PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT
FOR
MIDDLE MANAGERS

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative research project aims to examine a problem that concerns the professional development requirements of middle managers in a New Zealand multi-site state sector organisation from the middle managers’ perspective.

The organisation’s (allocated pseudonym is Justcorp) business plan stated as a strategic priority that it needed to build the capacity of its employees for the realisation of its vision. The objectives for this priority focussed on the organisation’s recruitment and retention, strengthening leadership, providing comprehensive training packages and enhancing team functioning. To deal with this, ten middle managers with different responsibilities relating to the core business have been employed across the three sites of Justcorp. These middle managers were responsible for the management of staff, resources and service to clients which placed them in a vital role in Justcorp.

For this research, ten participants from the three national sites were interviewed on their recent experiences surrounding their professional development and how it had affected their work. They were asked to identify the skills and abilities that were important for the middle manager’s role and to describe how in the future professional development could be delivered and organised in Justcorp. The interview findings were further discussed by a focus group involving five of the initial ten participants.

This research found that all ten participants had undertaken some activities of professional development. The impact on their work varied according to suitability of the activity to their tasks and opportunities available to them in Justcorp. In response to how future professional development requirements could be addressed participants focussed on the attributes that middle managers required for their role and how a process could be developed.
Participants recognised leadership and management education and training as essential elements of their development. The factors enabling and inhibiting the provision of middle managers’ professional development were identified and were generally considered as lacking a process.

The conclusions from this project and the key research aims that guided it were directed at how to adequately provide a model of professional development for middle managers in Justcorp. The model needs to commence at induction and cater for the development of the individual, improve middle management practice and assist Justcorp in the achievement of its vision.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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<tr>
<td>CEO</td>
<td>Chief Executive Officer</td>
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<tr>
<td>CPD</td>
<td>Continuing Professional Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>HRM</td>
<td>Human Resources Management</td>
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<td>MD</td>
<td>Management development</td>
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<td>PD</td>
<td>Professional Development</td>
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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Introduction
This project was concerned with identifying factors that either enabled or inhibited the provision of professional development [PD] for middle managers in Justcorp. Factors studied relate to three topics – professional development, the middle manager’s role and the provision of PD. Data were gathered to ascertain what middle managers had undertaken as PD, its impact on their role and what had enabled it to occur in Justcorp. Participants were asked to identify skills and abilities required for the role of middle manager in an organisation and how PD could address these. Further data relating to the provision of middle manager’s PD in this organisation was gathered.

Literature found in the fields of educational leadership and management and business management identify the role of the middle manager as being vital for the viability and growth of an organisation. Several writers (Avery, Everett, Finkelde, & Wallace, 1999; Cardno, 2005; Huy, 2001; Jackson & Humble, 1994; Klagge, 1998) consider that PD for middle managers is essential because it enables them to lead and develop others. Furthermore, by unlocking employee potential, achieved through PD, organisations are equipping themselves with the strategic weapon that enables them to meet their goals (Samson & Daft, 2003).

This project examined middle managers’ experiences of PD to determine the factors that enabled or inhibited its provision in Justcorp. It also sought to determine the needs of middle managers and Justcorp so that PD could produce better outcomes for both parties.
Rationale for this research

This research is aligned with the work of Rudman (2003) who argues that for an organisation to be successful in the 21\textsuperscript{st} century it needs to link aspects of human resources management [HRM] to its strategic goals. Professional development is one of the tools whereby the development requirements of employees and the organisation can be aligned so that “mutuality” or the common cause is promoted (Rudman, 2003, p. 7). Cardno’s (2005) model of professional development identified the tensions and opportunities between the goals of the different parties involved in the process while retaining the predominant focus of the core tasks of the organisation. For this project, the parties are the middle managers who are defined as “any managers two levels below the CEO and one level above line workers and professional” (Huy, 2001, p. 73) and the organisation. The role of the middle manager in any organisation has been identified as being critical to the organisation’s employee-employer relationship and success in implementing changes (Huy, 2001; Maguire, 2003). Therefore their development is central to the success of the organisation as a whole.

Justcorp which is the focus of this research project is a small division of a state sector department. This division operates with a hierarchal management structure, with its middle managers based in three national sites. Its core business relates to care and education of young people which coupled with the state sector and management structure enables similarities between it and schools to be drawn. In late 2005 the organisation’s vision was for it to provide safe environments and lasting change within the organisation for both clients and employees. Within this vision there were three strategic priorities, one of which was to build the capacity of its employees. This priority’s objectives focussed on the organisation’s recruitment and retention, strengthening leadership, providing comprehensive training packages and enhancing team functioning. The organisation identified that its middle managers had a key role in the implementation of change and subsequently involved them from the initial
planning stage in 2005. The importance of middle managers in the facilitating of change has been supported by both Maguire (2003) and Rudman (2003).

By acknowledging the role of middle managers in the change process and with the ‘Building Capacity’ priority’s objectives, this organisation is in a position where a model/process for middle managers’ PD needs to occur so that it equips not only these employees but others in meeting Justcorp’s goals. In implementing a model/process the requirements of both, individuals and Justcorp require alignment so that outcomes address and lead to the achievement of organisational goals. Cardno (2005) and Bolam (2002) write that these goals must be linked to a strategic plan and management of resources, of which effective human resources management [HRM] is the most important. It is this gap, identified as a need in the business plan and the internal and external audits of systems and processes of middle manager’s practice that this research project has investigated.

**Context of the research**

Within the hierarchical structure of Justcorp the division’s top three tiers of management are based at national office while the other three tiers form a management team at each of the sites. These multi-site management teams are responsible for the care and education of clients and the management of their respective site which is similar to that of a school within the state sector. Each site teams has a site manager, with a level of managers reporting to them which forms the middle manager team. Each middle manager has one major area of management responsibility with their team – operational, practice or programme. Within their area of responsibility there are line managers and staffing reporting and responsible to them. The structure of Justcorp together with the expectations of a state sector organisation requires a business approach to be adopted by its managers if they are to manage each site effectively. With the relative isolation of managers and nature of the work coupled with the level of change outlined in the business plan for this organisation, it seems critical that these middle managers
have the knowledge, capabilities and skills to play their role as Klagge (1998) writes:

Today’s middle managers need increased skills to pursue quality initiatives, develop high performing teams, and cover the wider spans of control left in the wake of downsizings (p.481).

Therefore, the level of diversity for Justcorp’s middle managers and the awareness of the importance of this role to an organisation impacts on the PD provided.

Currently in this organisation there is a degree of middle manager's PD occurring but it seems to be poorly planned, mostly individualised and the organisational strategies or impact seem to be rarely considered. Jones and Robinson (1997) found that while personal responsibility for developing professional expertise is to be encouraged it needs to be shared jointly by the professional and their organisation to maximise the benefits of the education. When this sharing occurs the benefits of the professional knowledge, competency and skill assists an organisation to retain its competitive position and to achieve its goals (Jones & Robinson, 1997).

Given this context, the problem at the core of this research project is how to adequately provide PD for middle managers in Justcorp that caters for the development of individuals, improvement in practice and achievement of its vision. The managers who take responsibility for professional knowledge, capabilities and skills ensure that the organisation remains efficient, effective and viable (Margerison, 1991). This development of middle managers’ knowledge, capabilities and skills is vital because of their impact in the organisation.

The research aims and questions
The purpose of this project was to describe the PD experiences of middle managers in Justcorp. This project had the following aims:
• to identify and critically examine the factors that contribute to the professional development of middle managers in a multi-site organisation; and
• to critically analyse the enabling and inhibiting of external and internal factors that impact on professional development for middle managers.

The questions that guided the research were:
1. What are the professional development needs of middle managers in a multi-site organisation?
2. How does the organisation currently provide for the middle managers’ professional development needs and how can this be developed further?
3. What factors enable the provision of professional development for middle managers?
4. What factors inhibit the provision professional development for middle managers?
5. How can professional development be aligned with the strategic goals of the multi-site organisation?

Thesis organisation
The thesis is organised into seven chapters. In Chapter One an overview of the project is provided by way of the rationale for conducting the research, the context of the research and the aims and research questions that were the basis of the research.

Chapter Two reviews the literature from the fields of educational leadership and management and business management that are relevant to middle managers’ PD. The literature themes on the topics of professional development, the middle manager’s role and the provision of PD are examined.

Chapter Three argues the choice of methodology and outlines the research design adopted. The two data gathering methods are detailed.
Chapter Four describes the method of analysis to be used in this project. This first phase of analysis considers the middle managers’ interview data. It outlines the PD opportunities and needs of middle managers, while identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the current PD and implementation process. Data are analysed and emerging themes are identified.

Chapter Five analyses and discusses the focus group data. This second phase of analysis considers data from the one focus group of middle managers. It discusses how middle managers’ PD implementation could improve the outcomes for the individuals and Justcorp. The emerging themes are identified.

Chapter Six discusses the research data and links it with the literature base from Chapter Two. The significant themes from each phase of analysis are drawn together to provide an overview of the factors impacting on middle managers’ PD in Justcorp.

Chapter Seven draws the research together and presents the conclusions based on the research questions. Recommendations for further research are also outlined and limitations of the research documented.

The following chapter reviews the literature in regard to professional development and middle managers in an organisation. Human resources management policies and processes are reviewed in relation to professional development and employees. The literature has provided the base for the research and informed the development of the research questions.
CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction
This chapter explains the salient points about professional development as it fits into an organisation’s human resources management for this research and shows professional development can be a process that benefits both individual middle managers and the organisations to which they belong.

A review of the central themes of the literature relating to professional development and the role of middle manager are presented. The first section is professional development. The links with the provision of PD, human resources management and middle managers are explained. The process is investigated and the themes that enable and inhibit an organisation in the provision of professional development for middle managers are outlined.

The following section examines the role of middle manager, whom Huy (2001) identifies as an individual who plays a critical role in an organisation’s survival and success. This middle manager role is examined and defined.

The final component of this chapter investigates the provision of PD, the role of human resources management in an organisation and how by developing the processes for individuals and their development the organisation manages its success. Human resources management develops and maintains the organisation’s “intellectual capital which is now seen as a key to corporate survival and success” (Rudman, 2003, p. 481).
Professional development

Professional development is the key to developing leaders and providing leadership that is delegated or distributed across the organisation because “leadership is a process, not a position” (Rudman, 2003, p. 154) in 21st century organisations. Situational and distributed leadership are the means by which senior managers can delegate tasks thus increasing participation of team members, providing the capacity of leadership development and enabling organisational improvement to be undertaken (Borins, 2002; Cardno, 2005; Samson & Daft, 2003). These forms of leadership fit with the concepts which require an organisation and those that lead and manage it to be adaptable so that it remains viable in the face of changes to technology, legislation, economics and social pressures. By achieving situational/distributed leadership, people within the organisation can be significantly influenced and developed, thus improving the organisation’s ability to meet its challenges and improve its effectiveness (Cardno, 2005; Rudman, 2003). Dixon (1995b) and Haneberg (2005) identify middle managers as being the leaders with the greatest influence and ready for development. The delegation of authority and PD of middle managers will deliver significant benefit to the organisation.

Professional development is the process by which an individual’s career is developed to meet the changes in circumstances and responsibilities within the organisation (J. O’Neill, 1994). This form of individual development is context-bound because of its focus on the professional performance, capabilities and responsibilities so that goals are achieved for the organisation by these professionals. However, PD is not just the organisation’s responsibility it is also that of the individual. Although, Rudman (2003) identifies career models and how individuals and organisations can engage in career counselling to achieve career and succession planning so that potential is developed; in reality most people’s careers just seem to happen.
Individuals, in this case middle managers, must take personal responsibility for the learning they engage in to develop their knowledge, capabilities and skills to effectively manage their PD and career (Macky & Johnson, 2003). The implementation of sound current management knowledge, capabilities and skills, especially at middle manager level, enables an organisation to meet changes to the environment in which it operates so that it remains efficient, effective and viable.

The way in which a PD process is implemented impacts on its effectiveness to meet its objectives. Implementation of PD process should begin with the organisation’s strategic plan and the professional employee’s acceptance of the objectives. The level of control over PD is important to the success of the strategy because the decision process itself creates tension between the individual’s level of professionalism and the strategy. As professionals, there is an expectation that their knowledge and experience should be sought for any strategy change process. Cardno (2005) writes that “when professional development is a constant and paramount concern” (p. 293) to professionals then those involved become professionalised. This type of professional is valued in today’s organisation because of their commitment to learning and making a difference (Jackson & Humble, 1994). These professionals are the “powerful strategic weapon” (Samson & Daft, 2003, p. 406) that HRM must develop and retain for the organisation and middle managers are part of this group (Dixon, 1995a, 1995b.)

Developing and retaining professionals requires PD that is implemented effectively. To achieve effective and well-targeted PD within an organisation, a culture of learning needs to be established (Cardno, 2005). A culture of learning can be implemented when the organisation’s organisational culture, that is its values, beliefs and taken–for-granted assumptions are clearly stated and “evidenced by the way the people in the organisation actually behave” (Johnson & Scholes, 2002, p. 229). Eklin and Inkson (2000) explain an organisational
culture has “a system of shared meaning and values held by members” (p. 256) and it is this that “let[s] employees know how things are done and which things are important” (p. 256). An organisational culture requires that the organisational structures are developed to support the shared meaning and values (Johnson & Scholes, 2002). Therefore, if an organisation identifies the development of employees it must implement policies and processes to support its employees to achieve education, training and skills. Leadership that develops and maintains a culture of learning generates two types of capital for an organisation. Material capital requires the efficient generation of structures and resources to make the work easier. Human capital requires the investment in people’s social, academic, intellectual and professional development and an environment that fosters democratic participation (Sergiovanni, 2001). In an organisation which identifies building capacity/human capital in its strategic plan then PD is the process that middle managers can use to engage in new learning because the organisation’s goals and resources are linked accordingly (Cardno, 2005).

For an organisation’s goals to be achieved then effective strategic management of change is necessary; this requires development for those employees leading the change process (Macky & Johnson, 2003). PD of managers, in particular middle managers can achieve effective change when an organisation’s strategic plan is implemented using these key elements – good people management practice, positive psychological contract and supportive organisational culture (Rudman, 2003). These key elements support people to undertake personal development and challenges in the workplace. These elements are identified in Cardno’s (2005) model of holistic professional development (Figure 2.1). While this model is designed for teaching professionals in schools the principles can apply to other professionals in other organisations because of the level of expertise a professional has as an individual. Since the 1920s, with the advent of scientific management theory and practice, the role of management has been regarded as a profession. This professionalisation of management identified that
development was required that was specific to the role of manager (Rudman, 2003).

Approaches to PD

Cardno (2005) states that effective holistic PD occurs when there is an understanding by the school’s leadership of the context in which they work and that change can be initiated and supported by PD; and that PD must cater for the school-wide, team and individual needs; is strongly linked to the achievement of strategic goals; is underpinned by sound principles of educational leadership and above all is considered as a planned and cohesive programme (pp. 295-6).

The driving elements of this model which guide the planning of the PD programme are educational leadership, performance appraisal and strategic management and review. Effective educational leadership practices linked to the model are those: of creating a culture of learning which encourages professional growth; delegating to others the lead role so that support is readily available and the vision is sustained; providing the systems and values that support PD; ensuring PD is planned and aligned to the vision and finally that PD is varied in its nature and scope. Pivotal to an effective PD programme is performance appraisal because it is about being able to evaluate and make judgements about
performance and demonstrating accountability. An effective use of this process provides feedback, opportunities to discuss improvement, identifies PD possibilities and brings about agreed and desired change. Strategic management and review requires those in the leadership role to consider the direction of staff PD and to plan for it. Both of these affect long-term strategic and annual operational goals of the school. When these three elements are considered there is a strong emphasis placed on providing PD that is “comprehensive and holistic with potential to impact on strategic improvement” (Cardno, 2005, p. 299).

