute to the authenticity of the study. Sale and Brazil (2004) agree with the chosen design approach, asserting that, in qualitative, interpretive studies, the method of information collection should gather knowledge from different levels and types of leaders to explore 'multiple realities or multiple truths' (p. 353). Authenticity is a term used by numerous authors writing from the postmodern perspective including Foucault, Derrida, Lyotard, Giroux, and Friere (Bloland 1995 cited in Creswell 2007, p. 25) where there may be different 'power relationships' (Creswell 2007, p. 25) such as in hierarchical organisations like rail.

The premise of interpretive research is based on an ontology that reality is socially constructed and may vary depending on individuals' perceptions, the culture, the setting or situation and relationships with other people (Cohen & Crabtree 2006; Darke, Shanks & Broadbent 1998). What was discovered in the course of this research holds particular meaning for the individual at that particular time, and is not value-free (Darke, Shanks & Broadbent 1998). Individual versions of reality (identified in the information collection) have highlighted that there are 'multiple claims to knowledge' (Cohen & Crabtree 2006). As a way of seeing through these variations, the research design took into consideration how information collected in the field could be confirmed, presented as credible and authentic, and be displayed with high integrity in the following chapters (Bell 2010; Creswell 2007; Trochim 2006).

Establishing that the results of this study were believable for the rail industry was a key consideration because the phenomenon under study was described from the participants' points of view through the researcher's interpretations. Therefore, critical perspectives in the literature were blended with multiple sources of evidence from semi-

structured interviews and an online survey to test authentic, reliable and confirmable versions of participant accounts of reality. Information was then referenced against the literature and other studies on leadership and management conducted by the CRC. The resulting findings of this research, mainly a perception of the individuals involved in the research, were constructed according to the framework developed by the researcher from published literature. The dissemination to, and acceptance of the findings, by the wider rail industry will reinforce the authenticity of the research over a longer time.

Credibility

In Creswell's book on qualitative research (Creswell 2007, p. 204), Eisner (1991) is cited as describing the soundness of research as being credible or having 'credibility', which is often referred to by others as 'validity' (Stake 1995). Creswell's (2007) terminology of "validation strategies" had an end goal in providing a realistic account of 'those studied' and a plausible account 'to readers' (Mays & Pope 2000, p. 50). This research design allowed for several ways that the authentication of the information gathered from those studied could be regarded as congruent with reality (Creswell 2007; Mays & Pope 2000). Other authors have also determined a number of tests to confirm the credibility of a study. For example, Maxwell (2005) uses seven tests to determine the credibility of a research study, similar to Creswell's ideas (2007). These include intensive long-term involvement with the project, having rich information to draw upon, having respondent substantiation of the information, identifying inconsistent information and negative cases, confirming the information across settings, using quantitative as well as qualitative information in the research, and comparing the information with other research. Each of these tests will be discussed in relation to this study.

Intensive long-term involvement with the project – The researcher has been engaged in associated rail industry research projects with the University of South Australia and the CRC for Rail Innovation for more than four years during the time of this study. This experience has enabled broad development of contextual knowledge of the Australian rail industry and long-term involvement with a range of research projects that were being undertaken at this time.

Having rich information to draw upon – Projects such as 'Developing a Leadership and Management Capability Framework' and 'Coaching and Mentoring' have both

added to the experience and ability of the researcher to draw on rich information from other studies connected to this one on leadership talent management. As a result of this ongoing involvement in the other workforce development studies, contact has been maintained with organisations throughout the time of this thesis.

Having respondent substantiation of the information – Respondent substantiation of the information confirms the importance of ensuring information is credible as well as authentic. Both tests have been discussed extensively throughout the methodology chapter and confirmed the importance of cross-checking information with participants. In this study, leaders' email addresses were sought from each HR manager to enable substantiation of the information. An individual email was then drafted to each interview participant, rather than through the HR leader, to maintain the confidentiality of the discussion (Radnor 2002). Forwarding the transcribed version of the interviews to each participant enabled confirmation that the information was accurate or required inclusions (Cohen & Crabtree 2006). In one instance, one small correction was noted, and the transcript updated.

Identifying inconsistent information and negative cases – This study chose to select organisations from the public sector as well as the private sector. This selection identified two types of internal processes, described in more detail in the findings. These inconsistencies related to the way that decisions were made in both types of organisations including strategy, governance, delegations through senior staff from the government minister and mandated performance management process over more flexible approaches found in the private sector (Hart & Uhr 2008). To ensure this study accurately reflected the reasons for these different processes, the researcher drew on her background knowledge of public and private sector rail organisations to represent and describe the findings.

Confirming the information across settings – Mathison (1988, p. 13) claimed that good research practice includes processes for checking the information by using multiple sources and methods to ensure that the findings are credible and believable. This study set out to incorporate cross checking processes in the research design and method. The evidence of other CRC for Rail Innovation workforce development projects on leadership and management development (Short et al. 2011) and coaching and

mentoring (Short et al. 2012) in which the researcher was involved, were the overarching frames in which this information was confirmed.

Using quantitative as well as quantitative information in the research – Not only did the CRC studies provide contextual knowledge of the industry and workforce development issues but observations of rail industry practice. The research in other programs provided access to extensive literature collections and knowledge about suitable blended methods of information collection using quantitative as well as qualitative approaches.

Comparing the information with other research – Access to an extensive collection of data from other rail related workforce development research in Australian companies and a large bank of literature from the field, enabled the findings of the research to be compared and cross-checked for credibility.

Criticality

Whittemore, Chase and Mandle (2001) describe criticality as the researcher's ability to be critical of all aspects of the research. During the design of this study, the researcher attempted to project herself ahead into the study in the most informed way possible to foresee any problems, and to devise strategies to mitigate potential problems. As a beginning researcher, it is acknowledged that alternative explanations, negative instances and biases may have been unconsciously overlooked in the design, collection of information and findings of the study. However, some of these impending problems in the research design were avoided such as choosing participant organisations that were willing to participate in the study or readily accessible, while other problems such as under-estimating the time taken to write up this study, were not realised during the initial design phase.

Integrity

The research on leadership talent management has been undertaken at a certain time in the Australian rail industry from 2009-2013. By selecting a qualitative approach with a defined number of organisations and participants, it was expected that a manageable amount of information would be collected in a defined period of time. The information collection phase was designed to ensure minimal disruption to each organisation while ensuring the researcher was unobtrusive in daily work activities. Other integrity considerations included considering of how the findings would be reported truthfully

should any unconstructive practices or findings be established. In view of the fact that the study was funded by the Australian government and the Australian rail industry, the researcher considered that reporting the findings should be without concern for the fear or favour of those sponsoring the research (Australian Vocational Education and Training Research Association 2011). This approach would provide the most accurate account of the study.

The findings from the study are relevant at this time; however, the ever-changing context in which the industry operates may mean the findings may be different at another time. Moreover, the outcomes may only be relevant to a narrow range of settings within the Australian rail industry. Being aware of the context of the study frames the integrity of the research problem at this particular time only.

Generalisation

Within the Australian rail industry, there are numerous sectors including passenger and freight transport, manufacturing and many specialised niche sectors. The participants of the research comprised only three organisations from many, and so generalising the findings is not possible because of the diversity of the industry across the vast Australian nation. Specific findings based on these three organisations can only be considered as indicative. The value of such a study is in raising awareness of issues in settings where there are similar profiles to those from this study – such as in hierarchical structures with many levels of leadership in the passenger or freight transport sectors of rail, or in other industries that have traditional, workforce profiles.

Chapter summary

An outline of the qualitative, interpretive approach that was undertaken to explore how Australian rail organisations identify and develop their leadership talent has been presented. The research design for this study comprised blended methods of semi-structured interviews and online survey to probe the experiences of leaders at the executive, middle, frontline and HR levels in three rail settings. This study was conducted in a range of organisational types. These included a public sector passenger transport rail organisation, a private sector infrastructure organisation and a public/private sector passenger transport organisation. Not only were the types of organisations diverse but the locations were spread across the Australian nation – with one organisation on the eastern seaboard of Australia and the two other organisations on

the western side of the nation – a distance of more than 2,000 kilometres apart. The research design incorporated methods to consider the views of all levels of leaders to gain different perspectives about leadership talent. To ensure confidentiality and protection of sensitive personal and business information gathered in the course of this study, the utmost care was given to de-identifying the names of the participating organisations and interview participants, and maintaining the confidentiality of information. The blended methods were both conducted in a manner so as not to cause disruption to normal business procedures. At the end of the information collection, the researcher contacted the participants of the study through the organisational contact person. They were provided with the typed transcripts of their interviews to substantiate the information and the opportunity to make suggestions for any corrections. Acknowledgement of participation was provided to all participants. The information from the interviews and survey was analysed using a pre-prepared framework developed as a result of the literature review.

The next chapter presents the results of the information analysis, including excerpts of discussions with leaders.

5 Presentation and analysis of information

Chapter outline

This chapter:

1 presents an analysis of the semi-structured interviews and online survey undertaken in the three rail settings with four levels of leaders; and
2 presents an account of the current practices of rail leaders and associated findings of the study.

Overview

Since the start of this investigation, a literature review of current theory and practice was presented in Chapter 2; a conceptual framework for leadership talent management was developed in Chapter 3; and the methodology for the study was described in Chapter 4. This chapter presents the analysis of the semi-structured interviews and online survey in three rail organisations. A brief description is given on how the information will be ordered to allow the reader to gain a view of the leadership talent practices of rail organisations, 'set in the conditions of the world today' (Creswell 2007, p. 249).

Australian rail organisations have traditionally been structured along bureaucratic or hierarchically organised arrangements with public sector foundations. Many current organisations have been transformed through innovative business models and new partnerships. Green (2007) suggests that organisations such as rail maintain hierarchical arrangements to conduct new business in old structures. In these types of arrangements, leaders with the most power and influence tend to be at the top as the organisational configuration was designed for times when business was more stable (Boedker et al.

2011a). Now, postmodernism, brought about by rapidly changing world conditions, is ‘a conceptual threat’ to such traditional organisational structures and leadership as it was once accomplished (Green 2007, p. 16). Consideration of the diversity of many views is needed for these new environments because individuals deconstruct and reconstruct their own meaning in contemporary organisations, adding to the complexity of purpose for leaders (Green 2007).

The approach to this chapter is through the metanarrative of rail HRD from a postmodern perspective, seeking to understand leadership talent management from the viewpoints of four levels of leaders. The author acknowledges that each leader presented their viewpoint with different perceptions (Han, Kuchinke & Boulay 2009) that may be outside the realms of experience of other leaders under investigation (Hart 2004). For that reason, the information gathered from organisations and leaders was filtered through the conceptual framework presented in Chapter 3 (see Table 9) to identify and present these experiences. The framework displays six main themes: the external and internal context; defining leadership talent; communicating the vision; practices for identifying leaders; strategies for developing leadership talent; and then evaluation of the strategies for continuous improvement of practice. Within these main themes, there are 25 sub-themes in total.

In Chapter 4, the analysis and interpretation procedures described how interview responses were recorded against this framework of the leadership talent model. What was not described was the high volume of information that resulted from this approach. Consequently, it was necessary to consolidate and synthesise the information by four key themes based on the leadership talent management framework to allow the stories of rail industry leaders to unfold. The information was clustered in four, rather than six themes, because the analysis revealed that only certain parts of the conceptual framework from Table 9 were found to be used in practice in the rail industry settings. Most of the information gathered from leaders is displayed as shaded areas in Table 22. These areas have been consolidated into the following four headings:

1 The external and internal environments (Parts 1a and 1b);
2 Defining and communicating leadership talent (Parts 2 and 3);
3 Identifying leadership talent (Parts 4); and

4 Developing leadership talent, subsuming evaluation and continuous improvement (Parts 5 and 6).

Table 9 still stands as the conceptual framework for leadership talent practice, but what has been found in this study is that some areas of leadership talent practice in rail organisations are not being undertaken in the same way as the framework derived from the literature indicates. A brief summary of the significance of the topic from Chapter 3 is provided at the beginning of each theme as a shaded and italicised paragraph. This shaded area re-orientates the reader to the importance of the theme to consider and compare against the actual findings.

Table 22: Location of interview responses on conceptual framework

Where interview responses were most commonly located on the conceptual framework (shown by the shaded areas)

External	**Internal** →					
1	1	2	3	4	5	6
External contexts of leadership	**Internal cultural contexts of leadership**	**Define leadership talent**	**Communicate**	**Identify**	**Develop**	**Evaluation and continuous improvement**
Globalisation - managing an extended workforce	Generational - Veterans, Baby Boomers, Gen X and Gen Y	Importance of leadership talent for business strategy	Senior leaders own and endorse the talent management strategy	Senior leaders endorse, support and model the desired talent identification behaviour	Individual needs are identified and developed	Analysis of data against targets and strategy
Changing economic, structural (privatisation and government regulation) and social environment	Diversity - women, mature workers, different cultural groups	Difference between Management and Leadership is described and articulated	Rigorous, transparent written definition of leadership talent	Connected conversations between manager and employee to identify leadership talent, aspirations, motivation and potential	Who - current and future leaders because all have potential to further develop further	Observation of what is happening
Sustainability - economic, environmental and social impacts of leadership	Technology and leading in a technology based environment	Definition of leadership talent – past, short term (present), medium and longer term (future)	Clarity and consistency of the message and performance expectations	Individual knowledge about rail systems and the business environment knowledge is identified	What – values, behaviours, skills, knowledge and competencies for executive, middle and frontline leadership	Participant feedback Improvement strategies
				Individual performance including results, relationships with others, drive and integrity is identified	How - Balance of methods e.g. formal learning and informal workplace learning	
					Self awareness through psychometric tools, coaching and mentoring and 360 degree Feedback	
					Workplace learning through Projects and assignments, Workshadowing, Workplace opportunities	

The external and internal environments

External contexts of leadership

Leadership in a globalised economy is characterised by deregulation of industries, ongoing change and the use of technology. Leaders play an important role in interpreting the changes from the external environment, in sustaining the organisation and connecting the people to the organisational vision and purpose (from Chapter 3, Theme 1 – External, p. 70).

In the three rail organisations, evidence of recent restructures was apparent, not just once, but on an ongoing basis for at least twenty years. Reorganisation of once owned public assets had occurred many times since deregulation in the early 1990s. Yet, the higher level impacts, such as how new practices had affected people, were not mentioned widely by executive, middle or frontline leaders, and only briefly by HR leaders. Globalisation was not a term discussed by leaders (middle and frontline) although some mentioned the changing shape of rail organisations from what they had experienced as younger employees, with many lamenting about the demise of government ownership.

The interviews and survey enabled interpretation of the views of employees about their respective organisations, the proud sentiments about individual associations with the Australian industry and long careers in rail – evident with executive, middle and frontline leaders whereas HR leaders had careers that are more fluid. The culture and history of rail were described by one leader as, '…a proud history…my family (my brother, father and I) have over 65 years in the Australian rail industry, most of the time as leaders' (Survey, Qn 20). Leaders at the middle and frontline understood rail companies as solid entities, oblivious to most outside impacts because rail businesses service their customers first and foremost. Middle and frontline leaders portrayed their role as maintaining ongoing services even when there were times of chaos, restructure and change. Rail strategists were able to achieve team cohesiveness for day-to-day activities and operations that shield internal employees from the outside world. Senior leaders revealed that, in most restructures, employees had been able to maintain continuity of employment with the organisation, either under different ownership, in a parallel organisation or in a contracting company that provided services to the industry.

The one constant and enduring factor evident in the interviews was the commitment of middle and frontline leaders to the industry.

Leaders' responses to changes

In the post-privatisation rail era, executives accepted that new opportunities had to be seized by those who were willing to take a chance on the changes, described as follows:

> By staying around for a long time…I have worked my way through…various restructures, including privatisations, and as a consequence of my involvement in all of those changes, I have now become an executive leader...(Executive leader , Innovative Rail, Qn 2).

Their responses reflected a 'survival of the fittest' approach in this new environment, focusing on self and achievement of personal success because of restructuring. Changes provided opportunities for career advancement if employees were prepared to undertake different roles in new structures, as one executive leader explained:

> I was the General Manager Commercial in the previous franchise…I was given the role again with the addition of the procurement function…my area of responsibility dramatically increased (Executive leader, City Trains, Qn 2).

Within the rest of the organisation, external changes had some effect on the people but the middle and frontline leaders portrayed their commitment to the continuation of services to the public. This preceded affiliation with a particular company as leaders identified with rail, rather than the organisational name. It was apparent that when new owners were in charge of the respective rail businesses, they did little to change the internal structures of the organisation below executive level, preferring to maintain their distance from operations.

Ongoing changes in organisations, and the lack of planning for the leadership needs of rail since the 1990s was perceived by HR leaders as decimating the pool of employees over time. This contributed to a generational gap in new leaders coming through:

> ... So from 2000, when the business was privatised, to 2004, guys here were wearing five, six and seven hats at a time trying to manage all that…2004-2007-ish they were owned by another owner…Credit was an issue…There was a skills shortage, so there wasn't a lot of new talent coming in and since then we've got a real generational gap (HR leader, Innovative Rail, Qn 6).

Overall, the analysis revealed leaders viewed their individual organisations as operating within a traditional state base, even when there was an international holding company directing the higher-level strategy.

Internal, cultural contexts of leadership

Different generational and cultural groups in the workplace pose both challenges and opportunities for leaders in rail. Leveraging this generational and cultural diversity can bring about change to the established rail culture, unleashing human capital and talent in new and unforeseen ways (Chapter 3, Theme 1 – Internal, p. 72).

Analysing the internal contexts of rail organisations provided insight into the age and demographic profile of the rail workforce as well as a range of views about personal, leadership journeys. This study confirmed a high predominance of older employees with long rail careers at all levels of leadership brought about by a number of external factors – continuous restructuring since the 1990s, reduction of the overall rail workforce and the tightening of employment opportunities for new industry entrants. Further cost-cutting measures over the years within each organisation minimised long-term planning for leadership and management roles, which seemed to have influenced the mindsets of key leaders in organisations today. Consequently, rail employees from the 1990s reconfigurations have been key people, shaping the industry over the last twenty years and being custodians of the rail culture and traditions during this period.

Demographic profile of rail leaders

A profile of the interview participants' age groupings was deduced from the responses collected during the interviews and survey. Definitions of generational groups were confirmed from the following sources: Houck (2011), Howe and Strauss (1992) and Smith and Clurman (2009).

Nine of the twelve interviewees were in the Baby Boomer (over 45 years to 63 years) age group where all were male, and with an Anglo-Saxon background. In the survey, similar profiles were found with 3.4 percent of participants over 63 years of age, 55.2 percent of participants in the Baby Boomer (over 45 years to 63 years) age group and 41.4 percent of participants in the Generation X (32 years to 44 years) age group (Survey, Qn 2). The survey identified 10 percent of leaders as female and in frontline roles from the responses received in the paper-based format. The trend towards an ageing workforce is not just an Australian but a global occurrence (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development 2005). However, the current transition and changeover of employees in the industry in Australia is bringing to light new entrants to leadership roles at the frontline for a start, with a younger age profile – even though the

youngest leader in this study, employed at City Trains, was in his late-30s. The middle level leader at Innovative Rail highlighted the dearth of younger leaders in rail:

> We've actually been rather top heavy in senior staff – experienced staff – and we had quite a drought of new younger staff come on. I am currently 39 years of age – for many years I was the youngest person in my area, and it should never have been like that…we've started to get younger people coming through now, but it's only just been a recent phenomenon, so the identification is hugely important (Middle leader, Innovative Rail, Qn 7).

Executive leaders

Executive leaders were all over 50 years of age as it had taken many years to develop the knowledge and skill required for strategic roles. All were proud of their achievements because of undertaking key influential roles in past organisational restructures, confirming their commitment to the industry in the changing times of rail, as described, 'My career has been in railways. I joined as a graduate engineer in the early 70s' (Executive leader, Innovative Rail, Qn 1).

Middle level leaders

Middle level leaders showed their adaptability for a variety of generalist roles. Here, they were comfortable with people but did not have specialist skills. Undertaking any leadership role or position of responsibility required some level of maturity in years, probably not gained when a person was younger. As one middle leader said, 'By the mid 40s...people have their life sorted out' (Middle leader, Innovative Rail, Qn 11). This point was confirmed, as all middle level leaders were aged 40 years and older. Those who had skills to lead teams at the middle level were quickly identified. They usually remained there where they had strengthened their skills further through the many workplace experiences their positions had afforded. This level of responsibility at the middle level required leaders to be able to manage certain pressures outside their immediate relationships, family and other circles of influence.

The older age profile of middle level leaders highlighted how leadership was valued and formalised under government rail ownership. Then, the economy was more stable and consistent approaches to developing foundation level skills were provided. These opportunities incorporated on- and off-the-job development that had benefitted middle leaders over the past twenty years. Roles such as stationmaster provided lower level management skills and a formal qualification that enabled this leader to progress to other career roles over time as he explained:

> The starting rank was a station master's certificate back in late 90s which was more or less around management and managing staff and planning and organising – things like that….The station master's ticket was done pre-privatisation, so back in the government days, I guess. It was a six week course... (Middle leader, Innovative Rail, Qn 1).

However, requirements for different positions have now changed, and there are crucial imperatives to attract younger people into the industry. There was a perception that even though older employees were reliable, trusted workers they were set in their ways, difficult to change and because they were on the verge of retirement, they were not seen as being able to step up to leadership positions.

> …a lot of staff that just can't be considered now because of their age – regardless of their experience and talents, it's tough to put people through a system when they're just on the verge of retirement…why go through the effort? (Middle leader, Innovative Rail, Qn 7).

Frontline leaders

There were both older and younger leaders at the frontline. Younger leaders believed that while older leaders may be on the verge of retirement, they held vast specialised knowledge. Their talents should be considered equally for opportunities in rail along with new up-and-coming employees. One younger leader believed that the organisation should not overlook the potential talents in all employees by suggesting, 'don't assume anything...' (Frontline leader, Innovative Rail, Qn 10).

The paper-based survey conducted in one organisation identified extensive experience in frontline roles, with the majority of leaders having more than five years of experience as leaders. A snapshot of this extensive experience in rail is shown in Figure 25. There were three leaders with 15-20 years of experience, six leaders with 20-25 years of experience, three leaders with 25-30 years of experience and one leader with more than 35 years of experience.

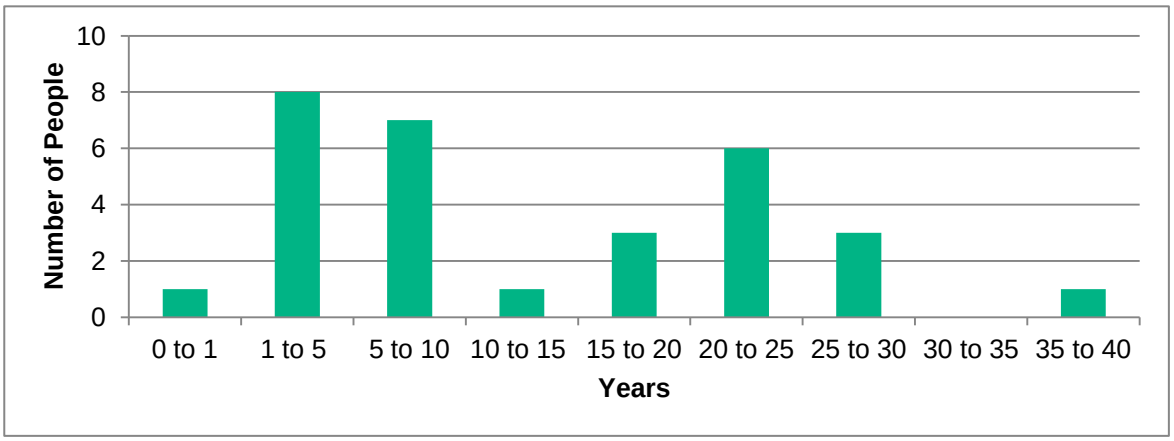


Figure 25: Years of frontline leadership experience in rail (from survey, N=30)

HR leaders

HR leaders in this study were male and aged over 50 years of age. Their knowledge of the human capital profile of the entire rail workforce was limited. What was known focused on the 'hard' skills of employees in operations in technical areas and safety-regulated situations. Given the compliance requirements, this is understandable, but in relation to human capital, most HR records were held in the safety and compliance areas of the business, not in the human resource management portfolio, and surprisingly, this information was not readily accessible to the HR leader in one organisation.

> It actually sits in the safety and compliance area because it gets audited by the regulator…we can print off a big matrix and say 'Yep, here's all the guys that can do x, y and z'…a lot of that is specific – who can do this type of welding or operate this type of vehicle and that sort of stuff ... (HR leader, Innovative Rail, Qn 9).

Use of technology to manage the human capital profile of the organisation

Other information that could provide a picture of aspirations and abilities for leadership roles such as employee leadership skills, qualifications and experience held less value to this organisation and was not collected nor managed in an electronic format.

> We have a HR information system, but it's very basic…because of the rail skills set and legislative requirements to justify the genuine skill sets like ATQF type stuff we track very well…we're certainly not documenting leadership skills, so who has the best people skills (HR leader, Innovative Rail, Qn 9).

When there was a need for specific skill sets such as for new job contracts, conducting a process to identify particular skills was laborious. This approach did not enable modelling for future planning to identify skills gaps or leadership needs of the organisation.

Defining and communicating leadership talent

A leadership talent strategy defines what 'leadership' means to the organisation with a specific definition that can be changed as business circumstances respond to the external environment (Chapter 3, Theme 2 – Define, p. 73). *The definition is communicated widely throughout the organisation, articulating why the strategy and approach is needed, how it works, the benefits and details of performance expectations* (Chapter 3, Theme 3 – Communicate, p. 74).

Questions on the importance of a leadership talent strategy were asked of executive and HR leaders as they were identified as developing the organisational policies and plans for human capital strategies. The outcome of the interviews revealed there was no documented leadership talent management strategy in the three rail organisations.

Organisational responses to leadership planning

Continual ownership changes and restructuring in both public and private sector rail organisations resulted in constant reorganisation, but a strong need to continue rail operations without disruption. Organisations tended to reshape their leaders and leadership positions constantly at the executive levels to meet ongoing business requirements. They maintained the middle and frontline roles in their current format over other priorities such as planning for future leadership. An invisible line appeared to exist between strategic levels, and the middle and frontline, which were retained in these periods of restructure and change to ensure operations ran smoothly on a continuous basis (illustrated in Figure 26).

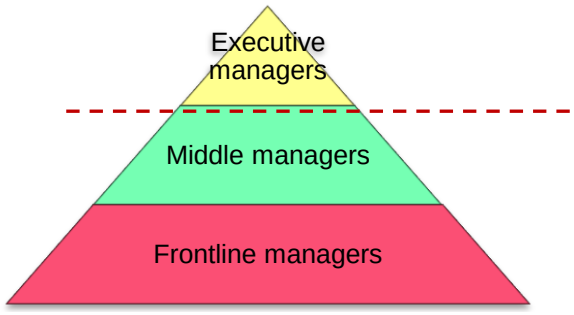


Figure 26: Reorganising teams at the top

There were a number of consequences in taking the middle and frontline leadership cohort for granted. Frontline leaders comprised the greatest number of leaders in the organisation (73 percent), with middle level leaders (19 percent) next, also confirmed in

the associated rail study by Short et al. (2011). Long careers of continuous rail industry service, and learning and skills developed on the job contributed to fixed ideas of the rail industry, and the need to follow certain operational practices. A change of leaders at the middle and frontline occurred relatively infrequently. One HR leader believed that continual organisational change did not enable the organisation to develop its own culture, with widespread consequences for people in understanding the ongoing changes. He suggested that the rail industry, more than other industries, had seen ongoing change. As he described, '...it's been through such rapid change, in terms of ownership, and it hasn't really had a time to develop a culture yet' (HR leader, City Trains, Qn 14). In the public sector organisation, change occurred frequently, and senior leaders were pragmatic about how they managed in this environment. Sustainability of any particular leadership strategy was short-lived, and limited to a 12 month timeframe, budgetary constraints and which government was in power at the time. There was a degree of frustration that change was ongoing and occurred without notice as, 'priorities can change overnight' (Executive leader, MTAA, Qn 12.3).

A sample of the responses to the question about ownership and responsibility for developing leadership talent strategies, policies and procedures is provided in Table 23.

Table 23: Responsibility for developing leadership talent strategy and procedures

Question: Who is responsible for developing the strategy policies and procedures that facilitate the identification of future leaders?
Innovative Rail
The executive - HR are assisting in the process but in essence it's the responsibility of the executive team… (Executive leader, Innovative Rail, Qn 8).
MTAA
The Executive Director People and Organisational Development – he and his team fundamentally do the leg work if you like – put the frameworks in place but it's ultimately the corporate executive who decides... (Executive leader, MTAA, Qn 8).
City Trains
Well, the importance is critical…in terms of identifying future leaders… The human resources area effectively; they're leading the succession planning area and so we as leaders buy into that process (Executive leader, City Trains, Qn 8).

Executive leaders highlighted a range of factors affecting their ability and willingness to support and successfully develop a leadership talent strategy – citing structural inhibitors such as cultural differences, time and geographic spread of operations. When

different values in different organisations such as public sector and private sector came together in new partnerships, executive leaders were challenged in knowing how to bring together several cultures into the new organisation:

> While we have been a privatised organisation since 1999 and it's already 2011. Things have not really progressed over the last 12 years sufficiently…we are actually quite an immature organisation relative to other private enterprise non-rail businesses within Australia. The reason for that is because of just the nature of the franchise, the way it's been very short term and also the fact that the base in which we came from was really effectively from government….It's [the strategy] at a preliminary stage at the moment (Executive leader, City Trains, Qn 6).

Executives had particular beliefs about new leadership talent for the organisation. Firstly, they believed more work was needed to develop successful strategies across the board as this leader suggested , 'It's not working as well as what we need it to do, so I think perhaps its the bit we need to pick again' (Executive leader, MTAA, Qn 6). Secondly, they believed that while people were the key to success of the organisation, they had not actively developed leadership talent strategies. The HR leader stated, 'I think it's absolutely critical for this organisation… so yes, the answer is critical. Do you have an overall talent management strategy for leadership? No.' (HR leader, MTAA, Qn 7).

Defining leadership talent

The three executives and three HR leaders did not identify any documented definition of "leadership talent" in their organisations. In the private sector organisation, the executive leader believed the organisation was working to a definition of leadership talent, even though it was not written, because he believed everyone knew that engineering and business professionals were highly important to the business.

> Yes, we do. Yes, it is. I think it's not only implied but clearly where I sit it's recognised that this is a very important part of the business…the business needs are just as important as the engineering needs…and a talent for those two groups maybe somewhat different but nevertheless the definition of leadership does include individuals who can work very closely with people to produce optimum results…and also people who have got business or some commercial acumen [are] important (Executive leader, Innovative Rail, Qn 1).

In the public sector organisation, the executive leader believed that the leadership talent strategy was in its early days of development, the definition was not agreed upon and progress on the strategy had stalled at this stage:

> I'm certainly not aware of one in the sense of do we have a bit of paper which says here's what we want from leaders and we're going to try and identify people who have those particular attributes or skill sets and do we communicate that? No. I've certainly never seen that written down on a bit of paper… (Executive leader, MTAA, Qn 7).

He believed that even though identifying leaders from inside was necessary, there was also a need for outside talent because 'we are conscious that we can get good people from outside from time to time' (Executive leader, MTAA, Qn 6).

In the public/private partnership organisation, the executive leader believed that the definition of leadership talent was in people's minds but not communicated because there had been limited work on defining leadership talent:

> No, there isn't one really – it might be in people's minds, but it's not communicated. I mean, it's more a case of individuals that are identified as being capable leaders and they can vary from individual to individual, so there is really no definition that we have ... (Executive leader, City Trains, Qn 6).

One HR leader believed that there was no definition of leadership talent that was widely agreed upon but more likely 'in the heads' of the CEO and the other executives:

> No, we don't, to tell you the truth. We don't. There's kind of a general agreement around what it is and particularly within the executive team who are charged a lot with providing or making some judgements on who the potential leaders are, but no, we don't have one and it's not published. A lot of the succession plan is actually in my head and the CEO's head… (HR leader, Innovative Rail, Qn 7).

In another organisation, the leadership team did not have a true understanding of what they were trying to achieve in a definition:

> I'm not confident that we have got one at the moment. I think they are working with it/on it but perhaps struggling with it and I think it's a little bit subjective at the moment as well. I would like to see it as a team effort but at this stage, I'm not confident that we have got a true grasp on it (HR leader, City Trains, Qn 7).

The information revealed that none of the organisations placed a high priority, or urgency, on developing a leadership talent definition, either for the current time or the future.

To identify ideas about leadership talent at the different levels of the organisation, this study used several strategies. Considering the information from both the interviews and online survey, profiles were drawn up of the structure and composition of leadership teams, leaders' thinking about the difference between leadership and management, and what they thought about the characteristics and competencies for leaders.

How executive leaders define leadership talent

Executive teams directly influenced leadership talent strategies and leadership thinking. Their vast experience in rail and age profile tended to affect how they defined talented leaders in the industry, and the importance of leadership to business strategy.

Executive teams ranged in size from six to twelve members, in age from 50 years onwards, and were male (Table 24). All executive leaders were in the later stages of their careers, with a technical or engineering background developed in the rail or associated mining or construction industries. One of the senior executives had pursued a lifelong career in rail, and the other two leaders had arrived in rail later in their careers. Of the three executive leaders, one was leading a team of 40 staff, one was leading a team of 120 staff and 400 contractors, and one was leading a team of 250 staff.

Table 24: Executive management team profiles in three case study organisations

Executive	Innovative Rail	MTAA	City Trains
Number of employees in the organisation	260	1,463	3,500
Number of leaders in the organisational executive team	6	12	8
Number of staff reporting to each executive	120 (plus 400 contractors)	250	40
Career and professional background	Professional engineer (civil) in rail industry	Professional engineer (civil) in water industry	Financial professional, experience in the oil industry then rail industry
Age profile	aged over 55 years	aged over 55 years	aged over 50 years
Years with organisation	Since early 1970s, member of executive management team for 8 years	Since 2004, transferred from Public Works Department of state government	Since 2008, three years with previous franchise and now in this position for 1.5 years
Women on team	No	No	No

All three executive leaders demonstrated high-levels of personal and professional power through their extensive knowledge of strategy, their management chain of command, their expertise and a high degree of passion for the complexity of technical work.

> The organisation is undergoing significant growth as a result of the booming mineral industry in this state. Only five years ago we were researching [how to transport] a million tonne per annum... so it's more than doubling in our business. What that has required are large numbers of outputs that need to be delivered in a defined period of time (Executive leader, Innovative Rail, Qn 2).

They focused their definition of talented leaders on individuals with technical knowledge and expertise, and the ongoing external relationships necessary with the government for compliance issues. Responses came from a viewpoint of the importance of senior leaders, engineering and technical skills and individual relationships with stakeholders. This seemed to correlate with their interpretation of who could be a leader as one described, '… we are lacking in experienced people, particularly engineers and engineering type of people' (Executive leader, Innovative Rail, Qn 6).

How strategic decisions were made about enabling talented leaders and who participated in decision-making about leadership, varied in each of the three organisations but had a familiar focus on technical skills and abilities in a male dominated environment.

How executives defined the difference between leadership and management

Leaders were asked three questions to ascertain how they viewed the differences between leadership and management, with the intention of drawing out what leaders do at each of the leadership levels. The questions related to personal leadership skills, leadership qualities of other leaders they had admired at work, and personal qualities and abilities that should be considered as important for the Australian rail industry. One executive leader described the contrast between leading and managing as leading people and managing situations. Leadership of a diverse range of people included building teams and developing positive relationships within those teams, articulated by this particular executive leader as follows:

> I think that leadership is about leadership rather than managing and it's about building teams; about building relationships with people who lead those teams and setting the appropriate examples and that extends to our contractors also. There's a vast difference between managing – situations can be managed, people need to be led, and I think that at the executive level one needs to recognise that leadership takes precedence over management (Executive leader, Innovative Rail, Qn 2).

Executive leaders considered themselves strong in leading others and providing direction to shape and drive organisational strategy for the achievement of goals. They had definite ideas about where they were directing their teams but, while they allowed

team members some input to strategic decisions, their decisions were final as demonstrated by this leader, 'I look to have an inclusive approach and I am willing to support individuals where they have ideas and views...and after ensuring that I agree...' (Executive leader, City Trains, Qn 3). Individual decisiveness and lone decision-making was a key way of operating at the executive level in the private sector but less so in the public sector organisation because the strategy was likely to change, depending on changing government priorities.

What executives thought about the characteristics and competencies for leadership

The three executive leaders had definite opinions about their experiences of being led by different leaders over the course of their careers. This experience enabled rich description of the positive characteristics, style, and approaches that might be considered for leaders in the rail industry. They suggested that they had seen both sides of leadership as acknowledged in this comment, 'Yes, certainly over the years I've seen some very good leaders. I've also seen some mediocre leaders' (Executive leader, Innovative Rail, Qn 4). Good leaders are able to guide people:

> I think a good leader takes people with them rather than pushes or coerces them. I think a good leader and leaders that I've seen are very clear on the goals and targets they want to achieve and they communicate that with their people both widely and also on a personal basis (Executive leader, Innovative Rail, Qn 4).

Desirable personal characteristics highlighted by executives included the importance of being able to gain commitment from teams when implementing strategic initiatives and 'confidence', conviction and commitment in believing in the direction of their plans. The importance of confidence in particular is highlighted in this comment, 'I think the qualities that individuals bring as leaders, is confidence in what they are wanting to undertake...' (Executive leader, Innovative Rail, Qn 4). Maintaining a high presence with stakeholders and people at all levels of the organisation created a sense of safety, belonging and assurance in the organisational approach to business. The capacity to remember and utilise information about people was also regarded as an impressive skill by several executives, perceived to be underpinned by a sense of self-awareness, strong personal values and authenticity...

> I think he's got very good interpersonal skills. Besides the fact that he's the boss, he is happy to talk to anybody...he remembers that sort of stuff and raises it with people and people are always very impressed with that, so I think it's the common touch... (Executive leader, MTAA, Qn 4).

Both public sector and private sector leaders admired these personal skills.

> Clearly a good intellect in the sense that he is very clear about where the organisation's going and he communicates that; he has a very strong personal value set in terms of respecting people…and he lives those values (Executive leader, MTAA, Qn 4).

The attributes of a personal leadership style relating to 'presence' or charisma, aura, authority and poise, enabled the leader to depart from their own agenda to engage people at a personal level. The interviews highlighted that many leaders held the special attribute of 'charisma' in high regard as described in this quote, 'He was very open and personable; he was confident in his approach; he was willing to listen…he had a presence because of the way he reacted with people…' (Executive leader, City Trains, Qn 4). The elements of presence comprised abilities such as positive track record, successful achievements, relationship building, putting people at ease, respect, and a personal approach. The statement was further endorsed as, 'He knew so many people that he was obviously respected…he also was a personal person so that manifested in being able to have a positive presence' (Executive leader, City Trains, Qn 4).

How middle level leaders define leadership talent

Responses from this middle level cohort provided a different perspective to leadership and the way executives viewed their role. While executive leaders were looking over the organisation and setting the organisational direction, middle level leaders spoke about how they were looking over their teams. Middle level leaders defined talented leaders as 'maintaining the community of rail' (Middle level leader, Innovative Rail, Qn 5). What this meant was that the promotion to middle leadership came about through their ability to be in charge of others. They knew well the pathways to the middle that involved taking personal risks and opportunities in various roles. Their arrival at a middle level role seemed to them to be a high achievement, and consequently, they sought to maintain connections with the frontline. Middle level leaders were found to be highly personable and likeable leaders as demonstrated by this leader's ability to undertake different roles in the industry:

> Well, I have worked for the organisation for 35 years and I've just gone up through the ranks – through the organisation doing different jobs from time to time; different locations; different types of jobs and positions and I've just moved into this role you might say (Middle leader, Innovative Rail, Qn 2).

Their personal leadership journey through numerous experiences honed their skills. However, they indicated a desire to maintain the 'common touch' with others even though they had been given a 'lucky career break':

> I started out as a junior locomotive operator…I got my experience up…I moved to a team leader role…went to Train Control…learnt the role over a number of years… then I was given a golden opportunity… to middle leader (Middle leader, Innovative Rail, Qn 2).

In the process of rail restructuring, one middle leader had found that he had gone up, and then down, to lower roles as positions were changed or altered at different times, which made him realise that there were others who could seize his position:

> Up and down – I've been up and down the ladder a few times for different restructures, changes of management predominantly – I would say probably 15 years I guess in total, perhaps a little bit longer…(Middle leader, City Trains, Qn 1).

By the nature of their unique roles, middle leaders were the go-betweens – being promoted for the time, taking written directions obtained from higher level leaders to interpret and communicate to the frontline – yet always under threat from different impacts. Close interaction with the executive was limited and middle level leaders relied on their own interpretation of what they had to do to be a leader to enact their work:

> So, there were major projects and major impacts with the train operator, staffing, things like that so it's all come about where my manager believed I could do the job and it was up to me to deliver (Middle leader, City Trains, Qn 3).

How middle level leaders defined the difference between leadership and management

Responses about the difference between leadership and management revealed the importance of the human aspects of the middle leader's role through consistent actions and words with both individuals and teams, described as interpersonal skills. In this quote, the middle leader demonstrated how he tried to lead diverse groups of people by 'relating to your staff and actually listening instead of just dictating' (Middle leader, Innovative Rail, Qn 4). Interpretation of this leadership role revealed a need for constant interaction with teams across sites and locations, to ensure visibility of leadership presence:

> ...Communication – try to communicate, whether it's verbally, just face to face; try to keep everyone in the loop of what's going on…visit the staff where I can. I like to get out there and talk to staff and just take an interest in staff's welfare and development of staff as well (Middle leader, City Trains, Qn 4).

Leadership roles at the middle level indicated a high focus on team building and the recognition of how different roles contributed to work output. This middle level leader articulated everyone's value in this aim, 'You just recognise the fact that everyone's a team player; everyone's got their role to do...' (Middle leader, Innovative Rail, Qn 4). He believed that strong listening and communication skills ensured instructions to teams were accurate, expressed as listening and balancing viewpoints. His comments demonstrated his experience in the role in working with people, 'Well, I like to think that I listen to people and that I have a balanced view…weigh up one thought against another rather than just simply take one thing as gospel and running off with it' (Middle leader, MTAA, Qn 4).

What middle level leaders thought about the characteristics and competencies for leadership

Middle leaders believed that the leader's authenticity in the successful achievement at work came from a decisive style, an understanding of self, and the need to protect all stakeholders from injury in their line of work. The reference to decisiveness appeared frequently, a quality held in high importance in safety critical situations, as described below:

> Oh well, he just let people know that he's not to be messed with; don't play him for a fool; don't presume to lie to him and if you're honest with him he'll do everything in his power to sort situations out with you…I respect that – you utterly knew where you stood and it wasn't done in a threatening manner either (Middle leader, Innovative Rail, Qn 5).

The same leader suggested that getting the point across to teams was a very important leadership skill because there were no second chances in dangerous situations where people could come to serious harm:

> 'I think actually it was quite appropriate because he was dealing in a safety critical area where, if his management didn't reflect that seriousness, people could die…people just can't afford to goof around...' (Middle leader, Innovative Rail, Qn 5).

This was demonstrated in an out-of-the-ordinary manner in another leader as this individual found:

> '…I was thoroughly impressed with was his very quiet approach. There were a few managers that I had met up to that point that were quite bombastic, very in your face, almost intimidating...' (Middle leader, Innovative Rail, Qn 4).

Commitment enabled employees to build trust in that leader. While the quiet approach was surprising to some, leaders held personal approaches in high regard as in this example:

> He was a high-ranking manager but he got onto a very personal level straight away. And I remember actually being quite impressed with that whole approach. It took the whole authoritarian stance totally out of it and brought him down to a totally human level…it was pretty obvious that he utterly knew what he was doing 24/7 which reinforced your confidence in him (Middle Leader, Innovative Rail, Qn 4).

Decisiveness and being able to articulate reasons truthfully, without feeling personally compromised, were viewed as courageous and admirable:

> If the decision that she made didn't go in a particular person's favour, she would explain the reasons why these didn't go in, this is why and this is the decision that it was made on these merits…If there was something that needed to be done that was tough to tackle on an individual issue, then she would do it discreetly as necessary and move on… (Middle leader, MTAA, Qn 4).

At the middle levels, listening to the views of people featured highly as one of the aspects of informed decision-making, helping to build and maintain the community of rail. These included assertiveness skills used in a proactive way to maintain team togetherness and individual welfare as demonstrated by this leader, '… door was always open, took an interest in – if you were sick – he would call in when he had an opportunity, very reasonable sort of thing but also assertive too...' (Middle leader, City Trains, Qn 5).

How frontline leaders define leadership talent

Frontline leaders valued talented leaders as those who were able to provide direction within boundaries, guide, mentor and coach others, listen to ideas, give good feedback and encourage a sense of team and community. One major difference between middle level leaders and frontline leaders was the way in which both enacted their roles. Middle level leaders looked over frontline leaders, and frontline leaders looked down to their teams. It seemed that the middle level leaders were constantly checking what they had left behind at the frontline. Frontline leaders were in charge of their own kingdom where they were overseeing operations, and they were doing it in their own way. Their important roles were sometimes overseeing up to three levels of leaders and teams in roles such as 'crew leader', 'team leader', 'supervisor' and other various terms.

How frontline leaders defined the difference between leadership and management

Interview responses were varied with two of the three leaders involved in crucial operations at the frontline, and the other leader in operational support. In these discussions, frontline leaders demonstrated the most focus on managing operations:

> An authorised officer…everyone calls them ticket inspectors…they're responsible for a number of different jobs – it's customer service; it's enforcing the law under the Transport Act and we get involved in crowd control for football traffic, special events… (Frontline leader, City Trains, Qn 1).

Extensive lengths of service in frontline roles highlighted that these leaders had exceptional operational skills in the successful delivery of rail services when many people are involved, both within the rail organisation and in the public. One leader had been in the industry for more than forty years, and he described his vast experience proudly, 'I joined the job in 1969. I left the government and came back in 2005. I was asked if I would like to come back, based probably on my previous record' (Frontline leader, MTAA, Qn 3). He demonstrated his personal and positional power to lead his team because he believed safety underpinned all operating decisions with this summation that leaders 'must understand the business…the rail safety accreditations; you've got to understand what it means…' (Frontline leader, MTAA, Qn 6). On the other hand, a younger frontline leader listened to the views of the team but made his own decisions, based on weighing up all the facts and being a good role model for others as demonstrated in his comments:

> You can't make a promise that you can't keep, and you've got to walk the walk – if you are asking someone to be this or do that, you have to do it too, and I think that's the key to a lot of it. You can't ask someone to do something if you're not going to do it yourself (Frontline leader, City Trains, Qn 6).

What frontline leaders thought about the characteristics and competencies for leadership

Listening skills are crucial for frontline leaders, endorsed as follows for operational roles, 'Well, I think being a good listener. That is something that is a good attribute for a leader' (Frontline leader, Innovative Rail, Qn 6). Listening skills enabled operations to run smoothly which are necessary for the frontline rail environment as highlighted by this interviewee, 'The thing that I liked about her the most was she would listen; she was open to suggestions and she gave good feedback which was straight – there was no fluff ...' (Frontline leader, City Trains, Qn 5).

The ability to listen and be decisive was a way leaders imparted an impression of confidence with their approach to getting the job done. Employees believed that if they were listened to, they felt able to conduct their work within invisible boundaries, or 'freedom within boundaries', further elaborated by one frontline leader:

> He's a person that allows you freedom to do what you need to do, but he does give you the guidelines within which to work, so he basically sets the boundaries and then allows you to proceed and to develop within those boundaries. I think that's good leadership skills (Frontline leader, Innovative Rail, Qn 5).

How HR leaders define leadership talent

The human resource leaders interviewed were all male, aged over 50 years of age and, while they contributed to the executive team decision-making; their input was perceived to have limited effect on the talent management strategies. The contribution of HR roles, more on the periphery of the organisation, was confirmed by responses from executives. They highlighted that leadership talent strategies were the responsibility of the executive teams, not the HR leaders. Consequently, they did not have a firm opinion about leadership talent. Instead, HR leaders were able to provide input to organisational decision-making when executive teams called for their opinion or certain HR topics. Executive teams would then decide whether they wanted to follow this direction.

