

**LEADERSHIP AND
FOLLOWERSHIP PRACTICES IN
LEARNING ORGANISATIONS: A
CASE STUDY OF ABU DHABI
EDUCATION COUNCIL**

Mariam Al Kalbani, PHD

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Department of Educational Research,

Lancaster University, UK.

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This thesis results entirely from my own work and has not been offered previously for any other degree or diploma.

Signatur *Mariam Alkalbani*

Abstract

This thesis studies the relationship between practices in learning organisation and social practices at the Abu Dhabi Education Council (ADEC). The research domain was broken down into six research (questions), which affect the development of a learning organisation at ADEC. 1) What is the impact of the roles of leaders on developing learning organisation characteristics with in ADEC? 2) What is the impact of the relationship between leaders and followers on developing learning organisation characteristics with in ADEC? 3) What is the impact of training and professional development on developing learning organisation characteristics with in ADEC? 4) What is the impact of social practices on developing learning organisation characteristics with in ADEC? 5) What is the impact of the teamwork on developing learning organisation characteristics with in ADEC? And 6) What is the impact of organisational factors (vision and mission of ADEC, division of work, information and reward system) on developing learning organisation characteristics with in ADEC?

In order to answer the six research questions, interviews and focus groups were conducted with leaders and followers. The sample of study accounted for 10 leaders and 20 followers, four focus groups were conducted (two with leaders and two with followers) where 32 participants took part in the focus groups.

The results of the study indicate that leaders do not play a supervisory or coaching role in the departments, which enables followers to work towards achieving the goal of being part of a learning organisation. The study found that leaders and followers have developed a good relationship based on accountability and transferability, and this has helped to transform ADEC into a learning organisation. It also shows that followers have not yet developed sufficient skills through training and workshops and formal education to enable them to learn. The study shows that social practices were the main motivator, encouraging leaders and followers to learn from one another and from expatriates.

To summarise briefly, it can be concluded that ADEC has not yet become a learning organisation, and that further work is required to develop the role of its leaders, the relationship between its leaders and followers, and an effective reward system, as well as multiple sources of information.

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Dedication

I dedicate my PhD thesis to my parents who have always been understanding and accepting of me. I also dedicate this work to my husband and my sisters and my children (Hamad, Rashid, and Abdulla).

Chapter One

Introduction to the Study

This chapter presents the statement of the research problem, the research questions, the study rationale, the intended utilisation of its results, its anticipated contribution to knowledge, and finally a map of the contents of the thesis.

1.1 Definition and Characteristics of Learning Organisation

The literature suggests that in a learning organisation, leadership and followership are complementary entities driving organisational development (Woodall, 2005; Bhavnagar, 2007). The learning organisation requirement in this regard is to go beyond the context of obedience and subordination, to open up scope for opportunity and innovation. The literature on learning organisations (Nonaka and Nishiguchi, 2001, Davenport and Prusacl, 1998, Senge, 1990) suggests that such organisations are essentially concerned about how to adopt learning as part of their culture. The aim of this is to enable these organisations to survive more successfully in the global economy. With the aim of achieving organisational goals, Yukl et al. (2010) and Cavell (2007) emphasise that in organisations where followers are typically supportive of their leaders they are effective in their work. Nonetheless, they also suggest that followers should be encouraged to be independent and active. Thus, the leadership process is supported significantly by followership, where followers are team players, energetic, patient, good listeners, and display a positive attitude (Cavell, 2007).

Senge (1990) is widely accepted as the first to have introduced the concept and characteristics of a learning organisation. Senge (1990) suggested working towards developing learning organisations, as their special characteristics can play a critical role in facilitating the achievement of goals. As will be mentioned in the literature review chapter, there is an ongoing debate regarding the definition of a learning organisation and its key characteristics? For instance, Love and Heng (2000) stated that a learning organisation, in an organisation that establishes activities that

contribute to enabling learning and explaining how learning can occur. Starkey (1996) considers a learning organisation as a new evolutionary model, devised to create responsive change. A learning organisation is also understood to be one in which there is a high level of human input and communication, determining the work environment and atmosphere.