In the model four dimensions of PD are outlined – curriculum development, school development, personal development and management development. Curriculum development is largely focussed on national policy imperatives to improve curriculum delivery and assessment. This is the core business of schools. School development is reserved for projects that involve a school-wide approach to initiate and sustain a change strategy. Personal development relates to the building of social, political and cultural skills of staff so that they are more effective in their communication and problem solving with people encountered in their work environment. Management development is concerned with developing the leadership and management skills at all levels of the school so that these responsibilities can be delegated. This development provides knowledge and skills based on leadership and management so that they can fulfil their role. Cardno (2005) identifies that most PD currently occurring in schools is centred on curriculum and school development leaving the potential of personal and management development PD to those who identify them as beneficial.

Many of the links identified by Cardno (2005) in the holistic professional development model between PD, improvement and achievement of strategic goals could be utilised by other types of organisations (Bolam, 2002; Lumby, 2002; J. O’Neill, 1994). Organisations require effective leadership practices that link strategic goals to the strategic plan and follow a change process that is supported by HRM policies and practice but more importantly supportive of the
organisation’s people. For professionals this is achieved through the performance appraisal process and effective PD which develops ownership of the strategy and individual’s skills so that the strategy can be achieved (Bolam, 2002; J. O’Neill, 1994).

Professional development to an individual is valuable when it fits the context in which they work and addresses the objectives of their performance appraisal (Bolam, 2002). For professionals the focus of development relates to skills in four areas - professional, organisational, managerial and personal. To enable an individual and the organisation to engage in PD successfully a needs analysis is recommended by O’Neill (1994) so that the “development partnership” (Main, 1985, p. 4) can be established between individuals and the organisational needs. A ‘development partnership’ embarks on a course of PD after assessing its type, level and relevance. Consideration is given to the individual’s career stage, preferred learning style, changing role and support available. The organisation considers the approach it needs to take to achieve the strategy, how it will be supportive to employees through the change and how it will evaluate the strategy’s change process and progress of its employees (Rudman, 2003).

Other writers (Bush, 1997; Garavan, Barnicle, & O'Suilleabhain, 1999; Vloeberghs, 1998) have identified many of issues detailed by Cardno (2005) such as PD requires to be planned, aligned to the organisation’s HRM strategy, culture and goals; in doing so, the individual and the organisation are more able to benefit. This move to align PD to an organisation’s structural, political and cultural contexts requires an embracing of the notion “that development focuses on the learner than on the learning” (Garavan et al., 1999, p. 192).

Processes utilised for PD are the key to its success for the individual and the organisation. With the investment of an individual’s commitment, time and effort and the organisation’s resources and support in the process there needs to be a robust method of designing and developing PD. To design and develop effective
PD for an organisation that will provide it with managers who are able to deliver organisational adaptation and renewal in their management, the approach to PD will be more effective when an organisation links its policy to the reality of what managers do; take cognisance of required competencies and characteristics; consider organisational culture and context; focus on linkages with business strategies and policies; and map out the cultural philosophy of management (Garavan et al., 1999, pp. 195-196).

When PD policy blends these different aspects it also needs as an element of flexibility to enable it to meet the changing requirements of the organisation and individuals. Doyle (1994, cited in Garavan, et al., 1999) advances that a system perspective for manager’s PD which is an integral part of a wider organisational system and linked to the work of the manager. The systems perspective to management development enables the organisation to develop strategies, policies and plans based on the analysis of how it functions as an organisation, how its managers are performing and what the organisation’s requirements are for the present and future. This system perspective has similarities to Cardno’s (2005) model of holistic professional development in that it is planned, addresses and develops individual’s management knowledge and skills, identifies the need for a broad scope of what is PD while assessing the impact it has on and in the organisation.

The system perspective and holistic professional development model can be considered as both a system and a process of PD that interacts with other organisational and environmental subsystems, activities and processes (Cardno, 2005; Garavan et al., 1999; Vloeberghs, 1998) such as selection, appraisal, compensation, education and training programmes, succession, socialisation, and so on. The goal of PD is to have an adequately operating management therefore the process of PD is about providing activities for catch-up, development and maintenance so the quality of management is improving (Cardno, 2005; Vloeberghs, 1998). The categorisation matrix of management development activities (Vloeberghs, 1998) depicted in Figure 2.2 could be utilised
to identify PD requirements within an organisation because it categorises the activities related to the tasks for the different levels within the organisation – individual, group, unit and organisation. The activities referred to in the matrix form two groups, function oriented or on-the-job and non-function oriented or off-the-job. This matrix of activities identifies PD activities with those it is aimed to develop. It reflects that PD is an integrated process/ system which should be complementary to organisational development so that both individuals and the organisation grow and develop.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Function oriented</th>
<th>Individual</th>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Unit</th>
<th>Organisation</th>
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<tr>
<td>Non-function oriented</td>
<td>General Management courses</td>
<td>Organisation development</td>
<td>Unit self-assessment</td>
<td>Succession planning</td>
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<td>Career development</td>
<td>Case studies</td>
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<td>Inter-unit development</td>
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<td>360 degree feedback</td>
<td>Problem-solving groups</td>
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<td>Benchmarking</td>
<td>Project teams</td>
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Figure 2.2: Categorisation matrix of management development activities (Vloeberghs, 1998)

The Ashridge Model (Woodall & Winstanley, 1998, pp. 20-21) outlines the content of management development programmes and the way in which they are managed. In this model there are three approaches to PD’s policy and practice. Under a fragmented approach, training is directive, carried out by trainers in a non-work related environment and is knowledge-based focus. Training is unrelated to the organisation’s goals and is applied in non-systematic way. It is considered a luxury or a waste of time. In a formalised approach training is linked to human resource needs through appraisal and training systems. The focus of the training changes to include both knowledge and skill-based courses. This approach requires training and trainers to meet individual needs therefore a variety of activities are utilised to provide training and development. A formalised approach considers the training as prescribed solution to PD. The final approach labelled focussed, identifies three components - training, development and continuous learning by individuals as a necessity for an organisation’s survival in a changing environment. These components are linked to the organisation’s goals and strategies and to an individual’s goals. A wider variety of activities are
utilised and there is a shift from solution focus outcome to evaluating the effectiveness of training and development. The emphasis on learning shifts from that of knowledge and skills learnt to learning as a process with some tolerance for mistakes.

Burgoyne (1988, cited in Woodall & Winstanley, 1998) argued that the movement from fragmented to focussed was possible and desirable for organisations and the integration of organisational and individual goals reflected the maturity of the organisation. Cardno (2005) and Samson and Daft (2003) identify the complexity of providing PD to employees that is specific to their personal requirements and to those of their organisation while remaining mindful of the internal and external factors of providing or not providing PD such as retaining staff, competitiveness and so on.

**PD activities**
Several writers (Grieves, 2003; Macky & Johnson, 2003; G. O'Neill, 2003) embrace the process of a holistic approach which enables an organisation to implement PD that provides education and training programmes to address the needs of the learner. The delivery and methods by which training and education are designed need to follow the five stages of the learning sequence (Rudman, 2003) and give recognition that it is adult learning that is occurring. This learning occurs when the learner and the programme are orientated to one another. The linking of learning, programmes and work tasks provides the learner with a purpose for engaging and an application to confirm the new knowledge in a practical relevant situation. Rudman (2003) and Woodall and Winstanley (1998) identify that this linking of learning to work is experiential learning, action learning and self-development are methods of training and education that suits the holistic approach because each values the learner’s prior knowledge and experience, creates an learning environment that requires full participation of the learner in the learning sequence and requires the new learning to be applied in a practical situation.
In the developing and implementing of a holistic approach of PD the learning must be beneficial to both those engaging in it and those planning it. More importantly, PD must be relevant, planned and integrated into tasks of the organisation so that it builds the commitment and capacity of those engaged. To achieve this approach PD requires activities that cater for the three identified areas - education, training and support (Cardno, 2005; Macky & Johnson, 2003; Rudman, 2003). The Categorisation Matrix of MD (Vloebberghs, 1998) refers to education or “off-the-job” activities (Garavan et al., 1999; Woodall & Winstanley, 1998) as non-function oriented because it is externally provided PD learning that takes place away from the normal work situation. These activities are usually courses, seminars, workshops, lectures and like and aim to expose the employee to a wider range of ideas and teachers (Rudman, 2003). Cardno (2005) identified formal qualifications such as university degrees and diplomas as a result of these activities. These types of activity are individually oriented but are generally supported in some way by their organisation. The major disadvantages of these education/ off-the-job activities are their appropriateness for the specific requirements of the individual and the transferability of the learning into the organisation and job (Rudman, 2003).

Training or “on-the-job” (Garavan et al., 1999; Woodall & Winstanley, 1998) or function oriented (Vloebberghs, 1998) are the most common activities. These are internally structured activities that enable the learner/ manager to put into practice the theory learnt in education activities or to learn the work with their colleague(s). The training is specific to the job tasks and to the organisation. These activities usually take the form of action learning, coaching, role modelling, job rotation, secondment, deputising, succession, networking and special projects and foster the sharing with colleagues. However, the quality of these activities rely on the level of planning done to ensure the trainer is suitable, time is available and the training is systematic, supported with other training and evaluated. The major disadvantages of these training/ on-the-job activities are
the availability of suitable trainers, the effects of training on the outputs and employees' resistance to undertake training because of a number of reasons such as: lack of time, personal effort it requires, not identifying the need and so forth.

Support are the activities given to the learner/manager that lead to professional growth (Cardno, 2005; Garavan et al., 1999). The most effective form of support for new managers is the reflection undertaken in one-to-one coaching and mentoring with an experienced manager who is able to facilitate this type of learning (Rudman, 2003). For management training the appraisal process, coaching, job rotation and promotion are deemed to be supportive to this type of learning. While mentoring by a senior, membership of professional organisations, attendance at professional conferences and subscriptions to relevant publications are deemed as support for on-going education (Woodall & Winstanley, 1998) and provide the opportunities for reflection on practice and the stimulation of new ideas and methods.

Management development
The complementary nature of PD and organisational development is still alien to many organisations and this lack of understanding impacts on the type of PD implemented or leads to the dismissal of the PD altogether (Avery et al., 1999; Vloeberghs, 1998). The Karpin Report (1995, cited in Avery, et al, 1999) identified gaps in managerial knowledge, capabilities and skills within Australian organisations and this is similarly reflected in studies of New Zealand organisations. The gaps found were in areas of entrepreneurship, global orientation, people skills, strategic skills, management development [MD] and teamwork. The report and studies found that organisations in these two countries need to invest in PD to enable managers to address the issues facing organisations in the 21st century. These issues being the lack of international orientation in the training and education of managers to enable them to address globalisation, the reliance on promotion above training as advancement within
the organisation, the lack of ownership by managers for their long-term learning, the lack of recognition by organisations that PD was an important strategy for their organisation’s future and lastly the underdeveloped role of frontline managers in organisations (Avery et al., 1999). Cardno (2005) has identified in schools that leadership and management skills should be developed for middle managers so that distributed leadership occurs; this concept is supported by Dixon (1995) Haneberg (2005) and Jackson and Humble (1994) who view the role of middle manager as vital in an organisation’s future.

The underdevelopment of management, especially middle managers, needs to be addressed because all staff in management positions should be motivated and supported to access the body of information, theory and skills needed to work with and through others to accomplish organisational goals (Cardno, 2005, p. 301).

MD is the special form of PD that enables an organisation to develop its leadership skills within the ranks of its managers and in doing so, enabling itself to spread the leadership responsibilities and manage itself more effectively (Cardno, 2005; Vloeberghs, 1998). MD is a broad concept that identifies that development of the individual occurs through a process of formal and informal work experience (Cardno, 2005; Rudman, 2003). Although, there is debate over the definition of MD, there is agreement that a standardised package can not be formulated because every organisation’s needs and managerial resources are different (Vloeberghs, 1998). However, MD has several components – management training, management education and management support (Cardno, 2005; Rudman, 2003).

Management training is described as the process by which managers gain the skills related to their work requirements through practice. This training is achieved through a combination of formal education activities, practical training or guided support. Management education is the learning achieved through structured, formal, institutional framework and leads to a qualification. This
education equips managers with the knowledge they need for managing and is achieved through formal programmes at universities and other providers. Management support refers to on-the-job and off-the-job opportunities that lead to professional growth. Coaching, job rotation, promotion, secondment, teamwork and project work are some of the on-the-job support activities that provide for MD. Mentoring, membership of local, national and international professional associations, attendance at conferences, reading of and subscriptions to professional material are off-the-job support activities that increase professional growth. The most effective of these support opportunities are one-to-one coaching and mentoring (Cardno, 2005).

Cardno (2005), Rudman (2003), and Vloeberghs (1998) identify MD has having two components: one focus is the individual and the other is the organisation. While each MD process caters for differences in individuals and organisations there are common characteristics to be found in MD practice. The process for individuals entails self-development involving the undertaking of education, training and support activities that meets their needs and interests; it involves career planning; the engagement in self-reflection and feedback and the acceptance that it is a long term process. For organisations it is a long term development decision to provide MD for employees, which requires a process that is structured and systematically applied so that opportunities for MD occur. The objectives for MD are that individuals are developing their career path and organisations are guaranteeing that there is continuous and adequate supply of managers for the key positions in the future.

For middle managers, as with all managers, MD is a part of the organisation’s HRM strategy for the development and growth of professionals within the organisation. To achieve this development and growth the use of a planned process has been identified as the way to succeed (Margerison, 1991; Samson & Daft, 2003). The MD process used is outlined by the organisation’s HRM strategies, policies and practices. However, the real driver for individual
manager’s PD is their performance appraisal and personal responsibility for their learning (Rudman, 2003).

While PD is defined as a process of learning with its components and alignments of the responsibility linked to the organisation and individual, it poses dilemmas as well. The dilemmas in the 21st century surround the ‘social contract’ and for employees to retain their “employability” (Rudman, 2003, p. 481). PD in the workplace requires a process of continuous professional development [CPD] and for a professional to take the responsibility for their life-long learning (Hager, 2004; Noon, 1994; Shaw & Green, 1999). Both writers (Hager, 2004; Shaw & Green, 1999) state that CPD and lifelong learning in the workplace should be linked to the PD process because it encourages individuals to engage and see work as a learning opportunity that enriches themselves and society. Mixing the theory with reality is the key essence of this dilemma for those delivering and receiving PD.

Professional development is the driver for improvement in an organisation’s development of its core business because it continues to develop “the knowledge, expertise and competence of professionals” (Jones & Robinson, 1997, p. 197) who create the managerial and technical know-how that generates the goods or services sold to the customers of the organisation and retain its “competitive position” (p.197).

**Role of middle manager**

Schools, state sector and business organisations of the 21st century derived from the late 1980s and early 1990s reforms, commercialisation, privatisation, decentralisation, rationalisation, and downsizing require middle managers with new skills that maintain viability and growth (Avery et al., 1999; Samson & Daft, 2003). Middle managers have been identified as the engine of an organisation (Haneberg, 2005) and described as “any managers two levels below the CEO and one level above line workers and professionals” (Huy, 2001, p. 73 ). In
schools these managers are required to “identify with different tasks and different people, acting variously as teacher, leader, team member” (Blandford, 2006, p. 5). A blending of these definitions would better define the role of a middle manager. They are the individual who is the leader, manager, innovator, motivator, developer, communicator, listener, co-ordinator, evaluator and member of a team (Holden & Roberts, 2004).

These managers possess a great deal of knowledge and understanding of how and what the organisation is about. More importantly, their influence within the organisation should not be underestimated by senior management when implementing strategic change which is supported by the work of Mintzberg (1989, cited in Rudman, 2003) on organisations and by Haneberg (2005) and Woodall and Winstanley (1998). The effective middle manager understands the core values and competencies of the organisation to innovate and implement strategy while seeing the vision in reality. The same manager, with their established networks and knowledge of the employees’ moods and emotional needs, is able to manage strategic change so that momentum, tension and continuity are addressed to enable an implementation that is lasting (Huy, 2001; Klagge, 1998). While other employees can and do achieve this level of understanding of the organisation, its employees and the effects of change it is the role of middle manager that translates the vision/goals into “operational practicality” (P. Dixon, 1995a, p. 23). Middle managers communicate with those formulating strategic goals and implement it with those they manage so that goals are achieved.