How HR leaders defined the difference between leadership and management

The HR leaders in the three organisations led teams consisting of a few staff, to teams as large as 35 staff. The interviews indicated less urgency in their work as they were not providing direction to day-to-day operational rail teams, and their work depended on strategy relayed through executive teams. While HR leaders developed the concepts, ideas and directions for people related initiatives, the combined group of executive leaders could overrule, change or ignore these proposals, and their HR role seemed to be micro-managed by others. In all of the three organisations, HR leaders did not demonstrate firm ideas about the difference between leadership and management.

What HR leaders thought about the characteristics and competencies for leadership

In referring to how they viewed positive leadership qualities, HR leaders valued authenticity and putting others before self:

> You always saw who she was, and what she thought and what she felt. She looked after us… (HR leader, Innovative Rail, Qn 4)

> ...he sort of pushed all that aside and just said 'I'm just a person just like you' and that authenticity and humility sort of struck me (HR leader, MTAA, Qn 4).

They believed good leaders provide an atmosphere where people wanted to do their best, helping others to learn:

> A good leader will create an environment where people want to do their best and will do so whether you are there or not… (HR leader, City Trains, Qn 5).

> ...We got well developed and got some good skills (HR leader, Innovative Rail, Qn 4)

Summary of the characteristics and competencies for leadership

At the end of this section, a summary of the responses to the two questions asked of the 12 leaders about important characteristics and competencies for leadership was collated. The questions related to: 1. the favourable characteristics or abilities that executive, middle, frontline and HR leaders had experienced in other leaders; and 2. the abilities leaders in rail should possess or develop. The responses from executive, middle, frontline and HR leaders were then analysed for key words to identify what leaders value. A summary of the responses by *all* leaders is provided below in Table 25.

The leadership literature describes many of the characteristics found in this study. It is noticeable that there is an overwhelming appearance of the terms *personal* and *human*. These terms appeared in each of the 12 interview responses. The questions were then rephrased and repeated in two different formats for the online survey. This enabled crosschecking of the findings of the terms identified in the interviews. The survey uncovered similar personal and human-focused terms including the abilities of leaders in:

- 'being able to communicate with all levels of the workforce'
- 'the ability to explain an objective'
- 'people skills, knowledge and experience'
- 'someone you can talk to'
- 'energy, vitality, positive attitude'
- 'the ability to manage multiple disciplines without specific technical knowledge' (Survey, Qn 12).

Table 25: What current leaders thought about the qualities of other leaders

	Innovative Rail	MTAA	City Trains
Executive	Confidence Take people with them Clear about goals Communicate widely and on a personal basis	Good interpersonal skills Time for everyone Common touch Good memory for names Good intellect Clear on direction Very strong personal value Respecting people	Open and personable Confident Willing to listen Presence Decisive Live the values
Middle	Very quiet approach Got onto a very personal level straight away Welcoming Helpful Human level Knew what he was doing Confidence in him	Listened Balanced up her arguments Decisive and open Tackle tough issues Discreet Personality Positive demeanour Personal interest	A good listener Open door policy Personal interest Assertive Ways of working
Frontline	Freedom within boundaries Guiding Mentoring	Team Community	Listen Open to ideas Good feedback Straight no fluff Encouraging Show and nurture Clear direction
Human resources	Knack of balancing things well Female Authentic She looked after us Mentor Develop Skills	Sound knowledge base Approachable Personal Welcoming Authenticity Humility	Sensible Human Personal Confide Listen Honest Stand up for you Help you learn Positive environment

Communicating leadership talent

While there was no direct question about communication of leadership talent management strategies, what individual leaders conveyed about their approach was revealing. None of the organisations had a defined strategy or definition of a talented leader, with a number of reasons provided by executive teams. These included, it is easy to identify possible leaders, performance management has not been developed yet, and the organisation has just been formed. As a result of having no leadership talent strategy or consensus on the definitions of a talented leader in organisations, the messages communicated through the organisations about leadership talent were interpreted as necessarily subtle and implied.

From the interviews, it was possible to deduce three main messages on communicating leadership talent management. The first message has highlighted that only some people can enact leadership in rail and individual talents must meet certain criteria. While these criteria were not defined, they were believed by interviewees to be well established in the minds of current leaders.

The second message was that there are two types of leaders – professional leaders with highly valued expertise such as engineering, technical and commercial qualifications, and functional leaders at the middle and frontline with skills in safety, compliance, and operations.

The third message was that there are two main ways of selecting leaders – a process at the executive level and a process at the middle and frontline levels. Employees with professional qualifications were potential 'talented' leaders for senior leadership roles. Other employees at the middle and frontline provided a functional leadership role but were not considered to be 'talented' nor to have the potential for senior leadership. At the middle and frontline, well-established, informal processes were in place for selecting and preparing leaders for future opportunities. Such processes enabled certain people to be included in the knowledge about leadership opportunities while excluding others.

In all three organisations, subjective approaches to leadership talent management sent messages to the rest of the organisation that notions about leadership were already fixed and devoid of any real intention to pursue strategies that were different.

Identifying leadership talent

A clearly articulated and communicated leadership talent framework, strategy and leadership definition enables organisations to be clear about the talents required by leaders. Objective and transparent processes discover individual aspirations and potential for leadership (Chapter 3, Theme 4 – Identify, p. 75).

This section sets out to highlight how leadership talent is identified in the three rail settings when none of the organisations had a defined strategy for talent identification or differentiation. As a way of delving more deeply into this issue, the question was posed in the interviews about how individual employees were supported if they were identified as having potential or they aspired to a leadership role. Then, in the online

survey, leaders were asked how important the identification of future leaders is to their respective organisations. The survey results, shown in Figure 27, identified that 66.7 percent of leaders believe that identifying leadership talent is very important, 27.3 percent of leaders believe it is somewhat important while 6.1 percent of leaders believe it is not important (Survey, Qn 15).

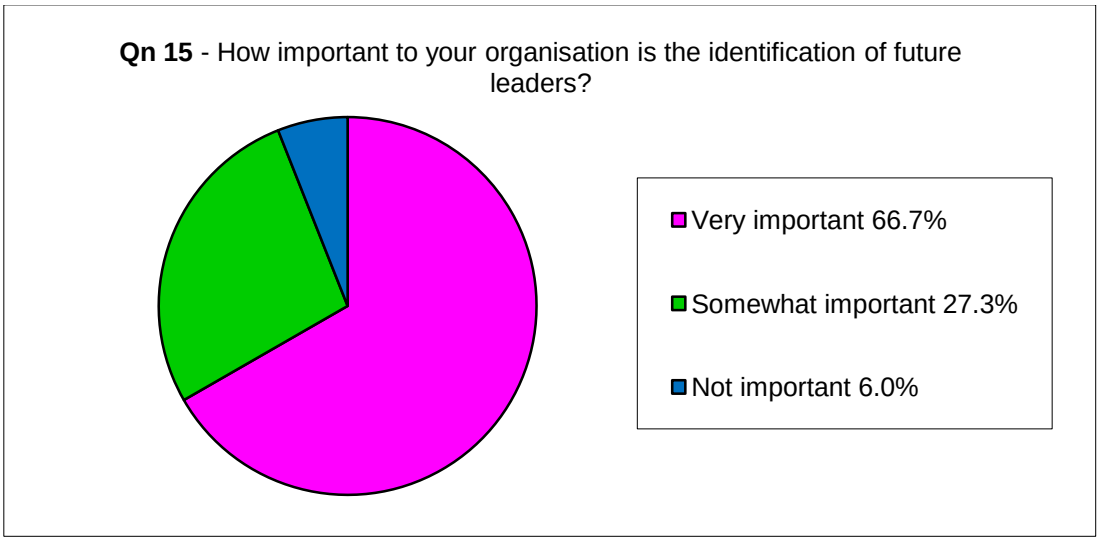


Figure 27: Views on the importance of the identification of future leaders

On an individual level, one leader believed 'observations of staff by supervisors' could help in the identification process of leadership talent. This process would include 'observations of their achievements and their commitment to the organisation' (Survey, Qn 16). Others stated:

- 'feedback from team leaders'
- 'knowledge of staff and their capabilities';
- 'the ability of current leaders to 'look beyond the current ones [leaders]'
- 'keeping an open mind on individuals and offering opportunities to those that have an interest'
- 'performance reviews'
- 'letting people act in the role for a period of time then assess their suitability'
- 'giving the quiet ones who get the job done and who are not the loud self-promoting types to have a go'

These were all common-sense ways leaders thought organisations could identify leadership talent (Survey, Qn 16). Nonetheless, how organisations *actually* identify leaders was somewhat different from the responses collected in the interviews. These findings are described in the next paragraphs.

The view from the top

Executive leaders were firm in their beliefs about identification of leadership talent being the responsibility primarily of the executive team, rather than an organisational approach. These sentiments are reflected in this comment that, 'The executive...not as much HR – HR are assisting in the process but in essence it's the responsibility of the executive team' (Executive leader, Innovative Rail, Qn 8).

Executive leaders believed they should take a proactive interest in connecting with and supporting, talented employees who would mainly come from a professional background. These employees were of prime importance to the organisation's long-term success, so in this supporting role, executives would be able to foresee any engagement issues that would impede the retention of younger expertise:

> On top of everything else, this requires managers and the executive team to take a proactive interest in individuals, because it's very difficult to recruit suitable staff. It's also a challenge to retain such people, and that requires both company and personal efforts (Executive leader, Innovative Rail, Qn 5).

In the public sector organisation, the executive believed that the support and commitment to leadership talent came from the executive team of 12, who met every three months to discuss HR strategies. While the executive team endorsed the strategies, it was the responsibility of the HR leader to implement those strategies outside of the meetings. However, what really happened in this organisation was frequent rescheduling of discussions. An indifference to, as well as a lack of awareness about, supporting leadership at all levels was observed because there was a strong focus on believing leadership talent was only within senior levels. As a result, these discussions about aspiring leaders and leadership initiatives had low importance because a number of people had already been 'identified to progress to senior leadership roles', and the executive team believed they only needed to track their progress:

> Quarterly meetings...probably needs to be an ongoing discussion about how we think the future leaders in the place are going...not every quarter but once every six months…so we really should just be tracking their progress and asking what else we can do… (Executive leader, MTAA, Qn 10).

People processes still 'under development'

People processes in one organisation were 'still under development'. While this statement was not used in the other two organisations, their processes were also perceived as 'still under development'. Comments from executives indicated that talented leaders were highly important to organisational success but the processes to identify them were immature and of low priority:

> We're starting to identify individuals but from the perspective of identifying future leaders is actually critical because we don't have enough at the moment, and you then need to mentor and develop them to the point where they can actually then assume a leadership role, so this all takes time… (Executive leader, City Trains, Qn 6).

Executive leaders held the power and resources for people development initiatives in all three organisations. While they knew how they personally arrived at their own leadership destination through many different experiences, they were not able to translate this experience for the benefit of the organisation about developing other people. Their comments indicated that it was stamina and endurance over a lengthy period of time that would lead to leadership success, rather than what the organisation did to help. The concept of supporting, identifying and developing different levels of leaders seemed to be cast aside because it was believed that many employees, especially at the middle and frontline, did not have the aspirations or ability to develop their career further:

> Certainly, you might amongst your management ranks to say get a bit more rigour into it but in terms of train drivers – the vast majority just wishes to remain driving trains and that's a pointless exercise (Executive leader, MTAA, Qn 2).

There was limited awareness of the untapped potential within the organisation and some leaders thought that the industry needed to work together to share senior leaders and provide opportunities to advance individual career pathways, with this being a typical comment:

> As an industry, we need to work closely together…be prepared to share our leadership courses but also individuals, and be able to support and sponsor, second, transfer, make sure that the opportunities exist for people to develop as such, so the best people rise to the surface…that has to be done within the industry, not as individual companies (Executive leader, Innovative Rail, Conclusion).

This approach, however, was not solving the immediate issue of leadership for different levels within the organisation, which is more than just identifying senior leaders for

executive positions. However, the view that leaders at senior levels were the priority of any leadership talent strategy was prevalent, and there was limited consideration of leaders at either the middle or frontline levels:

> I mean apart from I guess the understanding amongst the executive that we really need to be grooming people for future managers, so that's understood. Is there a statement about how we're going to go about doing it? No... (Executive leader, MTAA, Qn 2).

Because executive teams were unsure about who or what it was they were looking for in their leaders, supporting and identifying people was difficult:

> We do a bit of it, but no we don't have any sort of aggregated list of employees who wish to progress and where they are and we certainly don't have a list of all the employees in this organisation with some – here's 50 skills – tick which ones they've got, no, and I'm quite frank that I'm not sure that you would ever want to go to that level (Executive leader, MTAA, Qn 9).

Importance of rail industry knowledge

Rail industry knowledge is a crucial need for rail industry leaders based on how many perceived the industry in its current situation. The lack of recruitment into the rail industry over an extended period had led to a shallow talent pool, which leaders believed needed steady rebuilding. The position in which the industry now found itself was one where it was difficult to recover without concerted effort because new employees did not have strong rail knowledge. The lack of recruitment to the rail industry had been enduring, 'The tragedy is there's been a lack of recruitment possibly for the best part of almost of a generation...and I am talking about 10-15 years…' (Executive leader, Innovative Rail, Qn 12.3).

The importance of rail industry awareness identified that leaders were searching for an image of a leader with a strong focus in technical areas. This may have been entirely relevant in the past, but the ability to maintain this image will become increasingly problematic into the future as many rail leaders retire. A certain profile of leaders had been entrenched in a familiar rail industry career for a generation, but this fixed profile was appropriate in different, more stable times. Now, the industry is changing rapidly and failure to recruit new entrants to the industry was showing cracks. Talent gaps were becoming evident which would take time to patch:

> The breakup of the large government railways into smaller private lots; the separation of the ownership from the elements of design and the construction

> portions, and that is going to take some time to consolidate (Executive leader, Innovative Rail, Qn 12.3).

Many leaders highlighted the impending retirement of more experienced, senior leaders as the greatest threat to the industry with the loss of historical rail knowledge, corporate know-how and specialist expertise. What leaders did not articulate in the interviews was how the next generation will make their own history as work processes, and technical and engineering developments, continue to evolve.

While rail knowledge is important for leaders, some executives believed that for senior leaders there might be too much focus on rail. In leadership, they thought the skills in leading people and the business were more important than a sole focus on rail knowledge alone because, 'We're a bit too fixated – perhaps we're a little bit too technically focused in terms of the leaders, we need very high calibre technical people and perhaps we're not broadening our horizons enough...' (Executive leader, PTA, Conclusion). Even at middle and frontline levels, employees should be able to learn and transfer knowledge from one industry to another, whenever appropriate developmental opportunities become available even though, '…they might not have rail experience but you can learn a lot of that stuff pretty quickly around how organisations work' (Executive leader, Innovative Rail, Conclusion).

Safety knowledge and its application are essential in rail yet a limiting factor to some degree, and some leaders were cautious in assessing employees as capable of leading operations because of the dangerous aspects of operational roles. Public views of the specialised nature of the industry and its safety-critical focus contributed to self-fulfilling prophecies of limited entrants to rail through perceptions that it is a 'closed' industry where, 'You don't get a lot of staff coming in and going out like a typical administrative job' (Middle leader, Innovative Rail, Qn 6). As a result, tacit rail industry knowledge was developed in-house with its own peculiarities because many roles were difficult to fill if key staff left or retired as they are, '…not interchangeable so consequently we do get a lot of people who are here for the long haul…' (Middle leader, Innovative Rail, Qn 6). Some leaders believed that the industry was its own naysayer because leaders with transferrable skills are available in other industry sectors. This includes staff with similar professional disciplines needed by the rail industry, and some others from unskilled areas as this leader described, 'I think the biggest idea is to disengage from this concept that rail is so critical…' (HR leader, MTAA, Conclusion).

Importance of connected conversations

In the presentation of these findings, the meaning of a connected conversation is highly important. A frequent one-on-one conversation between a leader and team member that allows a natural flow of conversation provides the opportunity to discuss personal aspirations in a non-threatening manner. The interviews across all leadership levels (executive, middle, frontline and human resources) aimed to identify how these conversations occurred, and whether the conversations were regularly organised to identify leadership aspirations, and the consequent diagnosis of leadership development needs. This study established early on that because none of the organisations had a leadership talent strategy, this lack of strategy affected how leaders understood and applied contemporary approaches to practising leadership and connecting through personal conversations.

In a previous section, this study revealed the high incidence of the words *personal* and *human*, used by leaders to describe what characteristics and competencies they valued in leaders. The analysis of the interviews further identified more insight into how personal, human and connected these conversations were. Typically, formal performance appraisal processes are conducted to identify performance outcomes, career goals, and learning and development needs. In this study, performance appraisal had a different purpose, but identifying leadership potential and targeting the learning and development needs for leadership was not overtly one of those purposes. The different goals of each organisation's performance appraisal process are summarised in Table 26.

Table 26: Approaches to Performance Appraisal by organisation

Org	How performance management was done	Illustrative quotes as evidence
1	Career goals and learning needs were documented in a personal development plan, and discussions were scheduled on a six-monthly basis. However, there was poor uptake of these discussions, identified from a recently conducted employee survey. A renewed focus provided a way for employees to connect with their line leader to discuss personal learning and development needs in a more constructive manner	Going back to 2009, an employer opinion poll revealed that the PDP (Personal Development Plan) as it's currently structured is not working ... (Executive leader, MTAA, Qn 9) ... Now it's called My Action Plan, so that's the process through which we pick up on the aspirations of employees...we've never managed to get 100 percent participation of performance management. (Executive leader, MTAA, Qn 9) So in that sense that process is very much about 'Do you want to go somewhere in your career now'? 'Yeah, I would like to move up through the ranks and become a Depot Manager', so that is picked up through the MAP process. (Executive leader, MTAA, Qn 9)
2	Learning and development needs were aligned to meet the organisational targets, not personal career aspirations or leadership needs, and the focus of the discussion was on the key organisational drivers of commercial success.	... So performance management was a lot about how you did in your job and career development was then about how you are doing in your profession...we don't have the 'in your profession' process... (HR leader, Innovative Rail, Qn 9)
3	There were no performance appraisal processes in this organisation because it was newly formed. The executive leader explained that he could foresee that this would require time to implement processes, and that the organisation was a long way from working towards identifying individual learning needs.	... Consequently, the systems are only literally starting to be rolled out now. What you then need with that is how you are going to use the system to performance manage rather than just a computer system that logs things, and there needs to be a fair bit of work done in that area... (Executive leader, City Trains, Qn 12.6)

The online survey, developed after the interviews, further probed leaders as to whether interest in becoming a leader or furthering their leadership skills was discussed in the performance appraisal or performance management process with their manager. Of the responses, 29 percent of leaders responded that their leadership aspirations were discussed while 73 percent reported that leadership aspirations were not discussed. This finding is shown in Figure 28. Comments from those who reported that leadership aspirations were not discussed included statements such as 'what performance management process?'; 'not discussed yet'; 'only in the classroom'; 'not often' and some other more harsh remarks about the lack of discussions that will not be repeated (Survey, Qn 18).

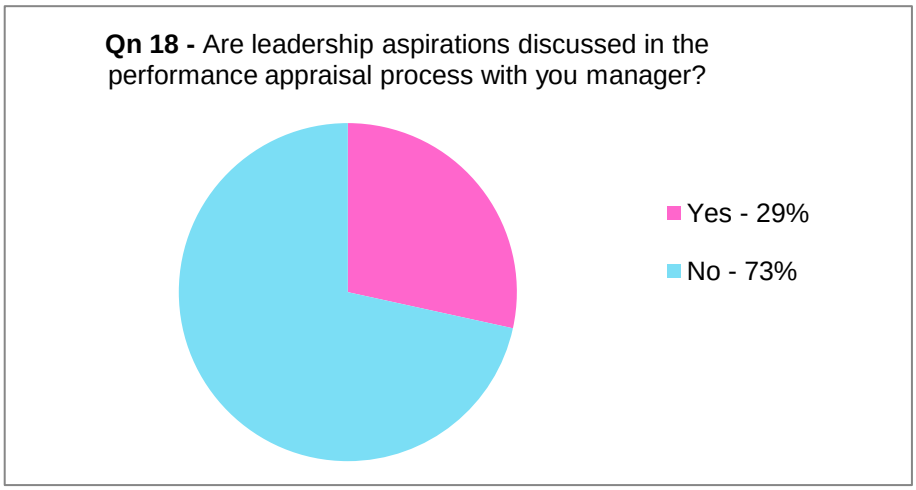


Figure 28: Performance appraisal and leadership aspiration discussions

Conversations executive leaders have

The three executive leaders described their skills as a leader in terms of communicating with teams to achieve business results. Their skills were focused strategically and externally with a typical response as follows, 'I keep a close contact with individual teams…six regions…consists of a regional team plus team leaders and construction projects with project teams and project leaders' (Executive leader, Innovative Rail, Qn 11). While they were in touch with teams, this did not necessarily mean that they listened to what individuals had to say on a personal level. When conducted, performance appraisal discussions were more likely to assess individual contribution to organisational performance against targets.

> We have a process of six monthly interviews with all staff – so on a twelve monthly basis that feeds directly into a remuneration review. That is very

> transparent, and it is actually delivered to the executive as part of that process (Executive leader, Innovative Rail, Qn 9).

The increasingly commercial environments in the public sector rail organisation mandated accountability at all levels through performance appraisal and personal development planning. One organisation was mandating connected conversations to address performance issues early, with strategies for learning and development included to meet these needs. The public sector executive leader described the process as placing accountability on all leaders as, 'Performance management [appraisal], yes that will be in place with the My Action Plan (MAP) and certainly we are moving to be quite definitive in terms of what each of the managers has to produce' (Executive leader, MTAA, Qn 3). My Action Plan (MAP) is the terminology used by this particular organisation to describe the individual's performance development plan. The performance development plan sets out individual personal goals and aspirations, desired career pathways, training needed to achieve these goals, a current resume or curriculum vitae and other relevant learning needs and experiences. The MAP process was designed so that individuals could have more control over their own career pathway and learning needs. However, even in this organisation's processes to facilitate more meaningful and authentic conversations, discussions focused more on the strategic goals of the organisation, rather than on personal aspirations...

> The discussion I have with the Managing Director about what I need to be focusing on will be very much driven by the strategic plan... (Executive leader, MTAA, Qn 3).

... and the opportunity to identify real needs tended to be overlooked:

> In terms of then having some sort of consolidated picture of how many people have aspirations and what are they wanting to do – no, we don't currently have that, and I'm not sure that there is any intention that I'm aware of, to actually do that... (Executive leader, MTAA, Qn 3).

Conversations middle level leaders have

Middle leaders described how they supported other team members with frequent interactions and conversations. They were mobile in their job role, visiting staff at different work sites because they were aware of being visible and establishing the right environment to build team trust, identifying creative ways and places to encourage conversations to flow naturally. Off-site meetings were popular to break down barriers between leaders and their employees as this leader described, 'We try to have a team

meeting every month where we have all of us come together – coffee shop, relax sort of and then people sort of open up a bit more' (Middle leader, City Trains, Qn 8).

These frequent interactions provided a more relaxed approach to enabling communication...

> Well okay, if they want to become a leader in the future, it's a case of giving as many opportunities as possible... We can do our part to put the feelers out and say, 'Hey, these are the opportunities', but there's also a bit of an expectation to be proactive on their side, as well. You couldn't expect it to be one way traffic... (Middle leader, Innovative Rail, Qn 9).

... and a way for the leader to reflect on their own work role in enabling others:

> And observing staff and nurturing them and helping them out and encouraging them to do a good job - that's all just part of the process as well, and I'm well aware of that fact and I try to step up to the plate where I can... (Middle leader, Innovative Rail, Qn 8).

They believed that performance appraisal or review was a forum for formal and serious discussions and that career aspirations should be facilitated over the entire course of the year because, '…any time 24/7 to tell you the truth, the phone's ready there and I have made myself available to any staff who want to ring…' (Middle leader, MTAA, Qn 8). One middle leader recognised that many employees did not aspire to leadership roles, instead wanting other career goals and work/life balance:

> They don't want to take on the responsibility or the authority and others crave it but need to be taught how to do it, and so you're looking at people and talking to them, getting to know them, that's the way that you find out how... (Middle leader, MTAA, Qn 8).

Conversations frontline leaders have

At the frontline of operations, teams consisted of staff with varying levels of skills, ages and expertise, ranging from young recruits under 20 years of age to older employees who had been in the industry for the majority of their careers. Both groups of frontline leaders had different viewpoints about working with their teams, connecting through conversations and motivating their employees at work. Older frontline leaders had directive approaches...

> But he's the type of bloke – he's another one of these straight shooters – I don't have to wait two weeks – I don't have to wait for a meeting to find out I've done something wrong. I know in about one second (Frontline leader, City Trains, Qn 12.5).

... but while they were straight to the point with their management style, personal conversations were not as easily conducted. This led to categorising their team members unfairly and limited their ability to get to know about personal aspirations:

> Usually very easily identified – people in [this organisation] are people who have either been here a long time or come in from outside, and some of them have very strong talents in some areas because they've come from those areas, and some have a bit of a broad talent (Frontline leader, MTAA, Qn 8).

As a result, discussing personal aspirations was seen as futile because they thought team members were looking more to retirement than new career aspirations:

> One of the worst features is we're a very ageing organisation. I'm heading towards my late 50s; all my team are over 50, so yeah look, it's something we probably don't do well... there's a couple of people there [another organisation] that you would recognise as leaders that we've picked up, but to answer your question honestly, you can only go by what you see – their performance (Frontline leaders, MTAA, Qn 8).

Maintaining the past rail culture was so important that it limited the views of some frontline leaders in realising that practices could be conducted in more innovative ways and that there might be benefit in new or different approaches, especially as young staff came on board. However, younger frontline leaders had a different view, believing that a range of approaches and conversations must be had to get the best out of each team member since, 'It depends on the person I suppose. I mean you cannot really use the same approach across different people. You've got to approach the person' (Frontline leader, Innovative Rail, Qn 7).

Conversations HR leaders have

HR leaders believed that the processes to find out about an individual's aspirations were not well developed and poorly carried out. Interestingly, HR leaders' comments confirmed how the HR role was viewed and supported by rail industry executive teams more for personnel management than for developing people – even though they were meant to be in charge of developing these processes. One HR leader depicted performance appraisal discussions, as discussing two parts of the individual's work, which he described as the career and the job roles. A well-conducted discussion would incorporate job aspects such as performance and results while the career component would identify aspirations and goals. Leaders often overlooked this part of the discussion:

> This is something we're not very good at…Performance management [appraisal] was a lot about how you did in your job, and career development was then about how you are doing in your profession...It's very ad hoc... (HR leader, Innovative Rail, Qn 9).

This sentiment was also repeated in other organisations where career conversations were not actively pursued as, 'The way it has the potential to find out; it doesn't actually do it very effectively…' (HR leader, MTAA, Qn 9).

The survey again highlighted the difficulty of personal conversations to identify aspirations and 'knowledge of staff and capabilities' (Survey, Qn 16). This was a two-part problem. It was a result of a lack of systems to capture employee information, including that connected conversations were not occurring regularly. Connected conversations would enable current leaders to know their employees on a personal basis, assisting the organisation to know what they wanted to do with their life and career, 'Well enough so that we can be confident about what they would like to do' (HR leader, City Trains, Qn 9). This leader believed that many organisations overlooked the vast potential of people through a failure to capture this information, especially with the impending retirement of the current generation of leaders as they considered their life in a new stage. Conversations such as, 'What are their experiences; what are their skills? Many bring a vast range of experiences when they come to work here…' (HR leader, City Trains, Qn 9) could enlighten the potential within the organisation.

The impact on the leadership needs for the future, lack of planning and the loss of specialised knowledge was summarised by another HR leader as follows, '…this business has really suffered from a lack of leadership development....From 2000 when the business was privatised to 2004 – everything was slashed, burned, cut…' (HR leader, Innovative Rail, Qn 6). The reality of a new era dawning was recognised but from the evidence in these interviews, leaders would benefit from development in conducting conversations to capture personal aspirations.

Developing leadership talent

Contemporary learning approaches develop individual leadership abilities in technical (task), conceptual and human skill competencies (Chapter 3, Theme 5 – Develop, p. 77).

How leaders developed their skills

This section presents an analysis of how executive, middle, frontline and HR leaders developed their leadership skills.

How executive leaders developed their skills

Executives had successfully achieved personal career goals to transcend to higher levels of leadership on a life-long journey, demonstrated by their self-motivation for learning. A high degree of personal responsibility, commitment to their careers over 30 to 40 years, formal qualifications and professional expertise contributed to their success. All of the executive leaders were now aged between 50 and 60 years of age and a number of other factors had contributed to the realisation of these achievements. These included the ability to endure change, maintain personal alignment with career goals and belief in their ability to succeed over other candidates for key strategic roles. Table 27 presents a summary of the analysis of the executive leaders' interviews.

Table 27: How executive leaders rose to their current position

Organisation	Executive leader response to: How did you become an executive leader in this organisation?
Innovative Rail	Civil Engineering degree Staying around a long time Staying with the organisation through restructures Building on experience
MTAA	Moved from one government department to another Staying with the organisation through restructures Recently undertook an MBA to complement Civil Engineering degree
City Trains	Commenced in the oil and gas industry Promoted into the position Strong commercial background Staying with the organisation through restructures Building on experience

In the three rail settings, the total number of executives comprised 15 people, or nine percent of the total number of leaders (more than 200) in the three organisations (Short et al. 2011). Fifteen leaders is a small number, but it reflects the personal vision and

resilience required to reach such high levels over other candidates. Executives had been in their positions for between three and eight years, and their leadership journeys had been extensive:

> Effectively, I was promoted into the GM Commercial role in the previous franchise and then, as I indicated, having been in that role in the previous franchise, I was given the position in this franchise as well, so effectively by promotion (Executive leader, City Trains, Qn 2).

Individual comments showed personal drive and ability to succeed in complex and difficult organisational environments. Learning and development opportunities undertaken on the job and seized as they arose, maintained their career vision as one leader described, 'I haven't grown up in this organisation so to speak. I joined this organisation in 2004 as General Manager, and I have been in this role since 2009' (Executive leader, MTAA, Qn 2). A personal need and the ability for achievement indicated that current positions resulted from past, successful performance and ongoing learning. Length of service in the rail industry environment, experience gained in different organisational formats, having a base professional qualification (in these cases, engineering), and the ability to build on personal experience were typical executive qualities.

This study showed replication of the executive leader profile of experience and experiential leadership learning in all three organisations where rail restructuring had enabled professional qualifications to be tested in action. The rise of executives to higher levels was built from knowledge of the rail industry, in technical related management fields, and from the foundation of early learning. Continual learning helped to confirm and define individual personal characteristics of tenacity, and the ability to change and develop self along the leadership journey. As a result, executives in their current positions moved well ahead of other leadership competition. However, despite their own personal successes, they demonstrated little inclination to assist other leaders to develop further, demonstrated by their lack of commitment to supporting a leadership development strategy, performance appraisal discussions or endorsing leadership development opportunities.

How middle level leaders developed their skills

Middle leaders provided a different picture of how they had arrived at their own leadership role. A wise mentor or guiding hand had aided promotion to a middle level

role that allowed them to develop experience on the job. Only one middle level leader had a formal qualification. In this scenario, talented team players became organised frontline leaders who then became personable, middle level leaders. Their focus on engaging with people, a strong connection with teams and the desire to maintain the community of rail was evident. However, as a result of lower levels of formal learning, their ability to recognise learning and leadership development needs in others was based solely on their own experience, performance and understanding as a leader. Many middle level leaders had been in their roles for a number of years as exemplified in these two instances:

> I would say probably 15 years I guess in total, perhaps a little bit longer (Middle leader, City Trains, Qn 2) ...
>
> Over – that was a nearly 20 year's process. It's been quite a long path, but it's been a path that I have been committed to in rail. I haven't deviated either. I have decided to pitch my tent here in rail, and it's worked well for me actually (Middle leader, Innovative Rail, Qn 2).

Consequently, they had vast experience in their roles. They were comfortable guiding others but were constrained within the contexts of their own knowledge and experience. These perceived limitations affected their ability to initiate change at the middle and frontline levels. Middle leaders highlighted frequent interactions with their teams and incorporation of discussion about work performance occurred regularly in day-to-day interactions whereas, 'Where performance is [concerned] … managers should be continually reviewing...' (Middle leader, MTAA, Qn 13.6). These ongoing discussions provided the opportunity to get close to people, yet middle level leaders had few points to offer about how they would develop other aspiring leaders besides providing personal support. One middle level leader expressed his point this way:

> ... But every year as stated we do a personal performance review...we ascertained it's an opportunity for them to talk back to us how they're feeling, what they want to achieve and what they want to give the company and where they're going... (Middle leader, Innovative Rail, Qn 8).

Another leader had not had a personal discussion about his own career aspirations or development needs for more than 15 years, resulting in replication of the same approach with his own team:

> My manager used to do a personal development plan for me – probably the first time I've had one for 15 years which is pretty disappointing...My direct reports have said I have never given them feedback...so we're trying different processes now... (Middle leader, City Trains, Qn 8).

These practices at the middle level indicated that a low value was placed on learning and individual development.

How frontline leaders developed their skills

At the frontline level, the three leaders had followed the pathway from employee to manager where no formal qualifications were required. Typically, they had developed workplace and leadership skills on the job by working their way from the bottom to more responsible positions:

> I've been in the Railways since 1988, and I started as a junior admin officer at a bus depot and just over the years I have just sort of worked my way through the different areas and opportunities came up and I never actually had to apply for any of the positions I have been in. I have always been asked 'Do you want to do this? Do you want to do that?' and it's just progressed from there till I have got to this point where I am at now (Frontline leader, City Trains, Qn 2).

While they had vast experience in their roles, they viewed the world through the context of their own reality. Reaching a frontline leadership role came about by moving from an unskilled, manual role to a supervisory role, requiring the ability to provide direction and get things done. Consequently, frontline leaders believed that there was limited leadership potential within their own teams because most employees had been in the organisation a long time:

> Usually very easily identified – people in this organisation are people who have either been here a long time or come in from outside, and some of them have very strong talents in some areas because they've come from those areas, and some have a bit of a broad talent... (Frontline leader, MTAA, Qn 7).

The widely held view of long-serving leaders at the frontline was that leadership skills were primarily learnt by 'getting your hands dirty'. There was a widespread view that leadership could not be taught in a course, 'I know everyone's had a go at trying to design courses that teach leadership and teach experience – there's no such thing' (Frontline leader, MTAA, Qn 8). The value given to formal learning and development was low and not widely utilised as this leader suggested, 'Look, some of our people have undertaken the frontline management courses, and that. I must be honest – what the value of those are, I'm not quite sure...' (Frontline leader, MTAA, Qn 10). As a result, leadership development at the frontline remained the domain of practical experience.

How HR leaders developed their skills

HR leaders' views were difficult to canvas. Rather surprisingly, given their human resources roles, they did not express strong opinions about learning and development. All of the HR leaders had some qualifications, but the qualifications were not in HR and a number of years old. Qualifications and experience ranged from general management experience, experience as an army officer and experience developed on the job in personnel in rail commencing in the mid-1970s. While HR leaders were supportive of processes that identified learning and development needs of rail leaders, they were powerless to implement strategies without the commitment of executive teams. Where there was a specific tool such as My Action Plan (MAP) to identify leadership aspirations and development needs in the public sector organisation, the HR leader was sceptical of its ongoing success, believing that leaders paid 'lip-service' to the use of such tools and would circumvent any endorsed strategies:

> …it doesn't actually do it very effectively currently… So there is going to be meetings with individuals and their supervisor to talk about aspirations, direction... planned and agreed outcomes... (HR leader, MTAA, Qn 9).

The next section presents an analysis of what knowledge leaders need at the executive, middle, frontline and HR levels.

What knowledge is required for leaders?

Organisations seek to align and reinforce the organisational culture, philosophy and ideals with the knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviours of leaders (Miller et al. 2011). Helping leaders develop this knowledge is important so that leaders understand the reasons for different approaches to business. In this theme, the interviews and survey set out to investigate what skills, knowledge and competencies are required for leadership at the four levels (executive, middle, frontline and HR leaders). The theme then proceeded to ascertain if, and how, this knowledge is developed.

From the organisational point of view, this study found that individual leaders were unable to describe the positive and negative peculiarities of their organisational culture, their unique business advantage or the aspects that needed to be reinforced and developed the more they were entwined in the industry. Moreover, there was evidence of a cautious and risk-averse rail industry culture, played out through its safety culture. This was used to put the brakes on all sorts of new initiatives as described by one middle leader, 'I think…within the train environment, you've got a culture of safety –

people use safety as a big thing to stop things' (Middle leader, City Trains, Qn 13.7). These attitudes tended to imply that the embedded culture and traditional ways of rail operations took precedence over new ways needed for a globally connected world.

Executive

In each of the three organisational settings, there was a focus on different business goals and outcomes, and in different markets. The companies were not in competition with each other but they all described their organisation as *rail,* and not their niche areas of business, for example, rail track infrastructure access, heavy freight haulage or passenger services. Organisational knowledge and values are inextricably intertwined with the business but responses by executive leaders did not highlight the modern, Australian rail industry. Their comments are as follows:

Private sector, niche rail access provider servicing important areas of primary production:

> My position is the General Manager, Infrastructure…I have an oversight role for an organisation that covers around 5,000 kilometres of network (Executive leader, Innovative Rail, Qn 1).

Public sector transport authority covering buses, rail system and school buses:

> My position is General Manager, Network and Infrastructure…fundamentally the engineering division of the organisation plus the IT branch... (Executive leader, MTAA, Qn 1).

Public/private partnership for large city, metropolitan rail passenger services:

> I'm GM Commercial, City Trains and ...the span of my responsibilities is the commercial GM cover, procurement of all items, so that's a very large area (Executive leader, City Trains, Qn 1).

The interviews with executives highlighted that developing organisational knowledge and business expertise through leadership development of existing employees had limited correlation with the existing human assets at the middle, frontline and functional levels such as HR.

Middle

At the middle level of leadership, all interviewees had been in rail industry employment for between 20 and 30 years. A typical response was 'my whole career has been in rail' (Middle leader, Innovative Rail, Qn 2). Their views and responses did not mention how or why business information and cultural values should be developed for leaders. Many

of their team members also had long careers in rail and were comfortable operating in the rail environment as they understood it because, '…a lot of people within the business that have been around a long time, and I've been around since I left school myself...' (Middle leader, City Trains, Conclusion). Many employees had existing, comfortable work/life habits, indicating that updating knowledge and changing the way they worked was not favoured – especially if a leadership role was undertaken:

> A lot of people are in comfort zones – don't necessarily want to move out sort of thing ... they are motivated by money day to day but moving higher up I don't think it's worth their effort. They can make more money being on the front line, do less work, less pressure if they stay where they are (Middle leader, City Trains, Conclusion).

In one organisation (public/private partnership), which had recently formed, the middle level leader identified that the rail company was still shaping its unique culture and business ways. Targeting the safety aspect of the rail industry culture was a way for powerful groups, such as unions, to influence these forming cultural values with safety legislation used as a tool to stall change and new, innovative projects. This leader believed that the organisational culture and productivity was hampered when leaders were unable or unwilling to change or address issues that could quickly expand to larger problems:

> If you don't address the issues [on new projects] …IR issues - people just stall it... don't care about whether it costs the government or whatever millions of dollars; it's just a matter of less upsetting people to get what we want, but if we could address that from day one (Middle leader, City Trains, Qn 13.7).

The survey response from one leader echoed this comment that 'a strong leader can turn around a culture of union protectionism' (Survey, Qn 20). However, unions collectively influenced negative behaviours, based on perceived weak points, encouraging operational staff to undertake practices that inconvenienced workplace productivity, rostering and ultimately, the safety of other workers:

> Yeah, one of my biggest challenges is a lot of people think, well, because I've got 15 days leave; I am entitled to those 15 days you know, but it's trying to change the culture... (Middle leader, City Trains, Qn 13.6).

This negative, circular tradition set about developing a culture of absenteeism at the frontline, which affected organisational productivity, and perceptions of the company with the public and stakeholders. Attempts to change these destructive actions of

operational workers was a challenging problem for individual leaders who were lacking options and support from higher level leaders to solve such problems.

Frontline

The culture of the industry was felt intensely at the frontline... called the 'railways' by one frontline leader. The history of the industry was enjoyed by leaders at the frontline, and they were proud of how the years had rolled by 'since 1988' (Frontline leader, City Trains, Qn 1). The comfort of knowing everything about the industry from the bottom up (to the frontline) was portrayed in the positive light of a past era, 'I'm a product of the old rail system. I started at the bottom, worked up..., and just progressed through the ranks' (Frontline leader, MTAA, Qn 2).

Frontline leaders believed that the knowledge for leadership in the rail industry was developed on the job, rather than in a classroom, because this approach did not develop the appropriate skills, knowledge and behaviours required. One leader suggested, 'I think there needs to be something whereby people can go out of this organisation and work for somebody else for three months. I think that's of better value than trying to teach it in the classroom' (Frontline leader, MTAA, Qn Conclusion). The comments seemed to relate to the lack of rail context within the training programs offered by training providers as frontline leaders expected, a view echoed by other rail leaders. This point confirmed the need for the development of contextual rail business knowledge that some types of learning could not always provide.

HR leaders

Human resource leaders believed there was a need for a more concerted effort to improve the organisational culture and knowledge of the rail business, but they were not able to offer constructive suggestions for how this might happen. In the public sector organisation, a cultural improvement program set out to align organisational values, desired knowledge and individual behaviours for all employees, not just leaders. However, leadership talent development was not incorporated this program. Nor was it promoted by other leaders within this organisation even though, 'the cultural improvement program that we call One [MTAA]...we are identifying the values that the organisation has identified for itself, how we could live those values and trying to model and mirror some of the behaviours we should be achieving' (HR leader, MTAA, Qn 12).

In the public/private partnership organisation, the rapid ownership and change was leaving employees behind and many were confused about the culture, values and business of the organisation. The HR leader at City Trains believed that existing leaders had work to do in creating an environment and culture where all employees wanted to 'do their best' (HR leader, City Trains, Qn 10).

At the end of this section, the summary highlights that leaders at each level need certain knowledge about the business to make well-informed decisions yet they did not always have exposure or access to this information.

Strategies used for leadership learning in rail

Contemporary leadership development approaches recommend learning through formal and informal methods to consolidate and reinforce new leadership skills. Leaders' views from the interviews and survey highlighted the range of leadership learning approaches favoured by different levels of leaders. Presentation of the perspectives of learning strategies occurs in the following section.

Formal learning

Misko (2008, p. 10) describes formal learning in the Australian context as 'learning in courses or programs leading to nationally and internationally recognised qualifications'. Formal learning comprises 'learning how to learn' from active instruction where participants carry out assigned learning tasks relating to the formal lesson. In turn, they relate and transfer the learning to their own experiences, integrating the new knowledge into their own personal knowledge base (Day, Halpin & Harrison 2009, p. 149).

The interviews and survey probed the views of all leaders about formal leadership learning. There was diversity of opinion presented by executive, middle, frontline and HR leaders. The interview responses follow, however, in the survey, participants did not consider that formal learning was the most *important* learning experience in developing leadership skills (Survey, Qn 21) – receiving no responses from any of the 33 respondents. The most important experience cited was workplace experience. However, when participants were asked to consider the most *influential* formal leadership development activity in Question 24 of the survey, other responses resulted. These responses are shown in Figure 29, highlighting that leaders considered that short courses (42 percent) and Certificate 1V in Frontline Management (33 percent) had a high degree of influence on their ability as a leader (by developing foundation skills). Other formal

leadership training such as Officer Training (8 percent) and experience at work (17 percent) were rated highly. As many frontline leaders had not experienced formal leadership training, they considered their experience the most influential learning activity.

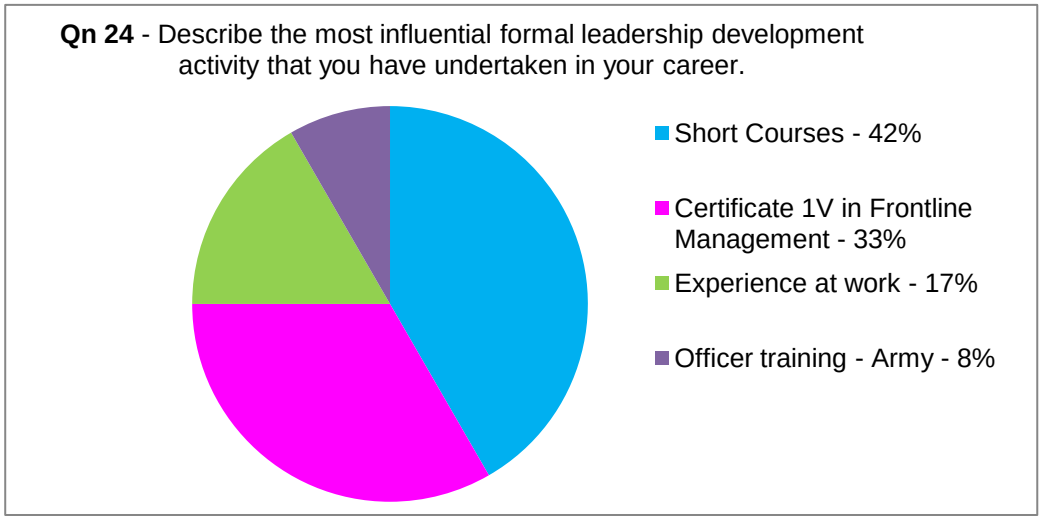


Figure 29: The most influential leadership development activity

Executive leaders reflected on their own journey to leadership. This reflection provided insight into how they understood formal learning could affect the development of leadership skills. Each executive had formal, professional qualifications, two with engineering qualifications and one with a financial/commercial qualification. One of the executive leaders with an engineering qualification had successfully achieved an MBA (Master of Business Administration) to gain an overview of the business in a public sector organisation. The reason for undertaking further study was to provide opportunities to gain a strategic view of the organisation as a leader. It would allow understanding of how all the parts of the organisation fitted together, rather than knowing only about the technical aspects of engineering because he had, 'a technical background from a long time ago, but I went and did the MBA like a lot of engineers, so I understand how organisations fit together…' (Executive leader, MTAA, Qn 3).

Executive leaders all believed that the development of foundation leadership skills through formal learning was important for aspiring leaders.

> … training both in a formal and informal sense is very important particularly in the early stages of – for example, in graduate training – and a lot can be achieved by post-graduate training courses (Executive leader, Innovative Rail, Qn 12.1).

Their views confirmed a single focus on two key points. Firstly, they believed it would be professionally qualified staff (including engineers) moving into leadership roles in the rail industry in the future...

> ...The development of future leaders and clearly with future leaders the identification of who could become future leaders is of vital interest to our organisation (Executive leader, Innovative Rail, Qn 6).

... Yet, they did not understand the potential of leaders from other job families and believed that leaders at middle and frontline levels would not move to strategic roles. As a result, they were not concerned about how leaders at the middle or frontline, or functional leaders such as HR leaders, would develop leadership skills. Their comments focused on how professional staff already under observation as potential leaders could develop further through formal training:

> We actively promote further education, which might include MBAs and so forth; so, both in-house, formal and informal training is an important part of the initial leadership training. We do have specific technical courses, but they are supplemented by people skill courses, business courses (Executive leader, Innovative Rail, Qn 12.1).

In one particular organisation, there was no leadership talent management strategy to focus their efforts, indicating confusion of the most appropriate strategies as follows, 'Internally, we have a leadership program, although I think that's a little bit superficial, and I don't think it's really doing what it's meant to do' (Executive leader, City Trains, Qn 12).

Within executive teams, active identification of leadership development needs of current leaders did not occur because executives believed that many of their team members had already developed adequate leadership skills. As one said, 'I think that most of them have been through various courses' (Executive leader, MTAA, Qn 11).

At the middle level, there were different views. Middle leaders believed that formal foundations of leadership through training were necessary to understand the various components of leadership, demonstrated through their hands-on and operational leadership techniques. Middle level leaders viewed achievement of a qualification as important, although not mandatory in any of the organisations, and only one leader (Innovative Rail) had achieved one. Formal leadership learning could enlighten other ways to lead because different experiences and role models throughout life provided varying views about what it means to be a leader. Realisation by middle level leaders

that leading in rail was becoming more complex, grounded their insight in practical reality through their observation of other leaders:

> Well, it is important because it gives you the basic tools to structure your leadership. I mean; leadership to you may be totally different to me and depending on what your observations in life about what leadership is (Middle leader, Innovative Rail, Qn 13).