The conception of a learning organisation is also based on a structure and culture intended to provide more opportunity for flexibility and innovation (Marsick and Watkins, 1999: 208). Marsick and Watkins (1999: 209) state that it is important for organisations to extend their capacity and capability, to utilise learning as a strategic tool. In general, Senge (1990) based the notion of a learning organisation on other management concepts, such as organisational learning, organisational theory, system theory, strategic planning and quality improvement movement. This view was upheld by Kerka (1995), who sees the notion of a learning organisation not only as a change, but also as providing roles for people who are effective in advancing an organisation (i.e. leaders and followers). King (2001) suggests that a learning organisation should not be understood as a uniform and readymade concept, but should be associated with specific goals to be achieved within each individual organisation based on its current conditions and how it works. King (2001) adds that developing a learning organisation is a dynamical process that can be accomplished through progressive processes. In relation to this, Geppert (2000: 89) mentions that the concept of learning may be used as a direction, and as a way of thinking about developing learning.

Senge (1990) in his book, “the fifth discipline”, identified five areas in which learning organisations can be developed and created: system thinking, personal mastery, mental models, building shared values, and a vision for teamwork. Senge’s disciplines are discussed in detail in chapter two (literature review). Several scholars have studied organisations classified as learning organisations, and generated different ideas and conditions upon which to designate the definition of a learning organisation. For instance, Confessore (1997) mentioned three conditions through which a learning organisation can be developed. He suggested that individuals (leaders and followers) in such organisations have the opportunity to work in an environment that increases their knowledge and information about what they need to do and how to do it. Individuals also have the opportunity to work collaboratively in a collective environment, and to share their knowledge with colleagues and leaders. Several mechanisms ensure all tasks related to a learning organisation are valued and integrated into all aspects of the organisation.

According to Watkins and Marsick (1999), there are six features required to accomplish a learning organisation; the authors stress that organisations are required to work on creating continuous opportunities for learning, which may help them when performing allocated tasks. Organisations should develop dialogue between top management and subordinates (leaders and followers), as well as between peers. The authors also suggested encouraging teamwork to improve the potential for knowledge sharing. Learning goals cannot be achieved without establishing a system for shared learning, and followers can learn from what others have experienced. Organisations are required to empower individuals to work towards a collective vision, and finally to

integrate the organisations' internal and external environments (within departments and with other organisation).

Elsewhere, Porth et al. (1999) compared various approaches to learning organisations, and proposed three main features by which to identify a learning organisation. First, the authors stress that employees within such organisations may be developed through seeking continuous learning. For example, a focus may be placed on how individuals learn, what the stages of learning are, and what the obstacles to learning are. Second, the authors addressed the importance of sharing, and effective collaboration among individuals, because change requires leaders and followers to participate in all aspects related to the organisation. Third, the authors focused on building a strong team, to achieve a shared vision and goals to establish a learning organisation.

Based on this introduction on learning organisation, this study specified three objectives:

- To review literature on learning organisation and discuss it from different perspectives;
- To identify the factors affecting developing learning organisation practices within organisations;
- To explore the relationship between social practices and learning organisation practices.

1.2 Statement of the Research Problem and Objectives of the Study

In the last two decades, the United Arab Emirates has witnessed a significant increase in the number of basic and higher educational institutions. This increase in number has led to the widespread provision of good educational services at all levels, i.e. primary, secondary and higher education. Abu Dhabi Educational Council (ADEC) is one of the key educational organisations in the United Arab Emirates responsible for prioritising, developing, and implementing educational policies, in accordance with the highest international standards and in support of national goals. ADEC's aim is to deliver one of the five best public education systems in world, enabling Emirati students to become world-class learners. However, the current school system network and infrastructure is not yet sufficient to support its ambitious goals.

It has been important for ADEC to establish key principles as a foundation on which to develop the educational organisations it oversees; particularly in relation to the quality of the education offered. Although ADEC has focused on different aspects in relation to the quality of education in its schools, there has been insufficient attention paid toward developing the characteristics of learning organisations in both general and higher educational institutions, or at ADEC headquarters.

At present there is a lack of empirical studies in the level of the United Arab Emirates; therefore, this study aims to offer greater understanding of this context, by presenting the issue of learning organisation characteristics from both leaders' and followers' perspectives. The idea of a learning organisation, as used in this study is represented by the relationship between leaders and followers, teamwork, learning (training and

professional development), the information and resources allocated to learning, appraisal and rewards within ADEC, and organisational factors and social practices.