A middle manager is now “responsible for creating a horizontal network, since most of the work is now organised around teams, processes and projects” (Samson & Daft, 2003, p. 20). Middle managers are important to the realisation of radical change, which in the 21st century many organisations are confronted with, therefore it is important for an organisation to encourage development of these employees (P. Dixon, 1995b; Huy, 2001; Jackson & Humble, 1994).
Building the managerial knowledge, capabilities and skills of middle managers is vital and if neglected could affect the viability and growth of an organisation (Avery et al., 1999; Samson & Daft, 2003).

Samson and Daft (2003) detail management skills as conceptual, human and technical, and divide the skills according to their relevance to each role. The skill expectations of each level of management can be compared accordingly (Figure 2.3). While this stems from business management the same expectations and comparison can be drawn for state sector organisations following the managerialism and commercialisation reforms of this sector (Borins, 2002; M. Dixon, 1996).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Management Level</th>
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<tr>
<td>Top managers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Middle managers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First-line managers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Non-managers (personnel)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Conceptual skills</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Human skills</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Technical skills</strong></td>
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Figure 2.3: Relationship of conceptual, human and technical skills to management level (Samson & Daft, 2003).

**Conceptual, human and technical skills**

From this diagram (Figure 2.3) middle managers’ applications of conceptual and human skills have more importance than technical skill in their work. Conceptual skills is the cognitive ability of the manager to “think strategically” (Samson & Daft, 2003, p. 16) about the whole organisation; where it fits, how it works and its plan for the future. These skills have been identified as; being able to navigate the organisation through knowing the structure and systems and people, allocate resources and plan and implement the vision and strategic goals through a change process and project management (Klagge, 1998). While human skills are the manager’s ability to work with and through other people and to be an effective group member as well. The manager must be able to understand
themselves firstly, other individuals and how their teams interact so that sound relationships at work can be developed. This requires a manager to have skills in communication, conflict resolution, leadership, consultation and facilitation (Klagge, 1998). Technical skill requires a manager to have an understanding and proficiency in the core business of the organisation and of the skill level of those they manage. These skills directly relate to the service or production of product or product that an organisation delivers or produces. The lack of technical knowledge and practice can hinder a manager’s work with implementing processes and the people they manage. The development of these skills in middle managers is essential, to release their potential so they can translate the strategic vision, support and enhance the performance of others in the organisation (Cardno, 2005; P. Dixon, 1995a; Jackson & Humble, 1994).

Social contract
Following the reforms and changes to organisations the middle manager psychological or social contract in the 21\textsuperscript{st} century organisation has been severely violated (P. Dixon, 1995a, 1995b; Klagge, 1998; Maguire, 2003). The contract violation has occurred in four keys areas – responsibility and power, input into decision making, job security and opportunities for advancement. Middle management positions were viewed as being “‘immune’ from the effects of organisational restructuring” (Maguire, 2003, p. 95) in the past because of their loyalty and commitment to the organisation but this has changed. As a result, the employee’s response to the changes to their contract can be negative; which in turn delivers a poor outcome for both the individual and organisation. Rudman (2003) and Maguire (2003) write that the solution to this problem is to develop mutual goals, influence, respect, rewards and responsibility not only for middle managers but for all employees.

Professional development for an individual is a process whereby “mutuality” (Rudman, 2003, p. 7) is achieved because the individual is building the knowledge, capabilities and skills. Avery et al. (1999) and Klagge (1998) write
middle managers need to be able to lead change by developing teams, implementing systems and maintaining the organisational vision because these managers are the most visible role models to an organisation’s employees. When an organisation neglects the professional development and social contract of its middle managers it is placing its viability and growth at risk (P. Dixon, 1995a, 1995b).

**Provision of professional development**

**Human resources management**

The importance of HRM to an organisation’s strategic planning has increased over the past decade because of the shift in focus for organisations in the 21st century. This shift has been from focusing on what is produced or provided to the achievement of better productivity and service by equipping their people. This shift towards ‘soft HRM’ places the emphasis on “building employee commitment and involvement in decision making” (Macky & Johnson, 2003, p. 301) for the achievement of organisational goals instead of the managerial driven environment under ‘hard HRM’. Organisations have realised that the investment in people can and does benefit the organisation (Rudman, 2003).

**Mutuality**

This ‘investment in people’ strategy requires the same investment in “policies that promote mutuality” (Rudman, 2003, p. 7) between the two parties. The policies elicit commitment to common and shared interests in the areas of goals, influence, respect, rewards and responsibility. To achieve mutuality or congruence between the employee and organisation’s goals a pluralist view to employment relations is required (Macky & Johnson, 2003). This involves an organisation balancing its HRM strategy and policies with the interests of other parties so that outcomes are mutually agreed. When organisational change is planned the management of the psychological contract is important (Maguire, 2003). This contract for middle managers, as for all employees requires managing so that it aligns employee and organisational needs and develops a
relationship of mutual trust, commitment and rewards. One policy that HRM can implement that fosters this relationship is the long term, effective development and growth of individuals. Through the implementation of this type of HRM strategy the organisation can achieve a competitive advantage (Macky & Johnson, 2003; Rudman, 2003).

**HRM policies and processes**

Samson and Daft (2003) define HRM as the “activities undertaken to attract, development and maintain an effective workforce within an organisation” (p. 406). For the effective implementation of PD activities they must be linked to the organisational vision, mission, objectives and strategy and relevant to the internal and external contexts of the organisation (Macky & Johnson, 2003). HRM has three primary goals and these are cyclic and interlinked if this form of management is to be effective. These goals are to attract an effective workforce, develop an effective workforce and maintain an effective workforce (Macky & Johnson, 2003; Samson & Daft, 2003).

Underlying the goal to attract an effective workforce are the processes of human resources planning, job analysis, forecasting, recruiting and selecting (Boxall, 1995; Tyson, 1995). Planning is the forecasting of human resources needs for the organisation to accomplish its tasks, to avoid vacancies and to achieve a match between the individual’s knowledge, capabilities and skills and the organisation’s position. The development phase requires HRM to implement processes that provide education, training and support activities for individuals’ PD. These processes can be initiated from the selection process and are part of a performance appraisal which involves observing and assessing employees (Bratton & Gold, 1999). The performance appraisal is a process of giving feedback to an employee which can be positive and negative in its nature. Performance feedback can be used by the individual and organisation to change performance through PD activities and rewards. PD processes cater for the development/ training opportunities that an organisation can offer an employee.
as part of their performance appraisal. In the case of those involved in management or aspiring for such a role MD is specialised development that addresses this focus (Rudman, 2003; Woodall & Winstanley, 1998). The last goal of maintaining of an effective workforce involves the processes relating to employee compensation, employee benefits and termination of employment (Rudman, 2003).

Effective HRM that attracts, develops and retains quality employees provides the organisation with a “powerful strategic weapon” (Samson & Daft, 2003, p. 406) which enables the organisational performance to meet the challenges of the 21st century environment of globalisation and change (Garavan et al., 1999; Vloeberghs, 1998). This need to plan strategically for change has seen the evolution of strategic human resources management [SHRM] (Grieves, 2003) although writers (Macky & Johnson, 2003; Rudman, 2003) state that the SHRM and HRM differ little in their objectives. Instead of an organisation remaining with the personnel image of the past which focussed on the hiring, discipline and firing issues surrounding its employees, HRM has been identified as a vital player in organisational success because the employees are viewed as the valuable asset of the organisation that require a planned strategy to maintain. This recognition that people are an organisation’s strength and most important resource, whatever the type or size of organisation, requires more than employees gaining employment, payment and benefits to attract and retain them (Maguire, 2003).

Successful organisations have acknowledged and implemented the shift required to empower employees to develop and involve themselves. This shift has been achieved through the implementation of effective HRM processes which has improved organisational performance (Rudman, 2003; Samson & Daft, 2003; Vloeberghs, 1998). To initiate the function of HRM an organisation must first decide on how it is to implement the function through an analysis of its vision, mission, objectives and strategy and a consideration of its internal and external contexts. Several writers (Macky & Johnson, 2003; Rudman, 2003) identified
that this analysis is achieved by considering the internal factors and contexts such as the organisation’s size, nature of the business, structure of the HRM role within the organisation, relationship of HRM role within the organisation, impact of the organisation’s technological nature and processes on shaping the focus in HRM. It also requires that an assessment of the external factors and contexts such as the political and economic climate, labour market and legislation affects how it does its business and employs its people be implemented as well.

Rudman (2003) highlights two structured approaches to the delivery of HRM in organisations. Departmental models are found within larger organisations while in smaller organisations these activities are assigned as responsibilities within a wider role. However, the delivery of effective HRM can only be achieved if there is a supportive environment that includes those responsible for HRM in organisation’s strategy planning (Boxall, 1995) because

HRM [Human Resources Management] contributes directly to the bottom line through its appreciation that it is the organisation’s human assets - its people - that meet or fail to meet strategic goals (Samson & Daft, 2003, p. 407).

HRM provides the strategy with the workforce and in today’s competitive and challenging environment the best workforce needs to be found, recruited, trained, nurtured and retained. The organisation and employee “social contract” (Samson & Daft, 2003, p. 409) or “psychological contract” (Maguire, 2003, p. 87) has changed. In the past this contract meant that an employee could expect in return for their ability, education, loyalty and commitment, wages and benefits, work till retirement, advancement and training from the organisation. Today, the social contract has changed its focus to the organisation getting the best employee for it to remain successful and to an employee’s employability within the organisation (Bratton & Gold, 1999). This change to employees’ social contracts has increased and changed the nature of work and responsibilities for managers and their organisation in several ways. For middle managers there are greater levels
of expectations and accountability placed on management and development of other employees brought about by changes in organisational structure and employment environment (Holden & Roberts, 2004; Jackson & Humble, 1994; Klagge, 1998).

For an organisation to achieve this type of social contract it is vital that HRM is implemented effectively. In doing so, the positive aspects of higher wages and benefits, creative training and development opportunities can be beneficial to both the organisation and employee; while the negative consequences of employment insecurity, lack of employee commitment, enthusiasm and recognition and employee suitability and numbers can be addressed as well (Maguire, 2003; Samson & Daft, 2003; Tyson, 1995). For middle managers, as for all employees, this social contract is relative to their employment, commitment and to the organisation’s performance (Haneberg, 2005). In this time of “management revolution that will change organisations” (Samson & Daft, 2003, p. 26) this social contract has importance. It requires managers to have or gain relevant professional, organisational, management and personal skills for their role; to maintain that skill level and be continually developing themselves. Middle management ranks are identified as being vulnerable to job loss and increased work pressure in 21st century organisations (Maguire, 2003). In response to the violation of the middle managers’ ‘social contract’ there is a need to develop “mutuality” just as it is for all employees (Rudman, 2003, p. 7).

The new social contract has changed the nature of the relationship between employee and employer and way organisations operate (Bratton & Gold, 1999; Maguire, 2003; Samson & Daft, 2003). An employee should to be proactive in establishing and maintaining their employability by being self-motivated in their training, education, work involvement and advancement. The focus of the employer and organisation has become one of providing challenging work which provides experience, training and opportunities for employees to take responsibility and control of their work. PD is one of the areas of the social
contract and is achieved through “a combination of strengths in human capital and organisational process” (Boxall & Purcell, 2003, p. 216). This requires managers and other professionals within an organisation to undertake PD and for the organisation to be supporting this learning (Grieves, 2003).

The effective work of professionals and managers is essential to an organisation in the 21st century if it is grow (Boxall & Purcell, 2003; Rudman, 2003; Tyson, 1995) because of the forces for organisational change impacting on how an organisation operates its business (Hunt, 2003). The organisation needs to have employees who have the necessary leadership, interpersonal and technical skills to cope with organisational change. Most professional managers require exposure to management skills and education during their careers as well as maintaining their technical knowledge (Woodall & Winstanley, 1998). Both these areas of development for the employee require an organisational strategy to support the growth. There is an expectation of the organisation to provide the opportunities and support for education, training and implementation of the learning (P. Dixon, 1995b). HRM links the employee’s goals with the organisational goals by providing the process (Boxall & Purcell, 2003; Bratton & Gold, 1999).

The role of middle managers in organisations, their PD and the concepts surrounding learning within the workplace are the responsibility of HRM. By providing the necessities the two parties’ commit to the new form of ‘social contract’ (Cardno, 2005; Rudman, 2003; Tyson, 1995). The development of mutuality between middle managers and organisation has been identified as being critical to the organisation’s employee-employer relationship and its success in implementing change (P. Dixon, 1995b; Huy, 2001; Maguire, 2003).

**Summary**

This chapter provides a review of the themes in the literature pertaining to professional development for middle managers. Implementing professional
development emerged as an important issue for 21st century organisations to address because the effectiveness of managers, particularly middle managers (Huy, 2001), is an indicator of the current and potential successful achievement of an organisation. Professional development is the key to improving the performance of individuals, teams and organisations (Margerison, 1991).

To meet the challenges of change an organisation requires the implementation of policies and processes to ensure their employees are the best at what they do so the organisation grows. Effective professional development is a tool by which an organisation can attract new employees, develop current employees and retain them so that the organisation and its people can be successful in their business and work.
CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY and RESEARCH DESIGN

Introduction
In this chapter, the research process, principles and methods will be explained and discussed. The first two sections outline the nature of social science research and explain the differences between the two major research methodologies, and why this research is qualitative from the participants’ perspective. The third section details the research methods utilised in this project along with the ethical considerations relating to this research.

Justification for the methodology used
The nature of social science research
Davidson and Tolich (1999) explain social science as “simply a collection of ideas about how we make sense of the social world around us” (p. 8). Social worlds can be identified in the many different social structures that operate in society such as government departments, health care organisations, political organisations, education institutions, social services and business and for those working in them there is a need to explain “how we know what we know and how we know we know” (Bouma & Atkinson, 1995, p. 3). This is achieved by conducting social research which according to Neuman (2003) and Davidson and Tolich (1999) involves learning something new about the social world by using research to either explore the issue, describe it or explain it. There are three types of applied research known as exploratory, descriptive and explanatory (Bryman, 2004; Neuman, 2003; Singleton, Straits, & Straits, 1993) which use an inductive, context-bound approach to provide answers to achieve some specific goals.
These answers as outcomes of social research explain change that can refine or create new “framework for understanding as theories” (Davidson & Tolich, 1999, p. 17) to the already formalised ideas of why things happen. Social science theories are explanations of behaviours so by the very nature of the two focuses - people and their behaviours makes this research complex. The social world’s reality comprises of “complex and interwoven variables” (Davidson & Tolich, 1999, p. 28) therefore the research of a problem is just a snapshot of reality at the time to provide “an inductive understanding of how people create meaning in their social world” (p. 26). There is an acknowledgement of uniqueness in the reality of the educational setting and practices of teaching and learning because it involves people and their learning and requires researchers to adopt a multidimensional approach to deal with the multilayered and complexity of social world problems (Babbie, 1998; Bryman, 2004; Husen, 1997; May, 1994). This research focuses on PD of Justcorp’s middle managers and how the activities of education, training and support are provided and utilised from their perspective.

For example, in terms of this project Rudman (2003) and Bratton and Gold (1999) state that PD along with other forms of training and development must be embedded in the organisation, securely linked to the strategic objectives and operating in an organisational context. These key elements along with the factor that the processes in developing, implementation and learning involve people means that this research is a complex task.

Research methodologies
Research methodology is explained by Leedy (1997) as a process through which a researcher attempts “to achieve systematically and with the support of data the answer to a question, the resolution of a problem, or a greater understanding of a phenomenon” (p.5). The two main paradigms are positivism and interpretive. Positivism stems from the natural sciences with a deductive approach to research where a theory is generated and the research aims to prove it. Whereas interpretive uses an inductive approach on data gathered to analyse so that the
researcher can grasp the subjective meaning of the social action (Bryman, 2004). Generally, most social science research is a disciplined attempt to address questions or to solve problems through the collection and analysis of empirical primary data for the purpose of description, explanation and application (Babbie, 1998; May, 1994) therefore it suited to the interpretive stance.

Within the interpretive methodology there are four research designs. These are case study, ethnography, phenomenology and grounded theory. The design selected for this project is phenomenology because of its emphasis on describing an experience from the participants’ perspective (Leedy, 1997). This focus accompanied with the researcher deep interest in the topic provided a basis for selecting the phenomenology research design for this project. Further considerations in its selection were the available sample size of ten middle managers and the small scale of this project.