Recognition of prior learning was being utilised to formalise leadership skills in several organisations where leaders had many years of experience in leading teams. An example of this achievement was from work on major projects, but this approach overlooked how to develop people leadership skills and the ability to conceptualise and manage novel and difficult problems. One leader explained that, 'We just got a certificate/recognition for project management which sort of followed on from the project that I worked on' (Middle leader, City Trains, Qn 13). Skills recognition was widely offered but not well taken up or highly valued, as participants had to prepare their own evidence portfolios.

Like middle leaders, frontline leaders did not require formal qualifications to progress into leadership roles and the job built experience. The interviews discussed leadership development with two younger frontline leaders (both under 40 years of age) and one older frontline leader (late 50s age group) which appeared to be a typical age gap profile at the frontline. The older leader believed that the only way to develop leadership skills was through experience rather than just knowledge that younger leaders seemed to have, 'It probably comes back to trying to close this gap up between knowledge and experience and what you need to have' (Frontline leader, MTAA, Qn 12.9). The younger leaders believed foundation skills through formal training were a base from which leaders could define their own leadership style and approach:

> I think it enables you to just – because it gives you that foundation; it enables you to link all these things together; just to better execute your job. The problem solving one was most useful... (Frontline leader, Innovative Rail, Qn 12).

Motivation to achieve a formal qualification was variable. If not mandated, its take up was dependent on the individual's perception of its value about whether it would enhance their career, 'I went and spoke to the people about RPL, but I never followed up on it… I never put all the stuff together and sent it in... I never took the next step...' (Frontline leader, City Trains, Qn 12.1)

At the frontline, job roles were also becoming more multifaceted, requiring supplementary skills and knowledge, but frontline leaders had not used many formal ways to develop their own skills or those within their teams, 'Not really, no. Nothing that I can think of...' (Frontline leader, MTAA, Qn 12.9).

The input of HR leaders in guiding formal leadership initiatives demonstrated their involvement in working with teams as limited, as in the example above from the frontline. In the main, their views about learning and development were not widely sought by teams at executive, middle and frontline levels. This was a problem of several parts – HR leaders' confidence about their knowledge of contemporary learning, applicable to a rail organisation, and their knowledge of the rail organisation's business. Consequently, they tended to be unsure about advising teams of learning strategies that could shape the leadership future of their workplaces. However, HR leaders endorsed the view that the development of foundation leadership skills through formal learning triggers confidence, enhancing the skill base of leaders. In congruence with the literature, one suggested that formal learning needed the right opportunities to reflect on, and to transfer new knowledge to the workplace:

> A lot of these foundation training skills start talking about things and it just gets people, 'Oh, actually I can do that'…like a frontline management initiative course... (HR leader, Innovative Rail, Qn 13.1).

Nevertheless, there were many opportunities to link formal learning with real situations in the workplace. This would consolidate learning, but the support, motivation and enthusiasm of existing leaders to achieve this goal appeared to be lacking. One HR leader suggested, 'I think a stronger method is work based opportunity, so that there are real examples/real situations that people are placed in to lead in those situations...and then the next learning is so much stronger ...' (HR leader, MTAA, Qn 13.1).

By linking their current knowledge to what was currently happening in rail workplaces, HR leaders recommended thorough assessment of leadership potential would benefit both the organisation and the individual. Generic programs drained valuable time and financial resources and there tended to little idea of whether these programs were meeting the organisation's or the individual's needs. This HR leader indicated, 'It is my view that if you haven't got the potential to be a good leader… the right temperament, the right personality… no amount of training will impart the skills to you ...' (HR leader, City Trains, Qn 12). He followed up with the comment, 'So just putting all

managers through a leadership training program, I think is a waste of time...' (HR leader, City Trains, Qn 12).

Self-awareness through psychometric tools

The Australian Human Resources Institute (Australian Human Resources Institute 2010, p. 42) states that the development of talent such as that required by leaders 'will mean high levels of IQ (Intelligence Quotient), EQ (Emotional Quotient), SQ (Spiritual Quotient) and TQ (Technical Quotient) that are acquired by on-the-job training, know-how and commitment to learn those ways'. Psychometric tools can diagnose personal awareness about these abilities as one tool in a suite of many leadership talent development approaches.

In rail organisations, executive leaders believed psychometric tools could assist in identifying styles of employees for frontline roles at the initial employment stage. The application of these tools did not extend to diagnose leadership capability at the middle, frontline and HR levels because, 'We do the psychometric testing for train drivers, transit officers…[and] our customer service staff and coach drivers' (HR leader, MTAA, Qn 12.2). Psychometric tools were not used to diagnose further learning needs once employees had been hired, '... probably not as much once we get people on board' (Executive leader, Innovative Rail, Qn 12.2).

Middle and frontline leaders provided the greatest insight into the possibilities for using psychometric tools. They stated that psychometric tools or personality tests could uncover a wide range of motivations, traits and abilities needed for leadership. This middle level leader suggested, 'Through a personality test, you would find out whether a person has a particular trait. Now, some traits aren't conducive to leadership. They are conducive to being an analyst' (Middle leader, MTAA, Qn 13.2).

Myers Briggs and Human Synergistics were named consistently as well known models that had been used in organisations, 'Myers Briggs and then there was another one previous to that which was sort of like put you in the animal class – peacock, eagle, dove or owl' (Middle leader, MTAA, Qn 13.2). The tests were described as adding value when used in combination with other methods for diagnosing leadership development needs, '... they are not necessarily the only thing that you've got to go by, so it's a combination of different tools' (Middle leader, MTAA, Qn 13.2).

Coaching and mentoring

As the Australian rail workforce changes from one generation to the next and valuable knowledge needs to captured, relational types of learning such as coaching and mentoring have an important role to play. The Australian Human Resources Institute (Australian Human Resources Institute 2010, p. 11) claim that coaching and mentoring are 'the emergent forces for a reconciliation of intergenerational preferences' in new workforces such as those found in rail where older, more experienced leaders are juxtaposed with new, younger leaders and employees.

The analysis of discussions of interviews and survey responses highlighted support of coaching and mentoring development approaches. However, terminology was often used interchangeably. This initial interpretation suggested that while leaders did not have the right 'name' for coaching and mentoring, informal practices were well-entrenched as follows, 'learning and support from my mentor'; 'staff learn by doing and mentoring'; and 'watching the success of others and where they got to' (Survey, Qn 21).

Executives viewed both coaching and mentoring as crucial development tools to develop leadership skills further as described by one executive leader, 'Coaching and mentoring are possibly the key elements in my opinion which assists in the development of managers and leaders' (Executive leader, Innovative Rail, Qn 12.3). They believed that both coaching and mentoring had 'high value' in assisting individuals develop their careers at senior levels 'as opposed to a vocational course' (Executive leader, City Trains, Qn 12.3)

The impending loss of specialised rail knowledge from the industry as experienced rail leaders approached retirement, highlighted that both coaching and mentoring could be utilised to pass on specialised rail knowledge to younger leaders. The discussions found limited evidence of whether there were facilitating structures established to capture such knowledge through coaching and mentoring. It was also not determined whether executive leaders coached younger leaders, even though they recommended coaching and mentoring to transfer knowledge to others.

> Senior people with a wide background, wide knowledge of the industry – they are maturing and getting close to retirement age, and it's absolutely essential that these people are retained to ensure that coaching and mentoring can occur (Executive leader, Innovative Rail, Qn 12.3).

Coaching and mentoring are both time-intensive learning approaches. Executive leaders were observed to be short of time and not able to commit their efforts to such initiatives for lengthy periods. Therefore, at the executive level, coaching was most likely utilised spasmodically for performance related issues or to teach hard skills related to the job role. A team member or external person was often undertaking the coaching:

> Coaching/mentoring ... I had one of the managers that wasn't going that well on a project with a senior guy working with him to teach analysis skills, but I haven't done with my staff. (Executive leader, MTAA, Qn 12.3).

At the middle level, coaching and mentoring was used in a more hands on and informal way than at the executive level because these leaders were in close contact with their teams on a day-to-day basis, 'Well, it's all about taking an interest in staff...' (Middle leader, City Trains, Qn 13.3). Coaching helped individuals with tasks and skills on the job, especially when they were new to the role. Middle leaders took a natural approach to coaching; stepping in to ensure the guidance and support of the employee in new leadership situations by, 'Coaching…a really good way to teach a person to do some skills/some jobs that you can't do by telling them' (Middle leader, MTAA, Qn 13.3).

Stepping away from task-orientated approaches through coaching, mentoring played an important role for middle level leaders in providing an image of leadership. In their own careers, they highlighted that the support from a more experienced leader for a beginning leader was necessary through role modelling that may not be available in their own personal lives:

> They may not have father figures, mentors or be in a role that they see an active leadership in play to get cues from ... about what makes effective leadership… it's like a soft science in a sense (Middle leader, Innovative Rail, Qn 13.3).

Positive mentoring relationships were believed to enable the development of leadership skills and behaviours through a process of observation and correction of practice:

> My manager… he's been my mentor… I've tried to model myself on him as to the way he goes about doing things… I try to measure myself against him, as well. He has believed in me and given me opportunities (Middle leader, City Trains, Qn 13.3).

At the frontline, leaders also recognised the importance of mentoring and coaching, 'Good coaches… tell you what to do, and then they show you how to do it and they encourage you to do it' (Frontline leader, City Trains, Qn 12.3). However, older and younger leaders had different approaches to coaching and mentoring. The older leader

at MTAA had a formal leadership approach to coaching, developed within the public sector rail environment, and believed that if his team needed assistance they could seek his help as he described, 'I've done it for people, not [those] in my team but... I mean they know where I am if ever they want some advice' (Frontline leader, MTAA, Qn 12.3). However, this approach seemed to take an authoritarian stance. With younger leaders, experienced leaders used informal coaching in day-to-day operations to support and encourage individual teams on a frequent basis.

HR leaders confirmed that coaching and mentoring initiatives in rail were predominantly focused on enhancing knowledge in technical and operational areas, and less so for the development of leadership skills:

> Senior civil engineers they love it; they love getting together with the younger guys and talking through specific work tasks but a technical engineering issue related to rail engineering they're more likely to do that now because of this coaching ... (HR leader, Innovative Rail, Qn 12.3).

However, HR leaders highlighted limited facilitation structures around coaching and mentoring initiatives and unclear responses about their role in formal initiatives. This was highlighted in an example of a formal mentoring program that resulted in difficulty in recruiting and matching appropriate mentors and mentees:

> Did use the coaching – what happened was we ended up with a small number of mentors and many, many mentees each requiring attention and many of those missed out on receiving the attention and the individual who was a mentor hadn't sufficient time to work it through (HR leader, MTAA, Qn 12.3)

The importance of the role of the HR leader as the conduit between learning initiatives and business unit teams in transforming, evaluating and improving current learning practices that meet leaders' learning needs, is highlighted as an area for development.

Feedback – e.g. 360 degree feedback and performance feedback

Feedback about leadership potential or performance enables the person to monitor self against a standard (Kluger & DeNisi 1996). Feedback is important to allow the individual to consider unknown areas of self for evaluation and improvement, considering that leadership in this thesis is related to the concept of performance (Boyatzis 2008). Responses from the survey indicated that different leaders believed that feedback is important to identify leadership potential within the respective organisations. Comments suggested that, 'other staff and supervisors'; 'listening to staff'; 'feedback from team leaders'; and 'asking questions from people above', were all

ways in which organisations could use feedback processes to identify and develop leaders (Survey, Qn 16).

However, the overall impression from the interviews was that honest and sincere feedback on performance was not sought readily at any leadership level (executive, middle, frontline and HR). Performance feedback was offered spasmodically, and where it was offered, it was based more on performance against job descriptions. In regard to leadership style and ability, executive leaders had limited exposure to 360° feedback processes but one team had used it to assess team member's skills and styles at senior levels, '…we've recently used it for the executive team and senior managers' (Executive leader, Innovative Rail, Qn 12.5). Executive approached the results and outcomes of the feedback sessions cautiously, and the outcomes were surprising to some team members. They were not fully aware of aspects of their personality, style and behaviour as this leader described, 'Look, I think it's interesting, and it comes as a surprise to some individuals in terms of how they are defined and rated' (Executive leader, Innovative Rail, Qn 12.5). The results of the feedback were kept in-house, and confined to the senior level team to enable reflection of personal leadership styles and how they affected others because it could be 'threatening...' (Executive leader, Innovative Rail, Qn 12.5). One executive described the process of giving feedback to other executive team members...

> Yeah, it was a feedback session where we all gave feedback on everyone else. We had a script... It was only short, but it was ...what do you think they could improve, what do you think they do well, for example, …along those lines (Executive leader, City Trains, Qn 12.5).

It was "short" because teams were not comfortable giving positive or constructive feedback. To assist this process, the pre-prepared guide mitigated any deviance from the intended messages.

Middle and frontline leaders had limited experience of 360° feedback. Explanation of the concept triggered one leader to comment that he preferred a direct approach to feedback, 'No, don't get into any of that. I must be honest; I'm not comfortable [with indirect feedback] …if I think it's wrong, I'll go and see the person' (Frontline leader, MTAA, Qn 12.5).

HR leaders' exposure to 360° feedback was for administering the tool with executive leaders and one had a general understanding of its use:

> No, we haven't really... a few of us have done it in the framework of doing formal or leadership development courses ... we did that as part of the preparation for that, but we haven't used it in the business (HR leader, Innovative Rail, Qn 12.5).

However, HR leaders believed that by gaining sincere and truthful feedback on the performance and ability of leaders, feedback instruments could be incorporated into current learning strategies. This would provide a catalyst for change, both within the individual and the organisation since, '360° feedback would support the development of those individuals who see themselves as change agents...' (HR leader, MTAA, Qn 12.5).

Workshadowing

Job or workshadowing occurs at the usual place and environment of work of the person being shadowed, without intervention from a trainer or facilitator (Jacobs & Park 2009). The purpose of workshadowing is to provide an overview of another job role. Executive leaders indicated reluctance for the practice of workshadowing and a reticence to encourage others to shadow them in their executive job role. One commented that workshadowing would make people feel ill at ease, 'No, there isn't any of that. I think that would make people feel very uncomfortable' (Executive leader, City Trains, Qn 12.8). Workshadowing was utilised more naturally when 'hard' skills were on show rather than for the observation of management and leadership functions and, 'Not at the manager level. I mean certainly at lower levels amongst the technical staff we do that… They just go with one of the experienced people and work the roster for a week' (Executive leader, MTAA, Qn 12.8).

The many opportunities to work shadow executive level leaders by aspiring staff at lower levels went unfilled as leaders did not understand the value of these workshadowing opportunities for those aspiring to higher-level roles as this leader suggested, 'I have no personal experience with that, so I don't know how useful it is quite frankly' (Executive leader, MTAA, Qn 12.8). The perceived trepidation by executive leaders in allowing others into their workspace was revealing. All of the three executive leaders had taken many years to reach these positions and one, in particular, felt threatened that another person may seek his role. In reality, other leaders at the middle levels interviewed for this study did not have the personal or professional expertise to move into an executive role.

Middle level and frontline leaders used informal workshadowing to assist staff learn new workplace skills, but they incorporated this with other learning strategies. The interviews revealed when new skills had to be learnt; both levels of leaders used a combination of coaching, mentoring and workshadowing. However, they did not have a name to describe this combination of learning approaches, 'Is suppose to some extent I do shadow my boss… he takes me to a lot of meetings that he goes to so I am the backup plan…' (Frontline leader, City Trains, Qn 12.8).

HR leaders had limited experience of establishing work shadowing programs and had limited exposure to this learning opportunity, 'Well, we do in middle management positions. And then on one occasion, we used it in the executive position' (HR leader, MTAA, Qn 12.8). Consequently, work shadowing was not an approach widely used to develop leaders.

Workplace opportunities

Learning is a feature of everyday work, and work itself is a rich source of learning (Collin 2002). The survey identified that workplace experience and workplace learning opportunities were rated highly by current leaders as the most important experience in developing their leadership skills. One leader described how 'observing his previous manager' contributed to his learning. His manager 'was always very clear and articulate about his requirements and always followed up on work set. You were never left feeling you had just done something for no reason. Everything had a meaning and a purpose' (Survey, Qn 21). Others described this experience as, 'making mistakes and having to live with them or having to correct them'; 'dealing with and assisting other staff' and 'managing employees who are dealing with conflict' (Survey, Qn 21).

The interviews sought to identify how that learning takes place for leaders in rail by questioning them on workplace learning experiences.

Executive teams were searching for ways to extend personal leadership capabilities at work while improving team cohesiveness. At this level, leaders already had many years of experience on the job, as well as formal, professional qualifications. In one organisation, executives had planned a week long program in a remote location to develop personal and team coping skills:

> … a short leadership course which involves the executive team and the CEO… a trek where there's six days spent walking in the wilderness in the Kimberley as part

> of the executive understanding and working together (Executive leader, Innovative Rail, Qn 12.7).

However, discussions indicated that the executive leader was unsure about whether this activity was useful in developing personal leadership skills and knowledge. Each rail organisation was already providing workplace opportunities for the development of their leaders through projects and opportunities that arose at work, and had many rich opportunities to offer. Organisations were not capturing these models and they did not appreciate the opportunities in-house so that the extension of learning could occur across the organisation:

> The other way would be giving them specific assignments in the business which they have to do… very much multi stakeholder issues... that encompassed a whole range of management analysis, stakeholder discussions, external parties, internal parties (Executive leader, City Trains, Qn 12.7).

A number of opportunities to utilise industry partners to provide experiential learning opportunities became apparent from the interviews. Executive leaders had not explored them deeply to provide unique and customised learning experiences:

> We as an industry need to work closely together and be prepared to share not only our leadership courses and our training but also individuals and be able to support and sponsor, second, transfer, make sure that the opportunities exist for people to develop as such, so the best people rise to the surface, and that has to be done within the industry, not as individual companies (Executive leader, Innovative Rail, Conclusion).

Middle leaders were inclined to innovate and design their own experiential learning opportunities within the organisation. One had a suite of workplace problems to use as lessons for aspiring leaders. The learning approach allowed the novice leader to identify individual solutions to the problem:

> You sit down and explain, give them the project and let them work through it and see how they deal with the issues or you can give them a lot of support so contact this person, get that done, so they're actually doing the work, but all the thinking is done for them and then you lead them through (Middle leader, MTAA, Qn 13.7).

To complement these learning approaches, the leader described activities that he designed to support the learning as the project progressed, 'for example, …if there was a tricky incident coming up myself and a couple of the other managers would ask what they would do' (Middle leader, MTAA, Qn 13.7).

Facilitated workplace learning opportunities at the frontline and middle levels set the scene for aspiring leaders to move permanently into leadership roles, as supervising

leaders were able to observe leadership skills in practice. Choosing certain people to develop leadership skills became evident in middle level leaders' interviews. While utilising learning in the workplace, developmental approaches had the effect of precluding some aspiring leaders over specially selected ones as this example showed, 'He has sort of believed in me and given me opportunities and things like that, to the point where I have managed a special events...' (Middle leader, City Trains, Qn 13.7).

At the frontline, leaders described small projects from their own personal experiences that developed their leadership skills at work. Their comments echoed middle leaders' views that certain people were selected for these projects with the goal of assisting their career development, 'I remember years ago; my boss's boss coming to me and saying that we need to get these signs up in all the underground stations. He came to me as no one had ever done anything with it' (Frontline leader, City Trains, Qn 12.7).

HR leaders provided insight into what they might do to develop an individual's leadership skills further because identifying workplace opportunities for leadership development was not part of the suite of learning and development tools currently used:

> ...The ideal thing for us to do would be to…identify work opportunities and work options that would stretch the person and allow for that growth to take place and so the shifting around in various positions,... (HR leader, MTAA, Qn 14).

The area of learning at work provides rich opportunities for rail organisations to develop unique learning related to the niche areas of their business. However, the connections between business and learning were not fully developed or observed in this study.

Evaluation and improvement strategies

Evaluation of the leadership talent strategy occurs through a number of methods and enables continuous improvement as the strategy evolves (Chapter 3, Theme 6 – Evaluation, p. 80).

Evaluation is a crucial component of leadership talent practice, enabling continuous improvements to be undertaken as external situations change and internal architecture is re-aligned to meet these needs (McCartney & Garrow 2006). The information analysis did not reveal any direct comments from leaders in the three organisations about evaluation of their current leadership talent approaches. This included targets for the identification and development of different levels of leaders or developing a leadership

talent strategy. The general impression was that some executive leaders believed that there were more important business areas to focus on, and at the middle and frontline, leaders had established their own ways of identifying and developing the next generation of leaders.

Given that leadership talent identification and development were afforded low priority, improvement strategies were not considered. Therefore, making a start on developing a strategy was viewed as the first step in all organisations, 'Well, I think the concept of putting in place these systems and these succession plans – that's a good start. Is it working well? We're just not at that point in time...' (Executive leader, City Trains, Conclusion).

HR leaders were cynical in their comments about leadership talent management believing that the current state of the strategy was more like the AFL (Australian football league) draft, 'I don't think we have a leadership strategy at all…I liken it to the AFL draft with the football – they do a draft, and the coaches sit around and choose potential players…' (HR leader, City Trains, Qn 8). They suggested that a strategy first needed to be developed before it could be improved:

> 'I don't think it's really evolved. I'm not confident that we have one, so in that regard it's not working. I think there's a reaction – someone leaves, and there's a rush to try and find people' (HR leader, City Trains, Qn 15).

Organisations were just getting by at the present time in replacing existing leaders as they retired, but not enough to fill future leadership needs. HR leaders were powerless to improve the leadership development approaches because there were no formal processes currently in place for them to have such an influence:

> Our processes need to be formalised somewhat. I think it's getting by; I don't think it's thriving. I think we're doing just enough to find enough leaders to replace the ones that are leaving. We certainly don't have a leadership pipeline or a pool of talent yet... (HR leader, Innovative Rail, Qn 10).

However, the online survey identified points of view from current leaders about how organisations could improve evaluation and improvement of leadership development activities. These ideas included, 'having real support and commitment from the executive'; 'ensuring leadership development activities were planned rather than reactive'; 'developing leadership learning approaches through'; and include 'leaders who can take the time to mentor future leaders' (Survey, Qn 25).

Summary of leadership talent practices in rail

Key messages – the external and internal environment

Typical business models today are far removed from sole government ownership for delivery of public services, once seen 20 to 40 years ago. Now, global, international companies are linked with Australian rail organisations for the sole objective of commercial profitability, while public sector organisations are also vastly altered. The reality highlights that globalisation is influencing all rail ecosystems and driving new missions of commercial success.

Changing business paradigms created obvious tensions between commercial success and the traditional community of rail, which affected how leaders at different levels viewed the industry. Executive leaders valued knowledge, strategy and the ability to change to align with the directions of the parent company. These transformations were not understood or valued by middle, frontline or human resource leaders who held onto past practices and valued the traditional rail culture. Their focus on the rail community and people was referred to as a 'transformed industry' that had no 'culture'.

Key messages – defining leadership talent and communicating practices

Leadership has not been defined in rail and so a wide understanding of its values, attributes and features are unknown. Senior rail leaders believe that a good leader is one who has expertise in hard skills such as technical, engineering and financial ability because leadership comes from the top. While no written definitions were apparent, they were convinced the attributes of leadership were widely shared in their teams. However, when individual leaders at all levels were asked to describe their vision of a 'good' leader, remarkably similar characteristics emerged about human or personal abilities necessary to engage various groups. These characteristics included personal communication, personal values and time for all people, amongst the long list of 'people-focused' attributes.

Strategic leaders unintentionally perpetuate myths within the organisation by not widely understanding or sharing the importance of leadership for the business strategy. Processes for identifying talent followed unwritten and subjective approaches that were not transparent to all. Failure to communicate widely the desired messages about leadership talent contributed to feelings of mistrust and misunderstanding amongst

leaders. This approach excluded different groups from leadership opportunities, only known about in some circles.

Key messages – Identifying leadership talent

Executive leaders believed it was their responsibility to develop the leadership talent strategy, with HR teams putting the strategy into operation. However, executive teams did not know what they were looking for in their leaders or even that they should be looking for leadership talent at different levels of the organisation. The connections had not been made between leadership talent, business performance and competitive advantage because there was such a focus on engineering and technical expertise and ability.

Infrequent conversations at a personal level provided low insight into aspirations and knowledge about people as well as overlooking the untapped potential within the organisation. This was partly a result of past cultural ways, unease with personal discussions and the tendency to place the safety critical requirements in rail first.

Key messages – Developing leadership talent

The sustainability of leadership practice for the next era of Australian rail requires the development of knowledge and leadership capabilities needed to meet these challenges. While knowledge transfer of key information to younger leaders is important in this process, focusing an inordinate amount of time and effort to replicate the current culture, situation and people is in the end unsustainable. Leadership requires a range of values, skills and abilities at different levels to meet these increasing performance challenges, but rail companies have not differentiated leadership at senior, middle and frontline levels. As a result, leadership at all levels is enacted based on the reality and experience of individuals from variable role models throughout their lives.

The strong focus in these organisations on safety and technical qualifications and abilities overlooks leadership as providing the softer perspective of leadership. Many leaders found people and personal related issues holding a high degree of mystery. Conducting authentic and meaningful discussions was, therefore, an uncomfortable task.

Senior leaders in professional and technical areas value formal qualifications while middle and frontline leaders value skills developed from experience on the job. Formal

qualifications are not mandatory for leading teams or workgroups at the middle and frontline. While there are considerable amounts of informal learning occurring on the job through coaching, mentoring, workshadowing and workplace experience, some guidance and direction is required to direct how this learning should occur.

Key messages – Evaluating leadership talent

Organisations have a strong focus on operational and business performance through quantitative information and business targets, rather than on leadership, personal growth or aspirations. This focus has resulted in HR teams being powerless to implement any meaningful leadership development strategies. Leadership development has low priority in organisations, does not have a documented strategy with targets and is difficult to evaluate.

6 Discussion

Chapter outline

This chapter:

1 synthesises and interprets the findings of, and draws implications from, Chapter 5;
2 connects the findings and interpretations to existing theory and research on leadership talent management, described in Chapter 2, to highlight new knowledge about leadership talent management practice in contemporary business settings;
3 addresses the main research question about how leadership talent is identified and developed in the Australian rail industry, while considering the sub-questions about purpose, policy and practice, how leadership talent is identified and how organisations are developing their leaders;
4 revisits the initial ideas about talent management as conceptualised in the Introduction, and the conceptual framework established in Chapter 3, to compare the original assumptions with the findings of the research; and
5 identifies the significance of the findings for rail industry talent management practice and what steps could follow from here.

A qualitative, interpretive research design was chosen for this study because it allows the researcher to become 'an interpreter of the information' that has been gathered (Creswell 2007, p. 248). Setting out to explore the phenomenon of leadership talent management in Australian rail, this study has enlightened initial preconceptions of the topic and provided considerable insight into leadership talent management within the industry. At the beginning of this study, following an extensive review and analysis of the literature, a framework that could be used to guide leadership talent management decisions was proposed and presented in Chapter 3. This framework was then used to develop the interview questions and to analyse information from the interviews and survey. Chapter 6 now discusses the significance of the findings.

Leadership talent management in rail has been confirmed as one component of an organisational system where there are many intersecting factors and contexts that need to be considered. This study found that Australian rail leaders operate in an organisational system that includes global, national, industry, local and team contexts. Therefore, the discussion will take into account the impacts of the external environment on internal rail environments through an HRD frame. Taken from this viewpoint, readers can make their own informed assessment of interpretations of the current practices around the management of talented rail leaders, found in this study of the current industry. McLean (2012) concurs with this approach, affirming that taking one view of a phenomenon represents only one account and this may not be the only explanation of what was found. In a large system such as the Australian rail industry, acknowledgement is made that only some of the practices, possibilities or explanations may have been identified. However, my contribution to this topic is also recognised as no work has previously been undertaken to describe how talented leaders are identified and developed in Australian rail industry contexts. The discussion in this chapter considers the main research question and sub-questions against the leadership talent management model described in Chapter 3 (provided again as a contextual reminder to consider in the discussion).

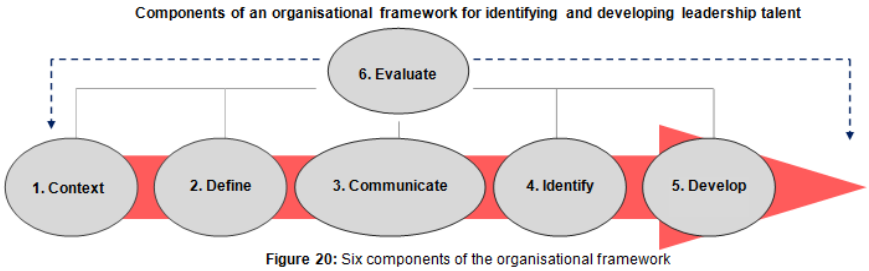


Figure 20: Six components of the organisational framework

The framework comprises six components to assist with leadership talent management decisions in organisations based on the findings from the literature. The framework is designed to assist organisations develop their own contextualised leadership talent strategy. The components are as follows:

1 The contexts in which leadership is enacted
2 Defining what it is that an organisation is looking for in its leaders
3 Communicating the vision through the organisation
4 Strategies and practices for identifying leaders at different levels
5 Strategies for developing leadership talent
6 Evaluation of the leadership talent management strategies

The purpose, policy and practices of leadership talent management in rail

The first question on the purpose, policy and practices of leadership talent management in Australian rail organisations is discussed according to a leadership talent management strategy, as defined in the literature, and the current practices found in rail organisations through this research.

Of the three organisations in this study, none had in place a systematic or planned approach to managing their leadership talent. This finding was identified through a number of questions that directly questioned executive and HR leaders about the importance of leadership talent for the future of the organisation. These questions probed who had responsibility for developing the strategy, policies and procedures for the identification of future leaders, and how they perceived the strategy was working. The questions were directed to executives and HR leaders, as they were both responsible for managing the human capital needs of their organisations. The findings identified that City Trains had no strategy for managing leadership talent. The reason being that they were in a 'short term franchised business arrangement' and had not given priority to this side of the business. Innovative Rail was able to 'hand-pick leaders' based on what the business needed at any time, and MTAA had developed an approach to 'identify all the critical jobs in the organisation' and 'the potential people to take over those jobs', but had abandoned this ad hoc approach as it was not a 'talent management strategy' (Executive leader).

The literature consistently describes the purpose of talent management as a mechanism for the management of talented people within organisations (Ashton & Morton 2005). An approach or strategy is systematically developed to manage talented people (McCartney & Garrow 2006) to ensure there are enough people (or skilled leaders, as in this case study) in place to meet business needs. Blass (2007) suggests that organisations with successful talent management strategies set out to develop their strategy based on a philosophy or principles that guide what they are trying to achieve. This viewpoint, for example, may embrace developing leaders for competitive business advantage or developing leaders to bring about organisational change. The philosophy in turn 'shapes the way the system is viewed, implemented, and put into operation' (Blass 2007, p. 3). Some writers believe that not only is leadership talent management an action oriented process; it is also a 'mindset' that values the unique talents that people contribute to roles such as for leadership (Beechler & Woodward 2009; Iles,

Chuai & Preece 2010; Schuler, Jackson & Tarique 2010). Ashton & Morton (2005, p. 28) suggest that the successful management of talent 'can differentiate an organisation when it [talent management] becomes a core competence – and when talent significantly improves strategy execution and operational excellence'.

This finding about the lack of strategy for managing leaders highlights a number of points. The rapid transformation of the Australian rail industry over the last twenty years, from public sector to privatised companies (Mahendran, Dockery & Affleck 2007), has involved up to four distinct phases of Australian rail as shown in Figure 30. While these changes have been relentless, a sustained emphasis on the part of these three organisations on aligning talented leaders with business needs was not evident.

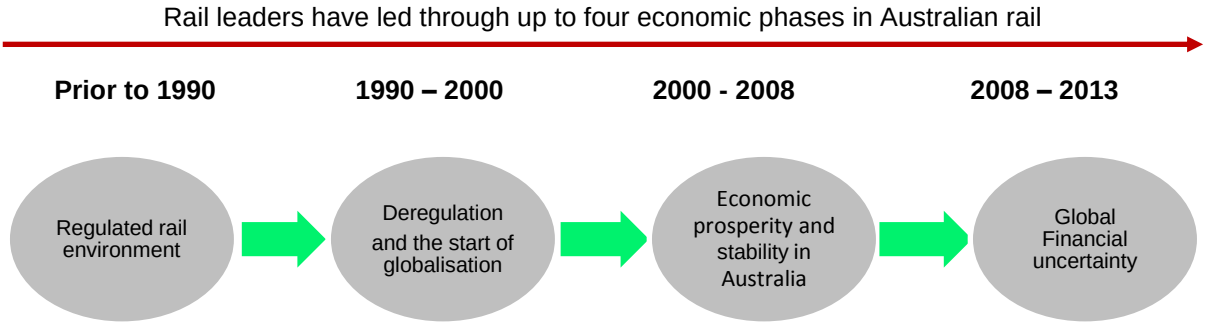


Figure 30: Rail leadership through four economic phases

The importance of taking a proactive approach to leadership talent management and defining a strategy to improve rail industry practice is a need identified in several key rail industry reports (Australasian Railway Association Inc. 2008; Pricewaterhouse Coopers 2006). This was stated at the beginning of this study in the Introduction, identifying that the Australasian Rail Industry Association, in particular (in 2008), believed that leaders have an important role in driving widespread cultural change throughout the industry. In line with the complexity in the environment, leadership is now a process 'in and of, complex adaptive systems' (Uhl-Bien & Marion 2009, p. 631), such as the three rail organisations profiled in this study. However, this study has found strategies for managing, identifying and developing leadership talent through planned approaches to be undeveloped.

Organisational effectiveness through leaders

Leaders in rail have developed new workplace coping skills to meet changing economic conditions and workplace environments in modern iterations of rail. Without a systematic approach by organisations to managing the talents of leaders across the entire rail industry, there was a lack of awareness about the importance of managing leadership talent. Clarke (2013, p. 137) suggests that the role of talented leaders in complex, dynamic, business environments today is to 'establish the conditions of organisational effectiveness within a larger system'. The complexity of the wider world, and the complexity within organisations, demand up-to-date knowledge of the totality of the operating environment. However, the age profile of leaders across the three organisations indicated that developing strategies to renew and refresh leadership across the organisational spectrum had been given little prominence. The demographic group of rail leaders in general was 'top heavy' and close to retirement age (Frontline leader, City Trains). Andrew Lezala, Chief Executive Officer of Metro Trains, Melbourne, Victoria, at the CRC for Rail Innovation Showcase 2012 (Lezala 2012) confirmed that the successful running of the rail company today is 'reliant on having people with an up-to-date understanding of their job to do it properly'. Hahm and Leisy (2010, p. 1) concur, identifying that it is people who 'enable a company to innovate, differentiate and succeed' and that talent management is more than managing the 'physical bodies that come to work each day'. Managing leadership talent in a proactive and planned way can bring about organisational renewal and change, while retaining the specialised tacit knowledge particular to the rail industry.

Structures to lead business complexity and change

Organisational structures of Australian rail companies today are still typically arranged around hierarchical configurations (Weber 1947), where up to six levels of leadership are in place to organise work, enforce accountability and maintain standards. In previous work on leadership and management undertaken in rail workforce development projects (CRC for Rail Innovation 2013; Short et al. 2012; Short et al. 2011), frontline leaders were typically found to comprise around 73 percent of leaders in a contemporary rail organisation, while middle level leaders encompassed 19 percent and executive leaders included eight percent (shown in Figure 31).

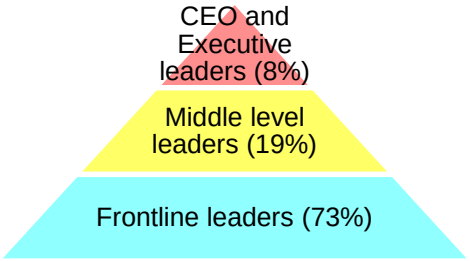


Figure 31: Hierarchical rail organisation structure

Source: Short (2011)

Such hierarchical structures have their origins in bureaucratic rail entities from pre-deregulation times (Everett 2006) where the pace of business was slower, physical resources were limitless, and people aspired to a lifelong career moving through the leadership ranks. Uhl-Bien and Marion (2009) propose that, in complex times, such structures are not conducive to successful business. Organisations now require interconnectedness of relationships and knowledge. Uhl-Bien, Marion and McKelvey (2007, p. 299) describe many bureaucratic organisations as 'complex adaptive systems', or fixed in structure, yet moving from an industrial economy mindset to a knowledge economy *modus operandi* – much like rail organisations in this study. In these new business models, this research has shown that international companies are linked with local organisations while public sector organisations are also vastly altered. The reality highlighted by this research showed how globalisation is affecting most rail ecosystems, and driving new missions of commercial success and sustainability. The skills needed by leaders in these new environments are different from those of the past but connected for each level of leadership, as all leadership levels contribute in different ways to the business. Han, Kuchinke and Boulay (2009, p. 61) state that 'deconstructive analysis', or understanding and promoting the importance of each level of leadership, can create a holistic approach to business. As a result, developing the appropriate structures for managing, identifying and developing leadership talent is necessary to embrace this business complexity where collective or team work, undertaken by leaders at all levels, contributes to organisational success (Clarke 2013).

The changing business paradigms were not so obvious to the researcher before this study commenced, and created different understandings of rail leadership and its purpose for leaders. The varying understanding is due to new business arrangements,

created through the inclusion of multinational companies (MNCs) in the Australian rail scene, illustrated in Figure 32.



Figure 32: Three new types of business arrangements

The need for commercial success in these new business configurations, understood by executives, had not filtered through to the middle and frontline. This middle level leader at Innovative Rail described how leadership of the business was still conducted in ways similar to 'government days' almost twenty years ago. He said, 'Mind you, back then it [leadership] was more of a government role and had a lot of those government mentalities. I think a lot of it wasn't very effective or very efficient, and we still have a lot of that here'. These different understandings influenced how leaders at each level framed their view of the industry, especially the traditionalists in rail (at the middle and frontline). While leaders at the executive level were undertaking sustained efforts towards long-term profit goals, middle and frontline leaders held onto past practices and ways of learning that valued the traditional rail culture. Here, business was conducted in a way that did not rate commercial imperatives highly, and there was a rich culture focused on engineering, operations and serving the public (Pendleton 2003). Leaders discussed the focus on the rail community and people constantly as a 'transformed industry' that had no 'culture'. Moreover, globalisation has brought about changes in the way work can be achieved more efficiently with less unskilled, and more, skilled people (Han, Kuchinke & Boulay 2009).

In discussing the purpose, policy and practice of leadership talent management, a startling revelation was noted by the researcher about what leaders in rail valued most, and how these views have affected current practices of managing leadership talent in organisations. Leadership of the technical areas (including engineering, operating rail services, track and infrastructure) was highly valued by executive, middle and frontline leaders. Organisations have given these aspects of the business a high degree of attention, enabling them to prosper through more than twenty years of change. Areas of

less confidence (people, leaders and culture) have received a reduced amount of focus and attention. Unfortunately, MacLeod and Clarke (2009) found that many leaders in organisations do not have a good understanding of the links between engaging employees in their teams and the benefits this may offer, in terms of greater connectedness to the business purpose and increased productivity. Boedker et al. (2011a) understand that in the organisational quest for higher performance, now necessary in contemporary business environments, a focus on developing the skills and knowledge of leaders in these areas should be a key priority. This is because 'the quality of employees' skills is a key determinant of industry productivity' (p. 77). Leaders have the ability to work closely with teams, to communicate effectively about change and to improve motivation. However, the contribution of soft skills such as leadership can only be improved through focused planning to lift performance (Boyatzis 2008). Accordingly, Hahm and Leisy (2010) believe that the intangible resources of people can be harnessed and developed through a well planned talent management strategy, but that managing talent requires sustained attention. By taking a holistic view of the business, consistent with the philosophy of HRD that developing human capital can have an economic return (Swanson & Holton 2009), organisations can connect the people, as well as the infrastructure, to the business strategy.

Understanding how external contexts impact internal contexts

The changing ownership of rail organisations and the goal of achieving business results in complex operating environments, featured strongly through the interviews. Conducting business in rail organisations is more challenging today than it has been in the past, but how leaders conducted business in these arrangements was noteworthy. The success of well prepared or skilled leaders is in their ability to translate and integrate external, environmental changes to the inside of the organisation, enabling them to tackle new opportunities head-on (Hay Group 2011). Continuing changes in the external world had a sustained impact on the interior of rail organisations, affecting individual leaders' practice in irregular and unbalanced ways. As a result of the interpretation of these changes, there were observed to be distinct contexts between the external and internal environments of companies in this study. These contexts appear to have evolved to maintain order in increasingly complex rail operating environments and to give legitimate, leadership power to senior leaders for strategic, organisational decision-making. Furthermore, the high value placed on senior leaders with engineering

and business skills gave justifiable power to those making decisions for the rest of the organisation.

A diagram was developed to highlight how this study perceived the current operating contexts of rail organisations, presented in Figure 33. There are four distinct contexts comprising external and internal environments. Context 1 includes the global environment and the parent company of the organisation. Context 2 includes the operating area of Chief Executive Officers and executive leaders. A large gap or divide between this level of leadership and the next levels separate Context 2 and Context 3. The operational levels of leadership include middle level leaders in Context 3 and frontline leaders, in Context 4.

Knowledge is reinforced as a business driver, as change, and changing ownership, threatens the hierarchical structure and power of senior leaders. A deliberate strategy had evolved to shield the majority of employees in each organisation from change. This gap was observed to exist due to two key factors – the skill and expertise of executive or senior leaders in business decision-making and the mainly unqualified, middle and frontline employees in charge of operations. Executive technical expertise, knowledge and business skills contribute to the ability of senior leaders to conceptualise new commercial possibilities, while the middle and frontline leaders are shielded from the changes to ensure rail operations continue to run smoothly, even in times of restructure and change. A growing gap at the middle and frontline is observed between Context 3 and Context 2, in Figure 33.

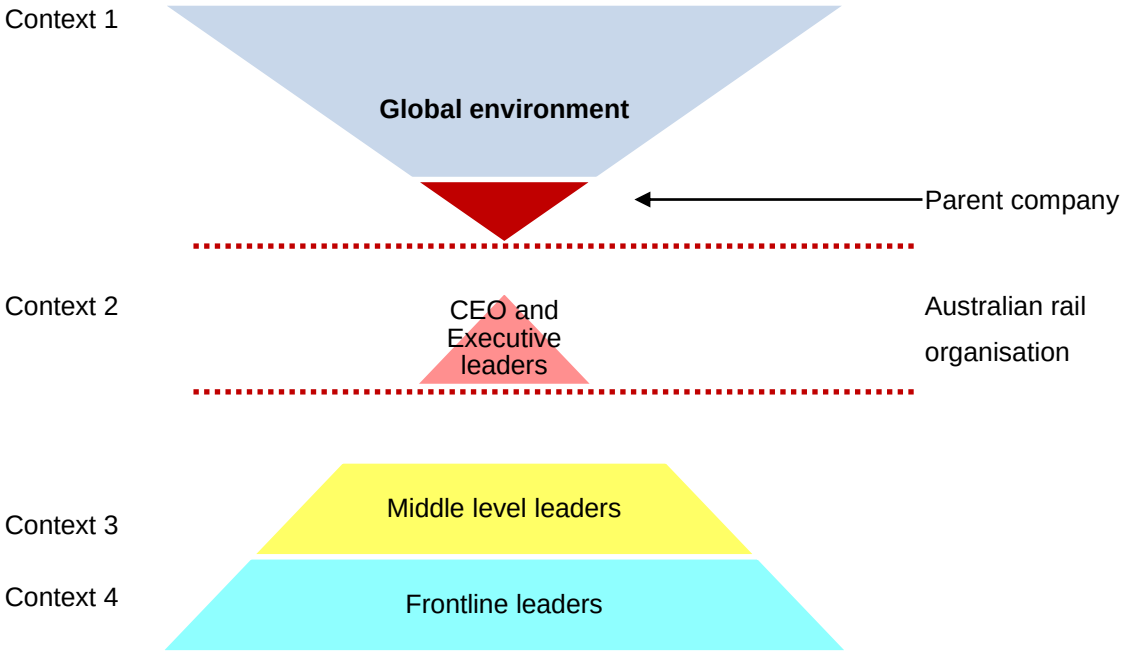


Figure 33: Contexts of leadership

Clarke (2013, p. 138) suggests that, in organisations (like rail) that are adapting to new business models, it is teams of people with shared 'interrelationships and interests' that make the business successful. Affording very high importance to executive leaders while overlooking the role of middle, frontline and HR leaders in business strategy neglects the untapped potential of the whole organisation. A defined leadership talent management strategy can, accordingly, highlight and define the importance of leadership skills and abilities at all levels.

Conflicting values and expectations

The enlightening aspect of this study was the high engagement of middle and frontline leaders with the rail industry even in times of change. While middle and frontline leaders were particularly focused on the traditional community of rail, they expected to fall into line with ongoing change, especially if they wanted to maintain employment in the industry. The cultures of the different levels of leadership were portrayed as stable, rich and strong at the frontline, shifting slightly at the middle level but weaker at the senior or executive levels, since the composition of teams was frequently changing. These interpretations are shown in Figure 34.

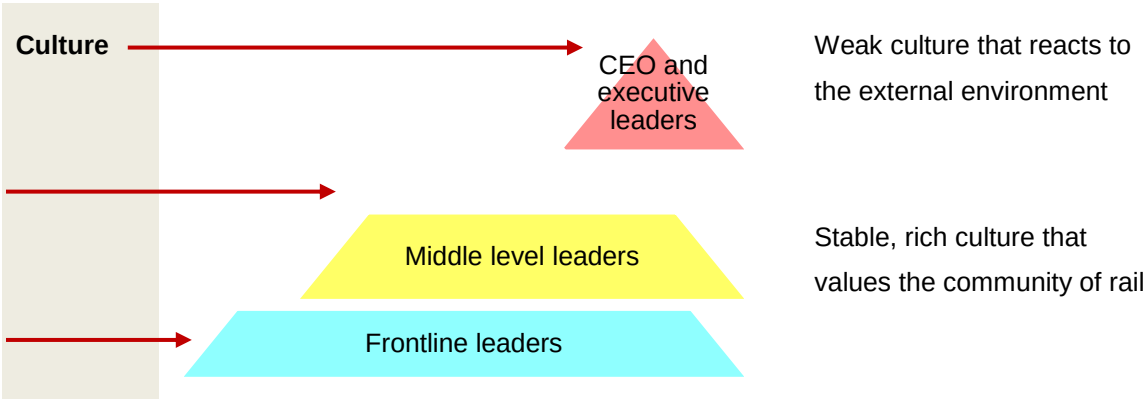


Figure 34: Reaction to change by levels of leadership

Adaptation and reaction to change framed leaders' individual thinking about the industry and the organisation and leaders were not offered a new vision of the organisation to assist them adapt to, or conceptualise, change. Senior leaders set out to maintain the status quo of people and resources below the middle line to maintain business outcomes in times of complexity.

Middle, frontline and HR leaders did not understand continual change and new business strategies in the same ways, which did not engender everyone to be working towards the same objectives. The organisational strategy and direction was known by executive leaders, but how it filtered through to middle level leaders, and then to frontline and HR leaders, was not well executed in all cases. At MTAA, the frontline leader described government ownership of rail businesses as the preferred operational option because leaders understood the business purpose. Now, business strategy seemed to be mismatched with leaders' ideas of how business and customers should be serviced. The middle level leader at City Trains had difficulty even understanding his own role, in view of the fact that he had been 'back and down a couple of times' through all the changes. Greater awareness and inclusion in business purpose and initiatives were needed from the executive through to the frontline to ensure leaders supported the directions of the organisation. New industry entrants, without leadership experience developed from the rail ground floor up, were perceived to be unable to fulfil roles competently, which tended to undermine support for new initiatives, and some leaders. Defining a framework through which to manage leadership talent of the organisation would define how the organisation intends to become successful through its leaders, and that all leaders are required in these efforts. Clarke (2007) describes how a documented and well-defined strategy might specify the skills or talents for effective leadership. The

younger generation in this study endorsed this view, believing that everyone had talents to offer and should have the same access to leadership opportunities, no matter what their age. Yet, for the present time, the older age group of rail leaders dominates many of the current leadership positions.

'Hands-off' approach to the management of leadership talent

Across the three organisations, executive leaders were taking a predominantly 'hands-off' approach to managing leadership talent by considering only executive leaders as at MTAA, by hand-picking leaders as at Innovative Rail, and by not doing anything as at City Trains. These approaches were likely to have ongoing consequences for leadership talent management given the limited structures currently in place. Frequent and ongoing changes affected the desire of executive leaders to prepare and fortify their own ranks in preparation for ongoing challenges emanating from the external environment. The complexity of changing team arrangements at the middle and frontline appeared to be overwhelming for executive leaders when thinking about how to develop a leadership talent management strategy. As a result, decision-making about leadership talent management was highly focused on the executive team. Developing a more joined-up-approach to leadership talent management could highlight the full potential of the organisation and its employees, described by Farndale, Scullion & Sparrow (2010, p. 164) as breaking down the 'silo' approach that overlooks the potential of leaders within the whole organisation.