The focus of this study is on investigating leadership and followership as it influences organisational practices at ADEC, in a range of areas, such as the relationships between leaders and followers, teamwork, the reward system, social practices, and organisational factors. In other words, the study will address followers' behaviour, and their responses to the idea of a learning organisation, as realised (or otherwise) at ADEC. Therefore, the study concentrates on exploring a range of factors that should enable ADEC to attain the characteristics of a learning organisation.

The research questions for the study were based on the definitions in existing literature regarding approaches to a learning organisation. However, many of the seminal works consulted did not address learning organisations from the social practices perspective, or in relation to the leader and follower perspective. When an organisation thinks about change, it should not do so independently of the social practices of its leaders and followers. Social practices and changes connected to a learning organisation. Leaders in organisations can facilitate the creation and development of a learning organisation, through the in-depth transformation by altering practices of followership, social practices, teamwork, and reward systems. This study explains the issues related to learning organisations, by focusing on ADEC as a case study. In doing so, it examines, to what extent, ADEC currently manifests the characteristics of a learning organisation. Specifically, the research questions are:

RQ1. What is the impact of the roles of leaders on developing learning organisation characteristics with in ADEC?

RQ2. What is the impact of the relationship between leaders and followers on developing learning organisation characteristics with in ADEC?

RQ3. What is the impact of training and professional development on developing learning organisation characteristics with in ADEC?

RQ4. What is the impact of social practices on developing learning organisation characteristics with in ADEC?

RQ5. What is the impact of the teamwork on developing learning organisation characteristics with in ADEC?

RQ6. What is the impact of organisational factors (vision and mission of ADEC, division of work, information and reward system) on developing learning organisation characteristics with in ADEC?

1.3 Study Rationale

Although ADEC provides the bulk of educational services in the Abu Dhabi region, it does not itself apply an approach that would render it recognisable as a learning organisation. An organisation such as ADEC, may, however, undergo transformation to become a learning organisation over time. The research context is a case study of ADEC in the United Arab Emirates, and this study aims to offer new evidence on learning with in ADEC. It aims to provide unique information related to leaders' and followers' experiences of learning at ADEC, and seeks to provide the first empirical evidence of progress towards becoming a learning organisation not only in the United

Arab Emirates level but in the Arab world. A survey of literature to date, found no empirical studies of learning organisations in this context.

This study will provide ADEC with a framework with which to evaluate its progress towards becoming a learning organisation at both the individual and organisational levels. The study will also identify the existing learning capabilities and capacities of ADEC, which may benefit them in terms of establishing change by transforming to become a learning organisation. This also offers potential to explore the factors affecting the creation of a learning organisation, so that they can be further elaborate and explained.

In general, the motives and utilisation of the study findings are summarised below:

- Facilitating the development of the characteristics of a learning organisation at the individual, group and all-institution level;
- Determining the future of relationships between leaders and followers;
- Preparing recommendations that are centred on teamwork, reward systems and social practices;
- Setting up learning priorities with in ADEC; and
- Determining the required training, by defining followers' needs.

At the international level, followership and leadership and their relationship to learning organisations have been topics understudied in the academic domain (Yukl, 2002, Jones, 2005, Kupers, 2007).

1.4 Contribution of the Study to Knowledge

The primary contribution of this study to existing knowledge relates to three fields: the international level, the Middle East and Arabic countries level, and United Arab Emirates level (as represented at ADEC). At the international level, there is a dearth of studies related to learning organisations and social practices, since this topic is still relatively new. The focus of the majority of studies in the last two decades has been on the role of leaders (Mahney, 2000, Boreham and Morgan, 2004, Garvin, 2008), and they have largely overlooked the role of followers. This study is centred on both leaders and followers, to explain the factors that lead to the creation of a learning organisation. Therefore, the study will help researchers in different parts of the world, by providing a foundation to build on and adapt to local public and/or private organisations.

The focus of this study is on not only leaders and followers, but also addresses the issues of social practices and their role in moving towards a learning organisation. Leaders and followers report that their social practices (values, beliefs, attitudes) help them learn from one another and from the experience of expatriates. Furthermore, the study links social practices and visions shared between leaders and followers, another component that has not been addressed in the literature. The study also stresses social

practices to help leaders and followers to construct good relationships, so that they can learn from one another while followers listen to their leaders and learn from them.