This research attempts to address problems and issues about organisational strategy, HRM and PD that may lead to improvement. The emphasis on improvement is not always a focus for research in science and other disciplines (Bryman, 2004) however, it is in a major consideration for social science research. Especially, research conducted on organisational and human development factors (Bryman, 2004); and with a focus on learning and how best to achieve it becomes part of the specialised research called educational (Husen, 1997).

Quantitative paradigm
The quantitative paradigm has its foundations in natural science and places an emphasis on empirical quantifiable data that provides an outcome in numbers and measures that is either explaining and predicting or confirming and validating or testing a theory. The research process has well-defined and established guidelines that generally require that the concepts, variables and hypotheses are defined before the research is begun and that these remain static throughout.
The design form for this type of research is context-free, structured and followed once commenced. Methods of research such as experiments, surveys, well-designed questionnaires, statistics or other mathematical measures enable the researcher to be “explicitly objective and neutral” (Davidson & Tolich, 1999, p. 27) from their data gathering and those being studied. By doing so, their findings/generalisations are considered reliable and valid especially if the number being studied is large. Quantitative researchers use deductive analysis on their data to enable them to confirm or refute the original hypothesis and to draw logical conclusions based on generalisations. The quantitative researcher studies the facts, the cause and effect relationship to produce a conclusion/truth which they view reflects the sense of a social reality. These researchers provide a set of logically reasoned statements, which are replicable, for human behaviour, while the qualitative researchers have a different focus.

**Qualitative paradigm**

The qualitative paradigm has its foundations in anthropology, sociology and psychology, and places an emphasis on gathering data so as to interpret and understand social interactions, social meaning and social context in which people act. The research process for this paradigm occurs in natural occurring social situations and for the data to be considered valid it needs to be comprehensive, accurately collected in the situation, have the variables identified and have the same interpretation of events and relationships as those being observed/studied. The design for this type of research tends to be open-ended with a ‘working hypotheses’ as its focus so that emerging data requiring understanding can be investigated as it evolves and is it context-bound. The methods of research such as case studies, observations, participant observation and different types of interview enable these researchers to be part of the situation because they are involved with gathering the evidence and determining the processes of research.

The selection of this paradigm for this project has been made because the participants’ perspectives are the focus of data being gathered. Qualitative
researchers attempt to produce extensive descriptive findings which they interpret in a subjective, value-laden and inductive way and conclude with ‘grounded’ generalisation/ theory (Babbie, 1998; Creswell, 2002). This research captures as much of the reality as possible in a set time to give others a basis for understanding of the social interaction, social meaning and social context because “individuals interpret their social world” (Bryman, 2004, p.20), a factor that needs to be remembered as well as the need to verify the findings with further research to cover the different perspectives. Qualitative researchers aim to provide perspectives and shared meanings, so they are able to develop insights into situations and reasons for human behaviour.

Before a paradigm is decided by a researcher Leedy (1997) states that:

The problem or question is the axial centre around which the whole research effort turns. The statement of the problem must be expressed with the utmost verbal precision. The problem is then divided into more manageable sub problems. So stated, we can then see clearly the goal and direction of the entire research effort (p.45).

But, the choice of a paradigm does require that other considerations are understood. A qualitative paradigm’s difficulty of replication enables criticisms to be made about the findings when compared to the quantitative paradigm. These criticisms are levelled at the researcher’s view of what is significant and important; the possible closeness between the researcher and people being studied and the preciseness of how the focus was chosen and conclusions drawn (Bryman, 2004). Bryman (2004) does say that these criticisms are diminishing because there is a move towards addressing the lack of transparency in qualitative research by using procedures for analysing the data. While the subjective qualitative paradigm is considered to be unscientific (Singleton, Straits & Straits, 1993) it provides meaning to many “multiple interpretations of human experience, or realities [that] are possible” (Neuman, 2003, p.77).
Ethical Issues

This research involved collecting data from people, and about people, therefore involved that ethical issues be followed and considered (Leedy, 1997). There were two areas of ethical concern that were relevant to this research project. These being the ethics of data collection and analysis and, secondly, the ethics of the treatment of human subjects where the risk of harm and preservation of anonymity and confidentiality are important ethical concerns (Singleton et al., 1993).

One of the core principles of research ethics is that researchers need to:

‘anticipate, and to guard against, consequences for research participants which can be predicted to be harmful’ and ‘to consider carefully the possibility that the research experience may be a disturbing one (Bryman, 2004, p. 510)

The importance of informed consent and voluntary participation in research has been mentioned by numerous writers (May, 1994; Neuman, 2003; Babbie, 1998). This requires that the participants be given information about the research’s purpose, procedures and who, if any, is sponsoring it and that they can withdraw at any time.

Researchers need to be sensitive to ways in which their actions can violate an individual’s privacy as social research presents many possibilities for such an invasion (Singleton et al., 1993). They are reminded never to promise anonymity if all they can provide is confidentiality (Davidson & Tolich, 1999). This was a major concern of this research project because of the size of the sample and the organisation. Both data collection methods involved participants being given information explaining the project prior to their involvement and giving their informed consent. As an added precaution the organisation’s identity has been withheld in this report.

The participants may be known to the researcher as colleagues prior to the research but the relationship is one of colleague to colleague in the same
organisation with the same responsibilities. Interview records preserve the respondent’s confidentiality as they have been identified only by the letters A to J. The interviews were conducted in a professional and friendly manner. Participants in the focus group transcription have been identified as FG1 to 5. All materials are securely stored in a locked cabinet at a private residence, while the electronic files have a password protection access. The access to the raw and analysis was limited to the researcher and supervisor.

The data gathered at the interviews and focus group was taped in the first instance and followed with a transcription sent to the participants within three weeks of the interview for checking. This gave the participants the opportunity to correct any errors made in the transcribing, recall or articulation surrounding their answer. One participant made four word changes and four inclusions to their interview transcription and another one added to the transcription those words that were difficult to hear on the tape.

**The participants of this project**

The ten middle managers were identified by their role within Justcorp. Three different titles were used to identify the middle manager position however all were between the first-line managers and the top managers. They were part of the management team for each site with operational, practice and programme responsibilities. But as identified by many researchers (Huy, 2001; Mintzberg, 1973; Rudman, 2003) managerial work is fragmented and varied in its nature and this is true for these middle managers who are expected to be responsibility to a lesser degree for the other two areas of management while fulfilling their role in Justcorp.

Each middle manager was first approached via phone by the researcher to gauge their interest in becoming participants in early 2006. The next approach in October 2006 was made by letter which asked for their informed consent to be interviewed and if selected to be part of a focus group of four. Consent letters
were received between 26 October 2006 and 21 November 2006. Table 3.1 reflects the reference system used and the dates when each interview was conducted:

Table 3.1: Interview dates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Date of interview</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>7 November 2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>14 November 2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>13 November 2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>16 November 2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>21 November 2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>21 November 2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>23 November 2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H</td>
<td>23 November 2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>27 November 2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J</td>
<td>27 November 2006</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

After all ten interviews were completed; four names were drawn out of paper bag by the researcher to take part in the focus group. These participants were contacted via phone. However two of the four were not available so the matter was discussed with the remaining two participants who suggested that it could be possible to form the group with their other colleagues. The researcher approached the other three middle managers who agreed to participate. This provided a focus group of five which represented a half of Justcorp’s middle managers but it represented only one of the three sites.

**Data collection methods**

Two methods of data collection were selected for this research project. Ten semi-structured interviews were conducted. This tool enabled all of the middle managers in Justcorp to become “key informants” (Davidson & Tolich, 1999, p. 123) in this research and to provide data that had a “complexity of view” (Creswell, 2002, p. 8).
A focus group of five selected from the original group of ten middle managers, enabled the collated semi-structured interview data to be discussed further so that the findings could be refuted, revised or agreed. Both the interviews and focus group enabled the middle managers’ “to answer on their own terms” (May, 1994, p. 93) and provided the anecdotal data required for this type of qualitative research.

Semi-structured interviews
The interview schedule (Appendix A) used was in three sections: middle manager’s current and recent PD, the skills and abilities of the middle managers and the development of a model of PD for middle managers. This guide consisted of a series of context-bound questions in a sequential order that were altered “in response to what are seen as significant replies” (Bryman, 2004, p. 113) from participants. This type of interview with its flexibility provided the qualitative data with that personal dimension and enabled the participant’s ‘world views’ to be sought, the emerging themes to be identified, and additional, clarifying information from participants to be obtained (Bryman, 2004).

This method of data collection required the researcher to consider how to conduct the interview so that it was beneficial to both parties (Bryman, 2004). The quality of the interaction and outcome depended on the time spent and the rapport developed with each participant (Leedy, 1997). In some cases the researcher was known to participants as a colleague and through past involvement in Justcorp tasks. When this was not the case more time was scheduled to enable pre-interview introductions to occur.

The wording of the questions and flawed questioning techniques can be sources of errors so developing open-ended questions is essential. A pre-testing of the questions conducted by the researcher with two senior managers, not involved with Justcorp, assisted in the development of the questions but it did not identify
the difficulties experienced with the two questions regarding the skills and abilities of middle managers. Many participants had difficulty limiting their responses and considered all they mentioned to be most important.

Other disadvantages of this method were the possibilities of bias, poor recall by the participant and the inability of the participant to articulate their responses accurately. To overcome these, the researcher engaged participants in conversation to develop the interaction. Generally, the interviews were conducted when both the participant and interviewer had plenty of time to develop the interaction but this was not the case with the last interview. This interview was difficult for a number of reasons relating to a situation that could not have been anticipated. The participant has added to her transcript to clarify her intentions.

The lack of anonymity in an interview situation and the reliance on the interviewer to ensure absolute confidentiality of the data collected can be of concern to participants as well. These issues have been protected by the researcher in the storage, labelling and writing of data.

The transcribing of taped interviews can pose problems and errors as well such as the poor quality of recording leading to poor transcription, the inability to reflect participant’s emphasis and their reluctance to being taped. Leedy (1997) recommends that these documents and any section of a project that incorporates a participant’s response be submitted for their final and written approvals. The transcripts from each interview and the focus group were given to individual participant for their approval.

**Focus Group**

The focus group was used to generate and utilise the interaction between the group participants to enrich the data collection (Finch & Lewis, 2003). Each participant was sent the five questions that have guided this project, with the relevant interview data listed accordingly, a week before the group met. These
questions and data provided were the basis for this discussion. Bryman (2004) writes that consensus and argument are revealed in focus group interaction and each is equally revealing into what participants are meaning.

For this type of data gathering the researcher needs to consider how they will control the direction of the proceedings, manage the quantity of the data to analyse, analyse the data, develop the quality of responses, manage problems of group effects and achieve the assembling of the group (Babbie, 1998; Bryman, 2004; Finch & Lewis, 2003). All of these were heightened by the fact that the participants were work colleagues of each other but were generally overcome through the researcher’s timely input into the direction of the discussion or to a group participant.

The focus group was held on the 21 December 2006. By conducting the focus group in this timeframe participants’ could still recall their interviews. The focus group discussion was taped and the five participants were sent the transcript within three weeks for their amendments, additions and approval. No changes were required. In the transcription the researcher was able to identify each participant and label their contributions according using FG1 to FG5. Interjections were not always easily identified but notes were made in the margin to record the comments.

**Facilitation**

For this research facilitation (Bryman, 2004) has been employed to cross-check the results between the two sets of data. This has provided the logic of triangulation of data and further emphasised the researcher’s phenomenology design choice so that findings accurately described participants’ views and experiences of PD in Justcorp. Utilising two methods of data collection increased the researcher’s confident in results because they were gathered from different sources (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2000). Facilitation is suitable for this
project because of the sample size, its small scale and the constraints on the researcher's time.

For this project the focus group was used to cross-check data of the interviews. Denzin and Lincoln (2000) write that the use of a focus group or group interview can be helpful in the cross-checking because it enables participants to describe, share and recall experiences with others and can be used in conjunction with other data which is at the “heart of qualitative research’s validity” (Fetterman, 1989, cited in Davidson & Tolich, 1999). The interconnected data from participants strengthens the findings from the two sources (Holliday, 2002) by attempting to “secure an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon in question” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 5).

**Validity and Reliability**
Validity and reliability are two vital elements to any research project because the integrity of the research relies on “how well you understood their meaning and how carefully you obey their demands” (Leedy, 1997, p. 32).

**Validity**
The concept of validity is problematic because it can not be assessed directly and there are many forms of validity (Babbie, 1998; Leedy, 1997; Singleton et al., 1993). Leedy (1997) concludes that “the principal question that validity asks is, “Are we really measuring what we think we are measuring?” (p. 34). Validity is considered as the soundness, effectiveness and usefulness of the measurement tools for the research being undertaken.

Generally this section of the chapter is more concerned with the measurements of validity in the design of the research project, rather than those relating to the generalising of the conclusions drawn from a sample to apply to another case (Leedy, 1997). Specifically it is concerned with internal validity where the researcher assesses whether a deduction from theory is relevant to concept of
the research and whether the measure is valid or invalid for that concept (Babbie, 1998; Bryman, 2004). In the case of this research the measurement tools were semi-structured interviews and a focus group. Pre-testing of interview questions was done prior to conducting the interviews to test the content validity of this instrument. During both the interviews and focus group further clarification from participants was sought when ambiguities were evident. The focus group discussion provided another measure of validity for interview data.

The qualitative approach, in terms of the semi-structured interviews, helped to provide validity (Davidson & Tolich, 1999), although the interview results may not be generalised to other organisations. Several writers (Babbie, 1998; Leedy, 1997; Singleton et al., 1993) suggest that response bias problems arise in interviews. Attempts to limit bias were made in the interviews and focus group and whenever possible interview and focus group notes were verified by participants. Care was also taken to ensure that leading questions were not used in both the interviews and focus group discussion in order to restrict the possibility of bias occurring (Bryman, 2004).

Reliability
Reliability in research is concerned with the question of repeatable of the results, in other words will the measures devised for concepts be consistent (Bryman, 2001). While reliability is difficult to achieve the focus is upon adding accuracy to consistency (Leedy, 1997) so that replicable of a measure in a difference time and place could produce the same result (Davidson & Tolich, 1999). Representative reliability refers to the extent to which a measure will provide consistent results with different people (Davidson & Tolich, 1999). In this project only one researcher conducted and analysed the research. The coding and intentions of participants were constantly checked to maintain the degree of consistency (Cohen et al., 2000).
Summary
This chapter provided a discussion of the complex nature of research in social science field. It described the quantitative and qualitative research paradigms and explained the differences and attributes that each offers to research. This research project used a qualitative paradigm to gather data to investigate the research aims outlined in chapter one. A semi-structured set of interviews and focus group were the chosen research methods. The chapter concluded with the discussion on aspects of ethical issues, facilitation, validity and reliability and how each relates to the project.
CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS AND ANALYSIS: INTERVIEWS

Introduction

This chapter presents and analyses interview data collected from 10 middle managers from Justcorp. A transcript of an audio recording of each interview was made and verified by each of the participants. To interpret data, the method qualitative content analysis was applied using manual techniques to process it. This method enabled the researcher to give attention to constructing the meaning of and in the texts (Bryman, 2004). Twenty-one categories were initially identified and these informed four themes. Data described the PD opportunities taken by these participants and how it had or had not impacted on their development and role. The strengths and weaknesses of the current direction of middle managers’ PD and its implementation process were identified. Middle managers described their development needs and how these could be addressed to enhance the outcomes for themselves and the organisation from their perspective. As a result, these findings were utilised in the focus group discussion and conclusion chapter.

Data analysis

Analysis of qualitative research requires a systematic and explicit approach so that the research is not “regarded as weak or initial “exploratory” approaches to those topics” (Collins, 1984, cited in Neuman, 2003, p. 438). Qualitative content analysis comprises of “a searching out of underlying themes in the materials being analysed” (Bryman, 2004, p. 392). This form of analysis enabled the use of predefined categories in the process, but allowed for refinement of those categories or new ones to be generated. Altheide (1996, cited in Bryman, 2004) refers to this approach as being:
a recursive and reflexive movement between concept development –sampling-data, collection-data, coding-data, and analysis-interpretation (p.393).