Informal strategies based on selecting certain people for leadership roles were well entrenched in all three organisations. At City Trains, the frontline leader described how he had never had to apply for any of his leadership positions. At Innovative Rail, the HR leader described how the executive team went around hand-selecting people for roles when new projects arose. Even at MTAA, a public sector organisation with merit-based selection processes, the executive leader described how the team identified the critical jobs in the organisation, the potential people to take over those jobs and then those people were approached to prepare for the opportunity. The resulting messages portrayed to other employees unintentionally perpetuated myths that senior leaders had the most power and importance over leaders at different levels, and they could select whoever they liked for certain roles. Failure to communicate transparent messages about leadership talent widely established feelings of mistrust and misunderstanding, and excluded diverse groups from many leadership opportunities that were not publicly

promoted. However, recent studies on workplace productivity reinforce how the contribution of all levels of leadership is necessary for complex operating environments, no matter what the industry (Boedker et al. 2011a; Snee & Hoerl 2012).

No role differentiation of leaders

The research found executive leaders did not acknowledge the wide range of job roles in the organisation. They did not widely acknowledge how these important roles contributed to the success of the business. This lack of understanding included varying perceptions of leadership and leaders as 'professionals with engineering skills' (Innovative Rail); leadership as a concept in 'people's minds but it's not communicated out' (City Trains); and a focus only on senior leaders (MTAA). These views confirmed the perception of 'leaders' as senior people.

Establishing how an organisation is structured could assist current leaders identify the different types of leadership levels, job roles and the talents required for each leadership role to enhance a talent strategy. Figure 35 illustrates the possible range of job families by leadership level within an organisation. The pre-occupation with technical, engineering and safety roles found in this study can then be considered in light of other positions.

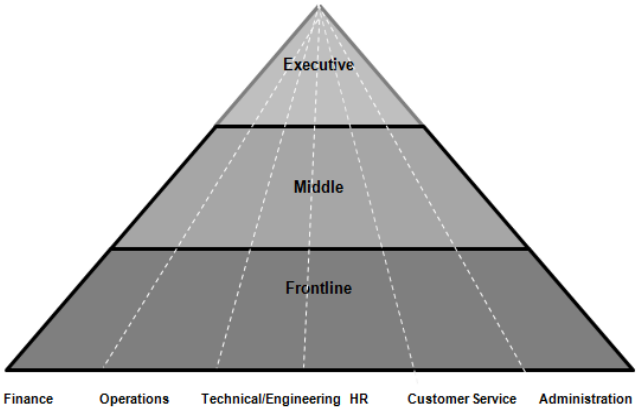


Figure 35: Areas of organisational function

Source: Davidson and Griffin (2006)

Leadership talent is undescribed

Following on from having no defined leadership talent management strategies, there were no documented definitions of leadership in any of the rail organisations. This resulted in widespread unawareness of what was really meant by 'leadership talent'.

The definitions and perceptions of leadership talent varied widely from ‘people who have got business or some commercial acumen’ (Executive leader, Innovative Rail); to ‘a bit of paper which says here’s what we want from leaders and we’re going to try and identify people who have those particular attributes or skill sets’ (Executive leader, MTAA); to ‘it might be in people’s minds but it’s not communicated out’ (Executive leader, City Trains).

HR leaders confirmed that the definition of leadership talent is widely undefined. Others believed the definitions were subjective because, ‘There’s kind of a general agreement around what it is but, no, we don’t have one and it’s not published’ (HR leader, Innovative Rail).

Aspiring leaders did not know what it was that they were aspiring to, or even if they would be considered as suitable leaders in the future. The components of, and characteristics for, leadership roles were not publicly well described even though some executive teams believed that they shared a definition of leadership. Contextual considerations about what it means to be a leader at executive, middle and frontline levels were not apparent in any of the settings as the importance of ‘leadership’ was highly focused on senior leadership roles. Considering that leadership is not just based on position was not obvious and, for younger leaders, the necessity to wait for numerous years to be selected for leadership seemed unattractive for many.

It was understood by the executive leader at Innovative Rail that those with the most importance and potential to the long-term needs of the organisation were engineers or other professionals with strategic, technical and professional abilities who could undertake ‘the planning, the budgeting, the financing, the strategic development’ of the company. At City Trains, the executive leader valued being ‘strategic, decisive, open and personal’, while at MTAA, the executive leader respected ‘empathy, openness, being willing to listen and treating people with respect’. Executive teams believed it was straightforward to identify leaders, based on what they thought the business needed. Yet, leadership definitions were not written and were based on subjective ideas and impressions. Han, Kuchinke and Boulay (2012, p. 60) claim that discussion of an issue such as “leadership talent” is a critical feature of defining a concept, and that ‘dialogue’ is at the foundation of ‘knowing’. Accordingly, if what is meant by leadership talent is not discussed, there is limited credibility in one, singular viewpoint (Lyotard 1984).

The impact of not defining what leadership is and why it is needed, was found to constrain thinking about the short, medium and long-term leadership needs of rail businesses, the ability to develop potential, and whether to hire from outside. While the HR leader at City Trains believed that new leadership talent was necessary from time to time, this appeared to be speculative rather than measured. The literature indicates that developing and widely sharing definitions of leadership talent builds the trust of decision-makers with those who are most affected by the strategy (Avolio & Gardner 2005).

Leaders are at the core of shaping and delivering business strategy. The degree of their success is dependent on the ability of other people to enact these policies, processes and projects to meet these strategic goals (Buller & McEvoy 2012). However, executive leaders defined a 'good' leader as having 'strong engineering or business ability'. While these skills are certainly required by technical experts in meeting the complex demands of technical or rail business strategic advantage, such a narrowing of the definition gives little consideration to the engagement of people (Perrin et al. 2010). Middle level leaders demonstrated more empathy with people as their job role involved leading other leaders. While no written definition of leadership was available, comments in the interviews confirmed the need to define leadership because people have 'variable role models and definitions', as described by the middle level leader at MTAA. Frontline leaders were in touch with teams everyday on operational and business issues. They believed that they knew about the attributes of leadership for leadership positions such as, 'knowledge, practical experience, understanding of rail safety accreditation' (Frontline leader, MTAA), or being able to, 'listen, transfer the business requirements and make decisions without really having to apply lots of critical thinking' (Frontline leader, City Trains).

Yet, considering that leadership comprises three key domains – technical, human and conceptual areas (Northouse 2010; Yukl 2010), consistency in the individual visions of a 'good' leader for a rail business was revealing. This study found that many of the leaders interviewed for this research cited remarkably similar characteristics about the human or personal abilities necessary to engage diverse groups, no matter what the leadership level. These characteristics required development by current leaders, and included communication skills, personal values and having time for people, amongst the long list of 'people-focused' abilities.

With regard to the difference between management and leadership, there were times in rail when both management and leadership are needed. However, management can be described as pertaining to the needs of the organisation, maintaining the status quo and looking after short-term needs (Department for Business Innovation and Skills 2012). It is often imposed upon others through positional power to maintain stability and minimise disruption in times of unsettling events such as restructuring (Northouse 2010). The ongoing change impacts in rail pushed leaders towards a management approach to maintain stability, especially at the middle and frontline. On the other hand, leadership is a relationship between people that builds trust, is for the long-term and satisfies basic human needs (e.g. sense of belonging, developing self, allaying fear). It empowers people to make decisions within a trust-based framework, considering the relevant contextual information (Toor 2011).

At this time, since leadership has not been defined in rail contexts, a common understanding of this phenomenon is unknown across the industry. Individual leaders were able to describe how they viewed leadership but the study has shown widely shared discussions about leadership were not occurring. Leadership and defining what leadership is, brings about the ability to do things in new and different ways (Glick et al. 2012). Nevertheless, leaders were relatively unaware of the importance of leadership for business innovation, productivity and strategic advantage at all levels of the organisation.

No clear connections between leadership and organisational performance

There was also a widespread lack of awareness about how the performance and accountability of an organisation were impacted by the actions and knowledge of individual leaders throughout the organisation. What was found was a lack of 'joined up' thinking (Cambridge Dictionaries Online 2011) that maximised the performance of the organisation through the knowledge and ability of leaders at all levels, and an acknowledgement of the importance of individual leadership roles. The Australian Workplace Productivity Agency (2013) links the role of skilled leaders to the prudent allocation of resources in organisations, that in turn results in higher performance of teams. However, there was a lack of knowledge in general, about how identifying and managing areas of work practice inefficiency and poor-performance could be improved through better connectedness with people. While leaders were not comfortable having the 'close-up conversations' around people related matters, they had fewer inhibitions

when difficult matters concerned safety or compliance. This influenced productivity at each level, observed to result from the unwillingness of leaders in positions of responsibility to change current practices. From the postmodern and HRD perspectives, questioning the assumptions and beliefs about existing work practices could highlight efficiency gains for rail operations in a global economy since it brings to light areas for improvement (Han, Kuchinke & Boulay 2009).

Communication

The study has shown that communication, listening, and the ability to manage language are essential skills for leaders at all levels. Frequency of the words 'communication' and 'listening' were high in the interview transcripts and were used by leaders at different levels to mean 'communication' for different purposes and contexts. Lyotard (1984) expresses the importance of communication in complex organisations as contributing to the meaning and purpose of work. Miller (2012, pp. 19-21) further describes three key purposes of communication in a workplace setting – for interpersonal communication to develop personal relationships with others, for engaging with teams and for communicating strategic and external information.

The study identified a key gap around leaders' ability in personal, one-on-one communication with others. Leaders at all levels made known their need to be listened to, and to be heard, and for their supervisor to act on the personal information that was being conveyed. For example, at City Trains the middle level leader looked forward to discussing his personal goals but had not had the opportunity for some time. Ongoing change and changing demographics are rapidly impacting the workplace and how and why individuals aspire to different work and life goals should be considered by current leaders at each level (Illeris 2011).

The high significance of the findings indicated wider issues of productivity, engagement and sense of belonging in the workplace that would benefit from the development of tools and structures to support leaders in personal conversations. While the 'hard' or technical components of the work were well done, the study has found that there was a wide degree of pent up frustration concerning the softer needs of individuality. This could be mitigated through more personal communication, including the need for constructive feedback about individual performance and authentic discussions about career and personal aspirations (Mercer 2011).

Current practice gave the impression that a leadership role in rail was understood through a management rather than leadership paradigm (Boedker et al. 2011b, pp. 43-44). Organisation wide, many leaders emphasised the same concerns that approaches with people were not inclusive or cognisant of individual talents and skills because knowledge of what people were good at was 'all up in people's heads' (HR leader, Innovative Rail). Tools to capture leadership aspirations were either undeveloped or overlooked individual potential. These tools can form important elements in a leadership talent management strategy, should it be developed in organisations, to capture individual information. In recent work on leadership in high performing workplaces, people management and leadership is given high priority. The inclusion of '1-on-1 time' to enable leaders to genuinely take an interest in, and care for, team member's growth and development, is essential given the now complex demands of life and work (Boedker et al. 2011b, p. 44).

Involvement of HR and HRD specialists in leadership talent management

Human resource development (HRD) practice enables the development of the skills of employees for current and future job roles (Sambrook 2005; Swanson & Holton 2009). As rail organisations adapt to changing business environments, the study expected to find that the roles of HR and HRD practitioners had an increasing role to play in preparing rail employees for new business productivity. However, it identified that HRD was not a highly integrated practice in business strategy in rail organisations, even though there were dedicated learning and development teams at MTAA and City Trains. While executive teams comprised key strategic people from areas of business operations including the HR leader, the value given to the 'people side' of the business was more for the placement of personnel in positions (HR management) rather than HR leadership or HRD. The way leaders approached business, and the management of leadership talent was a means of maintaining the status quo. This was unintentional yet also strategic with HRD practice on the periphery of the organisational activity.

Current practices are unsustainable

Short-term planning approaches to managing leadership talent were apparent in this study, but these quick-fix solutions cannot be sustained into the future as the skills required by leaders become more complex, and the potential pool of employees shrinks. Middle and frontline levels of leadership make up the greatest number of leaders in these organisations, but they have been afforded limited attention in developing the

skills for current or future leadership positions. Middle, frontline, as well as HR leaders were in the main without formal management or leadership qualifications from which to springboard their practice. Consistent with the findings of Boedker et al. (2011a), shifting to a knowledge focused economy requires higher level skills that were not necessary for most rail industry employees at the beginning of their careers (Pricewaterhouse Coopers 2006). Mahendran, Dockery and Affleck (2007, p. 29) suggest that this phenomenon has resulted in 'skills-biased cultural change… commonly associated with changes in technology', with a fall in unskilled labouring positions and an increase in professional roles such as managers.

The importance of developing written plans and policies around leadership talent management from an HRD perspective is twofold. Firstly, developing a consistent approach to managing leadership talent can harmonise talent management approaches across each setting. This study highlighted the different frames of reference and experiences of individual leaders, not only at each level of leadership but also within each team. There were various views shaping the understanding of 'leadership talent'. Coming together to agree on a vision of a 'talented leader', that is not written or defined, would highlight how variations of individual experience or perception can influence desired talent outcomes. Secondly, 'mental models are extremely difficult to change once believed' (Chermack 2003, p. 409) but change is possible by developing proactive approaches against a defined framework or structure that matches organisational needs. While there were no defined leadership talent management strategies in any of the organisations, acknowledgement needs to be made that this may not necessarily be the case in all rail organisations.

How is leadership talent identified in rail?

In addressing the second research question on how leadership talent is identified, the discussion will be framed according to the current operational practices of executive, middle, frontline and HR leaders in the three rail industry settings, taking into account that organisations reported that they had no overarching talent management framework.

Considering each of the three rail settings demonstrated disproportionate challenges in translating external changes into organisational practice (as discussed in the previous section), there were rail leaders with varying levels of skills, knowledge and importance. In each of the settings, the findings showed executive leaders to have the

highest significance, consistent with the structural arrangement of organisations. Middle level leaders were next, then frontline leaders, while HR leaders were perceived to have limited power and influence on organisational initiatives. The profile of rail leaders in this study confirmed a high predominance of long-serving, male leaders with engineering backgrounds in executive roles. At the middle and frontline, leaders were also predominantly male with long-standing service and commitment to the industry. In contrast, HR leaders had more transitory careers of between three and five years in rail before moving to other settings. The HR leader at City Trains was the exception. He had been employed for 'the majority of his career' in different roles in one rail setting.

In contemporary organisations, or from a post-modern perspective, segmenting key positions (Collings & Mellahi 2009) and considering the multiple talents and perspectives of leaders with equal importance enhances business productivity and innovation (Australian Workplace Productivity Agency 2013). Talented leaders at all levels are able to build and sustain team relationships, help others to cope with change, motivate and inspire others, and manage the deployment of resources (McCallum & O'Connell 2009). A systematic approach to identifying and aligning leaders at each level with the business intent is an indomitable business strategy, but must accordingly adapt and change as the organisation is influenced by shifting situations (McCartney & Garrow 2006). An overview of how each level of leadership talent is identified is provided in the following section.

How senior leaders identify leadership talent

As a result of their background and experiences, executive leaders had certain ideas about leadership, strategy and how leadership talent should be identified. At Innovative Rail, the executive leader believed that the executive team should plan a strategy with HR leaders assisting in the process. At MTAA, the executive leader considered that the executive team should be responsible for the strategy, with HR doing the 'leg work'. At City Trains, where no work had been undertaken at all, the executive leader believed the human resources area should lead the 'succession planning area' and executive managers should 'buy into that process'. However, in all three settings, identifying leadership talent throughout the organisation had a low priority. Executive leaders were working on individual ideas of what they believed a leader should be like, with little consideration of middle and frontline leaders' contributions to the business. The focus by executive leaders for identifying leadership talent was confined to senior leadership

roles and looking across the industry (as at Innovative Rail) to identify the next cohort of senior leaders. He said, ‘one idea which I think is very important is that we have to work together as an industry rather than individual businesses [to identify leaders]’. At MTAA, the leader here confirmed this point in a different way by saying, ‘we have identified people who we think can go to senior manager/general manager levels and so we really should be tracking their progress’.

The profile of executive leaders indicated that reaching a prestigious career goal at the executive level had been a lifelong career process, underpinned by drive and motivation for moving higher up the leadership ranks. Executives viewed organisational ownership changes as pending opportunities, and they had positioned themselves well to move again in the future. Two executive leaders had considerable rail industry operations and strategic experience, and one had arrived at a role in rail more recently, all with professional qualifications in engineering, business or finance to support their expertise. Engineering and business qualifications were confirmed by this study as highly valued and desirable professional qualifications for leadership of a rail business, ‘the business needs are just as important as the engineering needs’ (Executive leader, Innovative Rail). The high importance given to strategic leadership by executives over other levels of leadership is now less sustainable for complex workplaces or those that aspire to be high-performing (Boedker et al. 2011a). Organisations, now defined by diverse groups of people, have pluralistic meanings and interpretations for all employees (Green 2007). Talented leaders, from the executive down, all have a role to play in building the social capital (Day 2000) or community of rail within each team or sub-set of leadership. Kelm (1999) describes the importance of community as enabling team members to gain meaning or understanding or certainty in multifaceted, postmodern settings.

Defining talent (Hartmann, Feisel & Schober 2010), owning the talent management strategy (Stahl et al. 2012), developing a framework to transparently guide talent decisions (McDonnell et al. 2010) and having the talent management architecture in place (Blass 2007) are all necessary procedures to identify and align leaders with the ongoing and changing business needs of the organisation. A leadership talent management strategy and the way leaders at all levels are identified, consequently, needs to be supported by senior leaders (McCartney & Garrow 2006). While executive leaders stated that leadership renewal, succession and development of talent is necessary, they were uncertain about how to progress this concept, and as a result had

made little headway. From a recent study in 33 multinational companies that investigated the development of talent strategies and identification of leaders, Stahl et al. (2012) have identified a number of suggestions. This author claims that successful organisations involve the Chief Executive Officer, senior leaders as well as HR in the talent management strategies at the top, while at the operational levels involvement of line managers in the strategy is crucial. This can build the overall talent picture by allowing operational leaders to identify team members' aspirations and potential at each level (McCartney & Garrow 2006).

How middle level leaders identify leadership talent

Middle level leaders demonstrated how they had developed their own ways of identifying other leaders with potential or talent, facilitating their own informal identification processes. 'Good' leaders provided leadership aspirants with opportunities for mentoring, workplace experience and role practice. Others with potential were guided towards future leadership roles through a helping hand, even where there were formal merit-based recruitment processes. At Innovative Rail, the middle level leader incorporated work shadowing into processes of learning so that he could observe who had leadership potential. He looked for 'personal performance… a good key indicator because the staff that I am entrusted to manage are not observed 24/7' At City Trains, team meetings were planned 'off site' to enable people to 'open up a bit more', while at MTAA, leadership aspirations and ability were identified by observing, talking, listening and giving people workplace tasks to test their skills in an informal way.

Leaders at the middle level provided a distinct contrast to the executive level where an invisible barrier of professional versus vocational expertise existed. Middle level leaders comprised around 19 percent of all leaders (Short et al. 2011) with two distinct profiles. They were either a specialist in a technical area such as safety and compliance, 'to give support, advice to the other people specifically in safe working and in investigations' (Middle level leader, MTAA). Alternatively, leaders were generalists with a large span of control over many frontline leaders such as, 'train control which is a core function of this business' (Middle level leader, Innovative Rail). Many middle level leaders would have had difficulty moving into executive roles due to a lack of professional qualifications, confirmed by the statements from executive leaders that they looked outside their own organisation and across the industry to identify senior leaders. They were unprepared for the next level of leadership (executive roles) given the strategic and

financial skills now required to lead people and achieve results in complex, rail business environments. They were also unprepared to identify other leaders with the specific skills and talent required for contemporary rail organisations today.

At the middle level, leaders had not achieved up-to-date formal qualifications especially when they were working in non-technical areas such as customer service roles. Many qualifications were more than twenty years old, as in the case of the Station Manager qualification for the middle level leader at City Trains, that was a mandatory qualification when under public sector ownership in the 1990s (albeit a six week course). Formal learning was not an aspiration and learning on the job viewed as adequate for current roles. Organisations had facilitated the status quo of these learning approaches by endorsing experienced role models to provide career guidance to current middle level leaders. As a result, middle level leaders also based their own leadership style and approaches on these personal role examples models. While this approach is admirable, many older leaders had certain ways of working, mental models and mind-sets (Beechler & Woodward 2009), and were not always comfortable using technology to improve business productivity across geographically spread business units.

How frontline leaders identify leadership talent

Frontline leaders had ongoing requirements to fill leadership roles when staff went on leave, as there were many supervisory roles at the frontline. As a result, they had developed informal processes to identify, select and backfill positions based on endorsements from other employees and leaders. At City Trains, identifying leaders with potential was a staged process where the frontline leader first asked others about an individual's performance. Then, the supervising leader undertook observation of performance in action before placing them into a level 1 role. From this point the individual might progress 'from level 1, level 2, level 3, crew leader so by that time we've already got a feel for them anyway'. Frontline leaders are invariably selected for their ability to 'command and control' (Hales & Rabey 2011, p. 369), so at this level, frontline leaders were able to move into leadership roles without formal qualifications. Lack of formal leadership qualifications and requirements shaped the way frontline leaders identified leadership talent based on their own experiences as a leader, with one leader claiming that it stood out if they had leadership skills and 'it also stands out that they don't, too'. As a result, the frontline leader from MTAA limited team member participation in wide ranging learning opportunities that made certain leadership

potential stayed suppressed at the frontline. At City Trains, the frontline leader was provided insight into being a 'good' leader by his line manager when he described to him how to 'set the tone' or the 'temperature' of the team. He described the approach to setting the tone as 'heating things up' and 'sometimes cooling things down', and provided opportunities for workshadowing in meetings and other workplace situations to test leadership skills.

As a result of long-standing experience at the frontline, where leaders had between 20-35 years in supervisory and management roles (Piip 2011), frontline leaders' views on leadership was shaped by their own, unique experiences. Cumulative, long-term career experiences had built impervious layers of personal authority, tacit and technical knowledge necessary within the ranks of the frontline to direct operations, liaise with customers and achieve results. The benefit was in frontline leaders' expertise for operational problem solving, because of their vast experience and knowledge. Formal qualifications, either in technical, trade or management fields were widely lacking, and none of the frontline leaders aspired to reach higher levels of leadership. Continual learning and development in compliance and safety was time-consuming yet had high priority. As a result, leadership and the image of a 'good leader' were viewed through a certain paradigm of understanding from the frontline. This image could be consolidated for all, should the talents for frontline leaders be established and defined.

How HR leaders identify leadership talent

HR leaders had short careers in rail, had shallow involvement in leadership talent strategies in the three organisations, and in the identification and selection of leaders at each level. HR leaders had very little impact on leadership talent management as their roles focused more on traditional personnel management. As one acknowledged, 'one thing this business is really good at is that the managers manage their own people' (HR leader, Innovative Rail). It is now widely accepted that HR expertise can be utilised to link organisational practices around people, leadership, learning and improvements for increased outputs and productivity (Australian Workplace Productivity Agency 2013) but such linkages were not observed in this study.

Emphasis on rail knowledge and experience

Considering these ad hoc processes of identifying leadership talent at each level of leadership, there was an overall lack of unity and purpose connecting leadership levels

(executive, middle, frontline and HR) that highlighted different understanding of leadership for contemporary business needs. The existing rail communities at the middle and frontline, encompassed leaders and employees who had a way of knowing and doing, utilising highly specific rail knowledge in particular ways. This phenomenon was further complicated by a lack of recruitment into the rail talent career pool during the 1990s and 2000s (Mahendran, Dockery & Affleck 2007), that had resulted in a shallow pool from which to identify and develop the next generation of new leaders. Accordingly, any new industry entrants received judgement by older employees as not having the required depth of rail knowledge, as illustrated by this frontline leader at MTAA, 'I mean, somebody came in at the bottom and worked their way to the top. Now you're coming in at the middle with no experience'. The over-emphasis on rail knowledge resulted in the blinkering of leaders' understanding about who could be a leader.

Resulting from fixed perceptions about leaders in rail, connected conversations did not consistently probe leadership aspirations. Recent literature on talent management identifies that focused conversations about individual aspirations are one of the most important factors in organisational productivity, and have an impact on an 'employee's loyalty and motivation to perform' (Hay Group 2011, p. 8). As a result, the most common way to assess aspirations is through discussions and review processes. When these were undertaken in this study, they were more likely to be scheduled infrequently or at six monthly intervals (as in Innovative Rail and MTAA), while at City Trains, there were no plans to conduct performance discussions in the short term. The Hay Group (2011, p. 8) believes that the successful management of talent now requires regular conversations as well as performance discussions that focus on 'soft factors' to recognise development needs and aspirations. Interestingly, this idea is consistent with what the executive leader at Innovative Rail also believed leaders want, namely, 'challenges, stability, recognition and reward'.

The low awareness about personal conversations meant these discussions were not occurring. At the executive, middle, frontline and HR levels, feedback about individual progress and performance is necessary to progress personal aspirations. At Innovative Rail, the HR leader believed that the performance discussion focused too heavily on performance and not on the development of individual careers. As a result, he was 'scripting a discussion around how you have that conversation with people'. Lack of

personal conversations resulted in missed opportunities to identify potential. 'How to' conduct such conversations is highlighted as an area for development.

How are rail industry organisations developing their leadership talent?

In addressing the third research question on how rail industry organisations are developing leaders, the discussion will be framed in the light of contemporary leadership learning and development practices in 'complex' organisations, where there is an interplay between the external and internal world of the leader (Karp & Helgø 2009, p. 882). Clarke (2013) and others (Marion & Uhl-Bien 2001; Uhl-Bien, Marion & McKelvey 2007) believe that successful contemporary leadership development endeavours to capitalise on the development of the structure, culture and processes that characterise the social system (or community at each level), as well as the skills of individual leaders within the social system. In social systems such as modern rail organisations, there is a rich culture that can provide opportunities for leadership learning within the context, through a range of experiences to develop skills for formal leadership roles (Clarke 2013). Constructivist theories (Dewey 2009; Lave & Wenger 1991) contribute the perspective to leadership learning in contemporary organisations that individuals benefit from experiential learning, self-directed learning and reflective practice such as coaching and mentoring. These approaches have an underpinning principle that knowledge and meaning are individually co-constructed, and perspectives are transformed according to individual stages of development (Kegan 1982, 1994). At the individual level, recent writing confirms that there is a co-related need for 'leader' development or the development of individual competencies and skills for leadership that give rise to greater self-awareness, self-regulation and self-motivation (Day 2000, p. 584). Hence, contemporary leadership learning requires a strong focus on experiential and relation based learning (Day 2000), underpinned by formal learning, discussed in the literature by Lombardo and Eichinger (2000) and others (Illeris 2009; Mezirow 1990, 1991).

Leadership talent and identifying leadership development needs

None of the three organisations linked practices of leadership, identifying leaders and leadership development with an overall leadership talent management strategy. As mentioned throughout this study, a strategy or plan can align the skill need of leaders with the changing needs of the business to ensure leaders are equipped with the skills to

undertake their job, exhibit productive leadership practices and engage their team effectively to work toward organisational goals. As McCallum and O'Connell (2009) suggest, developing leaders and leadership capacity in modern organisations is a process that is focused on all levels of leaders, not just one. Building individual capability, as well as the capability or 'social capital' or 'networked relationships' of the organisation is the high-level intention of development approaches (Day 2000, p. 585). Instead of simply being stratified by levels of leadership, contemporary development approaches suggest learning between levels of leaders and learning with other leaders from different levels (Clarke 2013). However, for reasons related to the hierarchical structures of rail and the presence of informally trained managers at the middle and frontline, there was low value placed on enhancing leadership ability in general. Subsequently, developing the individual capability of leaders was not afforded high priority in these organisations.

Leaders exhibited variable qualifications; from executive leaders with formal qualifications in engineering or business; to middle level leaders with vocational qualifications in project management, management or safety; and to frontline leaders with no qualifications at all. Executive leaders had invested in their own learning while leaders at the middle and frontline had not considered formal leadership education necessary. Parks (2005, pp. 9-10) considers that organisations and leaders in the knowledge economy require 'new learning, innovation and patterns of behaviour', different from solving the technical problems of the past that could have been solved with 'knowledge and procedures already in hand', calling these new problems 'adaptive challenges'. Uhl-Bien, Marion and McKelvey (2007, p. 300) concur, arguing that the difference between leadership and management is intrinsically tied with organisational structures, that adaptive challenges do not respond to 'authoritative fiats' (command and control leadership styles) and that leadership is correlated with 'exploration, new discoveries and adjustments'. Consequently, command and control approaches found more so at the middle and frontline in this study might be increasingly irrelevant and disengaging on team productivity.

The literature identifies that leadership can come from anywhere in the organisation (Boedker et al. 2011a) and the development of leadership skills has now become the responsibility of the organisation as well as the individual, if a leadership career pathway is an aspiration (Ashford & DeRue 2012). For the purpose of this study,

nevertheless, the focus is on what organisations are currently doing to develop leadership capacity of people already in formally assigned leadership positions. Previously, regular performance appraisal or performance management discussions as organisational mechanisms to identify leadership aspirations were highlighted, and these conversations are also widely touted as a forum for the identification of development needs (Shields 2007). Conversely, this study found that conversations were tilted more towards a business and job role focus, rather than discussions about personal, leadership and career aspirations or developmental needs. Discussions were conducted inconsistently and with a high degree of impersonality. Leaders needed more assistance in understanding the why and how of conducting such conversations with a purpose. Current conversations overlooked opportunities to identify and discuss leadership aspirations and diagnose development needs (Cook & Macaulay 2009) because no one knew what 'leadership talent' looked like (Ashford & DeRue 2012; Garavan, Carbery & Rock 2012).

The relenting discussion in the literature confirms that leadership as a practice, and leadership talent, is a highly nebulous concept yet specific to the contextual environment in which it is undertaken (Beechler & Woodward 2009; Tansley 2011). Therefore, to harness the leadership talent of the organisation, the definition of talent at each level is crucially important, situated within an overall leadership talent management structure and strategy as a precursor to identifying development needs. This study confirmed that 45 rail leaders (from the interviews and the survey) in just three settings were not of the same mind about a talented leader and their resulting development needs because of wide-ranging individual perceptions and experiences. Consequently, unless the explanation of a talented leader is well defined, it will be extremely difficult for organisations to diagnose and remedy leadership talent gaps... Identifying individual leadership development needs is complex, as Silzer and Church (2009) and Sanghi (2007) highlight. Leadership talent comprises not only observable foundation, growth and career dimensions but also those attributes and motivations that are hidden such as motivations and career stage.

Leadership at the executive level

Initial professional qualifications are the building blocks of expertise, but this study found that executive leaders were highly focused on the importance of technical qualifications and abilities alone for their own, and others, leadership ability. At the

time of these executive leaders' initial education (during the early to mid 1970s since they were all in their 50s), the engineering profession was highly focused on developing technical competence rather than communication and people management skills which are now recognised as being needed in the 21st century in engineering businesses (Goh & Bullen 2010). Consequently, mindsets of engineering specialists who become leaders early in their career tend to have become set in engineering, management and prescriptive, problem-solving paradigms (Galloway 2008). Adeptness in the competencies of talent, team, project and change management, and knowledge of self, are all skills now needed to ensure engineering business leaders have a global, inclusive view of leadership (Fung Institute for Engineering Leadership 2012).

In light of this discussion, this study considered that executive leaders would require further development to reach stage five, or the self-transforming mind (Kegan 1982), of the constructive development theory, discussed in detail in the literature review in Chapter 2. Executive leaders' knowledge and experiences were constrained generally to Australian rail and certain views of leadership within these contexts, placing them more at stage four. At stage five, individuals are claimed to be able to integrate multiple principles, thoughts and beliefs, not just one view for an integrated, world view (Pruyn 2010). Considering the changing ownership of rail companies to multinationals, being acquainted with the global knowledge and experiences adds to the diverse talents of rail leaders, especially as companies move from an industrial to a knowledge base (Boedker et al. 2011a; Green et al. 2009). Taking into account Kegan's stages of adult development in relation to the highly regarded constructive development theory (1982), executive leaders displayed understanding of their own foundation, growth and career dimensions, demonstrating initiative in developing their own leadership skills.

In regard to the development of leadership talent and executive leaders, Kegan (1982) states that only a small percentage of the population is thought to be developmentally capable of reaching level four (let alone level five) as a self-directed learner, who devises personal strategies to achieve high levels of success. The significance of stage four or the self-authorising mind, is that executives in this study demonstrated the ability to accommodate and assimilate the external environment into new ways of knowing (Illeris 2002, 2007). Consequently, only a few leaders would be capable of achieving success as an executive leader in a contemporary rail organisation because of the complex, under-pinning knowledge, technical ability, drive and motivation to

develop and reveal such talents. This assumption is also recognised by Mumford, Campion and Morgeson (2007) who suggest that higher level cognitive skills are required by leaders such as executives, because these skills are essential for critical thinking. Their argument is in line with other theorists (Katz 1955; Northouse 2010) that the need for high level conceptual and change skills is the greatest at the level of executive leader.

Leadership at the middle level

Middle level leaders had developed experience as a leader predominantly on the job, firstly at the frontline and then promoted upwards. They were selected for their ability to combine operational ability and management skills. In the example of City Trains, the middle level leader completed an initial short training program, and after more than 20 years, completed a qualification in project management by means of a skills recognition process. At Innovative Rail, the middle level leader, started his career as a driver, then became a team leader and, in time, moved to train control over a 20-year journey. At MTAA, the middle level leader had worked for the organisation 'moving up through the ranks, doing different jobs, different locations' and had 'just moved into this role, you might say'. They could all be described as 'blue collar' leaders because they were without formal qualifications in people management, and were restricted by their consciousness of learning in the vocational education sphere (Storberg-Walker 2012, p. 591). Many would be unable to transcend to the executive level of management because of the lack of underpinning skills and qualifications. The lack of formal qualifications impeded their view of the development needs of self, as well as others, limiting their views of leadership development to archetypal approaches such as short courses and workplace experience. While they had a blend of technical, human and conceptual skills, unspoken assumptions of executives and others about middle level leaders (Storberg-Walker 2012, p. 591) limited their ability and motivation to break free from these imposing barriers. When considered against Kegan's (1982) model of adult development and learning, middle level leaders, in the main, had reached stage three, or the socialised mind, because of strong approval needs from peer or social groups to reinforce an individual sense of belonging in the 'traditional' rail environment.

Leadership at the frontline level

Frontline leaders had also developed their experience through experience on the job and did not have formal qualifications. At City Trains, the frontline leader had been in rail since 1988, starting as a junior administration officer. Over the years as opportunities arose, he did not have to apply for any positions and just progressed from there to where he was now. At MTAA, the frontline leader was 'a product of the old rail system', commencing in the industry in the 60s. He worked his way up, going through 'all the different grades and different areas in the country' before becoming a train controller, and 'just progressed through the ranks'. At Innovative Rail, the frontline leader had just progressed from 'looking after things' to 'looking after people' but admitted he had limited experience in managing people. Recognition of their own and others' development needs was limited by their scant experience of the concept of 'learning'. For example, the frontline leader from MTAA had never used training in any form as a developmental intervention for his leaders.

Considering Kegan's (1982) constructive development theory of adult learning and development, these frontline leaders demonstrated a limited worldview, a focus on following rules, traditions, and norms (Traylor 2010) and a relative inability to grasp the relentless rail industry changes. Workplace coping skills included behaviours such as absenteeism at the frontline and ongoing staff rescheduling consequences as a result. The life entrapment of frontline leaders in their increasingly difficult roles was played out in a variety of personal coping skills that were not understood well by higher-level leaders.

HR leadership

Human resources leaders were highly involved in the placement of people more so than advice and expertise with leadership development approaches. 'I know a lot about personnel administration but nothing about HR', claimed the HR leader at Innovative Rail. The qualifications and expertise of HR leaders related to general management, employee relations and personnel management. Interestingly, none of the HR leaders had qualifications in human resource management or learning and development. In the literature, it is suggested that to meet the increasing skills required by organisations in aligning talented leaders with business strategy, it is advantageous to involve HR leaders in this shared task since they are the ones with the expertise in learning and development (Nicholson & Nairn 2006). However, even though HR leaders were

involved with the rail executive teams, this study showed they had limited knowledge about contemporary strategies required for leadership development in organisational situations. With high value placed on safety, technical qualifications and hard skills over soft skills such as leadership, the balance needed for talented leadership was skewed in favour of hard skill development, and HR leaders did not challenge this view.

Leaders at all levels need leadership development, aspiring leaders as well as current leaders. The approaches currently taken by organisations were not differentiated for different groups of leaders. However, considering both aspiring as well as current leaders at each level, there could be at least eight differentiated approaches needed in each organisation (Table 28) as well as individual approaches within these categories.

Table 28: Number of differentiated approaches for leadership development

	Executive	**Middle**	**Frontline**	**HR**
Current leaders	✓	✓	✓	✓
Aspiring leaders	✓	✓	✓	✓

This study identified that each level had different job roles and would require different development needs. These will be discussed further in this chapter and then again in Chapter 7.

Strategies used to develop leadership talent

Rail organisations had ad hoc and reactive ways to developing leaders, as there was no overall structure to guide and focus decision-making. The absence of a leadership talent management strategy, the unknown complexities of 'leadership' and restricted awareness of contemporary development approaches all contributed to a rather limited understanding about what and how to embrace leadership development. The reality of leaders being more at ease with engineering and technical areas affected their ability to conduct connected conversations, get close to people and identify the 'real' development needs. Apprehension with people-related strategies also influenced the value accorded to HR leaders over those with technical skills. The literature states that successful talent management strategies are led, endorsed and modelled by executive teams as a defining element (McCartney & Garrow 2006). As a result, to understand and develop a strategy or framework such as for leadership talent management, organisations need to identify and work on the underlying 'unconscious assumptions'

which shape the existing culture (Schein 1990, pp. 3-4) of talent management. Written, shared and purposefully developed goals within such a framework can facilitate a strong sense of direction and purpose for both leaders and employees.

Executive leaders have a key role in leading the desired leadership talent approach for the organisation yet the absence of any leadership talent strategy indicates that they were unaware of this importance. This study showed they were also unsure about how they might undertake the task. There were compelling reasons to consider defining a leadership talent approach; demonstrated by middle level leaders, who observed leadership behaviour from senior role models; and by frontline leaders who in their culture of safety were cautious about risk and change. HR leaders believed culture improvement was necessary because rapid ownership change was leaving rail people behind. At all levels, leaders were now unsure about the purpose, culture and intent of their particular organisation. Identifying the skills and competencies at each level sets a frame for the methods of development and the associated skills, knowledge and competencies to achieve these organisational aspirations (Boedker et al. 2011b). In regard to the competencies of leadership, these are different for each level of leadership because of the focus of the individual leadership role (these will be analysed further in the model of a talented rail leader in Chapter 7).

From the analysis of the ways in which leadership is conducted at each level, leaders were also questioned and surveyed about a number of different strategies commonly used for leadership development. This study asked leaders to consider these learning strategies and provide their opinions about the value of such developmental approaches including formal learning, psychometric tools, coaching and mentoring, performance feedback, workshadowing, workplace experience and workplace opportunities. In the following section, leaders' responses are discussed according to each learning strategy.

Formal learning

This study provided insight into how formal learning might be incorporated into rail leadership development to build stronger foundations for leaders at each level. Certainly, literature discussed how experience plays a key role in developing leadership skills through exposure to a range of unforeseen, difficult or unpredictable learning experiences (Hanson 2012; Lombardo & Eichinger 2000; McCall 2004, 2010b, 2010a). In recent times, however, new light is being shed on the experience argument,

suggesting that formal leadership learning has an important role to play in contemporary organisations because it fills in the gaps of random learning or learning from the wrong lessons of experience (McCall 2010b).

Executive leaders demonstrated formal and higher level qualifications as the scaffolding of their leadership journey, and these placed them in an exclusive domain above all other leaders. Formal qualifications are mandatory for executive leaders because of the technical and professional knowledge that must underpin high-level conceptual thinking. A number of writers confirm this link between formal professional qualifications (although not the only factor) (Cocks 2009), conceptual thinking (Snowden & Boone 2007), cognitive skills (Mumford, Campion & Morgeson 2007) and the ability to conceptualize complexity (Clarke 2013; Martin & Ernst 2005) that formal learning develops. It was generally accepted by this study's respondents, that without such professional qualifications, aspiring leaders would not be considered for an executive level leadership role in rail, but this condition was not necessarily correlated with superior leadership ability. The three executives in this study would benefit from development in being more self-aware, as much of their work was 'about building relationships with people who lead those teams and setting the appropriate examples' (Executive leader, Innovative Rail). However, at City Trains 'only the executive had done Myers Briggs and some other personal traits, really just to examine the balance of the executive team'. At MTAA, 'the focus was using some instruments which were about team effectiveness rather than individuals'. Gibson and Mason (2011) identify that mentoring, coaching, and shadowing other leaders can develop the personal skills of leaders once gaps are diagnosed through psychometric tools such as Myers Briggs. This includes executives 'who need to be more effective with communication style, interpersonal skills, sensitivity to others or the extension of simple courtesies' (Reeves 2006, p. 48). The interviews revealed that executive teams could also benefit from awareness of human resource development practice (Storberg-Walker 2012) and contemporary leadership development approaches (Hanson 2012). This awareness would enhance their understanding of the place of professional qualifications and leadership development strategies required at lower levels (blue collar leaders, Storberg-Walker 2012), and not by just focusing on 'training', as expressed by the executive leader at City Trains.

Middle level leaders had limited formal qualifications and typically used experience and life-long role models to guide leadership practice. One comment highlighted the importance of role models and mentoring in the industry, 'I still aspire to be like him' (Middle level leader, City Trains). This experience provided opportunities for navigating leadership in complex rail settings, but the powerful lessons from particular examples in this study for old-style ways of leading, may not always be able to be changed easily once delivered. In regard to formal learning, skills recognition was available in some organisations to formalise learning and provide foundation qualifications but was not widely taken up for several reasons. Management or leadership qualifications are not mandatory for leadership positions in rail at any level, influenced by union involvement, which is different from other industries that have their original roots in the public sector (for example, education). Hence, career pathways to executive roles were shortened for employees without formal, professional qualifications, and middle level leaders showed little interest in pursuing recognition of prior learning pathways to gain a vocational qualification. Middle level leaders thought the skills recognition process was not widely taken up because the process was perceived as not having rigour as highlighted in this statement, 'we just got a certificate/recognition' (City Trains). Middle level leaders were sceptical of learning strategies they did not understand and unable to recognise the full extent of the development needs of others. This attitude set up an ongoing cycle of poor leadership development diagnosis at this level that could be mitigated through the introduction of mandatory management qualifications for leaders at the middle and frontline.

Similarly, frontline qualifications were not mandatory for leadership roles and many frontline leaders were benchmarking themselves against their own practice and other leaders' styles. At City Trains, mentoring helped prepare the frontline leader to take over from the existing leader when the time arose. Up-and-coming frontline leaders modelled 'good' leadership practice in being a directive, operational leader on others they had observed throughout their careers, rather than through formal learning. As a result of current practices, personal motivations to develop further were not stimulated.

HR leaders had a superficial involvement with teams in developing leadership learning strategies, corralled within their own knowledge and experience, and for the reason that their value to the organisation was not highly regarded by other leaders in operational teams. The value of HR leaders to operational teams could be strengthened through the

development of formal learning, knowledge of the rail business and contemporary qualifications to enhance their current practice.

Psychometric tools

Surprisingly, organisations did not use psychometric tools for diagnosing internal roles such as for leadership where high influence, decision-making and people engagement ability is required. Recent literature on leadership talent management highlights how successful organisations give high priority to matching the ability of their leaders with their desired business outcomes, identifying individual leadership gaps and providing the correct diagnosis to remedy shortfalls with these types of tools (Gibson & Mason 2011, p. 19). Instruments such as the Myers Briggs Type Indicator (Myers 1962) and other such tools have been available for many years, and assist in providing a sharper picture of the preferred work and learning preferences of individuals. Although not a complete panacea, psychometric tools can illuminate understanding of self and leadership preferences rather than relying on chance predictions to meet these needs.

Should rail organisations embrace the use of psychometric tools in their leadership development approaches for executive, middle and frontline leaders, there could be benefits on several levels. Firstly, the use of these tools can provide a broad diagnosis of individual talents of current as well as aspiring leaders, and thereby helping the process of identifying the suitability of individuals for leadership roles (Silzer & Church 2009). Secondly, psychometric tools can reveal and confirm leadership talent aspirations and abilities of minority groups (such as indigenous people, women and younger employees – providing the tools are culturally sensitive) who do not always have the opportunity to perform in acting leadership roles (Eby, Johnson & Russell 1998). Thirdly, psychometric tools can be utilised to identify and diagnose particular gaps (Strack et al. 2010) in individuals' human domains of leadership (Northouse 2010; Yukl 2010) as leadership moves more to a knowledge-based function (Vamos 2012).

Coaching and mentoring

The terms coaching (for example, Clutterbuck 2008) and mentoring (for example, Berg & Karlsen 2012) were used interchangeably by rail industry leaders to describe how they helped others succeed in their job roles. The strong interest in coaching and mentoring has been accentuated by the impending retirement of senior employees, and the sudden realisation that specialised knowledge is about to be permanently lost from

rail companies. This study identified that coaching and mentoring were both occurring frequently and spontaneously where more experienced leaders were paired with younger, aspiring leaders. Informal mentoring was the guiding hand that allowed younger leaders to model their behaviour for leadership roles, if they recognised the cues and learning experiences offered to them, 'I think because he put my name up for the job I have got now' (Frontline leader, City Trains). Considering this approach, current mentoring approaches were reinforcing the existing organisational culture by unconsciously favouring some individuals over others and teaching old, established cultural ways. Another problem with this tried and tested strategy is that older mentors had ways of teaching from a different era (Calo 2008), and could not always provide the stimulation, feedback and depth of learning required to keep younger employees engaged for sustained periods of time.

Recent research about high-performing workplaces in Australia (Boedker et al. 2011b) recognises that, while mentoring and coaching are beneficial leadership development approaches, they both need to be complemented with other leadership development practices. Therefore, describing and differentiating the purpose of coaching (for example, for hard skills not soft skills) from mentoring (for example, for soft skills not hard skills) (Laker & Powell 2011) and then articulating the objectives of both programs, can help define how both coaching and mentoring are facilitated on the ground (Boedker et al. 2011b). Relational learning through coaching and mentoring provides increased self-awareness of leadership ability and access to different leaders and important peers. This study identified a need to develop strategies to enhance this learning approach as the relational connections that are made from these experiences are often for the longer term, enabling a heightened level of reflection and learning as a result of becoming individually conscious as a leader (Kegan 1982; Short et al. 2011). Developing a definition and image of 'leadership' at each level would underpin enhanced coaching and mentoring practices throughout the organisation to enable leaders to be both a coach and a coachee, and a mentor and a mentee, while filling in the gaps of leadership knowledge for both self and others.

Feedback – 360 degree feedback, performance feedback

Giving as well as receiving feedback was a difficult task for many leaders and the particular method of 360 degree feedback was limited in use only by executive leaders. Feedback is a process to learn more about self (Gruman & Saks 2011) and when

combined with other developmental approaches such as coaching and mentoring, workshadowing and workplace experience, can develop understanding of the wholeness of self. Feedback underpins knowing about current, personal ability as a leader through others' perspectives and brings to the fore areas for development (Hanson 2012).

However, many rail leaders were cautious about delivering this feedback, believing that they had to work with colleagues over the 'long haul' and honest feedback may damage relationships and career opportunities, 'I mean you are dealing with people for many years' (Middle level leader, Innovative Rail). In previous rail research (Short et al. 2011), the traditional Australian values of egalitarianism, individualism, humane orientation, mateship and discrimination were found to underpin traditional industries such as rail. However, in contemporary workplaces, laws protecting employees need to be enacted and upheld by leaders to ensure accountability and fairness for all, especially in regard to feedback about 'good' and 'poor' performance. 'Good' leaders demonstrate their ability to provide as well as accept constructive feedback, with knowledge that commitment to good leadership practice depends on the input from a range of people and situations (Boedker et al. 2011b). In this study, it was found that feedback was not actively sought or given which established ways to maintain the status quo where executive leaders had the most power and importance (Gruman & Saks 2011) while overlooking mediocre practice. The ability to know how to provide, and learn from, feedback is a valuable learning tool for leaders.