At the Arab countries level, the study aims to bridge the gap in knowledge related to learning organisations; since other researchers have not addressed this particular topic in reference to this region. The results of this study will help researchers to identify the main challenges involved in moving towards a learning organisation. Examples given in this study can be expanded and adapted to other Arab countries such Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, Jordan, etc.).

At the United Arab Emirates and ADEC level, the study diagnosed the current aspects of learning organisation recognised within ADEC. The findings and recommendations of this study will assist ADEC in reviewing its policies and strategies, as they relate to developing learning organisations, particularly in the areas of social practice, developing good relationships between leaders and followers, improving teamwork, improving the reward system and developing organisational factors.

1.5 Definition of Learning Organisation

This study does not rely on any of the above definitions of learning organisations, not because these definitions are weak or not valid, but because they have been applied solely to western organisations, and so are likely to require adaptation to be applicable to organisations in other countries (e.g. the United Arab Emirates). The definition of learning organisation used here is based on the author's empirical research, and

generated from interviews and focus groups conducted with leaders and followers. Therefore, a learning organisation in this study is defined as:

“A learning organisation is a concept to describe how organisations can aim to achieve their visions, missions and organisational objectives. An organisation can become a learning organisation through continuous training and professional development, and its leaders’ and followers’ social practices and teamwork. A learning organisation also stresses that the role of leaders is crucial within the organisation, so they can develop and maintain good relationships with their followers. A learning organisation is one that can develop an effective reward system, develop good sources of information and instil vision and mission in their followers. (My thesis)”.

1.6 Organisation of the Thesis

This study consisted of seven chapters. The first chapter has presented a background to the study, the research problem and research questions, the significance of the study and content of the thesis. The second chapter provides an overview of the literature related to learning organisations, leadership and followership. The chapter also gives a detailed explanation of factors related to learning organisations, such as teamwork, a rewards system, information resources, social practices and organisational factors. Chapter three presents the research design and methodology used to address the

research questions in the study. The chapter consists of sections on the philosophy of research, the distinction between quantitative and qualitative research methods, and the choice of research method. The chapter four provides details of the results of the in-depth interviews and focus groups conducted with the leaders (directors), while chapter five focuses on the results of the interviews and focus groups, which were conducted with followers (employees) working in different departments with in ADEC. Chapter six presents the main results of the study and discusses them from the perspectives of learning organisation and social practices, referring back to the literature review. Chapter seven summarises the main Conclusion of the study, presenting its recommendations, contribution to knowledge, limitations and suggestions for future studies.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This study investigates the relationship between leadership practices and learning organisation followership. It starts by reviewing theoretical and empirical studies on the role of leaders in developing a learning organisation within the Abu Dhabi Education Council (ADEC). This chapter presents and discusses the theoretical background on different types of learning (single and double loop), the conceptualisation and operationalisation of learning organisations, problems associated with the concept of a learning organisation and the characteristics of a learning organisation. The chapter also examines the difference between a learning organisation and organisational learning. Part 2 presents leadership practices and their relationship to the concept of a learning organisation.

2.2 Learning

Organisations have recently begun to invest in continuous learning programmes for their employees to ensure that they are able to deal with rapid changes on both the national and the international level (Argyris and Schone, 1978, Senge, 1990, 2000, 2006, Bierly et al., 2000). This means that ensuring opportunities for ongoing learning has become crucial for organisations. As it will be shown later in this chapter, leaders play an important role in creating a learning culture within their organisations.

2.2.1 What is Learning?

Before attempting to define and conceptualise what a learning organisation is, the concept and nature of learning needs to be clearly defined. Learning as a concept has undergone a number of changes over the last two decades particularly in the field of organisational learning. Literature suggests that organisational learning has no place in organisational theory unless transformed to suggest strategic planning, change and the products of innovation (Edquist 1997; Belanger et al., 2002, Mintzberg, 1994). In learning organisations, change leads to learning. According to Bass (1998), the concept of a learning organisation is closely linked to change management and leadership effectiveness.

Definitions of learning vary considerably. Argyris (1976: 365) defines learning as:

“The detection and correction of errors, and errors as any feature of knowledge or knowing that makes actions ineffective”.