Predefined categories which emerged in the literature review were used to generate the research questions. Pre-testing of these questions gauged their suitably for purpose intended. Qualitative content analysis uses categorising on data. This enables categories to be identified and retrieved so that they reflect the purpose of the research, are exhaustive and mutually exclusive to the research aims and objectives. This form of coding using phrases from the text enables a coding schedule to be formed (Bryman, 2004). A manual technique was adopted for coding because of its flexibility of use for this researcher and the sample size.

**Manual technique**

An example of how this technique was used follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data from interview</th>
<th>Categories from Literature review – Positive coding</th>
<th>Negative coding</th>
<th>Focus group link</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I have just completed my <strong>Professional Supervision course</strong> at Massey last term and last semester I finished a paper on <strong>employment relations</strong>. I started a human resource paper this year but wasn’t able to follow it through because I believe I <strong>overcommitted myself</strong> – yeah so I’ve done one and a bit.(D)</td>
<td>Education/ off the job – course external provider (special ) x 2 Management focus</td>
<td>Overcommitted (why / how not followed up with participant - negative coding)</td>
<td>Supported by Focus group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Part of job requirement (needed expanding - negative coding)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The overall challenge in data analysis is to categorise data carefully and to make sure it fully captures what the participant has said not what the researcher wanted them to say (Cohen et al., 2000). Davidson and Tolich (1999) refer to positive and negative coding in text analysis as being a method of identifying categories and omissions. Figure 4.1 outlines positive coding as labelling the categories found in the text as they relate to the literature review and research aims; negative coding captures the errors made during data collection processes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positive coding</th>
<th>Negative coding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>as three categories for applying to data analysis. These are:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. identify and reinforce existing themes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. identify new themes which alter subsequent data collection or revise themes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. flag new themes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>identifies:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>failure to capture sufficient detail to make it useful for later analysis</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>captures the outcome of an event rather than its detailed process</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>failure to ask an obvious question</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>capturing interviewer on tape, not listening to an informant</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4.1: Positive and negative coding list (Davidson & Tolich, 1999).

Once the interview transcription were completed, checked and returned by a participant analyse was commenced. By listening to the taped version of each interview and following its transcription the researcher was able to underline verbally emphasised statements, phrases or words. Key statements in passages of text were highlighted and if appropriate a category was written in the margin. The purpose of these steps was to become familiar with the data so as to be able to identify emerging patterns and themes (Cohen et al., 2000; Leedy, 1997; Neuman, 2003). An example of the first steps in the analysis of interview data for this project is shown below:
Following the first analysis steps of the interview data each transcript’s sections of underlined and/ or highlighted text were cut from its original document and labelled with the participant’s identifying letter. This data was glued to one of ten sheets. Each sheet represented an interview question. Through the process of incubation which involved interpreting and developing meaning from all ten interviews the emerging patterns and themes became more apparent. This enabled the researcher to begin identifying those themes that were becoming more significant for these participants in relationship to the context and topic (Bryman, 2004; Cohen et al., 2000).
One of the main difficulties in the analysis of qualitative research data is to remain analytical and find the paths through the written data (Bryman, 2004). The qualitative content analysis process enabled the connections between data and emerging categories and themes related to the topic to be drawn. This occurred when some participants identified their current PD focus and skills required of middle managers. By identifying comparisons, contrasts and patterns from the interviews and focus group the findings were validated. Throughout this process reference was made to transcripts to ensure that quotes were not being taken out of context and reflected the intentions of the participants. An example of this is shown below:

| For me, being in middle management, I think the first thing is being able to communicate with the people, who you’re involved with. Being able to look at what they require from a development side and then hopefully the systems or resources to be put in place to deal with those training issues. (E) | This part of the conversation related to the Question 5. System and resources could have been identified as another important skill and ability for middle managers but it was not the participant's intention. |

The next step in the data collection was the focus group discussion but this will be dealt with in chapter five. The rest of this chapter deals with the research process and data obtained.

The same ten questions were asked of all participants. The first four questions were:

1. Can you describe the PD that you have undertaken in the past twelve months?
2. What were some of the components of this PD?
3. Can you describe how this PD has affected your everyday role?
4. What has enabled your PD to occur in this organisation?
These are linked with two of the underpinning research questions for the project and related to PD. While questions 5 to 10 are linked to the remaining three research questions which focus on the provision of PD for middle managers in Justcorp. These were:

5. What skills and abilities do you identify as being the most important to the role?
6. Why do you think these skills and abilities are important to middle managers?
7. In terms of PD what types of activities would be important to include and why?
8. What types of activities would not be included and why?
9. How might PD be developed and delivered?
10. How do you think PD should be planned for and supported in an organisation?

Results and analysis

Professional development

PD activities

Participants described their current PD for the last twelve months in terms of the actual activity/activities undertaken. All reported that they had undertaken at least two activities of PD. The responses for the activities were analysed further using the three PD areas of education/off-the-job, training/on-the-job and support as identified in the literature review. Table 4.1 illustrates the findings:

Table 4.1: Summary of interview data – Question one

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PD areas</th>
<th># of responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Education/off-the-job activities</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training/on-the-job activities</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support activities</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These findings revealed that most of the participants' PD had occurred within the activities of education/off-the-job area. Further analysis of these activities
indicated two significant groupings - formal tertiary courses and in-service workshops.

In the first grouping, eight out of the eighteen responses identified activities that resulted or would result in the gaining of a formal qualification. These qualifications were detailed and participants explained how they affected their work as middle managers in Justcorp. Two responses (C, J) were for a university degree course taken extramurally to gain a social work qualification which is part of the core business of Justcorp and considered to be of benefit to their role by these participants. Four responses (B, C, D, G) were for a Professional Supervision course which is a contractual arrangement with a university to provide a specific course content to this state sector organisation’s employees. All five (B, C, D, G, J) of these participants identified these as a PD requirement of their position. The remaining two responses (D, E) were for tertiary courses in HRM although one had not completed a paper. Comments on these types of activities were:

I have just finished my Professional Supervision course at Massey last term and last semester I finished a paper on employment relations (D).

My own for the last twelve months is like studying for my Masters degree in Social Work (C).

In the second grouping five participants (A, B, F, H, I) have made the other ten education/off-the-job activities responses. The activities were workshops with particular content directly relating to the function of the organisation. All were run as in-house training and covered topics such as the organisation's client computer system, induction, health topics, human resources, social work practice and management. Most resulted in a certificate of efficiency or attendance. This is reflected in the following comments:

I went for a day’s training on Alcohol and Drugs and I went for a days training on [named the client computer system used by Justcorp] (A).
Just the department run one which is on health one which is the Human Resource one that we all did but that was over a year ago (B).

In the training/on-the-job area ten responses were recorded from five participants. These responses identified activities such as identified a secondment to a management position (H, F), project work (H), monthly practice meetings (I), coaching (G), mentoring from a manager (F), short term deputising opportunity (F,J) and peer tutoring (C, F). Illustrated by comments such as:

I’m currently on secondment to a manager position. I have attended two workshops provided by external trainers and I’ve been on a project group and professional reading (H).

Otherwise a lot of my training has been I guess done on the job and learning from my peers as opposed to formal development (F).

Three responses were made in the support area. In the case of career development it directly related to the participant’s education response (E). Two participants (G, H) had undertaken professional reading - one to support their new role and the other as part of their course work.

Data revealed that current middle managers’ PD relied on external providers’ courses and workshops. The content of these activities related to the development of technical skills and would result in a qualification or certificate for the participant. Internally provided training/on-the-job activities and support activities were not widely dispersed amongst participants and focussed on the development of technical and human skills.

PD activities’ delivery
The responses highlighted how varied PD activities can be approached. In the education/ off-the-job activities two participants (C, J) identified an extramural university course comprising of four blocks of one week lectures, assignments and work experience placements of several weeks:
I've had four weeks contact time at the University for that and the rest of it's been extramural - doing assignment writing etc. And my own research in amongst that (J).

You have a placement as well but it was based on site for sixty working days doing the actual field work, relating to what I learnt requires the theories and models and things like those (C).

Two participants (E, D) doing university papers in HRM identified lectures and assignments. Although one assignment had been a research project:

I've had to do a research project, which was based on [the] work environment, and I chosen workplace stress, which involved me doing research in [to] workplace stress and then I did focus groups in relation to workplace stress and then comparing that to the international research and then drawing conclusions and recommendations from that (E).

Four participants (B, C, D, G) who had undertaken the Professional Supervision course identified that its format had enabled them to put theory into practice. The course began with a four day block of lectures and role plays. On their return to work they were required to complete two assignments. One of which was a recording of the practical application of techniques taught. The second four day block comprised of lectures and critiquing of their work. The third assignment was due before the final component, an ‘Enrichment day’ when the group met for the last time, almost a year from the commencement of the course. Participants identified that the course format, practical applications and feedback experiences as being advantageous to their learning. Some of the responses were:

The practical Professional Supervision is [a] combination of lectures and role play which they now call practice opportunities and group work and some individual work (D).

We’ve had two blocks [of] a week... we did a video assignment ...we’re still doing assignments... a lot of more reading ... We’ve got an ‘enrichment day’ which is next March, so we all come together and it’s almost like a graduation day really and they’ll recap on some stuff to see of it’s helped or not or what could we do better” (G).
Five participants detailed in-service workshops of one or two day duration on various topics related to this state sector department’s core business, policies, procedures and systems. Participants questioned the appropriateness of the workshop format and/or content. Networking with other departmental staff was considered a useful result from these workshops.

[There has been] nothing specific to develop me at another level (B).

I think the thing that I relished about going to the practice leaders forums, the local one, is the opportunity to promote the work and to network and build better relationships, better understanding between ourselves and your colleagues (I).

Data for the training/on-the-job area identified the lack of structure to these activities. In most cases it required a participant to draw on their professional knowledge and experience to locate and interpret this PD. The following comment reflects this:

At the moment I’m doing a practice leader, so I haven’t had formal training at doing that and I don’t have a predecessor to follow so mainly a briefing from the site manager and also looking for gaps that I think would be the responsibility of the practice leader that need picking up, so I guess it’s developing the job as I go (F).

[It involved] Writing the indicators for a national audit and then conducting a national audit and then evaluating the findings of that national audit and then reporting on the findings of that national audit (H).

Participants identified these activities as opportunities for personal growth:

Undertaking the secondment I think it has helped keep me interested in my work, new challenges and the development just helps me feel both current which I like in terms of my PD and helping me be prepared for… (H).

It’s increased my confidence around the fact that I’m site manager, and it’s increased my awareness of things of when I came into middle management role particularly around the political factors in the organisation (J).
There is a preference amongst participants for education/ off-the-job activities which include a practical application of the learning in their delivery. Being able to relate the learning to their work seems to be vital for these participants. The level of involvement of individuals in PD reflects personal commitment and responsibility of these middle managers to their growth and development.

**Role of middle manager**

**Conceptual, human and technical skills**

The skill and ability responses were grouped using the three skills of management. All participants recorded at least two responses in both conceptual and human skills. The results for each set of skills are reflected in Table 4.2:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Management skills</th>
<th># of responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conceptual skills</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human skills</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical skills</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Within each management skill there are a set of skills and abilities and the following recorded response levels of five or more in this data. In the conceptual skills only one skill reached this level of response. It was the ability to use processes for improving the workplace and was identified by five participants as being an important skill for the middle manager role.

In the set of human skills, four skills were identified as being important to the role. These were the ability to consult and facilitate with eight responses, skills of personal communication with seven, the ability to develop and mentor others with six and the ability to lead with five. Data reflects that these participants identify that the development of a middle manager’s human skills of management are very important to the role.
This data emphasised that these middle managers see the role as providing leadership, developing and working with others and using processes to improve the workplace:

I think because you’re trying to work with people both above you in the chain of command and also below you that you need to ensure information is timely, effectively communicated, it’s clearly communicated, it’s communicated with people who need it when they need it ….and also with the roster system that we have.. across the shifts… Given .. our statutory environment, legal and regulatory issues. … Processes for improving [the] workplace … and keep[ing] your staff motivated, happy and on task… (H).

Response levels in Table 4.2 and data support the middle managers skills splits shown in Samson and Daft’s management skills (Figure 2.3) where conceptual and human skills are identified as more important than technical skills. This should be reflected in PD for middle managers.

**Impact of current PD**

As a result of the education/on-the-job activities participants reported that this PD increased their knowledge and impacted on how they did their work as middle managers. This depended on the content of the activity, how it fitted the task(s) of the role and Justcorp’s support of its implementation by the middle manager into their work; therefore results did vary accordingly between participants.

Participants who had undertaken formal qualification courses assessed their PD as enabling them to improve their practice or assessment of practice of those they manage or of the workplace:

I think it probably has given me a more structured framework to pin things on and I guess that just good social work theory, it’s always good to have it there as a basis and it has motivated some of the things that are done around here with staff. … I’ve used some anger management things and I’ve used some of the readings that I’ve received over the year, And I also used them for Acting Supervisor training that I’m always passing on, so in some ways the learning that has been invested in me is spread a lot further than myself and my team has benefited from it (J).
Professional supervision has actually made me get connected to my staff because of the reflection bit. I reflect before I do any supervision. I look in their previous supervision record and during their supervision session. I ask them some reflective questions and also reflect after that supervision, [on] what [they] say and all those things, so that’s made me more connected because of the reflective issues (C).

I guess I look[ed] at supervision in a different kind of way because I don’t have a lot of people to supervise but I don’t give a lot of thought into it, like when I supervise someone it’s more task focused, it’s like more a prescriptive kind of supervision, and now because we work with different ethnicities I have to consider that as well. Do that was what the course has taught us, is how to cater for those- and PD and sticking to [the] agenda, but also making sure that supervision is not a counselling session and that I’m not there to solve their problems (D).

This is our period when we lose people – it’ll actually be great to have systems in place to employ people in advance of losing rather than having that three or four month lag when we lost people – so from that perspective it’s given me insight on how to do that, but also analyse ….in advance rather than letting them happen which most people react – being able to have the insight to look forward and actually say ‘what does the organisation need in six months time’ which we currently don’t do… jobs themselves to see whether we’re getting the right people when we do recruit (E).

Those participants who attended one or two day workshops described the knowledge gained as information to enable them to do their job because it developed a skill they required or gave them the detail(s) to use. However, it was not always relevant to their role or well supported to enable implementation to occur. As reflected by the following comment:

As usual [Justcorp] we are actually the poor cousins in that we haven’t quite decided what direction or even if the frameworks are going to be implemented, so we’re still in a state of limbo which has been very confusing and I’ve found it’s a bit demoralising to see field is very integrated and people are finding the framework is very useful (I).
Training/on-the-job activities were viewed as opportunities to engage in new learning, to increase contacts within the organisation and knowledge of the organisation:

I think the thing that I’ve relished about going to the practice leaders forums, the local ones, is the opportunity to promote the work and to network and build better relationships, better understanding between ourselves and your colleagues .... And work that we were doing, trying to get a clearer understanding about how our services should be integrated and then complement each other... and trying to create a better outcome [for clients] (I).

This data displays many of the issues surrounding a fragmented approach to PD. There is a high reliance on knowledge-based activities which are not linked to the organisational goals, the training is directive and the learning engagement is not continued into the workplace.

**Provision of professional development**

**Current policies and processes**

All participants responded that their costs whether they had been courses fees, workshops fees, study time, transport, accommodation and expenses related to being away from home had been met by Justcorp:

I think the department is quite generous, when we go to training like this we are looked after with transportation, food, decent accommodation (D).

I saw the flyer go around so I put my name on it (A).

They’ve paid for it, although they’ve ‘bonded me’, as they do, but the paying for it is probably the major factor and the tolerating of my few weeks offsite, and I had an agreement for five study leave as well to write it, so that’s been a major and I think especially because I was doing it fulltime, if I hadn’t had financial support there would be a lot to pay out in the end (J).