Workshadowing

Middle level leaders used workshadowing, along with coaching and mentoring, to bring frontline leaders into awareness of middle leadership roles. However, this study showed that shadowing practices tended to be based on what leaders already knew, influencing how aspirants were inducted into the existing culture. At the frontline, a stepped approach through the supervisory levels of 'crew leader', 'team leader', 'supervisor' was evident so the preparation for leadership process was informal and ongoing. Senior leaders, however, demonstrated their unease about allowing others into their leadership space, 'I think that would make people feel [that] there's a hidden agenda' (Executive leader, City Trains).

Workshadowing is in the same relational development family as coaching and mentoring but has limited structures around how it is enacted in practice (Jacobs & Park

2009). It can benefit both parties by providing an overview of a work-related role such as leadership while illuminating areas for learning and practice. In Lawrence's report (2010 p. 10), workshadowing is described as an activity that allows the leadership aspirant to leave their usual workplace setting to reflect on the intellectual and emotional aspects of a new job role. The advantage of workshadowing lies in allowing the individual to consider whether this type of role really is for them, whether it fits their personal and career aspirations, and what personal changes would need to be made to achieve such a goal.

Workplace experience, workplace opportunities, learning on the job

Workplace experience, workplace opportunities and learning on the job were all widely observed as ways to develop the leadership skills of selected employees currently aspiring to or already in leadership roles. The changing nature and pressures of rail industry work, and the resulting employee competence requirements, meant that timely 'learning in work' is needed to provide the converging and contingent opportunities for leadership learning (Sambrook 2005, p. 139).

Leaders in rail (at the middle and frontline) were self-organising and adept at helping other colleagues to learn the technical skills of leading on the job but were under-utilising the many rich opportunities to learn about leadership in rail. Learning through work and in work is at the very core of human resource development (Sambrook 2005), but analysis of the current approaches by rail industry organisations for developing leaders revealed a limited view of leadership learning. This study has shown that greater understanding of how leadership skills are developed along with more formal structures for leadership learning could systemise and enhance the learning that is already occurring. This conclusion is supported by examination of what leaders at each level revealed about their personal experiences of learning at work.

Executive leaders were looking for opportunities to seize their next career move by extending their knowledge base and expertise within their current job roles. At this leadership level, leaders in other similar global industries can often demonstrate a younger age profile with a strategic, fast-paced approach to learning that takes advantage of a range of global opportunities to strengthen their talent as a leader (Ashford & DeRue 2012). This is achieved by career experience and opportune learning

in diverse scenarios, not limited to the organisation, and described by Shen and Hall (2009, p. 795) as the 'reality' of new careers.

However, executive rail industry leaders demonstrated a relatively unconscious approach to building their leadership capital and personal strategic advantage, limited to learning opportunities confined to the immediate organisation. This confirmed how they viewed the paradigms of their own organisation as limited to an Australian base, and not one with a global reach. International assignments within the parent company, secondments to other rail companies and other 'stretch' learning assignments that build personal knowledge and expertise were largely unknown and untested. Executive leaders were confirming their workplace learning experiences to the current rail organisation or limiting them through permanent career moves. The rich learning opportunities offered by the global rail industry are now diverse as well as vast, and could provide the opportunity to learn how one manages oneself in new situations – a useful practice to reflect on as a senior leader (Laker & Powell 2011). Extending knowledge of leadership in rail, and in multiple global situations, lends itself to being coached, mentored and participating in work shadowing experiences in Australia as well as in international rail companies. Executives were not widely aware of how these learning strategies could be applied or how the logistical arrangements could be managed.

Middle level leaders were generous and skilful in recognising ways in which other aspiring leaders could develop experience and skills for rail leadership. They cited citing informal, workplace opportunities as the most effective ways of learning, 'You observe them; you talk to them; you listen to what they've got to say; you give them what I call pop quizzes' (Middle level leader, MTAA). In safety critical roles, they took a cautious, stepped approach to assisting others learn within their own frames of reference (Kegan 1982). This approach was selective of only certain employees; hence, not all leadership aspirants had access to the same prospects. An analysis of the current learning strategies at the middle level in this study identified gaps in learning strategies that could be filled with more structured learning approaches for both leaders as well as team members. While middle managers had well developed people management and human relation skills, they would also benefit personally from further structured workplace development and learning opportunities. These opportunities would involve workshadowing of peers or other leaders, leading within other rail business units to

utilise and further develop people management skills, and learning with peers on action learning projects.

At the frontline, this study found that there were up to three levels of employees, and leaders of these teams did not require a formal qualification. However, the diversity of teams and complex problem solving required by frontline leaders on a daily basis translates to the need for highly developed skills in leading operational teams (Rabey 2008). As the frontline leader at MTAA described (regarding gaps in his knowledge after a train accident), 'It just confirmed to me the big gap between what we know and what we should know'. As a result, informal processes were at play that set about identifying those with strong command and control leadership styles throughout the frontline levels to ensure a steady supply of leaders coming up through the ranks. The flaws in this process replicated the current culture and profile of frontline leaders that did not align with how younger leaders saw a leadership role. While workplace learning at the frontline was highly valued, it would benefit from the inclusion of other formal learning and mandatory qualifications for leaders. Other suggested development opportunities for frontline leaders include learning up and down the organisation, access to executive leaders to witness firsthand what happens at the strategic level in rail, workshadowing and observation of leaders at all levels. Even though there are vast amounts of informal learning occurring on the job, some guidance or a framework is required to direct how this learning can benefit all frontline leaders.

The practice of HRD is impacted by the external environment, known to incorporate the development of skills for work, organisational development and individual career development (O'Toole 2010). The increasing demands of HR and HRD professionals means that they must keep abreast of industry changes, considering what matters most to leaders (Marquardt, Berger & Loan 2004). Suggestions for developing wider knowledge of rail business activities include actively engaging HR leaders in leadership learning with other business unit leaders, seeking an experienced mentor outside of the HR/HRD field and workshadowing leaders in rail specific areas.

Progression of ideas about leadership talent management in rail

At the end of this section, a rigorous attempt has been made to uncover answers to the main research question and three sub-questions about leadership talent management in the three Australian rail industry organisations in this study. In concluding this section,

the study returns to the initial ideas about talent management, introduced in Chapter 1 and elaborated in the Conceptual Framework, in Chapter 3, to compare the initial assumptions with the findings of the research. At the beginning of this study, it was envisaged that the relationships between rail organisations and how they identify and develop leadership talent might be inter-related and intertwined, with a possible number of other influences. It was assumed that rail organisations recognised the leadership potential within their organisation by different levels and utilised many approaches to develop leaders. It was also considered that these strategies resulted in personal change in leaders and transformation through the organisations, orchestrated by HR and HRD teams. A representation of the perceived influences on talent management was originally presented in Figure 3. As a result of the literature review, a framework to guide leadership talent management was established in Chapter 3, and subsequently used for the analysis of information from the interviews and survey (shown in Figure 20 and Table 9).

This study identified that the hierarchical structure of organisations defines levels of leadership, there are informal identification and endorsement strategies for leaders at each level. The definition of what it means to be a leader is connected intrinsically to each level of leadership, but these interpretations are not related to any encompassing definition. Approaches to leadership learning incorporate workplace learning organised by different leaders, and based on individual knowledge of leadership, learning through experience on the job and informal mentoring for chosen people. The involvement of HR leaders in shaping contemporary leadership talent identification and development is limited. The original ideas about leadership talent management are not the same as those found in reality in this study, nor what the scholarly writing suggests.

The discussion highlights the key elements of leadership talent management that were both absent in the three rail settings. One could think about these elements as being the external and internal worlds of leadership and leaders, or the context of the organisation (external) and the context of the individual (internal). The organisational context requires a framework or strategy to guide decision-making about leaders at each level, while the individual context requires skills, knowledge and abilities to become a leader. The framework or strategy can be referred to as the ‘structural capital’ (Boedker 2005, p. 19) of leadership talent management while the individual context relates to human capital (Australian Workplace Productivity Agency 2013). Effective leadership talent

management in contemporary rail organisations should be an all-encompassing phenomenon, embracing the two elements – the framework or strategy of talent management and individual competencies (or talents) for each level leadership. This view is a holistic approach, much like the silver coins or the name-sake of 'talent' that had high value in Syracuse society around 400 BC (Kroll 2008). This concept was initially represented in the original ideas about leadership talent management, in Figure 3. As leadership talent management incorporates these two elements with considerations of multiple contexts, it is evident that the discussion is not yet completed. The structural framework or strategy, established to guide leadership talent management decision-making in Chapter 3, will be augmented in the next stage by establishing the talents necessary for leaders at each level. This discussion, leading to the development of a model, will be presented in Chapter 7.

Chapter summary

Discussion of the findings in this chapter has identified ongoing change, contexts of leadership, the culture and community of rail, defining and communicating messages about leadership talent, and defining the skills and competencies for leadership at each level as important considerations in leadership talent management. It is acknowledged that organisations are now operating in increasingly complex contexts that constrain the ability of rail leaders in being effective as single entities, as they once were able to be in the past. As a result, the purpose of talent management is to plan systematically for the leadership needs of the organisation by identifying the formally assigned leadership roles at each level. Leadership talent management sets out to ensure that current leaders have the appropriate skills and knowledge to conduct their role, that aspiring leaders have the opportunity to express their aspirations, and that both sets of leaders are identified and developed. Leadership talent management is important in view of the fact that talented leaders have an active role to play in connecting with, and helping others, understand the continually changing environments in which organisations now operate. This study has found that defining what it is that rail organisations are looking for in their leaders can assist rail industry organisations understand and leaders at the present time. The next chapter now brings together the 'external' and 'internal' components of leadership to present what is required by organisations as well as individuals in the quest for talented leadership.

7 The model of talented leadership

Chapter outline

This chapter:

1 presents a model of talented leadership for rail industry contexts by synthesising two components that formed the focus of this research: (1) a structural framework to guide leadership talent management decision-making developed from a review of the literature and employed in the analysis of the research data, and (2) the talents (or skills and knowledge) required for leaders at the executive, middle, frontline and HR levels, developed from the findings of the research study; and
2 identifies areas of learning and development for leaders at executive, middle, frontline and HR levels in rail organisations.

Why is an outline of 'model' leadership needed?

The enquiry identified that a commonly understood definition of 'leadership talent' was not widely in use in rail organisations, but rather current leaders were operating from their own diverse understandings. As a result of the initial research question about how rail organizations are identifying and developing their leadership talent (p. 6 of this thesis), this section outlines a model for practice. In reality, this study found that Australian rail companies are now competing in an environment of complexity where leaders require skills and knowledge for sound decision-making, and personal skills to care for and value people in their teams. Leadership in organisations requires the combined efforts of leaders at all levels to contribute to sustained outcomes for the business. In times past, the literature describes that conventional management practices sustained organisations' operations because challenges faced by leaders and their teams were routine and had well-known solutions (Uhl-Bien, Marion & McKelvey 2007). However, this study found that rail leadership today is ever evolving. Learning and

development of new skills is mandatory to ensure leaders can make informed decisions, consider the human needs of teams and achieve business results. A definition of leadership talent is illuminated to assist rail organisations identify and develop talented leaders with more confidence than they have been doing, and as was found in this research. The definition of leadership talent as pertaining to rail organisations can now be refined as follows:

> Talented rail leaders continually develop self as a leader of others at the executive, middle, frontline or HR levels. They enable and care for people in their teams so that the team can achieve results in complex environments.

This study found leaders require certain skills, abilities and professional qualifications to manage physical resources, but it is the talents required by leaders to guide people in times of change and complexity that are explicated here. The reason for describing the talents required to lead and guide people is a key finding of this study that identified a greater focus on technical and engineering skills than on the important 'people talents' now required in contemporary business settings. Returning to the original notion of "talent" as a coin, there two sides to becoming a talented leader. These sides comprise the hard (or technical or tangible) skills that can be readily learnt, and where proficiency and mastery can be precise (Laker & Powell 2011); and the soft (or intangible) skills that are related to interactions with people. This chapter now sets out to describe the soft skills or talents for leaders at the executive, middle, frontline and HR levels as identified in this study.

Reiterating some of the major themes from this study, rail organisations are now part of complex and global business systems. They have defined levels of leadership in hierarchical structures, they are faced with ongoing change, and they have untapped potential within the vast pools of people they employ. How rail organisations manage leadership talent at all levels has to be a combination of a skills approach, developing the foundation skills of technical expertise for particular roles, and a people approach, helping teams adapt to changing, complex organisational systems.

Leadership functions at the different levels

This research identified that while leadership can come from everywhere within the organisation, rail organisations still largely follow hierarchical management structures. Leadership as a practice has to operate within this predictable structural framework with around 73 percent of leaders at the frontline, 19 percent of leaders in the middle levels

of leadership and eight percent of leaders at the senior levels of leadership (Short et al. 2011). This study on leadership talent management additionally identified that HR leaders are positioned at either the middle or executive levels.

The leadership functions of executive, middle and frontline leaders were disentangled from the interviews to identify the broad purpose of each leader's role. The analysis identified that leadership is enacted differently at each level because each leader contributes a different function and purpose to the overall business. Consequently, this study identified two key points. Firstly, leaders require broader abilities as they move from the frontline to the middle, and then to executive roles, within organisations. These skills are related to tangible skills of technical expertise such as capabilities of rail engineering or business and financial expertise. Higher levels of technical ability are required for leaders in more senior roles. Other studies have also identified how leadership changes as leaders move up the organisational levels (e.g. Hooijverg, Hunt and Dodge 1997 and Jaques 1978). Kegan (1982, 1994) describes the six orders of consciousness, and the success of individuals in being able to understand complexity and leave behind certain paradigms of understanding as they move to senior roles. However, technical ability is not the only factor in being a successful leader, as higher-level roles are increasingly dependent on successful interactions with more groups of people, both within and outside the organisation.

Secondly, in complex rail organisations, each level of leadership contributes to rail business outcomes albeit in different ways; however, this research concludes that the leadership levels are not always valued for their contribution or given the prominence they deserve. Identification of individual potential and current development opportunities favoured some aspiring leaders over others, for instance, some male leaders who were selected early in their careers. As a result, the model in Figure 36 considers the leadership levels, showing that each level of leadership has important contributions to make to the business outcomes; therefore, they need to be adequately skilled to undertake their role. From a postmodern perspective, this philosophy underpins the model of talented leadership, as it includes equal access to opportunities, or "fairness" as described by Guba and Lincoln (1985). In Green's (2007) account of postmodern organisations, employees define their own meaning of the organisational situation, based on how they perceive the opportunities that are dealt to them. This finding was reinforced by the study that not all leaders believed the actions of current

leaders regarding opportunities were entirely fair. As a result, this model considers the talents required for leaders at each level so that an objective assessment of identification of talents is transparent to all.

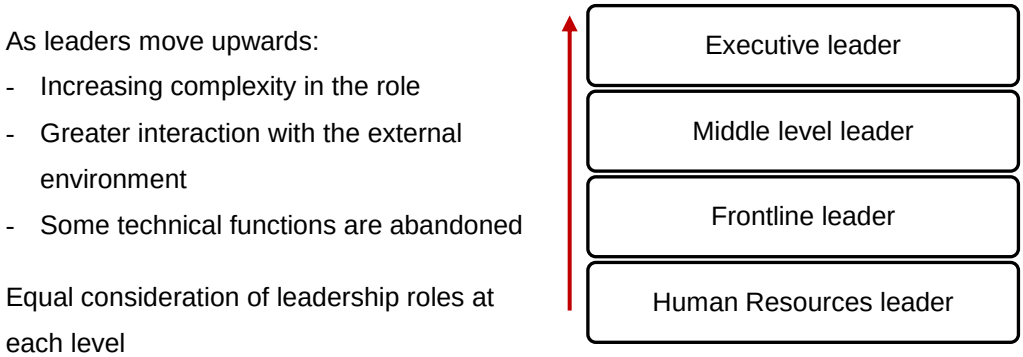


Figure 36: Consideration of leadership roles in the model of talented leadership

The model of talented leadership

This study found widespread apprehensions for organisations as well as for leaders over defining, identifying, developing and managing leadership talent. Organisations could not describe what talents they were looking for in their leaders, and leaders were unable to aspire to an unknown definition, improve their leadership skills or even decide whether they wanted to be a leader. Since people with different backgrounds and experiences understand leadership in different ways, it is necessary to define what it is that rail organisations are seeking in their leaders. This section proposes a framework for identifying and developing leadership talent in Australian rail organisations, considering that this thesis has shown that leadership talents can be developed.

Two levels of decision-making

The model of talented leadership identifies that there are two stages of decision-making in leadership talent management. The first stage involves developing a leadership talent management strategy, particular to the organisation. The second stage involves identifying and developing leaders with the talents needed to lead people at the executive, middle, frontline and HR levels.

Organisational strategy

The organisational strategy was firstly presented in Chapter 3 as a framework to guide leadership talent decision-making. It has been used throughout this study to analyse information and develop themes from the findings. The framework comprises six

themes or structures and processes required in a leadership talent management strategy: 1. consideration of the contexts of leadership; 2. the organisational definition of leadership talent; 3. communication of the strategy within the organisation; 4. strategies for identifying leadership talent at different levels; 5. strategies for developing leadership talent; and 5. evaluation of the leadership talent management strategy.

Throughout this study, the findings indicated that a strategy is necessary to guide talent decision-making. A strategy focuses leaders in organisations to determine what they need to do to manage leadership talent. It also helps leaders to consider whether the organisation has the values, beliefs and behaviours that support the vision of the talent management strategy, identify whether leaders are working together to fulfil leadership talent goals, and confirm whether these ideals are being communicated widely. As a result of this study, a number of key points were identified about what organisations should do in regard to identifying and developing their leadership talent. These points below refer to the organisational framework in Chapter three, the findings or the literature within this thesis. They are included below, and then described in more detail under each of the main themes of the framework.

Contexts

- Consider the relevant contextual information to make leadership talent decisions, pp. 194-195; to build the community of rail, p. 207

Define

- Define the purpose for managing leadership talent, pp. 198-199
- Define what is meant by leadership talent, pp. 135-136
- Communicate that leaders lead people and managers are responsible for projects and resources, pp. 147-148
- Link the leadership talent strategy to the business strategy, p. 13

Communicate

- Gain real support and commitment by senior leaders for the leadership talent strategy, p. 41 and p. 189
- Communicate the meaning and purpose of the leadership talent management approach, p. 201
- Communicate performance expectations, pp. 177-178

Identify

- Getting to know the people in the organisation (current and aspiring leaders), pp. 156-160
- Undertake talent discussions, performance appraisals and connected conversations, pp. 151-180
- Identify who has specialist expertise and rail knowledge, p. 152
- Develop systems to capture employee information, pp. 64-80
- Develop a joined-up organisation and ask line managers about individual performance, pp. 148-149 and p. 205

Develop

- Focus on developing individual needs, p. 218
- Involve HR leaders on designing learning strategies, pp. 218-227
- Ensure current and aspiring leaders are developed, p. 218
- Design learning between levels and learning with other leaders, p. 222
- Identify leaders who are able to mentor future leaders, p. 222

Evaluate

- Establish targets for the identification and development of leaders, p. 80
- Monitor and evaluate the leadership talent management strategy, p. 80

While the framework guides leadership talent decision-making, the talents necessary for individual leaders at each level call for more description to guide practitioners in organisations.

Leaders

This study identified that foundational and professional qualifications in technical disciplines, relevant to the area of expertise such as engineering or business, underpin the ability of leaders to make sound decisions in their roles. At the executive level, qualifications in professional disciplines, relevant to their area of expertise and job roles, enabled leaders to base organisational decisions on sound professional judgement. At the middle, frontline and HR levels, leaders were in the main without professional or vocational qualifications to underpin their decision-making, often learning skills on the job over many years.

This study identified that aside from the lack of formal qualifications related to technical skills, the ability of leaders to conceptualise and embrace change was confined

by the limits of their own understanding, arising from low participation in formal learning and exposure to other industry experiences. This was evident from the way leaders especially at the middle and frontline guided people, using leadership approaches that had served them well in the past. The technical areas or tangible skills are identified as an area of formalisation for middle, frontline and HR leaders while the intangible skills related to people are important for all leaders. Figure 37 presents the two areas of tangible and intangible skills.

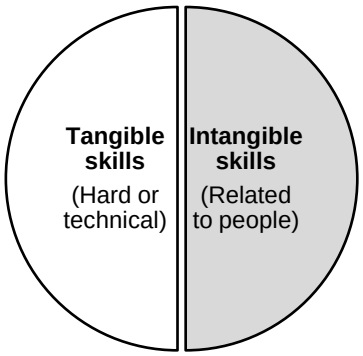


Figure 37: Tangible and intangible skills related to leading people

Utilising the structural framework developed in Chapter 3, and considering leaders' descriptions of what they valued, the findings enabled formulation of the talents required for leaders. This process took into account the gaps in current leadership practice, shown again in Table 22 below, when compared with the structural framework developed from the literature.

Table 22: Location of interview responses on conceptual framework

Where interview responses were most commonly located on the conceptual framework (shown by the shaded areas)

External	Internal →					
1	1	2	3	4	5	6
External contexts of leadership	**Internal cultural contexts of leadership**	**Define leadership talent**	**Communicate**	**Identify**	**Develop**	**Evaluation and continuous improvement**
Globalisation - managing an extended workforce	Generational - Veterans, Baby Boomers, Gen X and Gen Y	Importance of leadership talent for business strategy	Senior leaders own and endorse the talent management strategy	Senior leaders endorse, support and model the desired talent identification behaviour	Individual needs are identified and developed	Analysis of data against targets and strategy
Changing economic, structural (privatisation and government regulation) and social environment	Diversity - women, mature workers, different cultural groups	Difference between Management and Leadership is described and articulated	Rigorous, transparent written definition of leadership talent	Connected conversations between manager and employee to identify leadership talent, aspirations, motivation and potential	Who - current and future leaders because all have potential to further develop further	Observation of what is happening
Sustainability - economic, environmental and social impacts of leadership	Technology and leading in a technology based environment	Definition of leadership talent – past, short term (present), medium and longer term (future)	Clarity and consistency of the message and performance expectations	Individual knowledge about rail systems and the business environment knowledge is identified	What – values, behaviours, skills, knowledge and competencies for executive, middle and frontline leadership	Participant feedback Improvement strategies
				Individual performance including results, relationships with others, drive and integrity is identified	How - Balance of methods e.g. formal learning and informal workplace learning	
					Self awareness through psychometric tools, coaching and mentoring and 360 degree Feedback	
					Workplace learning through Projects and assignments, Workshadowing, Workplace opportunities	

The key areas of the structural framework have then been modified into behavioural statements considering the main idea of the skills approach proposed by Northouse (2010). Northouse states that knowledge and abilities are required for successful leadership of others, leadership skills can be developed, and leadership is an action-oriented process. This study identified that while the skills approach could be a practical way of categorising the skills, knowledge and capabilities required by leaders, organisations need to consider other factors including the organisational structure; and individual personality, motivation, career and life stage. Behavioural statements are described by Boyatzis (2008) as related, but different sets of behaviour organised around an underlying construct, with the intent of describing an action (or what it is that is required for talented leaders in rail). Boyatzis (p. 6) further describes behavioural statements in regard to a theory of performance, widely alluded to in this study by rail leaders as an important action, but not expressed explicitly as important in leading others. In developing these statements, or talents, the researcher considered that leaders in organisations could view and consider these statements in developing their own contextual leadership talent management strategy.

These talents comprise knowledge of the contexts in which leadership is enacted; knowledge of self, the industry and other environments; the ability to engage with people; learn new skills, and the ability to change. As a result of the exploration of rail

leaders' views on leadership and considering the literature, it was found that talented leaders at each level should be able to:

1 Scan the perspectives of complex systems to identify and assimilate changes in the environment that influence their role.
2 Define self as a leader based on understanding self, the organisational definition and contexts, and their leadership role and its contribution to the organisation's success.
3 Communicate and build relationships with people, stakeholders and teams at the strategic, team and personal, one-on-one levels by speaking, listening and presenting information.
4 Identify and enable others, provide the resources for work, and support and monitor performance.
5 Develop self and others using a range of learning strategies.
6 Evaluate and improve leadership practice.

Using the guiding principles suggested by Boyatzis (2008) – that behavioural statements are underpinned by key ideas – the statements were expanded into a framework format shown in Table 29. The intent of the expanded descriptors of the leadership talents is to guide practitioners in the identification and development of leadership skills at all levels.

Table 29: Leadership talents for all leaders

Talents required by all rail leaders at Executive, Middle, Frontline and HR levels					
Scans the perspectives	*Defines self as a leader*	*Communicates effectively and builds relationships with people*	*Identifies and enables others*	*Develops self and others*	*Evaluates self*
1. Perspectives	**2. Personal**	**3. People**	**4. Performance**	**5. Learning and development**	**6. Evaluation**
Global	Understands self and conceptualises personal change	Communicates effectively	Uses technology to facilitate business and ways of working	Identifies development needs of self and team members to advance personal aspirations	Observes the practice of leaders within own team in a range of situations
National	Seeks and considers feedback to grow, adapt and change	Builds relationships up and down the organisation	Manages team and individual needs to set directions and achieve productivity	Provides time, support and other resources to allow development to occur	Seeks feedback from individual leaders about their own development needs

Industry	Undertakes new career experiences to develop and grow	Supports and looks after others by being accessible	Holds people accountable for their performance	Uses formal learning to develop foundation leadership skills	Considers and implements improvements to development strategies

Organisational strategy:

1. Contexts of leadership
2. Organisational definition of leadership talent
3. Communication of the strategy
4. Identifying leadership talent
5. Developing leadership talent
6. Evaluating the strategy

Local		Includes different generations, cultural, ethnic and gender diversity	Develops innovative and sustainable ways to challenge problems	Uses personal forms of learning and development such as coaching, mentoring and reflective practices
Team				Uses workplace experiences such as on-the-job learning, work shadowing and workplace projects

The organisational strategy and the talents for individual leaders are combined to develop a guiding model of talented leadership for Australian rail organisations, shown in Figure 38.

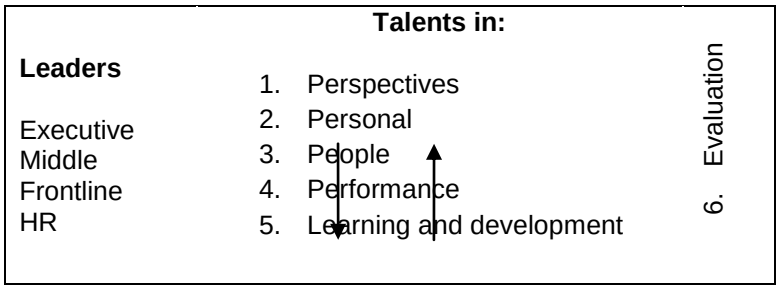


Figure 38: Model of talented leadership

In the next section, an explanation of the importance of the themes and sub-themes within the proposed talents for leaders is presented. The main theme is provided as a

heading, with the behavioural statement provided in italics; and the sub-themes are presented as a bulleted list, described in more detail in the narrative.

The leadership talents

1. Perspectives – scans the perspectives of complex systems

Talented leaders scan the external and internal contexts of leadership to identify and assimilate changes in the environment that affect their role.

- Global, national, industry, local and team perspectives

This study found that leadership is enacted differently at the different levels but that the leaders' views or perspectives of the numerous contexts also influence how leadership is performed in practice. This finding supports the literature in studies written about hierarchical organisations (Hooijberg, Hunt & Dodge 1997; Mumford, Campion & Morgeson 2007), but the combination of hierarchical levels and contexts are not widely described in the literature. This study found that identifying these varying contexts is important in enabling leaders to gain the perspectives and understanding of rail business relevant to their level of operations. This knowledge helps leaders make informed decisions. As a result, this study construes that talented leaders are able to scan and interact within these contexts to interpret information, gaining the required perspectives for their level of leadership. Chapter six explained how leadership played an active role in helping others understand the six contexts of the individual, the team, the organisation, the rail industry, the nation and the world. Leaders need to understand components of the whole system; how and why it exists, and how they fit into these systems.

A short overview of the systems in which rail leaders operate illuminates the different contexts of leadership, and the perspectives required for leaders.

Global – Since 1990, the rate of change in the global environment has been relentless, defined by deregulation of industries such as rail. How rail leaders understand their own leadership practice is challenged through these ongoing, external changes. Verifying and keeping abreast of changes in the external environmental is mandatory for rail leaders at all levels to influence and shape their leadership practice in a proactive and positive way. However, leaders especially at the middle and frontline often do not have the resources or skills to analyse complex information and make translations about how

global events affect their own leadership practice. Within the organisation, summarising the implications of changing situations could be undertaken to provide a context for operational decision-making.

National – The importance of understanding the national context of the current rail industry provides benefits to leaders at all levels. This study identified the lack of awareness about organisational ownership of some Australian rail companies by middle, frontline and HR leaders, with many leaders unaware of the implications of companies now being owned by multinational or transnational entities. Not only had rail companies changed ownership, there has been widespread change within the industry. Leaders who have a role in such localised operations of multinational and transnational companies benefit from understanding how the national and local context affects the business decisions of their parent company. Conversely, multinational companies view the business benefits of high levels of skilled workers, technical ability and expertise, and strong leadership skills in Australian companies, as translating to opportunities for the business into other parts of their worldwide web of commercial activity. The implications and opportunities for leadership practice and personal career opportunities were not widely understood by many leaders. This context is highlighted as an area of knowledge development.

Industry – The importance of rail specific knowledge is a key enabler of performance in the industry because unique technical and regulatory knowledge contributes to increased performance on the job. Knowledge of the particular industry is the second highest rating factor employers are seeking in new employees, especially in today's turbulent and ever-changing environments, next to interpersonal and communication skills (Graduate Careers 2012). As a result, developing leaders with specific technical and customer service knowledge is advantageous for the industry as well as the individual organisation. At the particular levels, executive, middle and frontline leaders require specific rail knowledge. This might relate to understanding the rail environment and business, issues and challenges at each level and the context and purpose of other job roles that contribute to the business. Some of the particular rail industry knowledge required by leaders may be aligned with competencies from the rail sector of the Transport and Logistics Training Package – TLI10 (Transport and Logistics Industry Skills Council Ltd 2012) and the Australian Qualifications framework level 5

(Diploma), level 4 (Certificate 1V - management) and level 3 (Certificate 3) (Australian Qualifications Framework 2013).

Local – The research highlighted that the different rail businesses were characterised by unique aspects relating to the business and their niche areas of specialisation such as being a passenger, freight or infrastructure provider. The nature of the business further impacted how leadership was enacted at the different levels in each organisation, as this gave rise to different business priorities. Research participants, especially at the middle and frontline, highlighted how important local variations in each rail business impacted contextual knowledge. These perspectives are necessary for successful leadership at each level in rail. This information was found to be widely held by senior experienced leaders but not so well known by the middle, frontline and HR leaders. Such tacit, local contextual knowledge about the business would benefit from being documented and widely shared – considering the older generation of leaders now departing the workplace for retirement. The specific focus of local knowledge for executives might include information about key stakeholders and the relationships important to the organisation. At the middle level, important local knowledge might pertain to ways of engaging with the executive level, ways of interpreting strategic imperatives and translating the information to the frontline. At the frontline, vital knowledge might relate to customers, local conditions and feedback from customers about the business.

Team – Talented leaders are increasingly linked with positive business performance and productivity in organisations through their ability to make the most of, and capitalise on, their team's unique diversity and talents. This research identified a strong need for leaders to understand the in-depth profile of people within their teams, to identify and develop individual potential, and to facilitate engagement with the business purpose in authentic and meaningful ways. Knowledge of individual aspirations is important in connecting personal goals of individuals with the direction and values of the business. Talented leaders at each level can facilitate this process by making known aspirations of those in their teams to other leaders across the organisation.

2. Personal – defines self as a leader

Talented leaders understand their personal context, defining themselves as a leader based on the organisational definition and contexts, and their role and contribution to the organisation's success.

- Understands self and conceptualises personal change
- Seeks and considers feedback to grow, adapt and change
- Undertakes new career experiences to develop and grow

Individual rail leaders bring to the organisation a range of different personal experiences, values and beliefs or 'personal contexts', comprising a number of inter-related factors which are unique to each individual. This study acknowledges that rail leaders identified that no one leader has the same background or personal situation, distinctive career experiences or fundamental aspirations. Hence, the literature identifies that successful rail leaders recognise and understand the personal context from which they enact leadership (Karp 2013). While this factor was highlighted in this study, leaders admired those who were able to be authentic to their values but on the other hand, were unsure of how to personally reconcile individual differences within teams. The interpretation of this inability to understand different leaders is an inhibiting factor, found to be prevalent within the three rail organisations in this study. Nevertheless, the literature describes that understanding the personal contexts of others is necessary to make the individual changes to adapt and grow as a talented leader (Day, Halpin & Harrison 2009).

This study found that understanding self was an area of unfamiliarity or discomfort for many leaders, especially at the executive, middle and frontline. An understanding of self helps talented leaders appreciate how their views impact others they lead (Short et al. 2011) and provides a compass for understanding one's own capabilities. The model of talented leadership builds in competency statements relating to a number of abilities related to self, including personality style, personal knowledge, and skills and abilities. In an increasingly complex and diverse world, this study found that considering in more detail the individual variables of foundation, growth and career dimensions of each leader (as first described by Silzer & Church 2009), can add to a richer understanding of the personal contexts of each individual. This notion is based on the idea that 'good' leaders, as found in this study, consider their current own contexts when aspiring to be a leader of others. Karp (2013) believes that leaders who have deep knowledge of themselves are more able to reconcile their organisational decisions against their own personal beliefs and actions, especially when problems are complex. As a result, self-awareness helps individuals understand how personal leadership behaviour and decision-making are aligned with the values and approach of the organisation.

3. People – communicates and builds relationships

Talented leaders communicate effectively and build relationships with stakeholders and their teams at the strategic, team and personal, one-on-one levels.

- Communicates effectively
- Builds relationships up and down the organisation
- Supports and looks after others by being accessible
- Includes different generations, cultural, ethnic and gender diversity

Communication was highlighted in this study as a very important skill for leaders, also revealed in the leadership and management research project (Short et al. 2011, p. 151). The three levels of communication necessary for leaders are described by Miller (2012) as strategic and external communication skills (to state the vision, mission and values of the organisation), team communication (to converse with teams) and core communication skills (to relate to people on a personal level). This study identified that different levels of leaders had developed specific communication skills, relevant to their role. In general, executives were stronger in strategic communication while middle, frontline and HR leaders were stronger in communicating with teams. However, all leaders could benefit from developing skills in personal communication, one-on-one conversations and giving and receiving feedback. As a result, the model of talented leadership incorporates communication skills for all levels to provide a focus for development.

Relationship building skills are core capabilities for all leaders. These skills enable strong and positive interactions with others including internal and external stakeholders such as government, shareholders, regulatory bodies, teams and others. Talented leaders identify and value the contribution of different generations and different cultural groups in these relationships. However, this study found that as many of the leaders were in the older age categories, they did not widely acknowledge the contribution of younger generations or the diversity of other groups which seemed to be a ‘blind-spot’ and an area for development for all leaders.

Talented leaders support and look after others in their teams. This research identified a need by all levels of leaders to experience a caring and authentic approach from other leaders, their individual needs and aspirations to be recognised and valued, and for leaders to be accessible to discuss concerns. The variable approach to performance

appraisal, personal conversations and collecting information about the skills profiles of people reinforced this interpretation. Furthermore, while supportive team leaders built and strengthened their own micro-communities within rail organisations, providing guidance and support when the environmental conditions were changing was patchy across the entire organisation. At the executive level, leaders were less accessible to middle, frontline and HR leaders. This lack of availability contributed to a widening gap, perceived as weakening the culture of the organisation through senior leaders' involvement more focussed on external business activities. Since leadership is based on the perceptions of team members about how they observe the fairness and action of their leader, leaders who are able to build trust with all team members by looking after and gaining their respect, can build stronger communities throughout the organisation. This point was considered to be important in the development of the model of talented leadership, and area for development for executive leaders especially, as leaders foster the conditions for conducive team working – much like that described by one rail leader as 'setting the tone or temperature' of the environment.

In the quest for more efficient use of resources and cost reductions of services, widely touted in the Australian literature on workforce performance and productivity (Australian Workplace Productivity Agency 2013), trust between team members and a trusted leader is thought to benefit organisations in many ways. While performance and productivity was not mentioned per se in this study, developing the foundation skills of managing people and teams across locations is regarded as an area of development for middle and frontline leaders to become more efficient with work practices and use of technology.

4. Performance – enables others

Talented leaders enable others, provide the resources for work, and support and monitor performance.

- Uses technology to facilitate business and ways of working
- Manages team and individual needs to set directions and achieve productivity
- Holds people accountable for their performance
- Develops innovative and sustainable ways to challenge problems

Talented leaders have underpinning technical and management skills from which they are able to springboard sound decisions to enable teams to achieve higher performance. However, this study identified that especially at the middle and frontline, leaders who were unqualified viewed the rail industry in a certain way. They were not motivated to challenge the performance of people, to provide feedback on performance and to set benchmarks to improve that performance. This interpretation was highlighted by a comment from an older frontline leader who suggested that rail leaders have to work with their teams for a very long time, and challenging performance could jeopardise long- term friendships and relationships. However, talented leaders need to identify benchmarks of performance to ensure team members are accountable for their actions. They use monitoring of progress towards goals and targeted feedback with each team member to communicate, coach and lift performance (Miller et al. 2011). Hales and Rabey (2011) further describe that when frontline leaders are unsure about performance targets or not adequately skilled for their role they often have vague work specifications or little understanding of how their role contributes to the rest of the organisation. Since this study found that frontline leaders were the oldest cohort of leaders, with few formal qualifications (employed in rail since pre-deregulation times), this concept appears to be true. The area of performance is included in the model of talented leadership to provide a focus for development for all leaders.

While also mentioned in the theme on people and communication, being more efficient with work practices and learning how to use technology strengthens performance. In its simplest form, some of these practices might include consideration of where routine meetings could be conducted using technology or whether teams would benefit from meeting face-to-face at the worksite.

Enhanced team ability comes from leaders who are able to deploy their people to the appropriate job functions to achieve particular outcomes. Talented leaders understand the latent potential within their teams, drawing out the range of skills and abilities in the most efficient and practical ways while developing the individual's skill gaps. This study found that particularly at the frontline, leaders had not had conversations with their teams for many years to discuss aspirations or to understand their unique skills. Consideration of leaders' ability to increase performance and productivity of teams is based on the premise that talented leaders do not take on face value ways of solving problems that have always been done in certain ways. Rather, they use their teams to

unravel problems in new ways, tap into their skills and potential, which leads to new knowledge shared and leveraged throughout the organisation.

5. Learning and development – develops self and others

Talented leaders develop self and others using a variety of strategies.

- Identifies development needs of self and team members to advance personal aspirations
- Provides time, support and resources to allow development to occur
- Uses formal learning to develop foundation leadership skills
- Uses personal forms of learning and development such as coaching, mentoring and reflective practices to expose individuals to leadership opportunities in the organisation
- Uses workplace experiences such as on-the- job learning, work shadowing and workplace projects to develop leadership skills

Talented leaders understand the importance of ongoing learning. They identify their own skill development needs to develop a plan of action to lift their own leadership performance. In addition, they conduct regular conversations with team members to identify personal goals that are related to career or life aspirations. Development needs are identified and planned accordingly.

In this study, many leaders at the middle, frontline and HR levels did not have formal leadership or management qualifications or qualifications in technical or professional disciplines. Given the complexity and change in rail organisations, developing the foundation skills of a technical discipline or skills as a leader or manager, is an 'insurance policy' that can protect the individual should there be a need to change career direction. A formal qualification in Australia allows the development of career and employment pathways based on a defined and national qualifications framework. The framework allows individuals to progress through the vocational education and training sector to higher education, or across industry sectors, as their career paths, aspirations and interests change. Many rail leaders at the middle, frontline and HR levels, were without formal qualifications, making it difficult to progress in their career to different areas or industries.

Rail industry organisations are rich in opportunities for learning across the many job families, niche areas of rail business, and levels of management and leadership with opportunities for work shadowing, on-the-job learning and workplace projects to develop leadership skills. While many of these activities were occurring informally for selected people, developing more structure around how these opportunities might occur more formally and more inclusively would be advantageous for both current and aspiring leaders. In the development of leadership talents, personal forms of learning such as coaching and mentoring can supplement or fill in the gaps in formal learning while other reflective practices, such as psychometric awareness and targeted feedback, can expose aspiring leaders to new career opportunities or confirm career goal pathways.

6. Evaluation – evaluates self

Talented leaders evaluate and improve leadership practice.

- Observes the practice of leaders within own team in a range of situations
- Seeks feedback from individual leaders about their own development needs
- Considers and implements improvements to development strategies

Talented leaders evaluate and improve their practice by seeking feedback from others, by understanding self, and identifying their own development needs over a period of time and in a range of situations. This study found that personal development plans were not widely utilised in rail organisations to monitor progressively, and measure career goals, career planning and leadership development needs. As a result, leaders who document their own goals, and evaluate their own and others' leadership practice, develop a continuous improvement mindset. Evaluation is included in the model of talented leadership as it is essential to develop and reassess the appropriate skills for leadership as environmental conditions change.

Areas for development by leadership level

The question about whether the difference between a talented leader and an average leader was something that could be developed was posed to current leaders in this study. Almost 94 percent of leaders believed that leadership talent could be developed further while only 6 percent believed that leadership skills were innate, and those leaders are born and not made (see Figure 39).

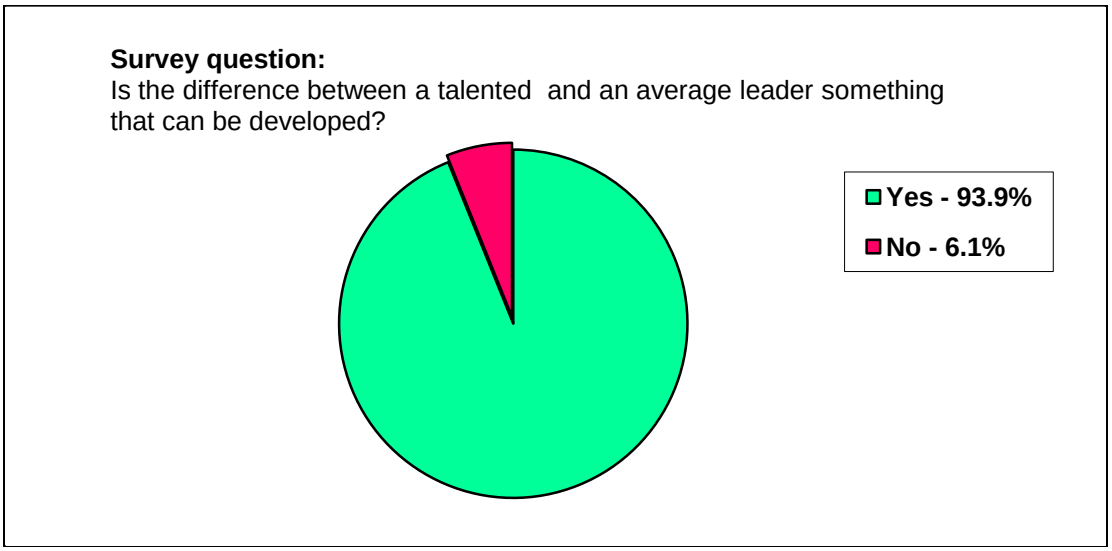


Figure 39: Views on whether leadership talent can be developed or is innate

Given such a strong endorsement that leadership talent can be developed, the model of talented leadership considers how leaders' current practice can be developed further, in the light of contemporary knowledge on leadership learning and development.

The model recognises that a range of methods are required to develop leadership skills. These include experiential learning activities that incorporate on-the job-experiences; tasks and real-life problem solving; developmental relationships that feature coaching, mentoring and feedback; and formal learning. Table 30 identifies potential learning activities for leaders.

Table 30: Potential leadership development approaches for leaders

Learning strategy	**Experiential learning** - On-the-job experiences - Tasks - Problem solving	**Developmental relationships** - Coaching - Mentoring - Feedback	**Formal learning**
Activity	- Structured projects and assignments that have identified learning outcomes - Cross-organisational problem solving - Reporting of project outcomes to different levels of management - Learning with peers	- Development of coaching and mentoring skills - Being coached and mentored - Giving and receiving feedback - Leader and peer-shadowing	- Formal management qualifications - Short courses

In the next section, the model of a talented leader is discussed in relation to the findings of this study. This section prioritises areas for development for each level of leader.

Executive leaders

Executive leaders require specialist expertise for their role and they work as part of a team. Combined with the efforts of other senior leaders, executives contribute to the development of a vision for the business strategy, with the goal of achieving performance outcomes for the organisation. The knowledge and abilities required for executive level roles indicate skills from professional disciplines as well as being able to learn, adapt and manage complexity and change as leaders look across their whole organisation to assess performance. Executive leaders need to know how to lead and furthermore, they need to become more effective in what they already do. This study identified knowledge gaps in external awareness of the global rail environment, self-awareness, people management and communication skills, and relationship building with other leaders at the middle and frontline. Development of these skill areas would positively affect team cohesiveness, helping executive leaders understand how middle and frontline leaders experience constant change. There was a predominance of male, executive leaders in this study with professional qualifications in engineering and business, and all were aged 50 years and above. Engagement with younger employees across the organisation would enhance different viewpoints on a range of issues to benefit rail businesses. Table 31, summarises the areas for development for executive leaders, indicating a high need to develop knowledge in the area of self, teams and the global context.

Table 31: Areas for development of executive leaders

Theme	**Sub-theme**	**Areas for development** *Executive leaders will develop skills and knowledge in the following areas that affect leadership practice:*
1. Perspectives	Global context	- global rail industry environment and trends - parent company strategy
	Team context	- team skills and aspirations - team cohesiveness strategies - team career stage for succession planning
2. Personal	Understands self and conceptualises personal change	- self as an executive leader - personal profile, style and impact on others
	Considers	- individual leadership performance

	feedback to grow, adapt and change	- feedback including seeking feedback from a range of sources and giving feedback to others
	Undertakes new career experiences	- personal career development in the global environment - identification of next career or life stage
3. People	Communicates effectively	- communication purposes e.g. strategic, team and personal - 'personal' and one-on-one conversations - performance conversations
	Builds relationships up and down the organisation	- relationship building with leaders at the middle and front-line - active partnering with the HR team for leadership talent management
	Supports and looks after others by being accessible	- visibility and accessibility within the organisation
	Inclusive of different generations, cultural, ethnic and gender diversity	- organisational diversity inclusiveness including cultural and different generational groups
4. Performance	Uses technology to facilitate business and ways of working	- Technology use for business practice and performance - Technology use for collection, analysis and documentation of 'people data' and employee skills profiles
	Manages team and individual needs to set directions and achieve productivity	- accountability strategies for executive team and other levels of leadership
	Holds people accountable for their performance	- performance benchmarks for people
	Develops innovative and sustainable ways to challenge problems	- objective leadership talent strategy and identification of leaders - cross-organisational projects and problem-solving
5. Learning and development	Identifies development needs of self and team members to advance personal aspirations	- contemporary learning approaches to leadership development - participation in regular leadership development - promotion of learning opportunities in the organisation, other rail organisations and the parent company
	Provides time, support and other resources to allow development to occur	- support for learning by allocation of resources including time - active, personal participation in leadership development and learning
	Uses personal forms of learning and development such as coaching,	- coaching and mentoring - coachee and a mentee - promoting aspiring leaders to other leaders within the organisation

	mentoring and reflective practices	
	Uses workplace experiences such as on-the- job learning, work shadowing and workplace projects	- workshadowing other leaders and being shadowed in the executive role
6. Evaluation	Observes the practice of leaders within own team in a range of situations	- leadership observation - analysis of leadership performance
	Seeks feedback from individual leaders about their own development needs	- 360 degree feedback processes - Individual development needs
	Considers and implements improvements to development strategies	- personal development plan - developing an improvement strategy based on feedback

Middle level leaders

Middle level leaders predominantly guide other leaders with their control spanning a large number of direct reports at the frontline. In this study, middle level leaders interpreted the strategy developed by executive leaders and translated goals into operational action for the frontline. As a result, well developed communication skills were highlighted as necessary in successfully leading teams of other leaders (frontline leaders and their teams). Middle level leaders need extensive knowledge of the business and its contexts, a leadership style that enables others, and skills in interpreting strategic initiatives for operational plans. Since middle level leaders link the frontline of operations to the strategy of the business, they need to be effective 'people persons'. Their ability to translate strategy (from executives) into every-day language for frontline leaders and their teams is crucial for successful rail operations.