This definition of learning focuses on the correction of mistaken actions by leaders working towards change. According to Onions (1973, cited in Harrison 2005), However, a common view of learning considers it a lifelong activity aimed at: a) developing: to unfold more fully, bringing out all that is contained therein; b) conducting: to bring up from childhood, so as to form habits, manners and mental and physical aptitudes; and c) training: to instruct within a specific discipline, or for some particular art, profession, occupation or practice; to exercise, to practice or to drill. A clearer and more practical definition is that given by (Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, 2004c), which defines learning as a process by which a person

constructs new knowledge, skills and capabilities and training as an intervention by the organisation intended to advance its objectives. As mentioned above, Argyris and Schon (1978: 2) argue that learning is used to detect and correct error. Therefore, learning is involved when something goes wrong within an organisation.

2.2.2 Types of Learning

The literature identifies four major types of learning: zero learning, single loop learning, double loop learning and triple-loop learning. Argyris (1976) and Argyris et al. (1985) were among the first researchers to carry out work involving these types of learning. Argyris and Schon (1978) pioneered research in the field of single, double and triple loop learning. These principles focus on the design and management of organisations to help them cope with challenges occurred in unstable environments.

The authors focused on human agent's perspectives that considered as design on action, since human agents can design actions to achieve organisational and monitor the implementation of action overtime. Presenting single loop learning, double loop learning and triple loop learning shows that there are an implicit distinctive between the different types of learning which is represented in the relationship between structure and behaviour.

According to Argyris and Schon (1978), *zero learning* means that organisations fail to respond to new problems and do not take any necessary corrective steps. Such organisations are called "*disintegrators*". Generally, employees of such organisations do not receive feedback to help them improve their performance. There is no

relationship between individual knowledge and the collective base of knowledge of the organisation. Such organisations tend to rely on unstructured interviews to recruit staff and are more likely to have a manually skilled workforce. Training and feedback generally documented and mandated in the organisation policies. In *single-loop learning* organisations, activities and problems add knowledge to the organisation's knowledge base without transferring any primary processes. These organisations are known as "*consolidators*" where individuals within the single-loop learning process receive feedback and adjust their actions accordingly. According to Morgan (1997), the majority of organisations are skilled and capable of carrying out single-loop learning since they are able to determine the aim of the organisation, examine their environment and monitor their performance in terms of goal achievement. Single-loop learning organisations are able to detect and correct mistakes regarding a set of operations. Therefore, *single-loop learning* occurs when errors are detected and corrected without modifications to a firm's existing policies, goals or assumptions. The ideal learning model is the *double-loop learning* model where organisations are able to take a good look at a situation and question the relevance of their operating norms in light of that situation (Torlak and Koc, 2007).

Companies based on single-loop learning systems simply address problems as they occur without making any effort to avoid similar problems in the future. Learning of this type is accomplished through problem solving. Individuals who learn in this way are characterised by adapted responses but their knowledge base increases slowly. The selection of employees by such companies is based on technical skills and structured interviews while training is focused on problem solving through communication. Employees' motivation is directly linked to compensation packages

and performance bonuses. Although single-loop learning can play a role in solving simple problems, it is mostly ineffective in solving problems that require higher levels of thinking. This does not mean that the single-loop learning is not valuable, but it is less effective than other types of learning (Eilertsen and London, 2005).

In “*double-loop learning*” organisations the employees and the organisation as a whole increases its knowledge base and broadens its skills on an ongoing basis. These organisations are known as “*transformers*”. Employees in such organisations are empowered to change the routine processes that govern their duties. They are also able to reframe problems and participate in changing policies and procedures and risks at work. Employee recruitment is based on soft and hard skills, attitudes towards learning, responsibility, team working and participation. Training in these organisations depends on personal development where an employee is engaged in self-directed learning (Argyris and Schon, 1978).

Double-loop learning occurs when errors are detected and corrected such that a firm’s existing policies, goals, and/or assumptions are called into question and challenged. Morgan (1997b) identifies the following four steps in the implementation of double-loop learning. Firstly, sensing, scanning and monitoring the organisational environment, including the ability of leaders and employees to cope with critical problems. Secondly, comparing this information against operating norms and, thirdly, questioning whether the operating norms are appropriate for the implementation of an organisational policy aimed at creating a learning culture. Finally, initiating appropriate actions should be translated into programmes for implementation. It is

clear from the above that organisations should be able to adopt both single and double loop learning which allow them to correct any deviation from organisational goals.