Many participants highlighted how the support for middle managers’ PD came from their direct line managers. This managerial support in three responses (G, H, I) identified the manager as being the driving force for creating the PD opportunity for the middle manager:
My manager supported my secondment. I've undertaken my own professional development in terms of my reading and course identification and course application and I sort out the project work and asked to undertake it and was given managerial support to do it (H).

The organisation emphasis on employees gaining social work qualifications was identified by two participants (C, J) has being a driver of PD for middle managers. Another participant (D) reported that the organisation’s learning and development department had been unsure of how to plot a plan for their management development so they had done it directly with their line manager. Another participant’s (E) study for a qualification in management was supported by an employment contract arrangement.

Data reflects that there is an ad hoc approach to the way in which PD for middle managers is implemented. It is evident that there is a level of senior management support for this PD through the approval received from the next level of management and resources utilised however systems were not apparent.

**Desired policies and processes**

Three participants (B, J, F) identified that a planned induction for managers would enable middle managers to understand the organisation and its systems better from the outset. A system of mentoring or coaching was desired by many participants (A, F, G, H, I, J) who expressed that this level of support would assist them in their role:

I think a lot of people are brought on site and are left quite isolated and stranded so I think mentoring is important (A).

Certainly having good supervision and good mentoring so doing a combination of learning directly from people and also the more formal setting, like we do in induction [for our site staff] (F).

Seven participants (A, B, C, D, E, F, J) felt that middle managers’ PD required activities that covered HRM, management practices and skills and current research relating to the organisation’s core business:
So getting providers, like say a law firm, getting them to come and talk about employment, relations – recruitment, HR [human resources] – what the culture is outside of government departments in terms of grievances (B).

The preference for the use of external providers for PD activities was expressed by six participants (A, B, C, F, H, I):

Mentoring or coaching is useful because often your line manager may not prioritise it based on the “business as usual” demand and also I think it would be useful to have someone external to my workplace having a role in that so that it’s not just focusing on managing business as usual, it actually looking at my professional development (H).

Three participants (A, I, E) stated that there needed to be a move away from one or two day workshops and similar types of training such as generic courses because they were no relevant for middle managers’ PD:

Training on site seems restricted to very monotonous little tasks. Extremely low level, I was at a meeting in training where I had to learn how to do a shift planning and debriefing sheet (A).

But I think the department comes up with a lot of generic based training that some consultant or somebody sold to them and they implemented it because this is so-called best practice and this is what the corporations do and it’s not actually related to us (E).

Social contract and mutuality
One participant (E) considered that an organisation must first value its management resources:

Their middle managers and senior managers are their most valued resources and they might fight tooth and nail to keep them and move them all over the place – big range of experiences, lots of learning and share ideas between the units... there are other opportunities within the organisation (E).

This theme of valuing management employees was reflected in data surrounding the current staff appraisal and development system implementation which was described as being completed in a “very tick box kind of way” (B). This led to outcomes being not followed through by Justcorp unless the individual was
proactive and showed personal responsibility for it (H). Three out of the four participants (A, B, C, H) who mentioned the system identified it as an inhibitor to middle manager’s PD.

Six middle managers (A, B, C, E, G, H) identified that their PD required some form of system that was consistently applied to individuals. Participants (A, B, D, E, F, H, J) listed at least one of the following: good self assessment, succession planning, career paths, quality training, management training and long term personnel planning as a means to get better outcomes from planned PD for middle managers and the organisation.

Participants (A, C, D, G, H) identified that a planned approach to middle managers’ PD required direction from both Justcorp and its state sector organisation senior management. This direction was considered necessary for linking the provision of a long term plan for middle managers’ PD to this organisation’s goals and its overall business plan. The right training and use of the right facilitators was also highlighted by several middle managers (B, D, F) as being necessary to their PD.

As part of PD, two participants (A, G) mentioned career development for middle managers as being necessary. They identified the lack of a vision for middle managers in this state sector organisation and how the size of Justcorp further hindered any career development. One participant (E) identified that secondment opportunities for middle managers’ development were also limited in Justcorp and there was no system enabling other opportunities in the rest of the organisation to be used by individuals.

**Summary**

This chapter indicates that these middle managers have accepted personal responsibility for undertaking PD to improve their knowledge and skills. The most prominent form of PD amongst the participants has been in the education/
off-the-job activities. These activities, in general, have emphasised knowledge-based learning focussed on the organisation’s core business or supporting its delivery from staff. It is primarily developing the middle manager’s technical skill.

The findings have indicated that these middle managers understand the skills and abilities required of a middle manager. This understanding was reflected in the responses relating to the needs of middle manager’s PD where the focus was placed on human resources and management knowledge.

Chapter Four reflects the organisational support currently given to middle manager’s PD but highlights that there seems to be no systematic approach to the implementation. The existence of organisational policies supporting PD for middle managers seems to be unknown to these participants.

Middle manager’s PD from the findings tends to be done as an isolated individual activity that is supported with funds and time. The new learning does not seem to be linked to any overall plan associated with the achievement of organisational goals related to the role of middle manager. Any prior learning or new learning is under-utilised or not utilised by the organisation.

The interview findings were summarised under the research questions as bullet points for the focus group discussion.
CHAPTER FIVE

RESULTS AND ANALYSIS: FOCUS GROUP

Introduction

In this chapter the results from the focus group discussion of five middle managers from Justcorp are presented and analysed. A transcript of an audio recording of the discussion was made and verified by each of the participants. A same manual method of analysing data from this transcript was used as for the first data tool covered in Chapter Four. This chapter details the focus group participants’ views on the themes identified in data gathered from the interviews and provided facilitation for this project. The focus group were asked to discuss how middle managers’ PD implementation could be addressed to enhance the outcomes for themselves and the organisation. Numerous suggestions were made to assist Justcorp in its provision of PD for its middle managers.

Data analysis

As outlined in Chapter Three, the second phase of the research was a focus group. The following questions guided the discussion:

1. What are the PD needs of middle managers in this organisation?
2. How does the organisation currently provide for the middle managers’ PD needs and how can this be developed further?
3. What factors enable the provision of PD for middle managers?
4. What factors inhibit the provision of PD for middle managers?
5. How can PD be aligned with strategic goals of the multi-site organisation?
   a) What can be implemented to improve PD for middle managers?
   b) What would assist the individual middle managers’ to improve PD outcomes?
   c) What support can the organisation give middle managers?
d) How can middle managers support themselves within the organisation?

Under questions 1 to 4 the interview findings were bullet-pointed to enable the focus group to check and delve into the main findings. This provided the facilitation process for this project.

Once the focus group had been conducted, transcribing was completed within four weeks. The transcript was sent to participants for their review. No amendments were subsequently required. In the transcription it was difficult to identify each participant’s contribution in every case when they interjected or when several spoke at one time. Each participant was allocated a code – FG1 to FG5.

As outlined and illustrated in Chapter Four the same procedures were applied in the analysis of the transcript. By listening to the taped version of the focus group the verbally emphasised statement, phrases or words were underlined and key statements in passages of text were highlighted and if appropriate a category from the literature review or interview findings was written in the margin. The purpose of this step was to become familiar with the data and to identify the themes and to qualify them by supplying the supporting evidence.

The next step involved interpreting and developing meaning from data so that the emerging patterns and themes became more apparent. This enabled the researcher to begin identifying themes that were becoming more significant for these participants in relationship to the context and topic. Throughout this process reference was made to the transcript to ensure that quotes and the intentions of the participants were not being taken out of context. Twenty-one categories were identified and these were conceptualised and refined to form four themes. The rest of this chapter deals with the focus group participants, the research process and data obtained.
Focus group participants

Five middle managers participated in this focus group. All had been interview participants and had volunteered to be part of this second phase of data collection. The focus group was conducted on the 21 December 2005 at one Justcorp site.

Results and analysis

To prompt a level of familiarity with the research focus, participants received a summary of the interview data and the focus group questions at least a week before the focus group discussion. Several participants acknowledged that they had read it while others reported that they had not had the time to do so. This prompted the researcher to read sections of the data during the discussion to enable the interview findings to be checked and to facilitate debate.

Professional development

PD activities and content

There were several suggestions with regards the makeup or components of any professional development plan for an individual. In the first instance, three participants reported that management development was a key area for middle manager:

There should be a move away from a social work practice being our training and more on management…I think it is not a requirement to do social work practice because it’s a management related position (FG1).

Participants considered there was lack of management expertise within Justcorp’s management and identified that management development sourced from an external provider would bridge this gap. The technical focus of current PD activities was deemed as inappropriate for middle managers and participants identified the skills that were more important for this role in Justcorp:

For example say you’re a site manager, I don’t believe I would think it was a requirement to do social work because it’s a management related position (FG1).
What they’re [other organisations] looking for are people who have got the skills to run business and that there’s not …in fact a social work qualification is probably a bad thing if that’s [not] what you’re focusing [on] and you need to focus on business administration and operations and delegation – that’s what it’s about (FG2).

These views supported the skill and abilities findings from the interviews. Participants’ identified that Justcorp’s preoccupation with qualifying employees in social work was neither necessary nor advantageous for them as middle managers.

Secondment and other opportunities to move around the wider organisation were identified by FG2 and supported by FG5 as the means by which middle managers could be developed with mutual benefit to both parties. Individuals could build their knowledge of the organisation’s different parts and their own management skills. Justcorp could be developing a good base of people with a wider range of skills that could be ready for senior management positions:

   Empower their middle managers to be able to fill a whole lot of roles and build their knowledge base of their organisation as a whole, at skill base and that makes them better senior managers going forward (FG2).

Both the management development and personal development identified in the data sources of this project fit with Cardno’s model of holistic PD (2005).

**Role of middle manager**

Three participants stated they felt isolated in the organisation. This was mainly attributed to the social work focus of organisation in its PD and staffing. The management role of middle managers was not clearly defined or understood by Justcorp. These managers reported that Justcorp seemed to be assessing their performance based on social work instead of management outcomes. This was reflected in the following comments:

   So you’re sort of struggling to be part of the organisation which is primarily social work loaded so your practice managers, site
managers and they just ... push on the complications so we as a group are very isolated (FG4).

I don’t think there’s really a career structure here and that’s why a lot of middle managers like us are coming from outside and when we leave we leave to the outside again (FG2).

I don’t think they want us to progress. They don’t want you to develop, they’re just waiting for us, one by one to resign and not be replaced (FG3).

These participants confirmed the interview findings that middle managers within Justcorp considered their role to be undervalued and their skills to be under-utilised by the organisation. The lack of direction for PD, specifically for middle managers further supported their perception. These results identify that Justcorp could be in a vulnerable position in regards to achieving and maintaining its goals because the role of middle manager isn’t functioning as it could – the engine of the organisation.

Provision of professional development

Policies and processes

Four participants identified that an appraisal of an employee’s performance was part of the PD process which is the pivot to Cardno’s model of holistic PD (2005). However, the current appraisal process used by Justcorp for its yearly assessment of all employees was not achieving this aim at present because it was flawed. The reasons related to their experiences of the process: that it was retrospective in its completion, it was a very mediocre reporting requirement and it rewarded staff with the next salary step without a performance standard being reached. These viewpoints are supported in these comments:

I think PD should be linked with performance appraisal and sometimes it definitely isn’t current. It’s very retrospective and it is done more of as a ‘ticking of boxes’...it’s very mediocre kind of reporting requirement (FG4).

But the PDA system itself is completely flawed because the PDA performance based payment system is meant to reward those right at the top of their game, where the staff here just expect it as a
normal payment, it’s got nothing to do with performance, it’s a matter of ticking the box. It’s the same thing with us as managers, I don’t give a toss with the performance payment because there’s not or whatever, 500 bucks or something – do you know what I mean (FG2).

Three participants responded that in order for their PD requirements to be met, a needs’ analysis has to occur and for the results to form a basis for an individualised development plan. This plan would then be evaluated as part of the performance appraisal process. Accordingly, this PD and development plan would address areas of weakness, an interest or a lack of skills of both the individual and the organisation:

I think it’s got to be needs assessed … it’s got to be individualised (FG1).

If they’re happy where they are then there’s no point forcing them to, but some people have got career aspirations and they need to look at and reflect on their practice and ‘know where I’m weak and what do I need to move up the scale if they want to stay with Justcorp (FG2).

The focus group highlighted how many different ways in which their PD was approved which confirmed that Justcorp did not seem to have a clear policy for the implementation of PD:

If you’re not pushy then you don’t get it, but if you’re waiting for the site manager to sit down with you and say, ‘ok I have identified your needs and I would like to develop them for PD’ it may not happen (FG1).

It depends though; when I came I was already half way through my qualification so it was part of my employment contract. It was that well I’m going to carry on doing this. If you can’t support my qualification them I won’t come, and that’s the difference (FG2).

The positive and negative aspects of the current implementation practice surrounding PD illustrated the effect on individual’s social contract and the development of mutuality between employees and employer. Middle managers
accepted that Justcorp enabled PD by paying the costs incurred and that individuals were able to follow personal goals and interests in relation to their PD:

So if I wanted to study again next year, I think that if it’s anything related to business, or people or social work then the department should support it (FG2).

Three participants (FG1, FG2, FG3) identified that a lack of a career structure for middle managers meant that these managers left the organisation. Another reason for leaving the organisation was the lack of progress in an individual’s development and with the proposed restructuring these middle managers considered they were not part of Justcorp’s future (FG3).

Participants identified the inconsistency and lack of information and differing level of support for their PD opportunities in Justcorp:

I think one of the things that inhibit PD around here is about favouritism. Like there certainly seems to be a culture of, if you are ‘in’ with certain people then you certainly get professionally developed a lot faster, or access to PD than other people (FG3).

But then the site manager has also got the issue to providing the development to certain people as well, so like you can’t be pushy if you don’t even get the information to be pushy about. Like for the PD that’s available to us, it’s not a consistent delivery for all of us (FG3).

[Site manager] isn’t interested in studying, which is why everyone makes their own decision. I think if you’re working for people who are still developing themselves you’d find that training and development would be a lot higher on their agenda (FG2).

It seems to me also though it’s the fact that it’s based on individual needs rather than what is the strategic direction for the site (FG3).

Furthermore, participants expressed that the lack of formal induction and management training for management employees impacted on their role as middle managers in Justcorp. Support for these was identified as needing to come from senior management by way of either strategic or business planning. They stated that the PD learning needed to be valued and utilised by the
organisation otherwise it was a case of “a tick box” (FG1) for completion. These comments were supported by others by way of interjections:

There is nothing in structure to say ok all residence managers and district managers you will be doing this on strategic management, project management, but the thing that’s because this is what I’m saying, the focus is on social practice, but when you see an organisation as large as ours (FG4).

Well if we had a formal induction, we would have more consistent information on what is available for every level in the organisation (FG4).

If [PD] is not carried from a lot higher level then you’ll see the importance isn’t given so then people ‘think why should I push something’. Things like business plan should be driven from the top, not the other way round (FG4).

When questioned on how these factors could be addressed to enhance the outcomes of PD implementation the middle managers focused on the need to provide a supported, structured model for their PD which met the requirements of their role in Justcorp. The focus group and interview data identified that an induction course for middle managers as being necessary:

The department needs to have some kind of induction pack for managers so it’s really looking at a generic idea of okay, you’ve joined the service and this is the generic part …. It’s a case of learning from mistakes, learning from criticism, learning from complaints. It’s the culture of learning here (FG4).

The focus group supported the change of focus in PD content for management employees from social work to management development; and that they should have the same access to career advisors and qualification pathways as other employees:

I would like to have someone to sit me down to you know like when you have careers advisors. It’s about having someone with knowledge to say right you want to continue in [the organisation] this is where you need to go (FG3).

... Again they focus so much on social work, that’s their core business. They don’t focus on the fact that we’ve got 156 staff, we need people who can actually run 156 staff. You don’t need more social workers and that’s part of the problem (FG2).
By developing management staff Justcorp, like other organisations, could be providing its own qualified senior managers. Management education, training and support activities could develop the skills that are considered important for those aspiring to progress into management roles. They considered that Justcorp needed to realise that being good in the field of social work is not enough to be a good manager. This was reflected in the following:

If you look at other organisations like [name] and you look at people in national office, all have got MBAs [Masters of Business Administration], a whole lot of qualifications, because they realise it’s so competitive.... to go up the ladder [promotion] and so they’re looking for people who will also back their skills up with academic learning, where here it doesn’t appear to be that. People could move up the ladder just because they’ve done good social work, well they’re not actually doing social work are they, like the regional managers, they’re dealing with people who work [with] finance and yet because they were good social workers they get promotion – it doesn’t make sense (FG2).