Two of the three middle level leaders did not have formal qualifications in management, but instead had developed specialist expertise in areas such as safety and rail operations that were critical to the business. Management qualifications would benefit middle level leaders in this role to overcome career downturns when candidates that are more competent were available (as in the case of the middle level leader at City Trains). The

range of skills needed now by middle level leaders are vast, including planning and organisational skills, and human/people skills that are important in achieving organisational objectives through others. The growing complexity of middle level leadership roles means leaders need increasing skills to manage teams and costs of operations in innovative ways. However, the real risk to middle level leaders is that their positions are often under threat in organisational restructures, especially if they do not have stand out, transferrable skills, or specialist expertise, to offer in other positions. Formal qualifications in vocational or professional disciplines are a form of insurance policy that places middle level leaders ahead of the competition when new opportunities arise. This study identified a large gap between middle level leaders and their ability to move into executive roles. This was due to their low levels of formal qualifications and experience in the highly valued areas of finance and strategy.

The areas for development for middle level leaders are summarised below in Table 32, outlining a need to gain formal qualifications in a professional discipline if a leadership career at a higher level is an aspiration.

Table 32: Areas for development of middle level leaders

Theme	**Sub-theme**	**Areas for development** *Middle level leaders will develop skills and knowledge in the following areas that affect leadership practice:*
Perspectives	Global	- global rail industry environment and trends
	National	- rail business ownership and type of business
	Industry	- rail industry context e.g. Australian trends and government policy
	Local	- organisational knowledge and niche areas of business
	Team	- team demographics - team career stage for succession planning
Personal	Understands self and conceptualises personal change	- personal profile, style and impact on others
	Considers feedback to grow, adapt and change	- feedback including seeking feedback from a range of sources and giving feedback to others
	Undertakes new career experiences	- personal career development in the different contexts - rail career pathways for own and team development
People	Communicates effectively	- communication skills to engage with executive and frontline leaders
	Inclusive of different generations,	- organisational diversity inclusiveness including cultural and different generational groups

	cultural, ethnic and gender diversity	
Performance	Uses technology to facilitate business and ways of working	- technology skills for more productive work practices
	Manages team and individual needs to set directions and achieve productivity	- personal conversations to identify the skills, abilities and aspirations of team members - identifying employee skills profiles for alignment with suitable roles
	Holds people accountable for their performance	- assertiveness and accountability skills for business, performance and learning targets
Learning and development	Identifies development needs of self and team members to advance personal aspirations	- contemporary learning for leadership skills - leadership learning and development needs for self and team
	Provides time, support and other resources to allow development to occur	- support for learning by allocation of resources including time - active, personal participation in leadership development and learning
	Uses formal learning to develop foundation leadership skills	- foundation management skills e.g. Certificate 1V in Frontline Management or Diploma in Frontline Management - professional qualifications if a senior rail leadership role is an aspiration
	Uses personal forms of learning and development such as coaching, mentoring and reflective practices	- coaching and mentoring - coachee and a mentee - promoting aspiring leaders to other leaders within the organisation
	Uses workplace experiences such as on-the- job learning, work shadowing and workplace projects	- formalising and structuring workplace learning for leadership development - workshadowing other leaders and being shadowed in the executive role
Evaluation	Observes the practice of leaders within own team in a range of situations	- observing other middle and business unit leaders - analysing own practice
	Seeks feedback from individual leaders about their own development needs	- canvassing feedback from team members, frontline leaders and executive leaders about leadership performance at the middle level
	Considers and implements improvements to development strategies	- personal development plan - developing an improvement strategy based on feedback

Frontline leaders

Frontline leaders require specific operational knowledge to lead teams to achieve results, with a focus on addressing customer needs and tailoring services to meet these needs. The analysis of the three frontline leader roles highlighted the increasing importance of the frontline leader in encouraging teams towards performance outcomes. Many frontline leaders (those from both the interviews as well as the survey) are responsible for up to two other levels of management, comprising large numbers of direct reports and individual employees. This structural configuration, or chain of command, had a direct impact on frontline leaders' ability to accomplish successfully the human function of their roles, especially across large areas. Findings identified that where frontline leaders had smaller teams (below 12-15 people); they were able to be more effective in the human functions of their role as outlined in this interview:

> I said, 'This isn't working – it's too many – I've got too many people all over the shop', so from that I started using the four seniors directly; making them responsible rather than 17 people... you just can't have that relationship with 17 people (Frontline leader, City Trains).

At the frontline, the achievement of results is highly dependent on the leader being able to develop, support and provide individual attention to employees across multiple sites and locations. This study identified that frontline leaders require development in productive work practices so that they could be efficient in their roles. At the same time, they need to support and enable team members to achieve results. Without ongoing development or the foundation skills of frontline leadership, many frontline leaders used a directive rather than an enabling or collaborative approach to achieve results. The areas for development for frontline leaders are summarised in Table 33, indicating a high need to develop foundational management and leadership skills.

Table 33: Areas for development of frontline leaders

Theme	**Sub-theme**	Areas for development *Middle level leaders will develop skills and knowledge in the following areas that affect leadership practice:*
Perspectives	Global	- global rail industry environment and trends
	National	- Australian rail regulatory requirements
	Industry	- Australian rail industry
	Local	- organisational knowledge and niche areas of business
	Team	- frontline team demographics
Personal	Understands self and conceptualises	- personal profile, style and impact on others

	personal change	
	Considers feedback to grow, adapt and change	- feedback including seeking feedback from a range of sources and giving feedback to others
	Undertakes new career experiences	- personal career development in the different contexts - rail career pathways for own and team development
People	Communicates effectively	- communication skills to engage with executive and middle level leaders - customer engagement - meetings and presentations - personal conversations
	Inclusive of different generations, cultural, ethnic and gender diversity	- organisational diversity inclusiveness including cultural and different generational groups
Performance	Uses technology to facilitate business and ways of working	- technology use for more productive work practices
	Manages team and individual needs to set directions and achieve productivity	- direction setting
	Holds people accountable for their performance	- performance discussions and feedback
Learning and development	Identifies development needs of self and team members to advance personal aspirations	- contemporary leadership learning - identification of personal aspirations
	Provides time, support and other resources to allow development to occur	- supporting individual team member development
	Uses formal learning to develop foundation leadership skills	- foundation skills in management and leadership through a formal qualification
	Uses personal forms of learning and development such as coaching, mentoring and reflective practices	- coaching and mentoring - coachee and a mentee - promoting aspiring leaders to other leaders within the organisation
	Uses workplace experiences such as on-the- job learning, work shadowing and workplace projects	- formalising and structuring workplace experiences for leadership development - discussing the experiences with each team member
Evaluation	Observes the practice of leaders	- observing other frontline and business unit leaders' practice

	within own team in a range of situations	- analysing own practice
	Seeks feedback from individual leaders about their own development needs	- canvassing feedback from a range of sources
	Considers and implements improvements to development strategies	- personal development plan - developing an improvement plan based on feedback

HR leaders

Human resources leaders are responsible for the management of strategies in relation to the human capital of the organisation. The nature of a HR role in a contemporary rail business environment indicates that leaders would benefit from professional qualifications to support their decision-making, and knowledge of the rail business when they are working in partnership with executive teams. Enhancing the credibility of HR leaders with executive teams highlights a key area of development for HR practitioners and specialists in the rail industry. Learning about the various rail contexts, the types of rail organisations and the niche areas of business, would enable HR leaders to propose innovative people solutions to enhance business performance. Table 34 outlines the areas of development for HR leaders.

Table 34: Areas for development for HR leaders

Theme	**Sub-theme**	Areas for development *Middle level leaders will develop skills and knowledge in the following areas that affect leadership practice:*
Perspectives	Global	- HR and HRD practice in global organisations including the parent company
	National	- HR and HRD trends in Australia
	Industry	- rail industry knowledge including rail regulation, types of rail businesses
	Local	- organisational knowledge and niche areas of business
	Team	- HR team skills and aspirations - team demographics - career and life stage of team for succession planning
Personal	Understands self and conceptualises personal change	- personal profile, style and impact on others
	Undertakes new career experiences	- personal career development in the different HR contexts - rail career pathways to advise teams and leaders

	Builds relationships up and down the organisation	- relationship building with a range of organisational stakeholders
Performance	Uses technology to facilitate business and ways of working	- technology use for the management of leaders' profiles and skills base
	Manages team and individual needs to set directions and achieve productivity	- direction setting and HR performance
	Holds people accountable for their performance	- partnering with executive team to develop the leadership talent management strategy - accountable for the development of the strategy
Learning and development	Identifies development needs of self and team members to advance personal aspirations	- contemporary leadership learning approaches - communicating HR strategy and learning approaches
	Provides time, support and other resources to allow development to occur	- support and resources for teams
	Uses formal learning to develop foundation leadership skills	- HR and learning and development qualifications
	Uses personal forms of learning and development such as coaching, mentoring and reflective practices	- coaching and mentoring - coachee and a mentee - promoting aspiring leaders to other leaders within the organisation
	Uses workplace experiences such as on-the- job learning, work shadowing and workplace projects	- formalising and structuring workplace experiences for leadership development - showcasing learning exemplars - enabling workshadowing at all levels of leadership to showcase what leaders do
Evaluation	Observes the practice of leaders within own team in a range of situations	- observing other HR and business unit leaders
	Seeks feedback from individual leaders about their own development needs	- feedback from a range of sources
	Considers and implements improvements to development strategies	- personal development plan - developing an improvement plan based on feedback - Championing personal development plans across the organisation

Chapter summary

Throughout this study, the terminology of 'leadership talent' has relied on definitions from the literature, with indications that such a definition should be contextually based. By the end of the discussion in Chapter 6 in which the main research question and three guiding sub-questions were addressed, the definition of leadership talent for the rail industry environment was clearer than at the beginning of this study. The definition of 'leadership talent' was then declared at the beginning of Chapter 7 in order to inform the development of the model of a talented rail leader in this chapter. This model has been developed utilising the skeletal framework for a leadership talent management strategy first devised from the review of the literature in Chapter 3, and the findings of this research that provided the detail to highlight the talents for leadership in rail.

This study identified that while rail organisations were still operating within hierarchical organisational structures, executive, middle, frontline and HR leaders should have equal importance and consideration in contemporary rail organisations. Leaders' roles have different functions and increasing complexity as they move through the organisation, but there are certain talents required for all leaders of a rail business. The first cluster of capabilities include those from the hard or technical areas that can be learnt, are precise, and can be developed through learning in vocational and professional disciplines such as engineering, business or human resource management. The second cluster of capabilities or talents include the soft or human focused skills required to engage with people. This study identified that these latter talents had not been defined previously for rail and, as a result of this key finding, this chapter has developed them into a model of talented leadership that focuses on the soft side of leadership. In addition, using this model, analysis of each leader's current practice has identified areas for development for the four levels of leadership.

A summary of the key areas is provided in Table 35.

Table 35: Summary of key areas of development for leaders

Executive	Middle	Frontline	HR
Global talents Self-awareness People talents Communication skills Relationship building skills with middle and	Business and rail industry talents Communication skills Formal qualifications Learning and development talents	Foundational management talents Communication skills Formal qualification Learning and development talents	Foundational HR qualifications Business and rail industry talents

The overarching goal in this thesis was to develop a framework and model to guide leadership talent practice in Australian rail organisations, and this chapter has been the final piece in this jigsaw in achieving this objective. Now, in the last chapter, the journey of this thesis over the last four years is summarised.

8 Implications and conclusion

Chapter outline

This chapter:

1 reinforces the significance of this study of leadership talent management practices in Australian rail organisations;
2 outlines the personal journey of the researcher over the course of this study;
3 summarises the main findings of the research and implications for rail industry practice;
4 outlines the potential limitations for incorporation of these findings into rail industry practice; and
5 makes recommendations for future areas of research.

Leadership talent management in the Australian rail industry context was little understood by me before I commenced this study, but its importance has now been acknowledged. This study highlighted that an organisation's leadership talent is a critical aspect of a successful business strategy but needs planned intervention to align leaders at all levels with current and future organisational needs. It further reinforced that in complex, difficult and changing environments, talented rail leaders provide the direction for followers in teams. For this reason, leadership in rail should come from all levels of the organisation, not just at the top.

The relationship between the research problem and the current literature

This study initially identified that writing about talent management is presented with a broad-brush approach from European and US perspectives, is related to HR management not HR development, and continues to favour large organisations. This writing reinforces early criticisms of talent management as the domain of consultants because of limited research undertaken in particular contexts, industries or specific

countries and for reasons not always related to scholarship. As a result, the researcher set out to explore how Australian rail industry organisations identify and develop their leadership talent since current talent management writing does not explicate or inform practice in industry settings. At the level of interest required for understanding of "leadership talent" in the Australian rail industry situation, leadership capability is widely assumed in the literature as a "natural" capability, already found in "talented" people. This gap provided the opportunity to explore "leadership talent" since the Australian rail industry (Australasian Railway Association Inc. 2008) listed leadership as the third highest risk to the viability of the industry, and a critical requirement for driving cultural change across Australian settings. Rail companies need talented leaders to envision the industry for the future as older leaders retire, new ways of business unfold and the rail workforce becomes more diverse.

When the research commenced in 2009, little was known about the way that leadership talent was defined, identified and developed in Australian rail industry environments. This study set out to explore the experiences of current industry leaders at four levels in three rail settings. At the end of this study, I have made new contributions to knowledge about leadership talent management by developing a model of talented leadership, applicable to Australian rail industry contexts, and identifying areas for development for each of the four levels of leadership.

Significance of this study of leadership talent management in rail

Australia continues to be one of the most financially sound and economically stable economies in the Western world in 2013, proven consistently over the four years of this study. As other economies around the globe have struggled to recover from the setbacks of the 2008 Global Financial Crisis, Australia has been able to build on its intangible assets (e.g. people, knowledge, capabilities and skills) as well as its physical assets (e.g. infrastructure, property, revenue from mining, business, agricultural, manufacturing) to provide a strong economic foundation for the future. The recognition by current governments of the need for investment in key enabling infrastructure, such as rail, underpins the strategic and long-term future of this vast Australian nation. Nonetheless, during the 1990s and 2000s, there was a period of rapid change instigated by the Australian government in conjunction with major competition policy reform. This resulted in an adjustment to service delivery through the conscious awakening for

effective and financially ‘savvy’ business practice in the delivery of public rail services. A realisation that services are best delivered by successful corporations rather than by governments, who are far better at enforcing regulation, has enabled the inclusion of numerous service and utility providers in Australia. In the rail sector, these organisations have worldwide webs of professionalism and expertise that underpin local service delivery. There is now an emerging two-pronged attack driving rail business productivity, performance and profitability in Australia – demand from service providers and government, and the sustainability impacts of transport and freight.

At the beginning of this study, rapid rail transformation underscored inconsistent impacts of change on many areas of rail operations and practice. Areas such as engineering and technical streams have been positively impacted by change and seen to develop rapidly, yet people focused areas have been placed on the ‘back burner’ to be attended to in another time. This study identified that the human capital impacts of change in rail have been undervalued for more than 20 years and, although the industry has been functional, the weather-beaten cracks of inaction have been rapidly becoming more obvious. Leadership talent and planning for the future leadership needs of the industry have formed one of those overlooked areas. While remaining functional, as soon as some leaders foreshadowed the end of their involvement in the current lifecycle of rail progress, succession needs quickly became highlighted. Leadership in rail is now demanding rapid catch-up and attention because the changing world is becoming more diverse, and traditional demographic profiles of current employees are altering substantially. Rail organisations require talented leaders at all levels with rail industry specific values, skills, behaviours and knowledge to lead others in times of change and complexity. Recent investment from the federal government in rail, as well as a focus on productivity through leadership in business, now places the significance of this leadership talent management research firmly in the spotlight.

From a local perspective, this study commenced with the concept that leadership talent management was a particular issue for the individual rail organisations under study. This was depicted in the original ideas about leadership talent management shown in Figure 3, outlining the preconceived ideas of the researcher about leaders in rail. As this study gradually unfolded, illumination shed on the talent management issues provided a clearer picture of the situation, discussed in more detail in this finale.

Several conclusions provided understanding of current practices around leadership talent management in rail at the present time. The empirical findings make several contributions to the literature on workforce development and leadership talent management which indicate the significance of the contextual environment in which rail leadership is enacted today, much more so than was initially considered. Taken collectively, these findings suggest the need for a deeper and more nuanced understanding of leadership talent management and the role of specialists in meeting the ongoing need for leadership human capital in traditional sectors.

At the end of this study, the main six findings of my research are summarised as follows: (1) the changing external environment and the implications for the internal environments of rail organisations, (2) the strongly held traditions of the rail culture, (3) the contexts in which leadership is enacted at each level, (4) the commitment of employees to the Australian rail industry, (5) the talents required for leadership of people, and (6) contemporary approaches to learning the Australian rail industry.

The main findings of the research on leadership talent management in rail

The first major finding from this study was about change. Should the decree of the Australasian Railway Association (2008, p. 14) in regard to 'the leadership role in change' (first mentioned in the Introduction) be widely considered, more emphasis would be afforded to the significance of leaders and the management of leadership talent in organisations. This study found that change is an ongoing occurrence in rail as well as other global and Australian industries. Nevertheless, leadership and the role of leaders in change was underestimated by organisations in transitioning people from certain traditions and beliefs about the industry to new ones that embraced new ownership arrangements and ways of business. The ability of those in charge to find the best ways ahead for those they lead was often limited by certain paradigms of understanding, especially where there were leaders and employees with lower levels of education. As a result, this study found that change impacts on Australian rail industry at the four levels of leadership have been incorporated into leadership practice with variable success over the last 20 years. Without any defined strategy or approach, the development of people to ensure they were prepared with the appropriate skills, knowledge and competencies to lead others through ongoing change had not been afforded the focused and strategic interventions that are needed in these complex times.

As the current era of rail comes to a close with leaders employed in organisations from the years between 1970 and 1990 considering their next life stage, and workforce demographics change, the only real strategic advantage rail organisations have anymore is the talents of their people and leaders. The knowledge era in rail is fortified by the ability of human assets and buoyed by relationships throughout the organisation. Leadership in rail was viewed through a management not leadership-of-all-people prism, involving a high, male profile and a strong engineering base where the power and expertise came from the top, and the talents required for leadership at different levels were not defined. The overall contribution and expertise of leaders at all levels including HR and HRD specialists, in a sustained approach to leadership talent management in the rail workforce, was highly under-estimated.

Not only were these change impacts felt by the organisations generally but also more specifically by the people throughout the organisations in their ability to integrate change and cope with life and work. This study found that those in positions of responsibility were operating from established leadership practices that served rail organisations well in the past where problems were more routine and predictable than they are today. The relentless challenges of the 21st century, the increasing emergence of novel problems, combined with the need to care for and look after people requires a certain set of talents. Given the now complex demands of operating in a global business space where relationships, connectivity and diversity rule, there was a need for a stronger focus on developing the human capital for leadership at all levels in rail.

The second major finding from this study related to Australian rail culture, particularly in terms of its strong traditions and multi-generational workforce. The current era of highly experienced rail leaders employed in rail since deregulation is drawing to a close. How leaders once envisioned the business is changing. New generations of younger leaders and employees are entering the industry with different life and career expectations and foundational and professional qualifications. These individuals are challenging the capacity of unskilled leaders to conceptualise new solutions to old problems, based on young professionals' expertise and how the rail culture was enacted and perceived in the past. Talented rail leaders in 21st century rail organisations now have to be proactive in defining, developing and reinforcing the desired culture for the present time with written, shared and purposefully developed strategies and values that empower, enable, encourage and involve the talents of all.

The third major finding from this study was about context. One of the most revealing aspects of this study was the numerous contexts through which leadership is conducted today that were not obvious before commencing this study. Rail leaders at all levels require the ability to take a worldview of their own leadership practice – synthesising the global, national and local aspects of rail – and then translating these interpretations into everyday practice for those whom they lead. Talented rail leaders need to understand not only these contexts but also the ramifications of operating decisions for customers and employees from such environments.

The fourth major finding from this study concerned careers and commitment. Rail leaders in this study demonstrated long-term rail industry careers and commitment to the rail industry as well as leadership as they once knew it. At the middle and frontline, leaders had a limited view of their own abilities outside rail, as the industry had shaped their identity over many years. While the sector requires dedicated and committed staff for the future, many leaders were unaware of the breadth of personal skills required to lead today, and the variety of career options on offer in other fields. Formal and informal learning about leadership aligns talents with new possibilities should they not be suitable for rail anymore, considering the industry has changed dramatically in the last 20 years. Combined with the identification of personal styles and preferences, this could open up new career possibilities and directions should these individuals be brave enough to embrace them, while at the same time allowing people from other industries to enter new rail careers.

As a result of these higher level impacts on the rail organisations and their people, a fifth major finding from this study relates to the talents required for leadership of people. One of the greatest areas for development of all rail leaders was the need for the recognition of the softer side of being a leader. A strong focus on engineering, technical expertise, safety and compliance weighted leadership in the minds of current leaders to the hard domains, but this study uncovered the unmet needs of people in rail in being recognised and supported in their daily work. The equal balance found in the original meaning of ‘talent’ (when the world was more straightforward), identified that both hard and soft skills are required now in combination to manage resources and lead people. As complexity increases, individual coping skills of people can be challenged in the multifaceted workplace. Talented rail leaders have a key role to play in ensuring individuals are keeping pace with these demands. The leadership role in rail now

requires one-on-one time with individual team members to monitor and support development. This is especially important considering the impact and meaning of work and life balance, where people are staying in the workforce for longer periods.

In considering the 'talents' (or knowledge and skills) for leadership of people, defining what it is that rail industry organisations are looking for in their leaders would provide a valuable framework for diagnosing individual development needs. Ongoing learning underpins the ability of rail leaders and employees to embrace the future confidently because they are able to be critical in solving new problems in imaginative ways, not simply accepting what has always gone before. In recent, financially stretched and changing times, HRD and adult learning initiatives in organisations have been afforded low priority over other more tangible projects that are perceived to have immediate, quantifiable benefits. Learning and development programs take longer to reap the benefits and rewards for organisations but many rail organisations were not connecting the links between leadership, learning and business productivity. Investment in HRD and learning is a requirement for organisations to stay competitive as the skill needs of jobs are changing constantly, and people need to be developed. Retraining in hard skills such as compliance and safety is a known and accepted activity in rail, but when it came to balancing up the development of other 'soft' skills required to meet these skill needs, rail organisations were less certain about the most appropriate approaches to take.

The sixth and last major finding from this study was about contemporary approaches to learning in rail. Most contemporary approaches to leadership and learning recognise that people must learn while in work – situated learning – because time taken away from work is unproductive as well as disconnected from the learning context. While this study identified considerable informal learning that was occurring in work, it was replicating many past practices and cultural ways because leaders were familiar with these traditions. Strategic interventions by HR and HRD specialists could build on the social capital already developed around leadership learning to provide guidance and structure about new methods of leadership learning and development. For example, the global rail industry culture across the world is resplendent with rich, learning opportunities for leaders, especially at the executive level, which were overlooked in this study. Considering their roles, HRD specialists should be able to contribute in a greater way to develop and diagnose learning opportunities appropriate to leaders.

These strategies might include coaching, mentoring, work shadowing, action learning projects and workplace experience.

The advancement of knowledge about the talents required for all levels of rail leaders has been the subject of this study, which set out to explore how individual leaders are identified and developed in Australian rail organisations.

Implications of these findings for leadership talent management in rail

Conducting research in complex organisations such as rail brings to the fore consideration of many points that are often interdependent on each other, as demonstrated in the overview of the main findings of this study. It is acknowledged for that reason that implications of the research findings may be mixed.

The CRC for Rail Innovation is a peak research body of which there are numerous rail industry partners. Many have been active participants in the current rail industry research. As partners, they have full access to the information developed from students' masters and doctoral projects, and so this study will be available widely through these avenues. However, the research was not intended to provide recommendations for practice; rather, it set out to make an informed analysis of what was actually happening in Australian rail organisations and then from the data to develop a model that could be adopted or adapted by these organisations. The degree to which organisations consider these findings for their individual practice could possibly be variable because current approaches to managing talented leaders may be already adequate from their perspectives. Consequently, current practices around the identification and development of people for leadership in rail may be difficult to change, even though the contextual impacts on organisations have changed over the years, and some practices are not as relevant anymore. Therefore, at the conclusion of this study the mission of the researcher is to promote and raise awareness of this study with participant organisations that were part of the original information collection. Through the researcher undertaking this proactive approach, organisations should be more informed of the findings. They may consider how aspects of this research could apply to their individual organisations. With regard to wider industry considerations of the findings, traditional and hierarchically structured organisations (such as transport and mining) may also benefit from knowledge of, and reflection on, these research findings.

The research was undertaken within an adult learning and human resource development frame to identify how leadership talent is identified and developed in rail, and the roles of executive, middle, frontline and HR leaders in these functions. When considered against HRD theory (which considers the development of human capital for organisational advancement and economic benefit), the analysis of leadership at each level identified imbalance in the importance given to each level of leadership; to hard (or technical) skills over soft skills; and to operational leadership roles such as executive, middle and frontline over functional HR roles. The implication for leadership talent management in rail is that leadership talent management needs to recognise each leadership level including HR leaders – that talent management is not only about placing people in positions – but it is also about identifying and developing the potential of all leaders.

This study's limitations

This conclusion acknowledges a number of important limitations of this research. Firstly, I am aware of some of the restrictions of my research that have become apparent only as the work draws to a close, and nothing can be done to change them at this stage.

This study employed a qualitative, interpretive research approach involving one case study in three settings, and the time available for the research was limited by the duration of my candidature. My experience in undertaking such a monumental task was minimal, and so I was learning how to construct a research project through a 'research apprenticeship'. At the conclusion, I can now look back to identify areas for improvement in both approach and technique. This thesis examined leadership talent management practices in Australian rail in three organisations but not every rail organisation in Australia. In hindsight, the practices studied in the three organisations have been shown to be similar, but as not all organisations were investigated, it cannot be claimed that the identified practices are representative of the whole rail industry. Therefore, it is acknowledged that the procedure undertaken as a beginning researcher has resulted in certain findings that may have been different had a different method and research design been undertaken. As an apprentice researcher, I took a direction that I was able to undertake confidently at my stage of learning, being cognisant also of the practical needs of rail industry partners (as all CRC research must do). When I began this research, I aimed to identify how the findings and analytical insights from this study

could be arranged to inform leadership talent management through a practical model or tool. I have delivered a number of presentations in rail industry forums where numerous industry practitioners have provided positive feedback. My research findings confirm that what I have identified is: (a) credible with current industry practitioners, (b) has applicability across many rail organisations other than the three in this study, and (c) remains without question a 'hot topic'. As my study is now completed, I am satisfied that I have achieved my goal of undertaking research that is relevant to current industry workforce development needs.

Recommendations for future work

Rail industry organisations are located across the world. The opportunity to collaborate on projects of shared interest is a real possibility considering many rail organisations are facing similar workforce development and leadership issues. Furthermore, there are currently limited numbers of researchers working in the area of rail-specific workforce development within the Australian context. Further collaboration with other global rail organisations and research bodies around the world would add to the body of knowledge on the key aspects of leadership talent management. This future research is important as the leadership pool changes and shrinks over time. International collaboration in this area would have a marked impact on rail business productivity and performance to enable analysis, systematisation and monitoring of practice where there has been limited research and problematising of the soft side of a predominantly hard or technical industry.

Future research and policy implications

While this study set out to explore one main research question about leadership talent management, it would now benefit from validating the findings in other organisations, particularly concerning testing the model of talented leadership developed in this thesis. In the next stage of this study, the model would investigate and confirm the talents by studying other organisations with four levels of leaders.

This study also identified many other interesting and possible future research projects at the frontline, considering that many frontline leaders do not have formal qualifications. Frontline leaders comprise the base level leadership of the organisation so establishing a strong foundation would to strengthen the underpinning organisational pool of leaders.

Many frontline leaders demonstrated long careers in the Australian rail industry, beginning their careers in a time when unskilled workforces were common. Many have low levels of active or sustained participation in learning and development.

For example, profiling the demographics and skills of Australian frontline rail leaders and employees would enable a national view of the talents of leaders in the industry. Information about formal education, current skill level, age, and job role could be collected to inform predictions about the skills base of frontline leaders and their associated workforce development needs. This would make a compelling study for the industry, given many frontline leaders had been in frontline roles for up to 35 years, and many were on the verge of retirement. There are currently no mandatory leadership or management qualifications required for rail leaders. This study could inform policy development on leadership and management qualifications in rail as a base for future formal and informal learning. Since rail organisations had informal processes in place to identify frontline leaders, formal qualifications have not been highly valued. This study identified that developing policies around qualifications for leaders at the middle and frontline would be beneficial in developing the skill base of existing and future leaders.

Research on the factors that engage and retain frontline leaders and employees in the rail industry would also be insightful as an associated study. This study would aim to identify possible career directions and personal aspirations of frontline leaders and employees. Considering the low levels of formal education of frontline leaders, identifying the current level of language, literacy and numeracy skills would enhance understanding of the literacy needs of leaders, determine the level of productivity and efficiency of practice, and the reasons why frontline leaders remain in the industry. This research found that because most frontline leaders do not have formal management or leadership qualifications, investigation into the impact of mandating formal leadership qualifications would be beneficial. Views about such policies would be sought from executive and middle level leaders, unions, HR staff and other stakeholders.

For debate on leadership talent in rail to be expanded, of particular interest is an investigation of the global talents required for executive leaders and the business and rail industry talents required for middle level leaders. A richer understanding of middle level leaders' ability to undertake professional learning and qualifications in areas of engineering, business and finance has been highlighted through this study. In regard to

executive rail leaders, knowledge of global and national learning opportunities as the rail industry becomes more interconnected is essential. Such research could establish and document information about global, formal leadership learning opportunities, opportunities for workplace learning and exchange, workshadowing and coaching and mentoring opportunities in other organisations. With such international learning opportunities, strategic leaders could investigate the productivity impacts for their organisations by learning about other leaders' practices and stakeholder impacts.

The personal research journey

At the beginning of this study in 2009, my career had reached a plateau and I was conscious of other life possibilities, including the desire to develop further. I previously described how I came to embark on this research journey with an outline of my personal situation, knowledge and experience in the introductory chapter. My understanding of the adult learning field was as a practitioner and educational manager within tertiary learning organisations, including a government or public provider of vocational training. In this role, I developed training projects for business and industry where I advised educational staff on the most appropriate project management, training delivery and learning methods. As a result, I developed many successful projects for the organisation. Taking a personal risk by leaving this role, since I did not know anything about the rail industry, I embarked on a new journey to undertake this research in Australian rail organisations. Here, I was liberated from what I had previously known about industry and business, satisfied with the personal change, motivated by the learning and often challenged by the task of undertaking a thesis. I am now more cognisant of organisational considerations concerning adult learning, and learning and development practices within industry that were largely unknown before I started this research. As a result, I have developed a new identity as a researcher. Investigation of leadership talent management in the Australian rail industry was the goal of this study when it commenced in 2009. In 2013 as this study has ended, not only has the research been completed but also I have personally fulfilled my goal of reaching into my own depths of potential and ability through learning, as I had stated at the beginning of this thesis.

At the beginning of this study, I set out to take a global view of the learning experience on offer and participate fully in every opportunity that became available. Earlier in the thesis, I described how I set a personal goal to immerse myself in the experience of

learning, research and the rail culture offered by the CRC for Rail Innovation research program. On commencement, I knew little about Australian rail, but looking back, I have developed relationships, friendships and a new appreciation of the history, tradition and incredible expertise of rail employees in Australia. The work that Australian governments, the CRC, universities, staff, researchers and students are undertaking to make Australian rail a world-class transport system for passengers and freight is commendable and truly inspiring.

My developing interest in leadership talent management has taken me around the world to gain an appreciation of the rail industry in different contexts. In 2010, I visited the United Kingdom where the industry has its roots, to observe how rail has developed. Observations of employees on platforms helping customers across the country had a lasting impression on me, with recognition of their strong bonds, commitment to and engagement with the industry. My journey transported me from London where I travelled on the Underground train system, to York to observe the history of engineering and innovation in manufacturing and design as it pertains to rail, through the English countryside to Scotland, and under the English Channel on the Eurostar to Paris.

The fascinating history of York provided for me a deeper appreciation of the apprenticeship system and indentures. The original parchments were handwritten with indelible ink, stamped with the family common seal and a wavy line cut through the document. At the end of the seven year timeframe, the two parts of the indenture papers had to be matched back together again to enable the young person, who entered the indentureship at age 14 or younger, to be released as an adult at age 21. During the 1600s, difficult times prevailed, and an indenture was a highly valued employment and career option for families with many children. It was a way to overcome social class inequity, poor food supply and working conditions that led to poor health. An indenture or apprenticeship was the difference between individual survival and a relatively comfortable life, or slow but steady decline into hardship in these times. The appreciation of the role of the mentoring relationship from this system is long lasting in my memory, as wealthy business owners guided and supported young people on their journey through the impressionable years of life. A successful mentoring model for young apprentices is something Australian rail organisations still aspire to today. Many are still grappling with how to do this.

During the time of my candidature, I have been engaged on other research projects on related workforce development subjects in rail. Further writing and presenting has also been part of the journey, enabling me to participate in many conferences and presentations over this time. Academy of Human Resource Development Conference, Asia Chapter (Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia 2011), Engineering Leadership Conference (Adelaide 2012), CRC for Rail Innovation Showcase (Brisbane, September 2012), CRC for Rail Innovation Showcase (Melbourne, October, 2012), Academy of Human Resource Development Conference, Asia Chapter (Istanbul, Turkey 2012), Second UIC World Congress on Rail Training (Vienna, Austria 2013) and the World Congress on Railway Research (Sydney 2013), have all been integral stages of my journey. Meeting other rail industry students (75 in total), from many nations across the world and all participating in masters and doctorates supported by the CRC, have added to my knowledge, skills and motivation.

The question is often asked as to whether this doctoral learning journey would be done differently, should it be attempted again. This question is difficult to answer because the clock cannot be turned back, but there are two points I would make about what I would do differently. Firstly, in a study such as this, time is of the essence. My experience of life has taught me to start early but sometimes writing led me to a dark hole that seemed bottomless. I persevered until I had a breakthrough, but in the future, I would approach this differently. I would have worked on another section of the thesis that may have shed more light on the problem, or sought more assistance from my supervisors. Secondly, I would be more confident in my approach to the information collection phase. While the questions for the interviews were well thought through and I had gained consent to test and refine them before finalising, I felt there was more I could have asked of participants while I had the chance. This resulted in not exploring interesting aspects of the interviews deeply with individual participants when certain ideas were put forward.

This study commenced in 2009 with a particular view of leadership talent management in rail and the definition of a ‘talented’ rail leader being unknown, and has concluded with a far more informed view after four years of immersion in the topic. The boundaries of my own understanding have been expanded vastly as a result of engagement and exposure to the numerous local, national and global experiences in this time. Not only has the research been completed but I also have a great sense of

achievement about myself and my resilience and stamina to complete such a study. Staying engaged with a project or area of research for a lengthy period is a challenge and cannot be achieved unless there is high engagement with the topic. In the beginning, I set out to explore a perplexing problem that I have been considering for a number of years so I have found deep personal meaning from being highly engaged for the duration of time.

To conclude this study, I return to my original statement in the Introduction where I pondered how individuals might rise through the ranks of an organisation to become the Chief Executive Officer. At the end of this study, I now have a clearer view. The journey to becoming a Chief Executive Officer involves ongoing learning, motivation and tenacity on the part of the individual but also involves taking up opportunities that may be available within the organisation, depending on the individual's courage to develop relationships with others and become known as aspiring to higher level roles. This stated I am now able to conclude this study.

Summary

This study has enabled preliminary considerations of leadership talent management in rail to be expanded from a narrow view to a more encompassing one of inclusion of contextual factors and considerations. From the surprising disclosure that in early times talented people were considered as being key assets that enabled societies to succeed, this concept has once again been brought to light throughout the course of this research. The initial ideas of the researcher were at first outlined in a conceptual framework, and then built over the journey of the thesis to culminate in the model of talented leadership for Australian rail organisations. This model contributes new knowledge to the 'soft' or people-focused talents necessary to lead people in times of change. It was developed considering what leaders at all levels in three Australian rail organisations value and has been confirmed as a result of this study. The model also identifies areas for development for leaders, considering learning strategies widely endorsed by current rail industry leaders.

Coming to the end of this chapter brings forth new possibilities as a researcher, now with new knowledge to enable me to conduct a methodologically, sound research project on my own. The ability to consider future research directions that have arisen because of this study comes at a time when Australia is embarking on widely initiated

projects for workforce development across a range of industries. The Australian rail industry is well positioned to be part of these studies where the investigation of a number of issues can enable new knowledge and possibilities to be brought to light for the benefit of the industry and Australia as a nation.

References

Acsente, D 2010, 'Literature review: a representation of how future knowledge worker is shaping the twenty-first century workplace', *On the Horizon*, vol. 18, no. 3, pp. 279-287.

Agarwal, R & Green, R 2011, 'The role of educational skills in Australian management practice and productivity', in Curtin, P, Stanwick, J & Beddie, F (eds), *Fostering enterprise: the innovation and skills nexus - research readings*, National Centre for Vocational Education Research, Adelaide, SA, Australia.

Agbola, FW & Lambert, DK 2010, 'Skilling Australia for the future? A study of quality assurance in Australia's vocational education and training', *Journal of Vocational Education & Training*, vol. 62, no. 3, pp. 327-349.

Aguinis, H, Gottfredson, RK & Joo, H 2012, 'Using performance management to win the talent war', *Business Horizons*, vol. 55, no. 6, pp. 609-616.

Alimo-Metcalfe, B 1998, '360 degree feedback and leadership development', *International Journal of Selection and Assessment*, vol. 6, no. 1, pp. 35-44.

Alimo-Metcalfe, B & Alban-Metcalfe, J 2008, *Engaging leadership: creating organisations that maximise the potential of their people*, Chartered Institute of Personnel Development, London, UK.

Allred, BB, Snow, CC & Miles, RE 1996, 'Characteristics of managerial careers of the 21st century', *The Academy of Management Executive (1993-2005)*, vol. 10, no. 4, pp. 17-27.

Alvesson, M & Spicer, A 2012, 'Critical leadership studies: the case for critical performativity ', *Human Relations*, vol. 65, no. 3, pp. 367-390.

Anderson, D, Brown, M & Rushbrook, P 2004, 'Vocational education and training', in Foley, G (ed), *Dimensions of adult learning: adult education and training in a global era*, Open University Press, Maidenhead, Berkshire, UK, pp. 234-250.

Andrew, S & Halcomb, E 2009, *Mixed methods research for nursing and health sciences*, Wiley-Blackwell, London, UK.

Angen, M 2000, 'Evaluating interpretive enquiry: reviewing the validity debate and opening the dialogue', *Qualitative Health Research*, vol. 10, no. 3, pp. 378-395.

Angulo, LP 2013, 'Labour inputs substitution during corporate restructuring: a translog model approach for US freight railroads', *Applied Economics*, vol. 45, no. 18, pp. 2547-2562.

Aring, M & Brand, B 1998, *The teaching firm: where productive work and learning converge. Report on research findings and implications*, Center for Workforce Development, Education Development Center Inc, Newton, MA.

Ashford, SJ & DeRue, DS 2012, 'Developing as a leader: the power of mindful engagement', *Organizational Dynamics*, vol. 41, no. 2, pp. 146-154.

Ashton, C & Morton, L 2005, 'Managing talent for competitive advantage: taking a systemic approach to talent management', *Strategic HR Review*, vol. 4, no. 5, pp. 28-31.

Ashton, D, Brown, P & Lauder, H 2008, *Education, globalisation and the knowledge economy*, Teaching and Learning Research Programme, University of London, UK.

Australasian Railway Association Inc. 2008, *A Rail Revolution: future capability identification and skills development for the Australasian rail industry*, Australasian Railway Association, Kingston, ACT, Australia.

Australian Human Resources Institute 2010, *The future of work and the changing workplace: challenges and issues for Australian HR practitioners (White Paper)*, The Australian Human Resources Institute, Melbourne, VIC, Australia.

Australian Public Service Commission 2011, *APS leadership development strategy - effective leadership, diverse workforce, capable organisations and workforce, employee conditions, APS values*, Canberra, ACT, Australia.

Australian Qualifications Framework 2013, *Australian Qualifications Framework*, Adelaide, SA, Australia, viewed 7 September, 2013, <www.aqf.edu.au >.

Australian Vocational Education and Training Research Association 2011, *Ethical considerations* AVETRA, Crows Nest, NSW, Australia, viewed 11 August, 2013, <http://avetra.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2011/09/Ethical-Considerations.pdf>.

Australian Workplace Productivity Agency 2013, *Human capital and productivity* Department of Industry, Innovation, Science, Research and Tertiary Education,, Canberra, ACT, Australia, viewed 20 April, 2013, <http://www.awpa.gov.au/our-work/Documents/Human%20capital%20and%20productivity%20literature%20review%20March%202013.pdf>.

Avolio, BJ & Gardner, WL 2005, 'Authentic leadership development: getting to the root of positive forms of leadership', *The Leadership Quarterly*, vol. 16, no. 3, pp. 315-338.

Bandura, A 1962, *Social learning through imitation*, University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln, NE.

Bandura, A 1975, *Social learning and personality development*, Holt, Rinehart & Winston Inc, New Jersey.

Bandura, A 1982, 'Self-efficacy mechanism in human agency', *American Psychologist*, vol. 37, no. 2, pp. 122-147.

Bandura, A 1988, 'Organisational applications of Social Cognitive Therapy', *Australian Journal of Management*, vol. 13, no. 2, pp. 275-302.

Barab, SA & Plucker, JA 2002, 'Smart people or smart contexts? Cognition, ability and talent development in an age of situated approaches to knowing and learning', *Educational Psychologist*, vol. 37, no. 3, pp. 165-182.

Barratt-Pugh, I & Soutar, GN 2002, *Paradise nearly gained: developing the Frontline Management Initiative*, National Centre for Vocational Education Research, Adelaide, SA, Australia.

Bastalich, W 2011, *Social constructionism, interpretivism, phenomenology, symbolic interactionism*, University of South Australia, Adelaide, SA, Australia, viewed 20 September, 2011, <http://resource.unisa.edu.au/mod/resource/view.php?id=9370>.

Bear, DJ, Dennis, DJ, Forcade, JW, Groe, GM, Lippitt, MB & Vickers, MR 2005, *Leading into the future: a global study of leadership: 2005-2015*, American Management Association, New York, USA, viewed 2 October, 2013, <http://www.amanet.org/HRILeadershipSurv05.pdf>.

Beechler, S & Woodward, IC 2009, 'The global "war for talent"', *Journal of International Management*, vol. 15, no. 3, pp. 273-285.

Bell, J 2010, *Doing your research project: a guide for first-time researchers in education, health and social science, 5th edition*, McGraw-Hill/Open University Press, Maidenhead, Berkshire, UK.

Berg, ME & Karlsen, JT 2012, 'An evaluation of management training and coaching', *Journal of Workplace Learning*, vol. 24, no. 3, p. 2.

Berger, PL & Luckmann, T 1966, *The social construction of reality: a treatise in the sociology of knowledge*, Doubleday, Garden City, New York.

Blainey, G 2001, *The tyranny of distance: how distance shaped Australia's history*, Pan Macmillan Australia, Sydney, NSW, Australia.

Blass, E 2007, *Talent management: maximising talent for business performance*, Chartered Management Institute and Ashbridge Consulting Ltd, London, UK.

Boedker, C 2005, *Australian guiding principles on extended performance management: a guide to better managing, measuring and reporting knowledge intensive resources (DRAFT)*, Society for Knowledge Economics, Crows Nest, NSW, Australia.

Boedker, C, Cogin, J, Langford, P, Meagher, K, Mouritsen, J, Runnalls, JM, Sheldon, P, Simmons, S & Vidgen, R 2011a, *Leadership, culture and management practices of high performing workplaces in Australia: literature review and firm diagnostics*, project funded by the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations and published by the Society for Knowledge Economics, Crows Nest, NSW, Australia.

Boedker, C, Vidgen, R, Meagher, K, Cogin, J & Mouritsen, J 2011b, *Leadership, culture and management practices of high performing workplaces in Australia: the high performing workplace index*, project funded by the Department of Education,

Employment and Workplace Relations and published by the Society for Knowledge Economics, Crows Nest, NSW, Australia.

Boudreau, JW, Ramstad, PM & Dowling, PJ 2003, 'Global talentship: toward a decision science connecting talent to global strategic success', *Advances in Global Leadership,* vol. 3, no. 1, pp. 63-99.

Boudreau, JW & Ramstad, PM 2005, 'Talentship, talent segmentation and sustainability: a new HR decision science paradigm for a new strategy definition', *Human Resource Management,* vol. 44, no. 2, pp. 129-136.

Boudreau, JW & Ramstad, PM 2007, *Beyond HR: the new science of human capital*, Harvard Business School Press, Boston, MA.

Boyatzis, RE 2008, 'Competencies in the 21st century', *Journal of Management Development,* vol. 27, no. 1, pp. 5-12.

Boyatzis, RE 2011, 'Managerial and leadership competencies', *Vision: The Journal of Business Perspective,* vol. 15, no. 2, pp. 91-100.

Boyce, LA, Zaccaro, SJ & Wisecarver, MZ 2010, 'Propensity for self-development of leadership attributes: understanding, predicting, and supporting performance of leader self-development', *The Leadership Quarterly,* vol. 21, no. 1, pp. 159-178.

Braithwaite, J 2008, *Regulatory capitalism*, Edward Elgar Publishing, Cheltenham, UK and Northampton, MA.

Brennan, T, Wills-Johnson, N, Larsen, P, Mahendran, A, Hughes, B & Wang, J 2009, 'The business of Australia's railways: Proceedings from the Australian Railways Business and Economics Conference', *Australian Railways Business and Economics Conference*, Perth, WA, Australia, 20th July, 2009.

Brett, M 2012, 'Effective practices of distributed organisations', *Engineering Leadership Conference 2012 (ELC 2012),* Adelaide Convention Centre, Adelaide, SA, Australia, 31 May-1 June.

Brown, D 2011, 'Restructuring and organisation redesign: a case of sorcerer's apprentice?', in Mercer, M & Chubb, C (eds), *IES Annual Review of the HR Year Ahead 2011: from restructuring to rebuilding*, Insitute of Employment Studies, Brighton, UK, pp. 4-10.

Brown, P, Hesketh, A & Williams, S 2002, *Employability in a knowledge-driven economy*, Cardiff University, Wales.

Brown, P & Tannock, S 2009, 'Education, meritocracy and the global war for talent', *Journal of Education Policy*, vol. 24, no. 4, pp. 377-392.

Brown, RB 1993, 'Meta-competence: a recipe for reframing the competence debate', *Personnel Review,* vol. 22, no. 6, pp. 25-36.

Bughin, J, Chui, M & Manyika, J 2010, *Clouds, big data, and smart assets: ten tech-enabled business trends to watch*, viewed 11 March, 2012, <https://www.mckinseyquarterly.com/High_Tech/Strategy_Analysis/Clouds_big_data_and_smart_assets_Ten_tech-enabled_business_trends_to_watch_2647>.

Buller, PF & McEvoy, GM 2012, 'Strategy, human resource management and performance: sharpening line of sight', *Human Resource Management Review*, vol. 22, no. 1, pp. 43-56.

Burbach, R & Royle, T 2010, 'Talent on demand? Talent management in the German and Irish subsidiaries of a US multinational corporation', *Personnel Review*, vol. 39, no. 4, pp. 414-431.

Busine, M & Watt, B 2005, 'Succession management: trends and current practice', *Asia Pacific Journal of Human Resources*, vol. 43, no. 2, pp. 225-237.

Calo, TJ 2008, 'Talent management in the era of the aging workforce: the critical role of knowledge transfer', *Public Personnel Management*, vol. 37, no. 4, pp. 403-416.

Cambridge Dictionaries Online 2011, *Joined up thinking*, Cambridge University, UK, viewed 12 October, 2012, <http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/british/joined-up-thinking>.

Cameron, R 2012, *Quality frameworks and procedural checklists for mixed methods research*, Australian Vocational Education and Training Research Association, Crows Nest, NSW, Australia.