Several middle managers identified that a strategic plan was necessary to PD implementation. This plan could be used to identify site needs, individual needs and how to address both in a planned way. This PD would be needs driven, part of the organisation’s plan and supported with resources. The site’s management team would be part involved in drawing up the site’s strategic plan:

I’d like that strategic planning identifies the needs of the site and then identifying who’s got the best person to get professionally developed to address those needs (FG3).

If you’ve identified like that HR is an issue for us then you would send [name used] out to get HR training of that was his interest (FG3).

The focus group considered that development opportunities for middle managers were being lost in Justcorp because of its lack of planning and that a model could address:

So large policy decisions nationally are made by one or two people and so it’s not only very risky to do that , but it’s not up-skilling
senior and middle management; to be involved in a project or focus group like that a policy level you’re up-skilling yourself (FG4).

An ideal opportunity to up-skill managers is when site managers are away (FG4).

I would like them to recognise the work that we’re doing and to value us and if they were to value us then they would look at professionally developing us (FG3).

The role of the human resources department in Justcorp was discussed by the middle managers. Participants considered this department to be reactive and focussed on staff discipline issues; when it needed to be proactive and dealing with developing and training staff. The following comment outlined this stance and also reflected another manager’s interjection:

We concentrate on grievances and discipline, all in the HR process, on a spectrum of this much, it’s got this much of the HR process (that was a metre and the part was centimetre)- we do no proactive stuff, training, developing, having succession planning, all that stuff is just normal HR practice which they don’t do you know and so (FG2).

The focus group discussion and interview findings identify a requirement for a model of PD for middle managers in Justcorp to meet the needs of individuals and the organisation. The model and its processes need to address the social contracts of individuals and develop the concept of mutuality between the two parties to achieve a measure of successful implementation in Justcorp.

**Summary**

In this chapter the collation of the focus group and interview findings identified the requirements of middle manager’s PD, from their perceptive and how implementation in Justcorp could be achieved.

The valuing of their role and their development were issues that needed to be addressed. The use of a model for middle managers’ PD with associated systems could provide both parties with PD that equips them to meet the
challenges and achieve success with the organisational goals of the future. The provision of a transparent, robust PD process could be the answer to Justcorp’s middle manager’s social contract and the achievement of mutuality.

Within this group of five middle managers there were different experiences surrounding the accessing of PD but there was an acknowledgement that a consistent process was required.

These participants identified several key themes surrounding the organisational factors that should support PD but were deemed lacking from their perspective. These suggestions were made to assist Justcorp meet its own needs as well as those of its middle managers when implementing PD.
CHAPTER SIX

DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

Introduction
This chapter discusses the overall findings and answers the research questions. The chapter is divided into four sections. Firstly links are drawn between the major themes from the data and the themes discussed in the literature review. The second section outlines PD for middle managers deduced from data. The development of the middle manager role in Justcorp is detailed in the third section. In the final section a model for the provision of PD is proposed and discussed.

Links with the literature
When considering the main themes discussed in Chapter Two, links are evident to the themes that emerged from the data. Table 6.1 identifies the links. The specific categories that informed the development of the major themes of this research are also identified within these themes.

Professional development refers to the activities to promote the development and growth of an individual both personally and professionally. The importance of PD to an organisation and individuals was identified as a responsibility for both parties with each having their part to play in its success. Data reflected how the process, its implementation and outcomes are linked.

Four themes highlighted the middle manager’s role as providing important and vital functions in an organisation: leadership; influence; implementing vision/ goals into practice/work and managing change. Data reflected the importance of developing the skills of middle managers to enable them to develop their role.
Table 6.1: Links with the literature

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Literature themes</th>
<th>Major themes from the data</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PD is the key to developing leaders and providing leadership (Rudman, 2003)</td>
<td>Middle manager’s role is an underdeveloped resource in the organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PD is the process for career development of an individual (J. O’Neill, 1994)</td>
<td>Middle managers’ role is an underdeveloped resource in the organisation (Middle managers do not view there is a career within the organisation)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PD is context-bound and focuses on professional performance, capabilities and responsibilities (J. O’Neill, 1994; Rudman, 2003)</td>
<td>PD for middle managers a requirement (Middle managers’ current PD does not reflect their role)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PD is the responsibility of the organisation and individual (Rudman, 2003)</td>
<td>Partial implementation (individual responsibility)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individuals accept the objectives of the PD which are linked to the strategic plan (Cardno, 2005)</td>
<td>PD for middle managers a requirement (Middle managers’ current PD does not reflect their role)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PD delivery takes the form of education/ off-the-job, training/ on-the-job and support activities (Cardno, 2005; Woodall &amp; Winstanley, 1998)</td>
<td>Partial implementation (Ad hoc approach to PD – individual driven PD activities)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management development is a specific type of PD for managers (Cardno, 2005; Rudman, 2003; Vloeberghs, 1998)</td>
<td>Partial implementation (organisation is providing resources and individuals are undertaking PD)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PD is tool to meet the requirements of an employee’s social contract by the employer and for the employee to retain their employability (Rudman, 2003)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle Managers are leaders with greatest influence (Dixon, 1995b) They have a complex role (Holden &amp; Roberts, 2004) that requires them to be able to translate vision/goals into operational functions so that others can work (Huy, 2001; Klagge, 1998)</td>
<td>Middle manager’s role is an underdeveloped resource in the organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle managers are ready for development (Haneberg, 2005)</td>
<td>Middle manager’s role is an underdeveloped resource in the organisation (Individuals identified their potential in the role and that current PD doesn’t reflect their role)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sound management knowledge, capabilities and skills in this role enable an organisation to meet challenges (Johnson &amp; Macky, 2003) Conceptual, human and technical skills are required (Samson &amp; Daft, 2003)</td>
<td>PD for middle managers a requirement (Middle managers’ current PD does not reflect their role)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle manager require PD to enable them to lead change (Macky &amp; Johnson, 2003)</td>
<td>Middle manager’s role is an underdeveloped resource in the organisation PD for middle managers a requirement (Middle managers’ current PD does not reflect their role)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PD process begins with the organisation’s strategic plan (Cardno, 2005) Organisation goals and resources are linked accordingly. A culture of learning is established to support learning (PD) (Johnson &amp; Scholes, 2002) Policies and processes are implemented to support the achievement of PD (Johnson &amp; Scholes, 2002) Models guide the implementation of PD (Cardno, 2005; Woodall &amp; Winstanley, 1998)</td>
<td>Partial implementation. (Current PD goals are for all employees, there is a need for specific PD goals for middle managers/managers) Identified barrier (Middle managers reported barriers to their learning and development) Partial implementation (Money, study time, manager support reported.) Identified barrier (Lack of known processes, transparency in process required) Partial implementation (by organisation because resources and activities are evident) Identified barrier (Inconsistency in its implementation)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effective leadership is required for the implementation of PD (Cardno, 2005) PD is linked to the performance appraisal process (Bolam, 2002; J. O’Neill, 1994) Development partnership (Main, 1985) PD is a process for attracting, developing and retaining employees (Samson &amp; Daft, 2003) Addresses the employers input in the social contract with employees (Rudman, 2003) HRM input and alignment is required (Macky &amp; Johnson, 2003) When a PD process is developed that provides and meets the mutual outcomes for both parties then mutuality is achieved (Rudman, 2003; Maguire, 2003)</td>
<td>Partial implementation (support given from direct line manager) Identified barriers (leadership and process) Partial implementation (Improvements identified)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PD for middle managers a requirement (Middle managers’ current PD does not reflect their role)</td>
<td>Partial implementation (Improvements identified)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The research indicated that the adoption of a PD model would enhance the current implementation of PD process by developing the linkages between the elements associated with the process. Data reflected the factors that are enabling and inhibiting the PD process for middle managers in Justcorp which match with the themes from the literature.

**Professional development**

One of the aims of this project was to investigate the enabling and inhibiting factors that contributed to the PD of middle managers in Justcorp. Data from the interview and focus group relating to middle managers’ current PD, their requirements and how the PD process is operating in Justcorp were compared with literature themes (Table 6.1).

**PD activities**

Eighteen out of a total of thirty-one responses from Justcorp’s middle managers’ identified education/off-the-job activities as their PD. This reliance on external providers for PD delivers content that may not be appropriate for an individual’s development and their work within their organisation and/or transferable to their organisation and position (Rudman, 2003). Twelve of the eighteen responses related to development of technical skills which Samson and Daft (2003) identified as being the least required skill for middle managers. Two responses did fit with Samson and Daft (2003) management skill requirement. However, this development was not linked to any organisational plan so the implementation of the learning can not be monitored by Justcorp. The remaining four responses identified a course that was implemented and supported by the organisation and aligned to the expectations of the middle manager’s role. The learning and implementation outcomes reported by participants were positive for this activity.

In the responses to training/on-the-job and support activities participants identified that within Justcorp there is a lack of structure and planning to enable resources to be used or sourced as PD activities. The focus was generally on
of technical skills although human skills had been covered. These outcomes to PD highlighted the necessity for providing PD specifically for those employees in management positions which addressed the requirements of both parties, in this project – Justcorp and its middle managers.

Activities’ content
Avery, Everett, Finkelde and Wallace (1999) write that the building of managerial knowledge, capabilities and skills of middle managers is vital and if neglected it could affect the viability and growth of an organisation. Interview data identified that participants considered human and conceptual skills as important because these enabled them to manage staff and resources. Data reflected that these middle managers identified that it was their responsibility to provide leadership to staff and the implementation of change. The focus group supported the development of management skills for all Justcorp’s managers because the organisation required sound business practice for the future. Middle managers considered that Justcorp needed, from its managers direction, more strategic planning and leadership. This personal development of management skills for middle managers has been identified by Cardno (2005) as essential because these managers support and enhance the performance of others. Therefore, to release this personal potential, PD is necessary (P. Dixon, 1995a; Jackson & Humble, 1994).

Management development
Seven middle managers, in the interviews and focus group, identified that PD with a focus on management skills had helped or would help them in their work. While three other middle managers in the interviews stated that they wanted PD that was specific to their tasks such as human resources, management of resources and leadership. Garavan, et al. (1999) and Woodall and Winstanley (1998) agree that MD is necessary for middle managers because of their role in organisations and that its focus should be specific to that role. PD for these
middle managers needs to focus on developing their management skills and abilities.

**Role of middle manager**

Data revealed that participants in their middle manager role in Justcorp could be considered as neglected and/or underdeveloped in this role because their PD was not specific to their role and functions and/or it was aligned to those employees whose function it was to do the core business with clients. This overlooking of middle manager PD matches with the Karpin Report (1995, cited in Avery et al., 1999) on management development practices in Australia and New Zealand.

Data reflected that participants identified that as middle managers their ability to think strategically, plan and provide information from employees to senior management would be beneficial to the organisation’s performance. It would enable both, the business plan and change processes to be more effectively implemented. Samson and Daft (2003) state that managers need the ability to “take a broad, long-term view” (p.16) on how internal and external factors impact on their organisation’s outcomes.

**Social contract and mutuality**

Data reflected that the way in which PD was delivered in Justcorp did not assist the development of their social contract and mutuality between middle managers and Justcorp. The lack of uniformity, clarity and transparency in the implementation of PD related directly to policies and processes of the organisation. Implementation of middle manager’s PD relied on the responsibility taken by their direct line manager and how it could be resourced and/or approved by them. This type of implementation does not fit with the development of mutuality and social contracts where there is a commitment to common and shared interests in the areas of goals, influence, respect, rewards and
responsibility with mutually agreed outcomes for all parties. The parties need to be the organisation and the individual (Maguire, 2003; Rudman, 2003).

**Provision of professional development**

**HRM policies and processes**

Three distinctive areas of activities have been identified for PD with each having its own characteristics and outcome (Cardno, 2005; Garavan et al., 1999; Woodall & Winstanley, 1998). The first area, labelled as education/off-the-job takes the form of courses, seminars, workshops and results in the individual either obtaining a formal qualification or recognition of attendance. The second area, training/on-the-job involves activities such as role modelling, job rotation, secondment, succession planning, deputising, networking, projects lead to colleagues sharing expertise and experience. While the third area, support engages the learner in activities such as membership of professional organisations, attending conferences, reading relevant publications, reflective practice, coaching, mentoring and job rotation resulting in on-going professional growth.

Data revealed that PD activities undertaken by Justcorp middle managers was driven by the individual, while this level of involvement in self-motivated PD is considered desirable (Avery et al., 1999), from the middle managers' perspective in this study, it was not meeting their needs nor those of Justcorp. There were gaps in management knowledge, capability and skill. These gaps have been linked to limiting an organisation’s ability for growth (Avery et al., 1999) and underdeveloped middle managers require access to this knowledge so that they can work with and through others to achieve organisational goals (Cardno, 2005).

This development of knowledge, capability and skill can not be solely achieved through education/off-the-job activities it requires the internally structured activities (training/on-the-job) which enable the theory to be put into practice so
that goals specific to the organisation can be achieved within the learner’s work context (Woodall & Winstanley, 1998). Participants identified these activities as opportunities to implement their new learning, develop their role and progress their careers in Justcorp. By enabling these activities Justcorp could undertake project work, plan for senior management secondments and succession from within its middle managers. Training/on-the-job PD activities are not fully utilised in Justcorp which middle managers identified as being lost opportunities for them and their organisation.

Data identified that support activities have been neglected by both individuals and Justcorp. Support is defined by Cardno (2005) and Garavan, et al. (1999) as those activities given to an individual to promote professional growth. A neglect of this development hinders both parties from being exposed to new ideas and developments and more importantly the engagement with other professionals.

**Approaches to PD**
While data reflects that there is PD occurring for Justcorp’s middle managers, the benefits to the individual and/or Justcorp are difficult to measure because the implementation tends to be either self-driven by the individual or delivered in the fragmented approach (Woodall & Winstanley, 1998). Participants identified that organisational factors hinder their PD and how they function in Justcorp as middle managers.

Two methods of implementation were identified by participants. The self-driven method enabled them to follow their own PD interests and achieving their career aspirations with Justcorp’s support. The fragmented approach was identified as limiting the availability of PD because activities were not known, resources were used by a few and there was no planning done by either the site or Justcorp to implement middle managers’ PD or utilise it. Data reflected the need for policies and processes to support the achievement of PD (Johnson & Scholes, 2002).
O’Neill (1994) suggests that for individuals and organisations to engage in PD successfully there is a requirement for a needs analysis to be done so that both parties benefit. These benefits occur when individual and organisational needs are addressed through a performance appraisal and a development partnership (Main, 1985). The result for PD is that it is of the type, level and relevance that suits both parties’ needs and the context (Bolam, 2002; Rudman, 2003). Data revealed that participants identified their current performance appraisal and development system as a barrier to their PD because it was ineffective in its implementation.

Two other factors identified in data as inhibiting PD were Justcorp’s lack of strategic planning and leadership. Cardno (2005) identifies that leadership is the driving element for improvements and achievements. The leadership links strategic management and review so planning in different areas within an organisation focuses on the goals and delivers the desired outcomes.

These writers (Bush, 1997; Garavan et al., 1999; Vlooberghs, 1998) have identified that for an organisation to provide successful PD it needs to be planned and aligned to the HRM strategy, culture and goals. This alignment enables an organisation, such as Justcorp, to adopt a soft HRM approach to policies and processes. Soft HRM places the emphasis on “building employee commitment and involvement in decision making” (Macky & Johnson, 2003) so that quality employees are attracted, developed and retained. Quality employees are an organisation’s “powerful strategic weapon” (Samson & Daft, 2003, p. 406) in the competitive environment of the 21st century.

This change to ‘soft’ HRM strategy requires leadership that enables others to develop and grow. The organisation requires a culture of learning to be nurtured and a shift by leaders to recognise that “leadership is a process, not a position” which Cardno (2005) identifies as a distribution of leadership. This type of leadership increases the influence amongst employees so that change
processes and goals can be more effectively achieved. With the amount of influence attributed to the middle manager’s role by Huy (2001), Dixon (1995b) and Haneberg (2005), Justcorp’s lack of harnessing of this potential could mean it does not achieve its goals in the future.

Data supported the need for the development of policies and processes for middle managers’ PD which link individual elements - performance appraisal and professional development, to the organisational elements - strategic management and leadership. This linking of the elements could be best achieved through the implementation of a PD model. The successful implementation of a PD model could achieve mutuality and improve the social contracts between these middle managers and Justcorp.

A model of PD for middle managers can be achieved by adapting Cardno’s model of holistic PD as illustrated in Figure 6.1:

![Figure 6.1: A model of holistic professional development for middle managers at Justcorp. (Adapted from Cardno, 2005)](image)

Underpinning this model is the concept of distributed leadership and how it can develop a culture of learning that supports professional growth (Cardno, 2005; Johnson & Scholes, 2002). Distributed leadership addresses the multi-site structure of Justcorp’s senior management team and provides the necessary
leadership required for the implementation of a single approach to the PD process for all middle managers. The responsibilities of the distributed leadership are the management and review of the strategic elements of the PD process.

Developing the links between this strategic management and review with the vision, long term strategic plan (business plan) of the organisation and its annual planning is the key to successful implementation. This alignment is required in the formulation, implementation and evaluation of the policies and process associated with the PD process. A better representation of each site’s requirements could be achieved through this type of leadership at this planning stage of the process.

A pivotal policy and process is the performance appraisal. The effectiveness of the performance appraisal informs and impacts on the rest of the implementation (Cardno, 2005; Vloeberghs, 1998). The system should achieve four things:

1. Provide honest and objective feedback;
2. Make dialogue about improvement possible;
3. Identify PD needs and
4. Bring about agreed and desired change
   (Cardno, 2005, p. 298).

In this model the requirements of national policy imperatives are addressed in the site and programme development quarters. These will drive PD that is required on a broader scale as it affects the site’s commitment to provide and improve its services to clients and stakeholders while monitoring the impact on its own employees and operations.

The remaining two quarters identify the dimensions of personal development and management development. Personal development of employees focuses on their skill development in relation to social, political and cultural aspects of their work. MD is concerned with the development of leaders and managers through the accessing of information, theory and skills needed to work with and through
others to achieve organisational goals (Cardno, 2005). This dimension develops leaders for the organisation and creates the holistic aspect of PD. It is about leaders developing leaders and therefore requires leaders and their organisations to provide activities to focus the MD of individuals.

These activities involve management education, training and support with a range of different content to enable the individual opportunities to acquire and implement learning with appropriate support. By adapting Vloebergh’s categorisation matrix of MD activities (1998) Justcorp could be provided with the framework for its middle managers’ MD as reflected in Figure 6.2. This matrix provides the scope of activities – education/off-the-job, training/on-the-job and support - required for this development and a framework for planning. It expands the opportunities available to include the wider state sector department and would address the career planning, mentoring, job rotation, succession planning and support requirements that data identified.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Individual</th>
<th>Multi-site or Site</th>
<th>Justcorp</th>
<th>State sector organisation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Non-function oriented</strong></td>
<td>General Management courses</td>
<td>Organisation development</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Career development</td>
<td>Case studies</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Function oriented</strong></td>
<td>360 degree feedback</td>
<td>Problem-solving groups</td>
<td>Unit-self-assessment</td>
<td>Succession planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Benchmarking</td>
<td>Project teams</td>
<td></td>
<td>Inter-unit development</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 6.2: A categorisation matrix of management development activities for middle managers at Justcorp (adapted from Vloeberghs, 1998).

The implementation of this model of holistic professional development could provide Justcorp and its middle managers with PD that addresses the findings of this research.
Summary

This chapter presented a discussion relating to the five research questions outlined in Chapter One. Discussion was built on data previously displayed and analysed in Chapters Four and Five. The current enabling and inhibiting factors related to PD and its implementation were evaluated. Data and literature themes were discussed to provide the requirements of PD for middle managers in Justcorp. Discussion of data relating to implementation process of PD identified areas that could improve the process to meet the needs of individuals and Justcorp. The benefits of the proposed model of PD were presented.

Discussion throughout this chapter related the findings back to the themes that emerged from the review of the literature presented in Chapter Two. The next chapter will provide conclusions, recommendations and make suggestions for further study in the area of PD for middle managers in Justcorp. It will also indicate limitations in the research.
CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction
The development of middle manager’s knowledge, capabilities and skills are vital for an organisation operating in the environment of the 21st century with the advantages and changes associated with globalisation, technology, economy and legislation. The role of a middle manager is a complex one, they are expected to be a leader, manager, innovator, motivator, developer, communicator, listener, co-ordinator, evaluator and a team member (Holden & Roberts, 2004). The achievement of this role and the complexity of the environment in which they are working required support from the organisation. PD is a process whereby the individual can be given that support. It enables the individual’s development requirements to be addressed through activities that educate, train and nurture professional growth as well as meet the goals of an organisation (Cardno, 2005; Macky & Johnson, 2003; Rudman, 2003). This research has focused on the provision of PD at Justcorp and its outcomes from the middle managers’ perspective.

The conclusions of this research are presented in this chapter together with recommendations for the future provision of PD for middle managers at Justcorp. A number of possibilities for future research have been suggested. Limitations of this research are also discussed.

Professional development for middle managers
A key theme from this research is that middle managers require management development to enable them to fulfil their role in Justcorp effectively. It is arguable that to neglect their PD needs would place the organisation at risk (P.
Dixon, 1995a, 1995b). Effective middle managers possess the knowledge and understanding of how and what the organisation is about (Haneberg, 2005; Mintzberg, 1973; Woodall & Winstanley, 1998). Their management knowledge, capabilities and skills enable them to establish networks, manage employees and resources so that the organisation can implement change that is lasting and which maintains an organisation’s viability and growth (Huy, 2001; Klagge, 1998; Samson & Daft, 2003).

The findings of this research underscore the importance of building the management knowledge, capabilities and skills of middle managers. Therefore, two central foci for PD of middle managers are management development and personal development. When this occurs, PD is more likely to be relevant to their responsibilities and work as data from this project highlighted.

Samson and Daft (2003) identified that those in the role of middle manager needed to be able to think strategically about their work and how it fitted into what the organisation was either achieving or not achieving. The position of middle manager has been identified as vital for the role they play in the planning and implementation of change. This aligns with Huy (2001) and Klagge (1998) who write that middle managers’ influence within an organisation comes from two areas. The first area is their understanding of the organisation’s core values and competencies, while the second area is their knowledge of staff and established networks in the organisation. These competencies require PD so that the personal potential of middle managers can be enhanced for both parties’ benefit – the organisation and the individual.

**Provision of professional development**

Another key finding of this project has been that PD policies and processes have the potential to enable an organisation to attract, develop and maintain an effective workforce. With an effective workforce, as Macky and Johnson (2003)
conclude, an organisation can gain a competitive advantage to achieve its goals and grow and remain viable in the 21st century environment.

The research findings reflect that there is an apparent lack of HRM policies and processes relating to PD in Justcorp especially for those employees in management roles. The provision and effective implementation of a model that links PD to the goals of Justcorp could be a process that enables it to meet those goals. This supports findings by Cardno (2005) who writes that for new learning to be of benefit to both parties it requires the support of policies, processes and links with the organisation’s goals and resources.

The provision of a model of PD for middle managers translates into policies and processes that can achieve a “social contract” (Samson & Daft, 2003, p. 409). The development of this contract produces benefits for both parties. An organisation may be able to attract and retain the best employee so it can remain successful, while an employee retains their employability within the organisation by developing themselves (Bratton & Gold, 1999). Achieving this form of social contract requires an organisation to develop mutuality in its employee-employer relationship. The influential nature of the role of middle managers within an organisation highlights how vital it is for an employer to achieve a sound social contract with these employees (P. Dixon, 1995b; Huy, 2001).

The development of mutual goals between employee and employer – mutuality – can facilitate PD that addresses and improves the outcomes for both parties (Rudman, 2003). This research found that middle managers required PD that essentially focused on two key areas: firstly, management development; and, secondly, their personal skills.

By addressing the findings of this project Justcorp may increase its chances of achieving its ‘Building Capacity’ priority’s objectives for middle management employees in the following ways:
Recruitment and retention: The offer of a middle managers’ training package could be an incentive that attracts and retains these employees for Justcorp. The effectiveness of middle managers could have a ‘flow-on’ effect in the recruitment and retention of other employees for Justcorp (Maguire, 2003);

Strengthening leadership: Developing the leadership ability of middle managers could develop “distributed leadership” (Cardno, 2005) for Justcorp. This type of leadership, which can be expected from the influential middle manager role, increases the influence and development, amongst its employees, of organisational strategic goals. Failing to develop and support middle managers in their role hinders their potential to influence change and the development of others;

Providing comprehensive training package: Beginning from induction and continuing to provide and support PD throughout an employee's contract meets this objective especially if mutuality is achieved (Rudman, 2003); and

Enhancing team functioning: By developing middle managers’ management knowledge, capabilities and skill through education, training and support, Justcorp would be increasing the possibilities of better team work and results. The role of middle managers in role modelling, developing teams and leading others is vital in 21st organisations (Avery et al., 1999; Klagge, 1998).

This research identified that Justcorp's middle managers are concerned about the PD provision and their role in the organisation. This aligns with Maguire (2003) who writes that middle managers were immune to the effects of organisational changes in the past but are now not. Therefore, to counteract the negative effects of this violation of the middle managers’ ‘social contract’ in the four key areas of their position and employment – responsibility and power, input into decision making, job security and opportunities for advancement – an organisation must find a solution. Mutuality is a solution because it enables the
development of mutual goals, influence, respect, rewards and responsibility (Rudman, 2003). PD is a process which meets both the needs of a middle manager’s social contract and an organisation’s goals but it must be robust in its implementation (Rudman, 2003).

**Recommendations**

To achieve an effective implementation of a PD process for middle managers which meets the outcomes desired by both parties – the organisation and middle managers – two things are required: firstly, a culture of learning which encourages and supports new learning; and, secondly, an acceptance of responsibility by all for the functioning of the PD process.

At Justcorp, the middle managers identified that the culture for learning was not ideal and in fact was hindering their learning because it was delivering negative feedback to them and in turn to their staff. This type of environment can not develop mutuality amongst its middle managers and requires change. This change requires modelling and direction from Justcorp’s leadership so that the culture can be changed. Cardno (2005) considered for a culture of learning to be successful there was a requirement for the organisation’s organisational culture – its values, beliefs and taken-for-granted assumptions - to be clearly stated, understood and operated by its members (Elkin & Inkson, 2000).

This organisation has as one of its strategic priority; to build the capacity of its employees so that its goals can be achieved. One of those goals was to implement change and maintain it. The role of middle managers in the implementation of change had been acknowledged by Justcorp when it involved middle managers in the initial planning stage. However, data does not reflect that this support was evident in PD that middle managers had received. The engagement in management development activities would support middle managers to implement change.
The implementation of effective HRM policies and processes has been acknowledged by successful organisations as the way to empower employees and to improve organisational performance (Rudman, 2003; Samson & Daft, 2003; Vloeberghs, 1998). Therefore, Justcorp’s senior management need to implement the functions of HRM that match its vision, objectives and strategy.

It is important that Justcorp accepts that its HRM is vital in the meeting of strategic goals. HRM practices attract, develop and retain employees (Macky & Johnson, 2003; Maguire, 2003). By adopting the principles of Cardno’s holistic PD model for middle manager’s PD, Justcorp would be providing the links between strategic planning, individual performance and PD that are required to improve the outcomes of PD for both parties.

Responsibility for the outcomes from PD requires ownership from the organisation and the individual middle manager. The organisation must identify how middle manager’s PD can meet its requirements and resource it. Middle managers in turn must undertake PD that is purposeful, appropriate and will deliver the desired outcome. To achieve this level of ownership the organisation requires processes of consultation, performance appraisal and professional development within a culture of learning that enables change to occur. All these factors were identified in the research data.

Data revealed that these middle managers have accepted personal responsibility for their PD and have a desire to implement the new learning into their work, but there is no formal process for this to occur in Justcorp. The embracing of new learning is hampered by Justcorp’s lack of PD processes which would be addressed with the implementation of an adapted model of holistic PD (Cardno, 2005).
Possibilities for future research

One of these possibilities relates to the implementation of an adapted model of holistic PD (Cardno, 2005). The research could be undertaken using an action research methodology which “starts from an idea that research should do more than understands the world: it should help change it” (Davidson & Tolich, 1999, p. 244). The initial stage would involve gathering information about the current issues and processes from senior management and human resources. This could provide a valuable insight to the different perspectives and include a plan of action followed by an intervention phase involving the practical implementation of this model. At the evaluation stage further intervention and further refinement of this model may be required. This action research approach may also be appropriate for the other human resources management processes associated with this model such as performance appraisal and those related to leadership. This may have practical benefits for implementation of this model and its continuation in Justcorp.

Another possibility for research, which would be an adjunct to this research project, would be the perspective of the senior management team of Justcorp. This study sought to investigate what middle managers’ PD needs were and how they were addressed. This provided only one viewpoint whereas having the other viewpoint would be advantageous. The senior managers’ perspective would provide contrasts and comparisons to the findings presented in this research project.

Limitations of this research

While some of the limitations were intrinsic in the methods used to gather data, others were imposed by the constraints of time and resources. One of these limitations that had the potential to affect the reliability of the findings concerned the data gathering from the other two sites. The planning for these two visits required the researcher to consider how to be unobtrusive as possible to the
participants during their working day when interviewing and to achieve these interviews within her own work timeframe and resources. To reduce the effect of this limitation, dates were agreed well in advance with all parties and several hours at each site were planned so interviews could be accommodated into participants’ work schedules.

Other limitations of this research relate to the size of the sample and whether the findings from the interviews and focus group were valid. The sample size was small but they were all the middle managers available in Justcorp at the time, so all the voices of middle managers were heard. While, the focus group of 5 did provide the facilitation process, all participants were from one site which could have skewed data. This “natural grouping” (Bryman, 2004) of the focus group could be considered a limitation of this research however, their passion for PD for themselves and others enabled the discussion to be informal and purposeful.

Another limitation is the “inaudible elements, which affects transcription” (Bryman, 2004, p. 359) in the taping of interviews and a focus group. This was addressed by making field notes during each session, listening to the tapes the next day and numerous times during the writing of this project.

Summary

The literature identifies that PD for middle managers is an essential process for a 21st century organisation to fulfil if it is to attract, develop and retain employees who enable it to meet its challenges and goals (Jones & Robinson, 1997; Margerison, 1991; Rudman, 2003). The adoption of a model improves the PD process and how successful the outcomes for the organisation and individual can be. Effective PD for middle managers requires management development and personal development. This PD provides an organisation with managers who are more able to deliver organisational adaptation and renewal (Garavan et al., 1999). PD for individuals addresses their ‘social contract’ and employability issues in the organisation (Rudman, 2003). This research identified that Justcorp
must implement a model of holistic PD for its middle managers because they are identified as the “engine of an organisation” (Haneberg, 2005) and their PD builds the capacity of their organisation to meet its challenges in the 21st century environment.
REFERENCES


Appendix A: Interview questions

Semi-structured Interview

Section A: These questions relate to your current and recent professional development activities

1. Can you describe the professional development that you have undertaken in the past 12 months?

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

2. Thinking about this professional development what were some of the components?

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

3. Can you describe how this professional development has affected your everyday role?

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

4. What has enabled your professional development to occur in this organisation?

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
Section B  These questions relate to the skills and abilities of Middle Managers.

1. What skills and abilities do you identify as being the most important to the role?
   ______________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________

2. Why do you think these skills and abilities are important to middle managers?
   ______________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________

Section C  These questions relate to proposing a model of professional development for middle managers.

1. In terms of professional development what types of activities would be important to include and why?
   ______________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________

2. What types of activities would not be included and why?
   ______________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________

3. How might professional development be developed and delivered?
   ______________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________
4. How do you think professional development should be planned for and supported in an organisation?