Campbell, D, Brougham, J & Caldwell, R 2009, 'Uncovering and understanding Australia's first railway', *Australian Journal of Multi-disciplinary Engineering*, vol. 7, no. 2, pp. 147-156.

Carless, SA, Wearing, AJ & Mann, L 2000, 'A short measure of transformational leadership', *Journal of Business and Psychology*, vol. 14, no. 3, pp. 389-405.

Cascio, WF & Aguinis, H 2008, 'Research in industrial and organizational psychology from 1963 to 2007: changes, choices and trends', *Journal of Applied Psychology*, vol. 93, no. 5, pp. 1062-1081.

Chambers, G, Foulon, M, Handfield-Jones, H, Hankin, S & Michaels, E 1998, 'The war for talent', *The McKinsey Quarterly*, vol. 3, no. 1, pp. 44-57.

Chandler, DE & Kram, KE 2005, 'Applying an adult development perspective to developmental networks', *Career Development International*, vol. 10, no. 6/7, pp. 548-566.

Charnaux-Grillet, S, De Smet, A, McGurk, M & Vinson, M 2012, *How do I unlock the value of my frontline leaders?*, McKinsey & Company, Atlanta, US, viewed 2 September, 2012, <https://hcexchange.conference-board.org/attachment/How_do_I_unlock_the_value_mo4.pdf>.

Chartered Institute of Personnel Development 2011, 'Learning and talent development', in McGurk, J (ed), *Annual Survey Report 2011*, Chartered Institute of Personnel Development, London, UK.

Chermack, TJ 2003, 'Mental models in decision making and implications for human resource development', *Advances in Developing Human Resources*, vol. 5 no. 4, pp. 408-422.

Clardy, A 1997, *Studying your workforce: applied research methods and tools for training and development practitioners*, Sage Publications Ltd, Thousand Oaks, CA.

Clardy, A 2008, 'The strategic role of Human Resource Development in managing core competencies', *Human Resource Development International*, vol. 11, no. 2, 2008/04/01, pp. 183-197.

Clarke, M 2007, 'Choices and constraints: individual perceptions of the voluntary redundancy experience', *Human Resource Management Journal*, vol. 17, no. 1, pp. 76-93.

Clarke, N 2013, 'Model of complexity leadership development', *Human Resource Development International*, vol. 16, no. 2, pp. 135-150.

Claudel, P & Casse, P 2012, 'Managing power maps: a leadership must', *Training Journal, February*.

Clayton, B, Fisher, T, Harris, R, Bateman, A & Brown, M 2008, *A study in difference: structures and cultures in Australian registered training organisations*, National Centre for Vocational Education Research, Adelaide, SA, Australia.

Clutterbuck, D 2008, 'What's happening in coaching and mentoring? And what is the difference between them?', *Development and Learning in Organizations*, vol. 22, no. 4, pp. 8-10.

Cocks, G 2009, 'High performers down under: lessons from Australia's winning companies', *Journal of Business Strategy*, vol. 30, no. 4, pp. 17-22.

Cohen, D & Crabtree, B 2006, *Qualitative research guidelines project, July 2006*, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, Somerset, New Jersey, viewed 1 January 2010, <http://qualres.org/HomeInte-3516.html>.

Cohen, WM & Levinthal, DA 1990, 'Absorptive capacity: a new perspective on learning and innovation', *Administrative Science Quarterly*, vol. 35, no. 1, pp. 128-152.

Collin, K 2002, 'Development engineers' conceptions of learning at work', *Studies in Continuing Education*, vol. 24, no. 2, pp. 133-152.

Collings, DG & Mellahi, K 2009, 'Strategic talent management: a review and research agenda', *Human Resource Management Review*, vol. 19, no. 4, pp. 304-313.

Collings, DG, Scullion, H & Dowling, PJ 2009, 'Global staffing: a review and thematic research agenda', *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, vol. 20, no. 6, pp. 1253-1272.

Collings, DG, Scullion, H & Vaiman, V 2011, 'European perspectives on talent management', *European Journal of International Management*, vol. 5, no. 5, pp. 453-462.

Conger, J 2010, 'Leadership development interventions: ensuring a return on the investment', in Nohria, N & Khurana, R (eds), *Handbook of leadership theory and practice: a HBS (Harvard Business School) centennial colloquium on advancing leadership*, Harvard Business Press, Boston, MA, pp. 709-738.

Cook, S & Macaulay, S 2009, 'Providing the basis for identifying and nurturing talent', *Training Journal, August*, pp. 36-40.

Corbin, J & Morse, JM 2003, 'The unstructured interactive interview: issues of reciprocity and risks when dealing with sensitive topics', *Qualitative Inquiry*, vol. 9, no. 3, p. 335.

Crane, TG 1999, *The heart of coaching: using transformational coaching to create a high-performance culture*, FTA Press, San Diego, CA.

CRC for Rail Innovation 2013, *About the CRC for Rail Innovation*, viewed 2 February, 2013, <http://www.railcrc.net.au/>.

Creswell, JW 1994, *Research design: qualitative & quantitative approaches*, Sage Publications Ltd, Thousand Oaks, CA.

Creswell, JW 2007, *Qualitative inquiry and research design: choosing among the five approaches*, Sage Publications Ltd, Thousand Oaks, CA.

Crocitto, MM, Sullivan, SE & Carraher, SM 2005, 'Global mentoring as a means of career development and knowledge creation: a learning-based framework and agenda for future research', *Career Development International*, vol. 10, no. 6/7, pp. 522-535.

Cromwell, SE & Kolb, JA 2004, 'An examination of work-environment support factors affecting transfer of supervisory skills training to the workplace', *Human Resource Development Quarterly*, vol. 15, no. 4, pp. 449-472.

Crotty, M 1998, *The foundations of social research: meaning and perspective in the research process*, Allen and Unwin, St Leonards, NSW.

Cunningham, J 1988, 'Techniques of pyramid-building in Egypt', *Nature*, vol. 332, no. 6159, pp. 22-23.

Cutler, T 2008, *Venturous Australia: building strength in innovation*, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra, ACT.

Damon, N 2007, *Leadership challenges facing business today*, viewed 16 Feb, 2012, <http://www.personneltoday.com/articles/2007/09/18/42275/leadership-challenges-facing-business-today.html >.

Darke, P, Shanks, G & Broadbent, M 1998, 'Successfully completing case study research: combining rigour, relevance and pragmatism', *Information Systems Journal*, vol. 8, no. 4, pp. 273-289.

Davenport, T, Harris, J & Shapiro, J 2010, 'Competing talent analytics', *Harvard Business Review*, vol. October, pp. 53-58.

Davidson, P & Griffin, R 2006, *Management*, John Wiley & Sons Australia, Milton, Qld.

Davis, G 2008, 'One big conversation: the Australia 2020 summit', *Australian Journal of Public Administration*, vol. 67, no. 4, pp. 379-389.

Day, DV 2000, 'Leadership development: a review in context', *The Leadership Quarterly*, vol. 11, no. 4, pp. 581-613.

Day, DV & Harrison, MM 2007, 'A multilevel, identity-based approach to leadership development', *Human Resource Management Review*, vol. 17, no. 4, pp. 360-373.

Day, DV, Halpin, SM & Harrison, MM 2009, *An integrative approach to leader development: connecting adult development, identity, and expertise*, Routledge, London, UK.

Deloitte Access Economics 2011, *The true value of rail*, Australasian Railways Association, Canberra, ACT, Australia, viewed 25 January, 2012, <http://www.ara.net.au/UserFiles/file/Publications/TVOR_Report.pdf>.

Department for Business Innovation and Skills 2012, *Leadership and management in the UK - the key to sustainable growth*, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills London, viewed 25 August, 2012, <http://www.bis.gov.uk/assets/biscore/further-education-skills/docs/l/12-923-leadership-management-key-to-sustainable-growth-evidence>.

Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade 2011, *About Australia - a snapshot*, viewed 15 December, 2013, <http://www.dfat.gov.au/geo/australia/>.

Department of Infrastructure and Transport 2011, *Background - Organisation of Australia's railways*, viewed 27 January, 2012, <http://www.infrastructure.gov.au/rail/trains/history.aspx>.

Department of Infrastructure and Transport 2013, *Infrastructure investment*, viewed 15 December, 2013, <http://investment.infrastructure.gov.au/>.

Department of Premier and Cabinet 2012, *South Australian Executive Service (SAES) Competency Framework*, South Australian Government, Adelaide, viewed 10 April, 2012,

<http://www.saes.sa.gov.au/attachments/022_Competency%20Framework%20CF_071.pdf>.

Department of Treasury 2010, *Australia to 2050: future challenges, Intergenerational Report*, Commonwealth of Australia, viewed 15 December, 2013, <http://archive.treasury.gov.au/igr/igr2010/report/pdf/IGR_2010.pdf>.

DeRue, DS & Wellman, N 2009, 'Developing leaders via experience: the role of developmental challenge, learning orientation, and feedback availability', *Journal of Applied Psychology*, vol. 94, no. 4, p. 859.

Dewey, J 2009, *Democracy and education: an introduction to the philosophy of education*, WLC Books (original work published 1916), New York.

Dey, I 1993, *Qualitative data analysis: a user-fiendly guide for social scientists*, Routledge, London, UK.

Dickie, C & Dwyer, J 2011, 'A 2009 perspective of HR practices in Australian mining', *Journal of Management Development*, vol. 30, no. 4, pp. 329-343.

Digman, J 1990, 'Personality structure: emergence of the five-factor model', *Annual Review of Psychology*, vol. 41, no. 1, pp. 417-440.

Dooley, LM 2002, 'Case study research and theory building', *Advances in Developing Human Resources*, vol. 4, no. 3, pp. 335-354.

Drucker, PF 1993, *Post-capitalist society*, Harper-Collins, London, UK.

Drucker, PF 1999, *Managing oneself*, Harvard Business Review, Boston, MA.

Dunn, L 2011, *Theories of learning*, Oxford Brookes University, Wheatley Campus, Wheatley, Oxford, UK, viewed 15 May, 2011, <http://www.brookes.ac.uk/services/ocsld/resources/theories.html>.

Dweck, C 1986, 'Motivational processes affecting learning', *American Psychologist*, vol. 41, no. 1, pp. 1040-1048.

Easterby-Smith, M, Thorpe, R & Jackson, PR 2008, *Managing research*, 3rd edn, Sage Publications Ltd, London, UK.

Eby, LT, Johnson, DC & Russell, JEA 1998, 'A psychometric review of career assessment tools for use with diverse individuals', *Journal of Career Assessment*, vol. 6, no. 3, pp. 269-310.

Edwards, L 2009, 'Testing the discourse of declining policy capacity: rail policy and the Department of Transport', *Australian Journal of Public Administration*, vol. 68, no. 3, pp. 288-302.

Eisenhardt, KM 1989, 'Building theories from case study research', *The Academy of Management Review*, vol. 14, no. 4, pp. 532-550.

Eisner, EW 1991, *The enlightened eye: qualitative enquiry and the enhancement of educational practice*, Macmillan, New York.

Ellinger, AD 2005, 'Contextual factors influencing informal learning in a workplace setting: the case of "reinventing itself company"', *Human Resource Development Quarterly*, vol. 16, no. 3, pp. 389-415.

English, L (ed.) 2005, *International encyclopaedia of adult education*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York.

Eriksen, K 2006, 'The constructive developmental theory of Robert Kegan', *The Family Journal*, vol. 14, no. 3, pp. 290-298.

Evans, J & Mathur, A 2005, 'The value of online surveys', *Internet Research*, vol. 15, no. 2, pp. 195-219.

Everett, S 2006, 'Deregulation and reform in rail in Australia: some emerging constraints', *Transport Policy*, vol. 13, no. 1, pp. 74-84.

Farndale, E, Scullion, H & Sparrow, P 2010, 'The role of corporate HR function in global talent management', *Journal of World Business*, vol. 45, no. 2, pp. 161-168.

Fayol, H 1949, *General and industrial administration*, Sir Isaac Pitman & Sons, London, UK.

Fenwick, J & McMillan, J 2010, *Public management in the postmodern era: challenges and prospects*, Edward Elgar, Northampton, MA.

Fenwick, TJ & Tennant, M 2004, 'Understanding adult learners', in Foley, G (ed), *Dimensions of adult learning: adult education and training in a global era*, Open University Press, Maidenhead, Berkshire, UK, pp. 55-73.

Fink, A 2005, *Conducting research literature reviews: from paper to the internet*, Sage Publications Ltd, Thousand Oaks, CA.

Flavell, JH 1979, 'Metacognition and cognitive monitoring: a new area of cognitive–developmental inquiry', *American Psychologist*, vol. 34, no. 10, pp. 906-911.

Ford, J, Harding, N & Stoyanova, D 2010, *Talent management and development - an overview of current theory and practice*, Centre for Managerial Excellence, School of Management, Bradford University, UK.

Freyens, B 2010, 'Managing skills shortages in the Australian public sector: issues and perspectives', *Asia Pacific Journal of Human Resources*, vol. 48, no. 3, pp. 262-286.

Fung Institute for Engineering Leadership 2012, *Berkeley global engineering leadership program curriculum - leadership in an engineering context*, Berkeley, CA, viewed 23 December, 2012, <http://www.funginstitute.berkeley.edu/programs-engineering-leadership-professional-program/curriculum>.

Galloway, P 2008, *21st century engineer: a proposal for engineering education reform*, American Society of Civil Engineers Press, Reston, VA.

Garavan, TN, O'Donnell, D, McGuire, D & Watson, S 2007, 'Exploring perspectives on human resource development: an introduction', *Advances in Developing Human Resources,* vol. 9, no. 1, pp. 3-10.

Garavan, TN 2012, 'Global talent management in science-based firms: an exploratory investigation of the pharmaceutical industry during the global downturn', *The International Journal of Human Resource Management,* vol. 23, no. 12, pp. 2428-2449.

Garavan, TN, Carbery, R & Rock, A 2012, 'Mapping talent development: definition, scope and architecture', *European Journal of Training and Development,* vol. 36, no. 1, pp. 5-24.

Ghosh, R, Haynes, RK & Kram, KE 2013, 'Developmental networks at work: holding environments for leader development', *Career Development International,* vol. 18, no. 3, pp. 232 - 256.

Gibson, JW & Mason, JL 2011, 'Executive leadership development as a strategy for long term business success', *Journal of Business & Economics Research (JBER),* vol. 5, no. 9, pp. 19-26.

Glick, MB, Chermack, TJ, Luckel, H & Gauck, BQ 2012, 'Effects of scenario planning on participant mental models', *European Journal of Training and Development,* vol. 36, no. 5, pp. 488-507.

Goh, S & Bullen, F 2010 'Engineering management education post GFC and Copenhagen: are we on the right track? ', *40th ASEE/IEEE Frontiers in Education Conference*, Washington, DC October 27-30.

Gosling, J & Mintzberg, H 2003, 'The five minds of a manager', *Harvard Business Review,* vol. 81, no. 11, pp. 1-10.

Graduate Careers 2012, *What employers want - employers top 10 skills and attributes*, Graduate Careers Australia, Melbourne, VIC, viewed 3 September, 2012, <http://www.graduatecareers.com.au/CareerPlanningandResources/StartingYourSearch/GraduateSkillsWhatEmployersWant/index.htm>.

Green, DD 2007, 'Leading a postmodern workforce', *Academy of Strategic Management Journal,* vol. 6, pp. 15-26.

Green, R, Agarwal, R, Van Reenen, J, Bloom, N, Mathews, J, Boedker, C, Sampson, D, Gollan, P, Toner, P, Tan, H, Randhawa, K & Brown, P 2009, *Management matters in Australia - just how productive are we? Findings from the Australian Management Practices and Productivity global benchmarking report for the Department of Innovation, Industry, Science and Research (DIISR),* pp. 1-42, Department of Innovation, Industry, Science and Research, Canberra, ACT, Australia, viewed 5 January, 2012,

<http://innovation.gov.au/Industry/ReportsandStudies/Documents/ManagementMattersinAustraliaReport.pdf>.

Grint, K 2005, 'Problems, problems, problems: the social construction of 'leadership'', *Human Relations*, vol. 58, no. 11, pp. 1467-1494.

Grint, K 2011, 'A history of leadership', *The SAGE Handbook of Leadership*, Sage Publications Ltd, Thousand Oaks, CA, pp. 3-14.

Gruman, JA & Saks, AM 2011, 'Performance management and employee engagement', *Human Resource Management Review*, vol. 21, no. 2, pp. 123-136.

Haggard, DL, Dougherty, TW, Turban, DB & Wilbanks, JE 2011, 'Who is a mentor? A review of evolving definitions and implications for research', *Journal of Management*, vol. 37, no. 1, pp. 280-304.

Hahm, E & Leisy, B 2010, *Managing today's global workforce - elevating talent management to improve business*, Ernst & Young Global Ltd.

Hales, S & Rabey, G 2011, 'The frontline manager: fronting up to organisational change', *Industrial and Commercial Training*, vol. 43, no. 6, pp. 368-376.

Hall, DT 2002, *Careers in and out of organizations*, Sage Publications Ltd, Thousand Oaks, CA.

Hall, DT & Chandler, DE 2007, 'Career cycles and mentoring', in Kram, KE & Ragins, BR (eds), *The handbook of mentoring at work: theory, research, and practice*, Sage Publications Ltd, Thousand Oaks, CA, pp. 471-498.

Hamid, S, Waycott, J, Kurnia, S & Chang, S 2010, *The use of online social networking for higher education from an activity theory perspective*, Pacific Asia Conference on Information Systems (PACIS), PACIS 2010 Proceedings. Paper 135, Taipei, Taiwan, viewed 18 Feb 2011, <http://aisel.aisnet.org/pacis2010/135>.

Han, H, Kuchinke, PK & Boulay, DA 2009, 'Postmodernism and HRD theory: current status and prospects', *Human Resource Development Review*, vol. 8, no. 1, pp. 54-67.

Hanson, B 2012, 'The leadership development interface: aligning leaders and organizations toward more effective leadership learning', *Advances in Developing Human Resources*, vol. 15, no. 1, pp. 106-120.

Harris, R & Short, TW 2013, 'Beyond training to workforce development: trainers as leaders in a Learning for the Future context', *Second UIC World Congress on Rail Training 2013 "Learning for the Future"*, St Pölten University of Applied Sciences, St Polten, Austria.

Hart, C 1998, *Doing a literature review: releasing the social science research imagination*, Sage Publications Ltd, London, UK.

Hart, K 2004, *Postmodernism: a beginner's guide*, Oneworld Press, Oxford, UK.

Hart, P & Uhr, J 2008, 'Understanding public leadership: an introduction', in Hart, P & Uhr, J (eds), *Public leadership: perspectives and practices [electronic resource]*, ANU E Press, The Australian National University, Canberra, ACT, Australia.

Hartmann, E, Feisel, E & Schober, H 2010, 'Talent management of western MNCs in China: balancing global integration and local responsiveness', *Journal of World Business*, vol. 45, no. 2, pp. 169-178.

Harvey, P 2010, *How people actually develop - 70/20/10 rule*, viewed 5 April, 2012, <https://blogs.oracle.com/peteh/entry/how_people_actually_develop_70>.

Haskins, ME & Shaffer, GR 2010, 'A talent development framework: tackling the puzzle', *Development and Learning in Organizations*, vol. 24, no. 1, pp. 13-16.

Hatch, JA 2002, *Doing qualitative research in educational settings*, State University of New York Press, Albany, NY.

Hathaway, RS 1995, 'Assumptions underlying quantitative and qualitative research: implications for institutional research', *Research in Higher Education*, vol. 36, no. 5, pp. 535-562.

Hay Group 2011, *Building the new leader: leadership challenges of the future revealed*, viewed 12 July, 2013, <http://www.haygroup.com/Leadership2030/downloads/Hay_Group_Leadership_2030_whitepaper.pdf>.

Hensher, DA, Daniels, R & Demellow, I 1995, 'A comparative assessment of the productivity of Australia's public rail systems 1971/72–1991/92', *Journal of Productivity Analysis*, vol. 6, no. 3, pp. 201-223.

Herther, NK 2009, 'Research evaluation and citation analysis: key issues and implications', *The Electronic Library*, vol. 27, no. 3, pp. 361-375.

Hills, J 2008, 'Need to know: internal influences', *Personnel Today, June 3*, p. 32.

Hilmer, F 1993, *National Competition policy*, Australian Government Publishing, Canberra, ACT.

Hitt, WD 1993, 'The model leader: a fully functioning person', *Leadership & Organization Development Journal*, vol. 14, no. 7, pp. 4-11.

Hogan, R & Warrenfeltz, R 2003, 'Educating the modern manager', *Academy of Management Learning & Education*, vol. 2, no. 1, pp. 74-84.

Holland, P, Sheehan, C & De Cieri, H 2007, 'Attracting and retaining talent: exploring human resources development trends in Australia', *Human Resource Development International*, vol. 10, no. 3, pp. 247-262.

Holloway, I 1997, *Basic concepts for qualitative research*, Blackwell Science, Oxford, UK.

Hooijberg, R, Hunt, JG & Dodge, GE 1997, 'Leadership complexity and development of the leaderplex model', *Journal of Management*, vol. 23, no. 3, June 1, 1997, pp. 375-408.

Houck, C 2011, 'Multigenerational and virtual: how do we build a mentoring program for today', *Performance Improvement*, vol. 50, no. 2, pp. 25-30.

Howe, MJ, Davidson, JW & Sloboda, JA 1998, 'Innate talents: reality or myth', *Behavioural and Brain Sciences*, vol. 21, no. 3, pp. 399-442.

Howe, N & Strauss, W 1992, *Generations: the history of America's future, 1584 to 2069*, William Morrow Paperbacks, New York.

Ibarra, H, Snook, S & Guillén Ramo, L 2010, 'Identity-based leader development', in Nohria, N & Khurana, R (eds), *Handbook of leadership theory and practice: an HBS centennial colloquium on advancing leadership*, Harvard Business School Publishing, Boston, MA, pp. 657-678.

IBM 2008, *Unlocking the DNA of the adaptable workforce: the IBM Global Human Capital Study 2008*, pp. 1-67, IBM Global Business Services, Somers, New York, viewed 24 April, 2012, <http://www-935.ibm.com/services/us/gbs/bus/pdf/g510-6647-00.pdf>.

Iles, P, Chuai, X & Preece, D 2010, 'Talent management and HRM in multinational companies in Beijing: definitions, differences and drivers', *Journal of World Business*, vol. 45, no. 2, pp. 179-189.

Iles, P, Preece, D & Chuai, X 2010, 'Talent management as a management fashion in HRD: towards a research agenda', *Human Resource Development International*, vol. 13, no. 2, pp. 125-145.

Illeris, K 2002, *The three dimensions of learning: contemporary learning theory in the tension field between the cognitive, the emotional and the social*, Roskilde University Press, Frederiksberg, Denmark.

Illeris, K 2007, *How we learn: learning and non-learning in school and beyond*, Routledge, London, UK.

Illeris, K 2009, *Contemporary theories of learning: learning theorists - in their own words*, 1st. edn, Routledge, London, UK.

Illeris, K 2011, *The fundamentals of workplace learning: understanding how people learn in working life*, Routledge, London, UK.

Jacobs, RL 2003, *Structured on-the-job training: unleashing employee expertise in the workplace*, Berrett-Koehler Publishers, San Francisco, CA.

Jacobs, RL & Park, Y 2009, 'A proposed conceptual framework of workplace learning: implications for theory development and research in Human Resource Development', *Human Resource Development Review*, vol. 8, no. 2, pp. 133-150.

Jaques, E 1978, *General theory of bureaucracy*, Heinemann Books, New Hampshire.

Jarvis, P & Parker, S 2005, *Human learning: a holistic approach*, Routledge, London, UK.

Jung, CG 1921, *Psychological Types, Collected Works, Volume 6*, Princeton University Press Princeton, NJ.

Kaiser, RB & Hogan, J 2011, 'Personality, leader behavior, and overdoing it', *Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research; Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research*, vol. 63, no. 4, pp. 219-242.

Karp, T & Helgø, TI 2009, 'Leadership as identity construction: the act of leading people in organisations: a perspective from the complexity sciences', *Journal of Management Development*, vol. 28, no. 10, pp. 880-896.

Karp, T 2013, 'Developing oneself as a leader', *Journal of Management Development*, vol. 32, no. 1, pp. 127-140.

Karpin, D 1995, *Enterprising nation: reviewing Australia's managers to meet the challenges of the Asia-Pacific century*, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, ACT, Australia.

Katz, RL 1955, 'Skills of an effective administrator', *Harvard Business Review*, vol. 33, no. 1, pp. 33-42.

Keating, J 2003, 'Qualifications frameworks in Australia', *Journal of Education and Work*, vol. 16, no. 3, pp. 271-288.

Kegan, R 1982, *The evolving self: problem and process in human development*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA.

Kegan, R 1994, *In over our heads: the mental demands of modern life*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA.

Kegan, R & Lahey, LL 2009, *Immunity to change: how to overcome it and unlock potential in yourself and your organization*, Harvard Business Press, Cambridge, MA.

Kegan, R & Lahey, LL 2010, 'Adult development and organisational leadership', in Nohria, N & Khurana, R (eds), *Handbook of leadership theory and practice: an Harvard Business School (HBS) centennial colloquium on advancing leadership*, Harvard Business School Publishing, Boston, MA.

Kelm, P 1999, *Understanding and addressing a postmodern culture*, Presented to the Board for Parish Services, January 21, 1999 (unpublished work). [Paul Kelm serves in the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS) parish assistance program]

Keys, T 2012, 'Democratising L&D in a connected world', *Training Journal, February*, pp. 52-57.

Kim, S & McLean, GN 2012, 'Global talent management: necessity, challenges, and the roles of HRD', *Advances in Developing Human Resources*, vol. 14, no. 4, pp. 566-585.

Kirkpatrick, DL & Kirkpatrick, JD 2006, *Evaulating training programs (3rd ed)*, Berrett-Koehler Publishers, San Francisco, CA.

Kirkpatrick, SA & Locke, EA 1991, 'Leadership: do traits matter? ', *Academy of Management Perspectives*, vol. 5, no. 2, pp. 48-60.

Kluger, AN & DeNisi, A 1996, 'The effects of feedback interventions on performance: a historical review, a meta-analysis, and a preliminary feedback intervention theory', *Psychological Bulletin*, vol. 119, no. 2, pp. 254-284.

Knight, B & Karmel, T 2011, 'Apprenticeships and traineeships in Australia', in Dolphin, T & Lanning, T (eds), *Rethinking apprenticeships*, Institute for Public Policy Research, London, UK.

Knowles, MS & Knowles, HF 1955, *How to develop better leaders*, Association Press, New York.

Kourdi, J 2009, *Business strategy: a guide to taking your business forward*, Profile Books, London, UK.

Kram, KE, Hall, DT & Bunker, KA 2010 'Looking forward: creating conditions for extraordinary leadership', in Bunker, KA, Hall, DT & Kram, KE (eds), *Extraordinary leadership: addressing the gaps in senior executive development*, Jossey-Bass, San Francisco, CA.

Kroll, JH 2008, 'Early Iron Age balance weights at Lefkandi, Euboea', *Oxford Journal of Archaeology*, vol. 27, no. 1, pp. 37-48.

Kuchinke, PK 2012, 'The self-directed career in an era of economic instability: opportunities and limitations in cross-cultural comparison', *10th International Conference on Knowledge, Economy and Management, 11th International Conference of the Asia Chapter of the AHRD & 2nd International Conference of the MENA Chapter of the AHRD proceedings*, Istanbul, Turkey, 8-10 November, 2012.

Kvale, S 1996, *Interviews: an introduction to qualitative research interviewing*, Sage Publications Ltd, Thousand Oaks, CA.

Lahiri, S & Kedia, BL 2011, 'Coevolution of institutional and organizational factors in explaining offshore outsourcing', *International Business Review*, vol. 20, no. 2, pp. 252-263.

Laker, DR & Powell, JL 2011, 'The differences between hard and soft skills and their relative impact on training transfer', *Human Resource Development Quarterly*, vol. 22, no. 1, pp. 111-122.

Lancaster, S, Di Milia, L & Cameron, R 2013 'Supervisor behaviours that facilitate training transfer', *Journal of Workplace Learning*, vol. 25, no. 1, pp. 6-22.

Lave, J & Wenger, E 1991, *Situated learning: legitimate peripheral participation*, Cambridge University Press, UK.

Lawler, JJ, Chen, S-J, Wu, P-C, Bae, J & Bai, B 2011, 'High-performance work systems in foreign subsidiaries of American multinationals: an institutional model', *Journal of International Business Studies*, vol. 42, no. 2, pp. 202-220.

Lawrence, S 2010 *A brief case for work shadowing - a workforce capability strategy for vocational education and training (VET)*, Department of Education and Training, Queensland Government, Brisbane, Australia, viewed 14 December, 2012, <http://vetpd.qld.gov.au/resources/pdf/tla/brief-case-work-shadowing.pdf>.

Lefcourt, HM 1966, 'Internal versus external control of reinforcement: a review', *Psychological Bulletin*, vol. 65, no. 4, pp. 206-220.

Lefcourt, HM 1991, 'Locus of control', in Robinson JP, SP, Wrightsman LS (ed), *Measures of personality and social psychological attitudes*, vol. 1, Academic Press Inc, San Diego, CA, pp. 413-499.

Leisy, B & Pyron, D 2009, 'Talent management takes on new urgency', *Compensation & Benefits Review*, vol. 41, no. 4, pp. 58-63.

Lepak, DP & Snell, SA 1999, 'The human resource architecture: towards a theory of human capital allocation and development', *Academy of Management Review*, vol. 24, no. 1, pp. 31-48.

Lepak, DP & Snell, SA 2002, 'Examining the human resource architecture: the relationships among human capital, employment, and human resource configurations', *Journal of Management*, vol. 28, no. 4, pp. 517-543.

Lepak, DP & Snell, SA 2003, 'Managing the human resource architecture for knowledge-based competition', in Jackson, SE, Hitt, M & Denisi, A (eds), *Managing knowledge for sustained competitive advantage: designing strategies for effective human resource management* Jossey-Bass, San Francisco, CA, pp. 127-154.

Lewin, K 1938, *The conceptual representation and the measurement of psychological forces*, Duke University Press, Durham, NC.

Lewis, RE & Heckman, RJ 2006, 'Talent management: a critical review', *Human Resource Management Review*, vol. 16, no. 2, pp. 139-154.

Lezala, A 2012, 'Meeting the challenge', *CRC Showcase, 24 October*, Melbourne, VIC, Australia.

Lim, DH & Morris, ML 2006, 'Influence of trainee characteristics, instructional satisfaction, and organizational climate on perceived learning and training transfer', *Human Resource Development Quarterly*, vol. 17, no. 1, pp. 85-115.

Lincoln, YS & Guba, EG 1985, *Naturalistic inquiry*, Sage Publications Ltd, Beverly Hills, CA.

Locke, EA 1968, 'Toward a theory of task motivation and incentives', *Organizational behavior and human performance*, vol. 3, no. 2, pp. 157-189.

Locke, EA & Latham, GP 1990, *A theory of goal setting & task performance*, Prentice Hall, Englewood Cliffs, NJ.

Locke, EA 1996, 'Motivation through conscious goal setting', *Applied and Preventive Psychology*, vol. 5, no. 2, pp. 117-124.

Lombardo, M & Eichinger, RW 2000, *The career architect development planner*, Lominger, Minneapolis.

London, M 2003, *Job feedback: giving, seeking, and using feedback for performance improvement*, Lawrence Erlbaum and Associates Inc, Mahwah, NJ.

Lyon, D 1999, *Postmodernity*, Open University Press, Buckingham, UK.

Lyotard, J-F 1984, *Postmodern condition: a report on knowledge*, University of Minnesota Press, Minnesota.

Mabey, C 2008, 'Management development and firm performance in Germany, Norway, Spain and the UK', *Journal of International Business Studies*, vol. 39, no. 8, pp. 1327-1342.

MacLeod, D & Clarke, N 2009, *Engaging for Success: enhancing performance through employee engagement*, UK Department for Business, Industry and Skills, viewed 29 October, 2013, <http://www.bis.gov.uk/files/file52215.pdf>.

Mahendran, A, Dockery, A & Affleck, F 2007, *Forecasting rail workforce needs: a long-term perspective*, Centre for Labour Market Research, Perth, Western Australia.

Mahendran, A & Dockery, A 2008, '*Forecasting the needs of the Australian Rail Transport Industry (ARTI)*', *4th PATREC Research Forum, 2 October*, Edith Cowan University, Western Australia.

Makela, K, Bjorkman, I & Ehrnrooth, M 2010, 'How do MNCs establish their talent pools? Influences on individuals' likelihood as being labeled as talent', *Journal of World Business*, vol. 45, no. 2, pp. 134-142.

Manderscheid, SV & Ardichvili, A 2008, 'New leader assimilation: process and outcomes', *Leadership & Organization Development Journal*, vol. 29, no. 8, pp. 661-677.

Manderscheid, SV & Freeman, PD 2012, 'Managing polarity, paradox, and dilemma during leader transition', *European Journal of Training and Development*, vol. 36, no. 9, pp. 856-872.

ManpowerGroup 2011, *"Manufacturing" talent for the human age*, viewed 23 January, 2012, <https://www.manpower.com.au/documents/White-Papers/2011_ManufacturingTalent.pdf>.

Marion, R & Uhl-Bien, M 2001, 'Leadership in complex organizations', *The Leadership Quarterly*, vol. 12, no. 4, pp. 389-418.

Marquardt, M, Berger, N & Loan, P 2004, *HRD in the age of globalisation: a practical guide to workplace learning in the third millenium*, Basic Books, New York.

Marsick, VJ, Volpe, M & Watkins, KE 1999, 'Theory and practice of informal learning in the knowledge era', *Advances in Developing Human Resources*, vol. 1, no. 3, pp. 80-95.

Marsick, VJ & Watkins, KE 2001, 'Informal and incidental learning', *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education, Spring 2001*, no. 89, pp. 25-34.

Martin, A & Ernst, C 2005, 'Exploring leadership in times of paradox and complexity', *Corporate Governance*, vol. 5, no. 3, pp. 82-94.

Martin, F 2011, 'Lafarge develops employee talent through e-learning', *Industrial and Commercial Training*, vol. 43, no. 5, pp. 291-296.

Maslow, AH 1943, 'A theory of human motivation', *Psychological Review* vol. 50, no. 4, pp. 370-396.

Mathison, S 1988, 'Why triangulate?', *Educational Researcher*, vol. 17, no. 2, p. 13.

Maxwell, J 2005, *Qualitative research design: an interactive approach (2nd edition)*, Sage Publications Ltd, Thousand Oaks, CA.

Mays, N & Pope, C 2000, 'Assessing quality in qualitative research', *British Medical Journal*, vol. 320, no. 7226, pp. 50-52.

McCall, MW 2004, 'Leadership development through experience', *The Academy of Management Executive (1993-2005)*, vol. 18, no. 3, pp. 127-130.

McCall, MW 2010a, 'Recasting leadership development', *Industrial & Organizational Psychology*, vol. 3, no. 1, pp. 3-19.

McCall, MW 2010b, 'The experience conundrum', in Nohria, N & Khurana, R (eds), *Handbook of leadership theory and practice: an HBS (Harvard Business School) centennial colloquium on advancing leadership*, Harvard Business School Publishing, Boston, MA.

McCallum, S & O'Connell, D 2009, 'Social capital and leadership development: building stronger leadership through enhanced relational skills', *Leadership & Organization Development Journal*, vol. 30, no. 2, pp. 152-166.

McCartney, C & Garrow, V 2006, *The talent management journey*, Roffey Park Institute, Horsham, West Sussex, UK.

McCartney, C 2010, 'Fighting back through talent innovation ', *Human Resource Management International Digest*, vol. 18, no. 3, pp. 16-18.

McCartney, WW & Campbell, CR 2006, 'Leadership, management, and derailment: a model of individual success and failure', *Leadership & Organization Development Journal*, vol. 27, no. 3, pp. 190-202.

McClelland, DC 1987, *Human motivation*, Cambridge University Press, UK.

McDonnell, A, Lamare, R, Gunnigle, P & Lavelle, J 2010, 'Developing tomorrow's leaders - evidence of global talent management in multinational enterprises', *Journal of World Business*, vol. 45, no. 2, pp. 150-160.

McDonnell, A 2011, 'Still Fighting the "War for Talent"? Bridging the Science Versus Practice Gap', *Journal of Business and Psychology*, vol. 26, no. 2, pp. 169-173.

McDonnell, A, Hickey, C & Gunnigle, P 2011, 'Global talent management: exploring talent identification in the multinational enterprise', *European Journal of International Management*, vol. 5, no. 2, pp. 174-193.

McDonnell, A, Stanton, P & Burgess, J 2011, 'Multinational enterprises in Australia: two decades of international human resource management research reviewed', *Asia Pacific Journal of Human Resources*, vol. 49, no. 1, pp. 9-35.

McGonagill, G & Pruyn, PW 2010, *Leadership development in the US: principles and patterns of best practice*, Bertelsmann Stiftung Leadership Series, viewed 15 September, 2011, <http://www.bertelsmann-stiftung.de/cps/rde/xbcr/SID-45D590A6-32C2F5AF/bst_engl/Bertelsmann%20Foundation-%20Leadership%20Development%20in%20the%20US%20-%20Principles%20and%20Patterns%20of%20Best%20Practice.pdf>.

McGraw, P & Peretz, M 2011, 'HRD practices in local private sector companies and MNC subsidiaries in Australia, 1996–2009', *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, vol. 22, no. 12, pp. 2539-2557.

McGuire, D, Garavan, TN, O'Donnell, D & Watson, S 2007, 'Metaperspectives and HRD: lessons for research and practice', *Advances in Developing Human Resources*, vol. 9, no. 1, pp. 120-139.

McLagan, PA 1989, 'Models of HRD practice', *Training & Development Journal*, vol. 43, no. 9, pp. 49-59.

McLean, GN 2012, 'How do we know reality in HRD - and who cares in the economic crisis?', *11th International Conference of the Asia Chapter & 2nd Conference of the MENA Chapter of Academy of Human Resource Development HRD in Global Economic Crises & 10th International Conference on Knowledge, Economy and Management*, Istanbul, Turkey, 8-10 November.

McMahon, F 1993, 'From cop to coach: the shop floor supervisor of the 1990s', in Caldwell, B & Carter, E (eds), *The return of the mentor: strategies for workplace learning*, The Falmer Press, London, UK.

McMillan, C 2010, 'Five competitive forces of effective leadership and innovation', *Journal of Business Strategy*, vol. 31, no. 1, pp. 11-22.

Mellahi, K & Collings, DG 2010, 'The barriers to effective global talent management: the example of corporate elites in MNE's', *Journal of World Business*, vol. 45, no. 2, pp. 143-149.

Mercer, M 2011, 'Performance management: more performance and less management?', in Mercer, M & Chubb, C (eds), *IES Annual Review of the HR Year Ahead 2011: from restructuring to rebuilding*, Institute of Employment Studies Brighton, UK.

Merriam, SB 1998, *Qualitative research and case study applications in education*, 2nd edn, Jossey-Bass Publishers, San Francisco, CA.

Meyers, MC, van Woerkom, M & Dries, N 2013, 'Talent—Innate or acquired? Theoretical considerations and their implications for talent management', *Human Resource Management Review*, vol. 23, no. 4, pp. 305-321.

Meyskens, M, Von Glinow, MA, Werther Jr, WB & Clarke, L 2009, 'The paradox of international talent: alternative forms of international assignments', *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, vol. 20, no. 6, pp. 1439-1450.

Mezirow, J 1990, 'How critical reflection triggers transformative learning', *Fostering critical reflection in adulthood: a guide to transformative and emancipatory learning*, Jossey-Bass, San Francisco, CA, pp. 1-20.

Mezirow, J 1991, *Transformative dimensions of adult learning*, Jossey-Bass, San Francisco, CA.

Michaels, E, Handfield-Jones, H & Axelrod, B 2001, *The war for talent*, Harvard Business School Press, Boston, MA.

Miles, MB & Huberman, AM 1994, *Qualitative data analysis: an expanded sourcebook*, 2nd edn, Sage Publications Ltd, Thousand Oaks, CA.

Miller, J, McCartney, C, Baron, A, McGurk, J & Robinson, V 2011, *Sustainable organisational performance - what really makes the difference?*, Chartered Institute of Personnel Development, London, UK.

Miller, P 2012, 'Leadership communication: the three levels', *Today's Manager, Singapore Institute of Management,*, vol. February-March 2012, pp. 19-21.

Minns, B 2004, *A history in three acts: evolution of the Public Service Act 1999*, Australian Public Service Commission, Canberra, ACT,

Misko, J 2008, *Combining formal, non-formal and informal learning for workforce skill development*, Australian Industry Group and National Centre for Vocational Education Research, Adelaide, SA, Australia.

Morris, LE & Williams, CR 2012, 'A behavioral framework for highly effective technical executives', *Team Performance Management,* vol. 18, no. 3/4, pp. 210-230.

Mumford, MD, Marks, MA, Connelly, MS, Zaccaro, SJ & Reiter-Palmon, R 2000, 'Development of leadership skills: experience and timing', *The Leadership Quarterly,* vol. 11, no. 1, pp. 87-114.

Mumford, TV, Campion, MA & Morgeson, FP 2007, 'The leadership skills strataplex: leadership skill requirements across organizational levels', *The Leadership Quarterly*, vol. 18, no. 2, pp. 154-166.

Myers, LB 1962, *Manual: the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator*, Educational Testing Services, Princeton, NJ.

Nadler, L & Nadler, Z 1994, *Designing training programs*, Gulf Publishing Company, Houston, TX.

Ng, ESW & Sears, GJ 2010, 'What women and ethnic minorities want. work values and labor market confidence: a self-determination perspective', *The International Journal of Human Resource Management,* vol. 21, no. 5, pp. 676-698.

Nicholson, J & Nairn, A 2006, *2020 Vision: the manager of the 21st century*, A report by the Boston Consulting Group for Innovation & Business Skills Australia, Melbourne, VIC, Australia.

Nilsson, S & Ellström, PE 2012, 'Employability and talent management: challenges for HRD practices', *European Journal of Training and Development,* vol. 36, no. 1, pp. 26-45.

Nixon, P, Harrington, M & Parker, D 2012, 'Leadership performance is significant to project success or failure: a critical analysis', *International Journal of Productivity and Performance Management,* vol. 61, no. 2, pp. 204-216.

Northouse, PG 2010, *Leadership: theory and practice (fifth edition)*, Sage Publications Ltd, Thousand Oaks, CA.

O'Toole, S 2010, 'Training, L and D, OD, HRD-what's in a name?', *Australian Journal of Adult Learning,* vol. 50, no. 2, pp. 419-426.

O'Brien, E & Robertson, P 2009, 'Future leadership competencies: from foresight to current practice', *Journal of European Industrial Training*, vol. 33, no. 4, pp. 371-380.

Oppenheim, D, Bagheri, S, Ratakonda, K & Yi-Min, C 2011, 'Agility of enterprise operations across distributed organizations: a model of cross enterprise collaboration', *SRII Global Conference (SRII), 2011 Annual*, March 29-April 2, pp. 154-162.

Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development 2005, *Ageing populations: high time for action*, updated OECD, Meeting of G8 Employment and Labour Ministers, 10-11 March, London, UK, viewed 7 October, 2013, <http://www.oecd.org/els/emp/34600619.pdf>.

Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) 1996, *The knowledge-based economy*, Paris, <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/51/8/1913021.pdf>.

Owen, J 2007, *Program evaluation: forms and approaches*, The Guilford Press, New York.

Parks, SD 2005, *Leadership can be taught: a bold approach for a complex world*, Harvard Business School Press, Boston, MA.

Parry, KW 1999, 'The new leader: a synthesis of leadership research in Australia and New Zealand', *Journal of Leadership & Organizational Studies*, vol. 5, no. 4, pp. 82-105.

Pavlov, IP 1927, *Conditioned reflexes: an investigation of the physiological activity of the cerebral cortex*, Oxford University Press, London, UK.

Payne, SC, Youngcourt, SS & Beaubien, JM 2007, 'A meta-analytic examination of the goal orientation nomological net', *Journal of Applied Psychology*, vol. 92, no. 1, pp. 128-150.

Peet, MR, Walsh, K, Sober, R & Rawak, CS 2010, 'Generative knowledge interviewing: a method for knowledge transfer and talent management at the University of Michigan', *International Journal of Educational Advancement*, vol. 10, no. 2, pp. 71-85.

Pendleton, A 2003, 'Does privatization create a 'new breed' of managers? A study of the UK railway industry', *Human Relations*, vol. 56, no. 1, pp. 85-111.

Perkins, DN 1991, 'Technology meets constructivism: do they make a marriage?', *Educational Technology*, vol. 31, no. 5, pp. 18-23.

Perrin, C, Daniels, S, Jefferson, KC, Blauth, C, Marone, M, O'Sullivan, C, Apthorp, E, Thompsen, J & Moran, L 2010, *Developing the 21st century leader: a multi-level analysis of global trends in leadership challenges and practices*, Achieveglobal, <http://www.achieveglobal.com/resources/files/AchieveGlobal_21st_Century_Leader_Report.pdf>.

Phillimore, J 1997, 'Trade Unions and the National Training Reform agenda in Australia, 1983—1996', *International Journal of Training and Development*, vol. 1, no. 1, pp. 34-48.

Piaget, J 1953, *The origin of intelligence in the child*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, UK.

Piaget, J 1971, *Biology and knowledge; an essay on the relations between organic regulations and cognitive processes [translated by Beatrix Walsh]*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago.

Piip, JK 2011, 'Identifying leadership talent: perspectives of frontline managers in the Australian rail industry', *Human Resource Development in Asia: capiltalizing human expertise for greater innovation and creativity, 10th International Conference of the Academy of HRD (Asia Chapter)*, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, 4-6 December, 2011.

Piip, JK & Harris, R 2013, 'Matching mentoring partners through technology in Australian rail', *Second UIC World Congress on Rail Training 2013 "Learning for the Future"*, St Pölten University of Applied Sciences, Austria, April 24-26.

Porter, LW & McLaughlin, GB 2006, 'Leadership and the organizational context: like the weather?', *The Leadership Quarterly*, vol. 17, no. 6, pp. 559-576.

Pricewaterhouse Coopers 2006, *The changing face of rail: a journey to the employer of choice*, Australasian Railway Association (ARA) Inc, Canberra, Australia.

Productivity Commission 2005, *Economic implications of an ageing Australia*, Productivity Commission, Melbourne, VIC, Australia, < http://www.pc.gov.au/projects/study/ageing/docs/finalreport >.

Pruis, E 2011, 'The five key principles for talent development', *Industrial and Commercial Training*, vol. 43, no. 4, pp. 206-221.

Pruyn, PW 2010, 'An overview of Constructive Developmental Theory (CDT)', *Developmental Observer*, <http://developmentalobserver.blog.com/2010/06/09/an-overview-of-constructive-developmental-theory-cdt/>.

Quality Assurance Agency 2012, *Personal development planning*, California, viewed 5 June, 2012, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Personal_development_planning>.

Rabey, G 2008, 'The potential of the frontline manager', *Industrial and Commercial Training*, vol. 40, no. 3, pp. 156-161.

Rabionet, SE 2011, 'How I learned to design and conduct semi-structured interviews: an ongoing and continuous journey', *The Qualitative Report*, vol. 16, no. 2, pp. 563-566.

Radnor, H 2002, *Researching your professional practice: doing interpretive research*, Open University Press, Buckingham, UK.

Rainey, HG & Bozeman, B 2000, 'Comparing public and private organizations: empirical research and the power of the a priori', *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, vol. 10, no. 2, pp. 447-470.

Reeves, TC & Okey, JR 1996, 'Alternative assessment for constructivist learning environments: case studies in instructional design', in Wilson, BG (ed), *Constructivist learning environments*, Educational Technology Publications, Englewood Cliffs, NJ, pp. 191-202.

Reeves, WB 2006, 'The value proposition for executive coaching', *Financial Executive*, vol. 22, no. 10, pp. 48-50.

Reichard, RJ & Johnson, SK 2011, 'Leader self-development as organizational strategy', *The Leadership Quarterly*, vol. 22, no. 1, pp. 33-42.

Revans, R 1980, *Action learning: new techniques for management*, Blond & Briggs Ltd, London, UK.

Richardson, L & St. Pierre, EA 2005, 'Writing: a method of inquiry', *The Sage handbook of qualitative research* vol. 3rd edition, Sage Publications Ltd, Thousand Oaks, CA, pp. 959-978.

Robertson, R 1994, 'Globalisation or glocalisation?', *Journal of International Communication*, vol. 1, no. 1, pp. 33-52.

Rogers, CR 1951, *Client-centered therapy; its current practice, implications, and theory*, Houghton Mifflin, Oxford, UK.

Rotter, JB 1954, *Social learning and clinical psychology*, Prentice Hall, New York.

Rotter, JB 1966, 'Generalized expectancies for internal versus external control of reinforcement', *Psychological monographs: General and applied*, vol. 80, no. 1, pp. 1-28.

Rumsey, D 2011, 'Neuroplasticity and its application for skills in innovation workplaces', in Curtin, P, Stanwick, J & Beddie, F (eds), *Fostering enterprise: the innovation and skills nexus - research readings*, National Centre for Vocational Education Research, Adelaide, SA, Australia.

Sale, JE & Brazil, K 2004, 'A strategy to identify critical appraisal criteria for primary mixed-method studies', *Quality and Quantity*, vol. 38, no. 4, pp. 351-365.

Sambrook, S 2005, 'Factors influencing the context and process of work-related learning: synthesizing findings from two research projects', *Human Resource Development International*, vol. 8, no. 1, pp. 101-119.

Samson, D 2011, *Karpin report revisited: leadership and management challenges in Australia*, Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) and Innovation Business Skills Australia (IBSA), Melbourne, VIC, Australia.

Sanghi, S 2007, *The handbook of competency mapping*, Response Business Books, Sage, Thousand Oaks, CA.

Schein, E 1990, 'Organizational culture', *The American Psychologist,* vol. 45, no. 2, pp. 3-16.

Schein, E 2004, *Organizational culture and leadership*, 3rd edn, John Wiley & Sons, New Jersey.

Schuler, RS, Jackson, SE & Tarique, I 2010, 'Global talent management and global talent challenges: strategic opportunities for IHRM', *Journal of World Business,* vol. 45, no. 2, pp. 1-11.

Scott, J 1990, *A matter of record: documentary sources in social research*, Polity Press, Cambridge, UK.

Scullion, H, Collings, DG & Gunnigle, P 2007, 'International human resource management in the 21st century: emerging themes and contemporary debates', *Human Resource Management Journal,* vol. 17, no. 4, pp. 309-319.

Scullion, H, Collings, DG & Caliguiri, P 2010, 'Global talent management', *Journal of World Business,* vol. 45, no. 2, pp. 105-108.

Servon, LJ & Visser, MA 2011, 'Progress hindered: the retention and advancement of women in science, engineering and technology careers', *Human Resource Management Journal,* vol. 21, no. 3, pp. 272-284.

Sheehan, C, Fenwick, M & Dowling, PJ 2010, 'An investigation of paradigm choice in Australian international human resource management research', *The International Journal of Human Resource Management,* vol. 21, no. 11, pp. 1816-1836.

Sheehan, M 2012, 'Developing managerial talent: exploring the link between management talent and perceived performance in multinational corporations (MNCs)', *European Journal of Training and Development,* vol. 36, no. 1, pp. 66-85.

Shen, Y & Hall, DT 2009, 'When expatriates explore other options: retaining talent through greater job embeddedness and repatriation adjustment', *Human Resource Management,* vol. 48, no. 5, pp. 793-816.

Shields, J 2007, *Managing employee performance and reward: concepts, practices, strategies*, Cambridge University Press, Melbourne, VIC, Australia.

Short, TW 2010, 'Leadership development in a moving context', *Australian Vocational Education and Training Association Conference, 7-9 April*, Gold Coast, Australia.

Short, TW, Piip, JK, Stehlik, T & Becker, K 2011, *A capability framework for rail leadership and management development*, CRC for Rail Innovation, Brisbane, QLD, Australia.

Short, TW, Cameron, R, Morrison, A, Ebrahimi, M & Piip, JK 2012, *Mentoring and coaching: a literature review for the rail industry*, CRC for Rail Innovation, Brisbane, Australia.

Silzer, R & Church, AH 2009, 'The pearls and perils of identifying potential', *Industrial and Organizational Psychology*, vol. 2, no. 4, pp. 377-412.

Skinner, B 1953, *Science and human behavior*, Macmillan, New York.

Smart, BD 1999, *Topgrading: how leading companies win by hiring, coaching, and keeping the best people*, Prentice Hall Press, Paramus, NJ.

Smith, JW & Clurman, A 2009, *Generation ageless*, HarperCollins e-books, New York.

Snee, RD & Hoerl, RW 2012, 'Leadership - essential for developing the discipline of statistical engineering', *Quality Engineering*, vol. 24, no. 2, pp. 162-170.

Snowden, DJ & Boone, ME 2007, 'A leader's framework for decision making', *Harvard Business Review*, vol. 85, no. 11, p. 68.

Stahl, GK, Bjorkman, I, Farndale, E, Morris, SS, Paauwe, J, Stiles, P, Trevor, J & Wright, PM 2007, *Global Talent Management: how leading multimationals build and sustain their talent pipeline, Faculty & research working paper*, INSEAD, Fontainebleau, France.

Stahl, GK, Björkman, I, Farndale, E, Morris, SS, Paauwe, J, Stiles, P, Trevor, J & Wright, P 2012, 'Six principles of effective global talent management', *MIT Sloan Management Review*, vol. 53, no. 2, pp. 25-32.

Stake, RE 1995, *The art of case study research*, Sage Publications Ltd, Thousand Oaks, CA.

Standing Council on Tertiary Education Skills and Employment (SCOTESE) 2011, *National foundation skills strategy for adults*, Department of Tertiary Education, Skills, Science and Research, Canberra, Australia.

Stevens, FG, Plaut, VC & Sanchez-Burks, J 2008, 'Unlocking the benefits of diversity', *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, vol. 44, no. 1, March 1, 2008, pp. 116-133.

Stewart, J & Harte, V 2010, 'The implications of talent management for diversity training: an exploratory study', *Journal of European Industrial Training*, vol. 34, no. 6, pp. 506-518.

Stogdill, RM 1974, *Handbook of leadership: a survey of theory and research*, Free Press, New York.

Storberg-Walker, J 2012, 'Introducing a new paradigm for 21st-century HRD: workforce development and the public good', *Advances in Developing Human Resources*, vol. 14, no. 4, pp. 586-606.

Strack, R, Caye, J, Lassen, S, Bhalla, V, Puckett, J, Espinosa, E, Francoeur, F & Haen, P 2010, *Creating people advantage 2010: how companies can adapt their HR practices for volatile times*, Boston Consulting Group Boston, MA, viewed 15 December, 2013, <https://www.bcgperspectives.com/content/articles/organization_transformation_creating_people_advantage_2010/>.

Survey Monkey 2011, *Online survey tool*, viewed 27 September 2011, <http://www.surveymonkey.com/>.

Swailes, S 2013, 'The ethics of talent management', *Business Ethics: A European Review*, vol. 22, no. 1, pp. 32-46.

Swanson, RA & Holton, EF 2009, *Foundations of human resource development (2nd ed)*, Berrett-Koehler, San Francisco, CA.

Takala, M, Winegar, D & Kuusela, J 2009, 'Leadership developmental needs--a system for identifying them', *Australian Journal of Adult Learning*, vol. 49, no. 1, pp. 126-147.

Tansley, C, Turner, P, Foster, C, Harris, L, Sempik, A, Stewart, J & Williams, H 2007, *Talent: strategy, management, measurement*, Chartered Institute of Personnel Development, London, UK.

Tansley, C 2011, 'What do we mean by the term "talent" in talent management?', *Industrial and Commercial Training*, vol. 43, no. 5, pp. 266-274.

Tarique, I & Schuler, RS 2010, 'Global talent management: literature review, integrative framework and suggestions for further research', *Journal of World Business*, vol. 45, no. 2, pp. 122-133.

Taylor, FW 1911, *The principles of scientific management*, Norton, New York.

Terman, LM 1925, *Genetic studies of genius, mental and physical characteristics of a thousand gifted children*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, CA.

Thomas, RM 2003, *Blending qualitative and quantitative research methods in theses and dissertations*, Corwin, Thousand Oaks, CA.

Thompson, C & Gregory, JB 2012, 'Managing millennials: a framework for improving attraction, motivation, and retention', *Psychologist-Manager Journal*, vol. 15, no. 4, pp. 237-246.

Thurstone, LL 1938, *Primary mental abilities*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago.

Tight, M 2002, *Key concepts in adult education and training*, Routledge, London, UK.

Toffler, A 1980, *The third wave*, Bantam Books, New York.

Toor, S 2011, 'Differentiating leadership from management: an empirical investigation of leaders and managers', *Leadership and Management in Engineering*, vol. 11, no. 4, pp. 310-320.

Torraco, RJ 2005, 'Writing integrative literature reviews: guidelines and examples', *Human Resource Development Review*, vol. 4, no. 3, pp. 356-367.

Townsend, P & Cairns, L 2003, 'Developing the global manager using a capability framework', *Management Learning*, vol. 34, no. 3, pp. 313-327.

Transport and Logistics Industry Skills Council Ltd 2012, *Rail - Transport & Logistics Training Package*, viewed 3 September, 2012, <http://tlisc.org.au/training-packages/rail-training/>.

Traylor, J 2010, *Robert Kegan's Constructive-developmental theory - orders of consciousness*, viewed 14 March, 2012, <http://www.slideshare.net/JessicaTraylor/kegan-constructive-developmental-theory>.

Trochim, WMK 2006, *Qualitative validity*, Web Center for Social Research Methods, USA, viewed 28 September 2011, <http://www.socialresearchmethods.net/kb/qualval.php>.

Uhl-Bien, M, Marion, R & McKelvey, B 2007, 'Complexity leadership theory: shifting leadership from the industrial age to the knowledge era', *The Leadership Quarterly*, vol. 18, no. 4, pp. 298-318.

Uhl-Bien, M & Marion, R 2009, 'Complexity leadership in bureaucratic forms of organizing: a meso model', *The Leadership Quarterly*, vol. 20, no. 4, pp. 631-650.

Ulrich, D & Smallwood, N 2012, 'What is talent?', *Leader to Leader*, vol. Winter 2012, no. 63, pp. 55-61.

United Nations Conference on Trade and Development 1996, *International investment instruments: a compendium*, UNCTAD, New York, USA and Geneva, Switzerland, viewed 6 August, 2013, <http://unctad.org/en/Docs/dtci30vol2_en.pdf>.

United Nations Conference on Trade and Development 2012, *Transnational Corporations Statistics*, UNCTAD, Geneva, Switzerland, viewed 6 August, 2013 <http://unctad.org/en/Pages/DIAE/Transnational-Corporations-Statistics.aspx>.

Universities of Essex and Manchester 2012-2014, *Teaching resource: interview methods*, viewed 19 December, 2013, <http://ukdataservice.ac.uk/teaching-resources/interview.aspx>.

Vamos, S 2012, *Industrial age mindset must go*, updated 24 October, 2012, Sydney, Australia, <http://www.afr.com/p/national/work_space/industrial_age_mindset_must_go_fnxNTIQWqj8XTjrGcEmpaM>.

Wallace, M, Sheldon, N, Lings, I & Cameron, R 2010, 'Attraction and image for the Australian rail industry', *British Academy of Management Conference*, University of Sheffield, UK.

Weber, M 1947, *The theory of social and economic organization*, Free Press, New York, NJ.

Weida, S & Stolley, K 2012, *Using research and evidence*, Purdue University, West Lafayette, IN viewed 14 November, 2012, <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/588/02/>.

Welch, C, Piekkari, R, Plakoyiannaki, E & Paavilainen-Mäntymäki, E 2011, 'Theorising from case studies: towards a pluralist future for international business research', *Journal of International Business Studies*, vol. 42, no. 5, pp. 740-762.

Wellins, RS, Smith, AB & Erker, S 2008, *White paper - nine best practices for effective talent management*, Development Dimensions International Inc, Pennsylvania, viewed 4 April, 2012, <http://www.ddiworld.com/DDIWorld/media/white-papers/ninebestpracticetalentmanagement_wp_ddi.pdf?ext=.pdf>.

Weyland, A 2011, 'Engagement and talent management of Gen Y', *Industrial and Commercial Training*, vol. 43, no. 7, pp. 439-445.

Whelan, E, Collings, DG & Donnellan, B 2010, 'Managing talent in knowledge-intensive settings', *Journal of Knowledge Management*, vol. 14, no. 3, pp. 486-504.

Whitmore, J 2009, *Coaching for performance*, Nicholas Brealey Publishing, London, UK.

Whittemore, R, Chase, SK & Mandle, CL 2001, 'Validity in qualitative research', *Qualitative Health Research*, vol. 11, no. 4, pp. 522-537.

Wiblen, S, Dery, K & Grant, D 2012, 'Do you see what I see? The role of technology in talent identification', *Asia Pacific Journal of Human Resources*, vol. 50, no. 4, pp. 421-438.

Williamson, D 2011a, 'Talent management in the new business world: how organizations can create the future and not be consumed by it ', *Human Resource Management International Digest*, vol. 19, no. 6, pp. 33-36.

Williamson, D 2011b, 'Mining for hidden human potential', *Human Resource Management International Digest*, vol. 19, no. 7, pp. 3-8.

Willis, P 2010, *Ten point plan for the literature review*, unpublished, University of South Australia, Adelaide, Australia.

Wolcot, HF 1994, *Transforming qualitative data: description, analysis and interpretation*, Sage Publication Ltd, Thousand Oaks, CA.

Yan, T, Conrad, FG, Tourangeau, R & Couper, MP 2011, 'Should I stay or should I go: the effects of progress feedback, promised task duration, and length of questionnaire on completing web surveys', *International Journal of Public Opinion Research*, vol. 23, no. 2, June 20, 2011, pp. 131-147.

Yang, B 2003, 'Toward a holistic theory of knowledge and adult learning', *Human Resource Development Review*, vol. 2, no. 2, pp. 106-129.

Yin, RK 1994, *Case study research: design and methods, 2nd edition*, Sage Publications Ltd, Thousand Oaks, CA.

Yin, RK 2003, *Case study research: design and methods* 3rd edn, Sage Publications Ltd, Thousand Oaks, CA.

Yukl, GA, Gordon, A & Taber, T 2002, 'A hierarchical taxonomy of leadership behavior: integrating a half century of behavior research', *Journal of Leadership & Organizational Studies*, vol. 9, no. 1, pp. 15-32.

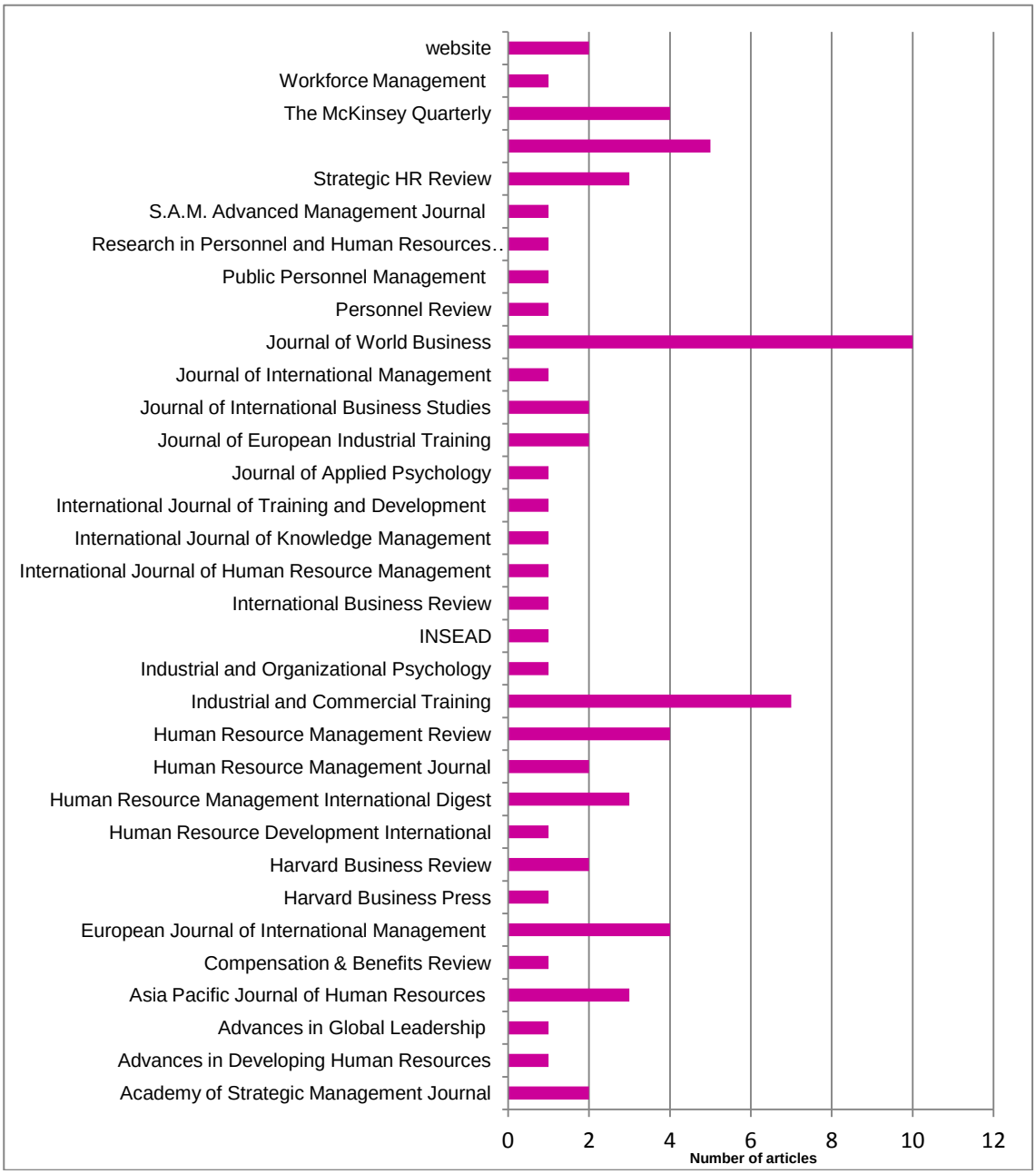
Yukl, GA 2010, *Leadership in organizations*, 7th edn, Pearson, Upper Saddle River, NJ.

Zaleznik, A 1977, 'Managers and leaders: are they different?', *Harvard Business Review*, vol. 55, no. 5, pp. 67-68.

Zierer, CM 1941, 'Industrial area of Newcastle, Australia', *Economic Geography*, vol. 17, no. 1, pp. 31-49.

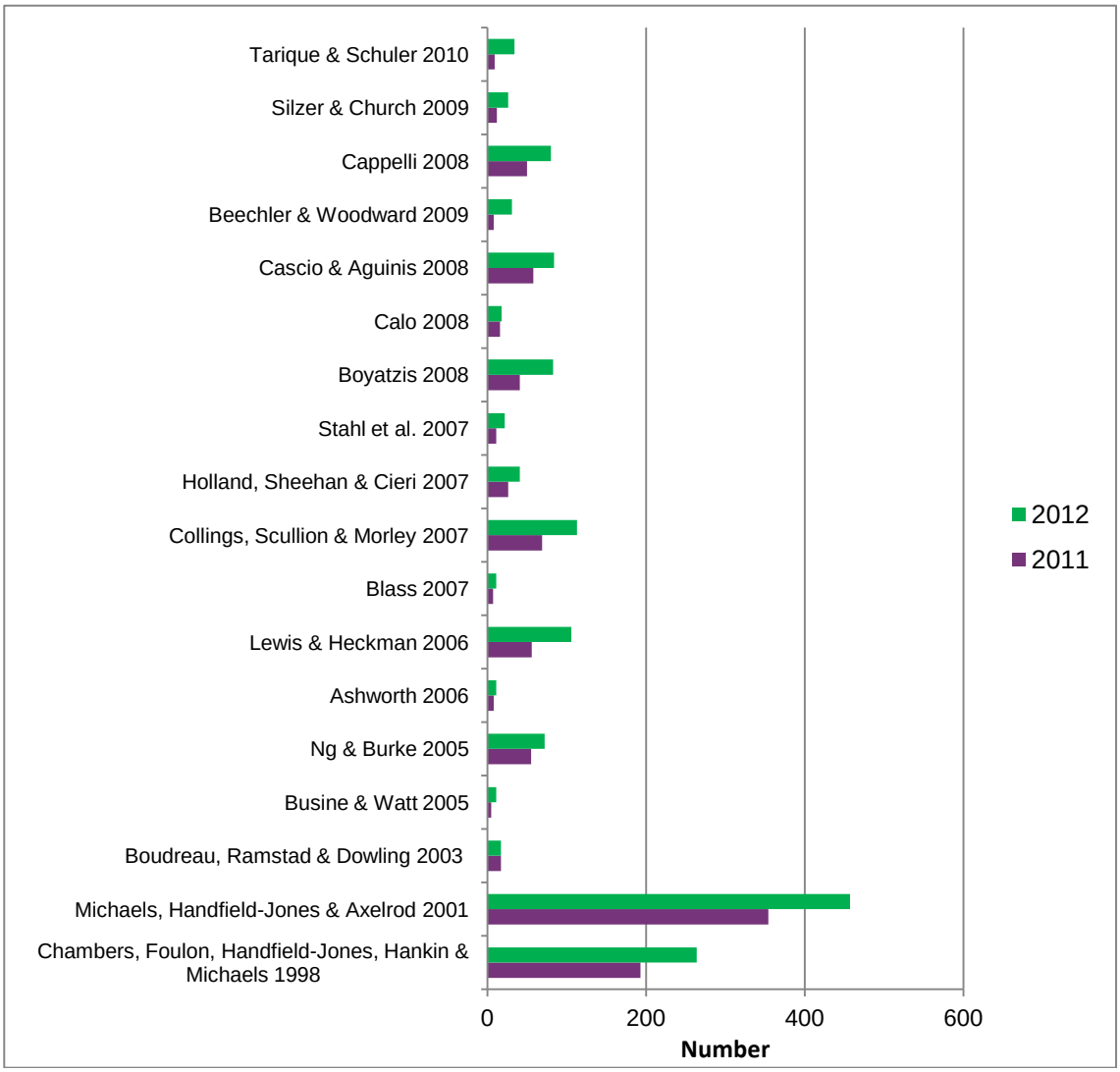
Appendix A

Relevant talent management articles by publication from 2000 – 2013



Appendix B

Most cited authors 1998 – 2012



Appendix C

Leader attributes as indicators of self-development

Characteristic	Description	Theorist
Achievement need		
Need for achievement	Desire to achieve superior performance, significant accomplishment, mastery of skills and high standards	(Barab & Plucker 2002; McClelland 1987)
Internal locus of control	Individual's belief about the degree of control over internal or external events	(Lefcourt 1966, 1991; Rotter 1966)
Energy	Sustained high energy levels, drive, engagement, tenacity and resilience under constant pressure	(Schuler, Jackson & Tarique 2010)
Mastery orientation		
Self-efficacy	Self-belief to succeed. Self efficacy affects thought patterns, motivation, choices regarding behaviour and health	(Bandura 1982)
Conscientiousness	Motivation to learn and master new skills is aligned with goal theory which is a key factor in intrinsic motivation or conscientiousness	(Locke & Latham 1990)
Openness to experience	Approaches new experiences willingly because of self-belief in ability to succeed. Has intellectual curiosity, active imagination and need for variety and stimulation	(Lewin 1938; Thurstone 1938)
Learning goal orientation	Individuals with learning orientation seek feedback on past performance to evaluate and improve future performance, knowledge and skills; are less concerned with making mistakes	(Dweck 1986)
Intellectual maturity	Actively constructing knowledge assists in developing intellectual maturity through acquiring, developing and using mental capabilities such as problem solving, memory and language	(Piaget 1971)
Meta-cognition	Mental processing efficiency and	(Flavell 1979)

	reasoning in relation to new knowledge and ability to make judgements. Meta-cognition comprises knowledge, regulation and experience	
Career growth		
Career experience	Range of experiences in past and current roles	
Feedback setting	Goal setting and feedback are highly correlated because performance increases desirability to achieve goal	(Locke 1968, 1996; Locke & Latham 1990)
Work orientation		
Related to self development	The need to improve, self actualisation for work	(Drucker 1999; Maslow 1943)
The importance of stable and mutable individual characteristics	A person with learning orientation is high on openness to experience, conscientiousness, and extraversion. Self belief of ability to change and moderate personal attributes	(Dweck 1986; Payne, Youngcourt & Beaubien 2007)

Appendix D

Challenges and implications for leadership development at all levels

Strategy	Implications for leadership talent development
Strategic decisions using innovation to embrace new opportunities and new problems. Characterised by: - new product and service development - strategic alliances - culturally sensitive global strategies (Beechler & Woodward 2009; McGonagill & Pruyn 2010; O'Brien & Robertson 2009; Stahl et al. 2007)	- Knowledge of people in business networks - Relationship building (Lewis & Heckman 2006) - Exposure to workplace assignments, experiences and work shadowing in a variety of contexts to develop transferable skills and ability in situations where they have yet to be tested. This enables new contacts to be made and tests the skill of the leader to operate in unfamiliar environments (Iles, Chuai & Preece 2010)
Organisational behaviour	**Implications for leadership talent development**
Tapping the motivation of individuals is the key to positive organisational behaviour: - organisational politics at work - understanding and managing misbehaviour and poor performance - intercultural communication (Lawler et al. 2011; McGonagill & Pruyn 2010; Mellahi & Collings 2010)	- Understanding networks and relationships both within the organisation and externally (Day 2000) - Knowledge of operating in a range of cultural contexts (Collings, Scullion & Dowling 2009; Stahl et al. 2007) - Feedback from interactions with 360 degree processes about effect of leadership style on others (Beechler & Woodward 2009; McGonagill & Pruyn 2010)
Personal Skills and abilities	**Implications for leadership talent development**
Leaders' personal skills and abilities are fundamental in sustaining value for customers and respond to new opportunities: - integrity, ethics and moral courage - ability to enlist support of others - authenticity of leader in being committed (Beechler & Woodward 2009; Farndale, Scullion & Sparrow 2010)	- Understanding and developing knowledge about self can identify how personal style impacts others (Day 2000) - Understanding how behavioural change from feedback can impact leadership style (McGonagill & Pruyn 2010) - Mentoring relationships can provide ongoing feedback about impact on others (Day 2000)
Demographics	**Implications for leadership talent development**

Characteristics of the Emergent Workforce where for the first time in history there may be 4 generations in the workforce together - increase of women and other groups - growing international labour pools - careers in transition, mid - late careers (Boedker et al. 2011a; Boedker et al. 2011b; Houck 2011)	Need for understanding in team dynamics of a diverse workforce which has multiple needs and complexities: - flexible labour – full-time, part-time and casual - coordination in remote and global teams - transnational teams in knowledge-intensive roles - conflict management in work teams - demand for personal flexibility policies (Ng & Sears 2010; Servon & Visser 2011)
Change	**Implications for leadership talent development**
High incidence of interactions required by leaders because of need for information about complex and uncertain events that influence the organisations business decisions (Collings & Mellahi 2009; Lahiri & Kedia 2011; McGonagill & Pruyn 2010) Managing in the face of uncertainty (Mellahi & Collings 2010; Shen & Hall 2009)	Knowing how to use different parts of networks for different information and situations for particular objectives (Lahiri & Kedia 2011; Mellahi & Collings 2010) Understanding how use personal skills to gain cooperation and assistance of numerous people outside the immediate chain of command to provide knowledge and information (Lahiri & Kedia 2011; McGonagill & Pruyn 2010)
Technology	**Implications for leadership talent development**
Need skills in virtual leadership for new ways of communicating and collaborating: - oral, written, electronic mediums (email, Skype, Facebook, mobile phone, video-conferencing, e-learning) (McGonagill & Pruyn 2010; Shen & Hall 2009; Tarique & Schuler 2010)	- Action learning approaches and problem based learning on real problems using technology (McGonagill & Pruyn 2010; Tarique & Schuler 2010) - Using a tech-savvy coach or mentor (Shen & Hall 2009) - Developing policies to managing information, privacy and knowledge, intellectual property and electronic monitoring of personal web use at work (Schuler, Jackson & Tarique 2010)

Appendix E

Leadership talent management framework with reference to the literature

1 - External contexts of leadership	1- Internal cultural contexts of leadership	2- Define leadership talent	3- Communicate	4- Identify	5- Develop	6- Evaluation and continuous improvement
Globalisation - managing an extended workforce (Ashton, Brown & Lauder 2008; Blass 2007; Boudreau, Ramstad & Dowling 2003; Busine & Watt 2005; Leisy & Pyron 2009; Mabey 2008; McDonnell 2011; McDonnell, Hickey & Gunnigle 2011; McDonnell, Stanton & Burgess 2011; Nilsson & Ellström 2012; Schuler, Jackson & Tarique 2010; Stahl et al. 2007; Tarique & Schuler 2010)	Generational - Veterans, Baby Boomers, Gen X and Gen Y (Acsente 2010; Houck 2011; Tarique & Schuler 2010; Weyland 2011)	Importance of leadership talent for business strategy (Boedker et al. 2011a; Haskins & Shaffer 2010; McCartney & Garrow 2006; Stahl et al. 2012)	Senior leaders own and endorse the talent management strategy (Boedker et al. 2011a; McCartney & Garrow 2006; McMillan 2010; Stahl et al. 2012)	Senior leaders endorse and model the desired talent identification behaviour (Collings & Mellahi 2009; Cook & Macaulay 2009; Haskins & Shaffer 2010)	Individual needs are identified and developed (Haskins & Shaffer 2010; McCartney & Garrow 2006; Nilsson & Ellström 2012)	Analysis of data against targets and strategy (Davenport, Harris & Shapiro 2010)

Changing economic, structural (privatisation and government regulation) and social environment (Freyens 2010; Holland, Sheehan & De Cieri 2007; Tarique & Schuler 2010; Williamson 2011a)	Diversity - women, mature workers, different cultural groups (Servon & Visser 2011; Short et al. 2011)	Difference between Management and Leadership articulated (Grint 2005, 2011)	Rigorous, transparent written definition of leadership talent (McCartney & Garrow 2006; McDonnell 2011; Silzer & Church 2009)	Connected conversations between manager and employee to identify leadership talent (Gruman & Saks 2011; Williamson 2011b, 2011a) aspirations, motivation and potential is identified (Brown 2011; Claudel & Casse 2012; Silzer & Church 2009)	Who - current and future leaders because all have potential to further develop further (Haskins & Shaffer 2010; Tansley 2011)	Observation of what is happening (Haskins & Shaffer 2010; McCartney & Garrow 2006)
Sustainability - economic, environmental and social impacts of leadership (Boudreau & Ramstad 2005; Bughin, Chui & Manyika 2010; Collings & Mellahi 2009; Hartmann, Feisel & Schober 2010; Stahl et al. 2007; Whelan, Collings & Donnellan 2010)	Technology and leading in a technology based environment (Davenport, Harris & Shapiro 2010; Keys 2012)	Define the desired leadership characteristics and competencies at different levels (Boyatzis 2011) for the present while considering the future (Ulrich & Smallwood 2012)	Clarity and consistency of the message and performance expectations (Pruis 2011; Tansley et al. 2007)	Individual knowledge about rail systems and the business environment is identified (Beechler & Woodward 2009; Tansley 2011; Williamson 2011b, 2011a)	What – values, norms, skills, knowledge and competencies for executive, middle and frontline leadership (Conger 2010; Haskins & Shaffer 2010)	Participant feedback (Haskins & Shaffer 2010; McCartney & Garrow 2006) Improvement strategies(Haskins & Shaffer 2010)
				Identify individual performance including results, relationships with others, drive and integrity is identified and discussed (Silzer & Church 2009; Williamson 2011b, 2011a)	How - Balance of methods eg formal learning and informal workplace learning (Jacobs & Park 2009)	
					Self awareness through psychometric tools (McGonagill & Pruyn 2010)	
					Coaching (Clutterbuck 2008; Iles, Preece & Chuai 2010)	
					Mentoring (Iles, Preece & Chuai 2010; Short et al. 2012)	
					360 degree Feedback (Ford, Harding & Stoyanova 2010;	

Z

Takala, Winegar & Kuusela 2009)
Projects and assignment (Haskins & Shaffer 2010)
Workshadowing (Blass 2007; McCartney & Garrow 2006)
Workplace opportunities (Conger 2010; Tarique & Schuler 2010)

Appendix F

Email sent to organisations outlining the research project

Dear

Further to our recent conversation, I am making contact with you as I am currently involved with the project (P4.104) within the CRC Workforce Development Program through the University of South Australia - developing a Leadership and Management Capability Framework, in which MTAA is an active member.

As part of the project, I am also funded by the CRC for Rail Innovation to undertake a Doctor of Philosophy (Education). The research topic that I have chosen will build on the work completed in the Leadership and Management project (P4.104) as well as considering the work in the next project on Coaching and Mentoring. My research topic aims to explore the practice of **leadership talent management in Australian rail organisations**.

I am writing to ask if MTAA would be willing to participate as one of the organisations I have chosen to investigate. The organisational commitment to the project for the period of the research over the next 12 months will involve:

1. 1 interview with one Executive Manager for no more than 1 hour
2. 1 interview with one Human Resource Manager for no more than 1 hour
3. 1 interview with one Middle Manager for no more than 1 hour
4. 1 interview with one Frontline Manager for no more than 1 hour
5. An online survey to be completed voluntarily by managers from all levels of the organisation

I have attached a further sheet to this email, which explains other details about the research project. If you have any other questions, I am available to discuss further by phone or email.

Kind regards

Janene Piip

0488 428 824

Appendix G

Description of the Research Project – information to organisations

Talent Management in three Australian Rail Industry organisations

I am undertaking research as part of a Doctor of Philosophy (Education) program with the University of South Australia funded by the CRC for Rail Innovation. The study is about how leadership talent is identified and developed in the Australian rail industry.

The research will focus on three aspects of leadership talent management and its application in the Australian rail industry and has three main stages:

- Firstly, there is a need to explore the purpose, policy and practice of talent management in modern organisations.
- Secondly, as the rail industry moves into a new era of transportation and logistics in Australia, the exploration will investigate how leaders are identified in the Australian rail context and rail industry workplace practice.
- Thirdly, the investigation will look at ways rail organisations are developing their future leaders including formal and informal practices such as education and training, workplace assignments, coaching, and mentoring.

It is envisaged that the study will add to the understanding of the talent management in the Australian rail industry by addressing some of the above questions. Research on this topic has previously focused on talent management as a practice across global and international industries rather than applications within the Australian rail industry. As a result, the research will place a focus on the rail industry to explore current practice and emergent themes across three organisations.

The project will commence in May 2011 with interviews and surveys to be conducted in the second half of 2011. The research will be undertaken in a manner that is unobtrusive to the organisation and participants.

Findings from the research will be summarised without inclusion of names or identifiers to individual organisations or participants. On completion of the research, a copy of the report will be forwarded to participants.

Thank you for your consideration to participate in the project.

Janene Piip

Appendix H

Executive and HR leader questions

How is leadership talent identified and developed in the Australian rail industry?

Introduction

Welcome and thank you for participating. This discussion is about how leaders, who are already working in the organisation, are identified and developed.

Questions

About you

1. Tell me about your role as a leader in this organisation and how many people you have in your team.

2. How did you become an Executive leader in this organisation?

3. What are your personal leadership skills that you are particularly proud of?

About Leaders

4. Can you think of a leader you have admired at work? What made them a good leader?

5. Thinking about these leaders, what personal qualities and abilities should be considered as important for leaders in your organisation?

About teams - Identification

6. How important to your organisation is the identification of future leaders and is this part of an overall talent management strategy?

7. Do you have a definition of leadership talent for your business? Is this communicated to the organisation?

8. Who is responsible for developing the strategy, policies and procedures that facilitates the identification of future leaders?

9. How does the organisation know about the aspirations of employees for different roles and their particular individual skill sets?

10. Do you think your leadership identification strategy is working well? How do you think it could be improved?

About teams - Development

11. What do you do to help individual teams develop their leaders?

12. The following are types of development activities used to develop leaders.

What activities have you used or recommended to develop potential leaders in your organisation?

What is the value of these approaches?

- Training
- Personality tests
- Coaching
- Mentoring
- 360 degree feedback
- Performance management
- Projects and assignments
- Work shadowing
- Other

13. How do you think your development activities for leaders could be improved?

14. If you had an exceptional leader in the business, what type of activities would you use to develop that person further?

Conclusion

What other ideas or suggestions do you have to offer in regard to identifying and developing leadership talent for your business in general and across the Australian rail industry?

Appendix I

Middle and Frontline leader questions

How is leadership talent identified and developed in the Australian rail industry?

Introduction

Welcome and thank you for participating. This discussion is about how leaders, who are already working in the organisation, are identified and developed.

Questions

About you

1. Tell me about your role as a manager in this organisation and how many people you have in your team.
2. How did you become a leader and manager in this organisation?
3. Did somebody identify that you had particular skills and help you to achieve this outcome?
4. What are your personal leadership skills that you are particularly proud of?

About Leaders

5. Can you think of a leader you have admired at work? What made them a good leader?
6. Thinking about these leaders, what personal qualities and abilities should be considered as important for leaders in your organisation.

About team members - Identification

7. How important to your organisation is the identification of future leaders?
8. What do you do to find out about individual team members leadership skills?
9. If they want to become a leader in the future, what do you do to help them?
10. Can you think of an example of an employee in your team who provided leadership in a certain situation that surprised you? What did the person do?
11. Would you normally consider that person to be a leader? Did you learn anything from this experience?

About team members - Development

12. What do you do to help individual team members develop leadership skills?
13. What types of learning and development activities are most suited to being a leader?

- Training – what is the value of this approach? Why?
- Personality tests -– what is the value of this approach? Why?
- Coaching– what is the value of this approach? Why?
- Mentoring – what is the value of this approach? Why?
- 360 degree feedback– what is the value of this approach? Why?
- Performance management– what is the value of this approach? Why?
- Projects and assignments– what is the value of this approach? Why?
- Work shadowing– what is the value of this approach? Why?
- Other– what is the value of this approach? Why?

Conclusion

What other ideas or suggestions do you have to offer in regard to identifying and developing leadership talent for your business in general and across the Australian rail industry?

Appendix J

Information sheet for interview participants





University of South Australia

Centre for Research in Education

INFORMATION SHEET

Project title: **Leadership talent management in the Australian rail industry**

Researchers: Janene Piip
University of South Australia,
Mawson Lakes, South Australia, AUSTRALIA 5095

Email: piijk001@mymail.unisa.edu.au
Telephone: 0488428824

This project is funded by the Board of the Cooperative Research Centre (CRC) for Rail Innovation and has been approved by the University of South Australia's Human Research Ethics Committee. The research falls within a broader program of workforce development and addresses a range of education and training requirements. The research will focus on three aspects of leadership talent management and its application in the Australian rail industry.

To assist in answering these issues, three research questions have been identified:

1. What is the purpose, policy and practice of leadership talent management in rail organisations?
2. How is leadership talent identified in the Australian rail context?
3. How are rail industries organisations developing their leaders?

It is envisaged that the study will add to the understanding of the leadership talent management processes in the Australian rail industry by addressing some of the above questions. The research will place a focus on the rail industry to explore current practice and emergent themes across three organisations.

As your organisation is one of the Participants in this Rail CRC, we are inviting you to assist with this project. Through semi-structured interviews with selected managers and leaders in the CRC's Core Participant organisations, supported by a review of national and international literature, the study will research existing practices in developing and sustaining leadership talent management in the industry.

Your part in the survey
We value your participation in our research and would like to audio-tape the interview. After final analysis, results will be available from the Steering Committee representative in your organisation. This information will help shape the direction of the research findings.

Confidentiality
The answers that you provide will be treated in the strictest confidence. The researcher will take every care to remove responses from any identifying material as early as possible. Likewise individuals' responses will be kept confidential by the researcher and not be identified in the report of the research. You are free to withdraw at any stage without disadvantage. All data collected will be retained in the University of South Australia, by law for a period of seven years, and stored in a dedicated locked room in the Centre for Research in Education, Equity and Work at the University of South Australia.

Further information
If you wish to enquire further about this survey, please contact us via the details above, and we will be pleased to assist you. The University of South Australia's Human Research Ethics Committee has reviewed this study. Should you wish to discuss the project with someone not directly involved, in particular in relation to matters concerning policies, information about the conduct of the study or your rights as a participant, please contact the UniSA Ethics Officer, Ms Vicki Allen on 830 23118; fax 830 23921; email: vicki.allen@unisa.edu.au

We look forward to your cooperation in this survey, and strongly encourage you to participate so that the most complete set of data can be obtained.

Appendix K

Consent form to participate and collect information

University of South Australia

Centre for Research in Education

CONSENT FORM

Project title: **Leadership talent management in the Australian rail industry**

Researcher: Janene Piip
Centre for Research in Education
University of South Australia
Mawson Lakes, South Australia, AUSTRALIA 5095
Phone: 0488 428 824; Email: piijk001@mymail.unisa.edu.au

- I have read the Information Sheet, which outlines the nature and the purpose of the research project.
- I understand the purpose of the project and my involvement in it.
- I understand that my interview will be audio-taped.
- I understand that I may not directly benefit from taking part in the study.
- I understand that I may withdraw from the project at any stage.
- I confirm that I am over 18 years of age.
- I understand that while information gained during the study may be used in written reports, I will not be identified and my personal results will remain confidential.

Name of participant: _____

Signed: _____ Date: _____

I have provided information about the research to the research participant and believe that he/she understands what is involved.

Researcher's signature: _____ Date: _____

Appendix L

Topic guide for interviews

Introduction **5 mins**

(Aim: to explain purpose of research, introduce researcher, overview of the CRC for Rail Innovation)

Introduce self	Interview will last approximately 1 hour
Explain purpose of research	
Questions have been provided beforehand	Have you had a chance to read and consider them?
	Reassure – information kept confidential, recording, transcribing and checking
	No right or wrong answers, all opinions are welcomed
	Check interviewee is comfortable with interview format and subject matter.

Consent Form and information sheet

Part 1 **10 mins**

About you – role as a leader

Part 2 **10 mins**

About leaders – qualities admire in others, useful for rail

Part 3 **10 mins**

About teams – identification – what do you look for?

Part 4 **10 mins**

About teams – development

Conclusions and other information **10 mins**

Thank you for participating

Appendix M

Survey

Participant information sheet

Identifying and developing leaders in rail 2011

Research supported by

Research conducted by:
Janene Piip
Candidate for Doctor of Philosophy (Education)

Email: piijk001@mymail.unisa.edu.au
Phone: 0488428824

University of South Australia,
Mawson Lakes, South Australia, AUSTRALIA 5095

University of South Australia

CRC for rail innovation

Description

This project is being undertaken as a part of PhD research funded by the Cooperative Research Centre for Rail Innovation with a number of rail industry organisations across Australia. The purpose of this project is to identify how rail industry organisations identify and develop their future leaders. The researcher requests your assistance because you can provide valuable insight into your perceptions about how this occurs in the rail industry.

Participation

Your participation in this project is voluntary.

Confidentiality

All comments and responses are anonymous and will be treated confidentially. The names of individual persons are not required in any of the responses. Findings from this research may be published in industry and academic publications but the level of information provided about participants will not allow for identification.

Consent to participate

The return of the completed questionnaire is accepted as an indication of your consent to participate in this project.

Further questions

Please contact the researcher named above if you have any questions or if you require further information about the project.

The University of South Australia's Human Research Ethics Committee has reviewed this study. Should you wish to discuss the project with someone not directly involved, in particular in relation to matters concerning policies, information about the conduct of the study or your rights as a participant, please contact the UniSA Ethics Officer, Ms Vicki Allen on 830 23118; fax 830 23921; email: vicki.allen@unisa.edu.au

Thank you for helping with this research project. Please keep this sheet for your information.

Survey

Identifying and developing leaders in rail

Part A - About you

1. Gender profile ☐Male ☐ Female

2. What is your age?

- ☐ Builder – over 63 years
- ☐ Boomer – aged 45 years to 63 years
- ☐ Generation X – aged 32 years to 44 years
- ☐ Generation Y – aged 15 years to 31 years

3. What best describes your position within the organisation

- ☐ Director/Executive
- ☐ Senior Manager
- ☐ Middle Manage
- ☐ Team Manager
- ☐ Frontline Manager

4. Occupational work area

- ☐ Professional
- ☐ Commercial/Business
- ☐ Engineering/Technical
- ☐ Safety/Security/Environment
- ☐ Infrastructure/Planning
- ☐ Information Technology
- ☐ Trades
- ☐ Administrative/Clerical
- ☐ Customer services
- ☐ Other (please specify)

5. How long have you been working for the organisation? _____Years

6. How long have you been in a management or leadership role? _____Years

7. What is your highest level formal qualification

Qualification level	**Name of Qualification**
☐ PhD	
☐ Masters	
☐ Postgraduate certificate or diploma	
☐ Bachelor	
☐ Diploma	
☐ Certificate	
☐ None	

8. Do you have a management qualification?

- ☐ Masters degree in Management
- ☐ Graduate Diploma in Management
- ☐ Graduate Certificate in Management
- ☐ Bachelor of Management
- ☐ Diploma of Management
- ☐ Certificate 1V in Front-line Management
- ☐ Other _____

9. The name of your organisation

☐ V/Line ☐ Metro ☐ Genesee & Wyoming	☐ WestNet Rail ☐ PTA WA ☐ RailCorp	☐ ARTC ☐ TransAdelaide ☐ QR

10. What are your <u>personal leadership skills</u> that you are particularly proud of?

Part B - About leaders

11. Thinking about a leader you have admired at work what type of personal characteristics did they demonstrate? Tick one of the boxes on each line ✓

	None	Low	Medium	High
1. General knowledge of the business, safety and compliance				
2. Intelligence				
3. Problem solving skills with innovative solutions				
4. High standards for self and team				
5. Engagement with team				
6. Communication and listening skills				
7. High energy and drive and motivation for the job				
8. Need to achieve superior performance				
9. Resilience under constant pressure and belief in ability to succeed				
10. Ethical behaviour and role model for team members				
11. Positive attitude				
12. Openness to new ideas				
13. Willingness for personal development and learning				
14. Ability to make quick decisions that are accurate and truthful				
15. Willing to accept feedback about self as a leader				

12. What were the <u>most impressive skills</u> this leader demonstrated? Your comments

13. Thinking about the person who currently leads your team. List the personal attribute or personal characteristics they demonstrate. Tick one of the boxes on each line ✓

	None	Low	Medium	High
1. General knowledge of the business, safety and compliance				
2. Intelligence				
3. Problem solving skills with innovative solutions				
4. High standards for self and team				
5. Engagement with team				
6. Communication and listening skills				
7. High energy and drive and motivation for the job				
8. Need to achieve superior performance				
9. Resilience under constant pressure and belief in ability to succeed				
10. Ethical behaviour and role model for team members				
11. Positive attitude				
12. Openness to new ideas				
13. Willingness for personal development				
14. Ability to make quick decisions that are accurate and truthful				
15. Willing to accept feedback about self as a leader				

14. Is the <u>difference between a talented leader and an average leader</u> something that can be developed? ☐ **Yes** ☐**No**

Your comments

15. How important to your organisation is the <u>identification of future leaders</u>?

- ☐ Very important
- ☐ Somewhat important
- ☐ Not important

16. How do you think your organisation could identify people with <u>leadership potential</u>?

Your comments

17. **Do you think there are <u>talented people</u> in the organisation who are not currently in leadership roles who would make good leaders?** Your comments

18. **Why do you think they are not in leadership roles?** Your comments

19. **Is interest in becoming a leader or furthering your leadership skills discussed in the performance management process or in discussions with your manager?** Your comments

20. **Your comments about what it means to be a leader in the Australian rail industry.** Your comments

Part C - Developing leaders

21. **What was your <u>most important learning experience</u> in developing your own leadership skills?** Your comments

22. **What did you <u>learn from the experience</u> that you have applied to your leadership practice at work?** Your comments

23. What <u>formal activities</u> have you participated in to develop leadership skills?

Rate how you perceived the usefulness of the activity. Tick one of the boxes on each line ✓

Activity	**Low**	**Medium**	**High**
☐ Short courses – communication skills			
☐ Short courses – listening skills			
☐ Short courses – leadership styles			
☐ Full qualifications – Certificate 1V in Frontline Management, Diploma in Management			
☐ University based course and degrees			
☐ Coaching and mentoring			
☐ Work shadowing			
☐ Action learning projects			
☐ Team building activities			
☐ Networking activities			

Your comments

24. Describe the most <u>influential</u> formal leadership development activity (eg training, courses or other activities organised at work) that you have undertaken in your career. Your comments

25. How do you think leadership development activities could be improved in your organisation? Your comments

Thank you for you for taking the time to complete this survey