Organisations with “*triple-loop learning*” evolved from organisations, which used single- and double-loop learning. Such organisations regard learning strategies as essential processes (Argyris et al., 1985). They are known as “*co-inventors*”, that is organisations that incorporate learning operations in their development. Employee recruitment is based on sharing ability, critical thinking and reflective learning. Training is based on peers teaching peers. *Triple-loop learning* occurs when organisations learn how to use out single- double-loop learning effectively (Argyris, 1996). This requires identifying the various factors (both individual and organisational) that help to facilitate organisational learning. With triple-loop learning, firms “learn how to learn” (Romme and Reijmer, 1997: 2). ADEC would not be able to become a learning organisation without integrating double- and triple-loop learning in its processes.

2.2.3 Factors Influencing Learning

Crossan (2001: 204) identifies general issues or factors that affect learning organisations including context, history and survival. *Context*, for instance, is linked to structural social factors. According to Lave (1996: 29):

“[The] assumption of most organisational learning theory is that learning is socially constructed, that is, what is learned and how learning occurs are fundamentally connected to the context in which that learning occurs.”

A fundamental aspect of organisational learning that should always be remembered is that an organisation should not lose its learning abilities when its employees leave the organisation (Crossan and White, 1999). The concept of organisational memory means that learning organisations are based on current members, and future members' experiences, as values and beliefs are accumulated over time (Bapuji and Crossan, 2004). Therefore, creating a learning organisation is only half of the solution to a challenging problem that faces organisations in working towards creating learning organisation practices. Senge (1992: 7) stated that for an organisation to become a learning organisation, it should accept a set of attitudes, values and practices that support the process of continuous learning within organisation. Thus, ADEC needs to use its leaders' and followers' values and social practices to work towards transforming the organisation into a learning organisation.

The second factor is *history*. Past endeavours and past events affect long-term learning within an organisation. The ability of the organisation to absorb and deploy old and new information will inform the development of the learning organisation (Senge, 2006). This represents the concept of *survival*, which is considered to be the cornerstone of a learning organisation (Bapuji and Crossan, 2004).

2.3 Learning Organisation

In the last two decades, the notion of the learning organisation has become one of the main researched topics in the field of management and leadership (Senge, 1990; Roth and Kliner, 1998; Garvin, 1993). The adoption of the learning organisation concept and strategy enables organisations to keep up with rapid changes in the business environment and to develop their competitive advantage.

Organisational priorities have changed in recent years. The focus has moved from piecemeal training activities to more systematic human resource development. Many businesses have reoriented themselves away from training individual employees towards becoming learning organisations with an emphasis on continuous learning (Price, 2004). Price adds that competitiveness as one consequence of creating a learning organisation. For some time, this learning experience was encapsulated within a particular model of training: a comparatively straightforward, organised function, which depended heavily on planning.

In the United Kingdom, for example, there is an increasing focus on learning. The government has published a Green Paper on Lifelong Learning (DfEE 1998: 1), which states:

“We stand on the brink of a new age. Familiar certainties and old ways of doing things are disappearing. Jobs are changing and with them the skills needed for the world of tomorrow.... Learning is the key to prosperity - for each of us as individuals, as

well as for the nation as a whole.... The fostering of an enquiring mind and the love of learning are essential for our future success... . To achieve stable and sustainable growth, we will need a well-educated, well-equipped and adaptable workforce. To cope with rapid change we must ensure that people can return to learning throughout their lives. We cannot rely on small elite: we will need the creativity, enterprise and scholarship of all our people.”

This statement shows that organisations (public and private) are required not to focus only on leaders but also on the followers who are the cornerstone of change in organisations. Therefore, leaders have an important role to play in supervising and advising followers through the building of a good relationship with followers. This study recognises the importance of followers in an organisation and how they contribute to the development of a learning organisation, as it will be shown in next sections.

2.3.1 Conceptualisation of the Learning Organisation

Several researchers (Villard et al., 1997; Johnstone et al., 1998; Senge, 1990, 2000) state that the concept of the learning organisation emerged in the 1990s; a decade that saw a revolution in organisational learning, enacting change in both public and private organisations through the reconceptualization of organisations (Villard et al., 1997).

There emerged a belief that becoming a learning organisation played an important role in guaranteeing positive transformational change within an organisation. The learning organisation concept became the new buzzword. A rationale that supports the learning organisation is the belief in change. In other words, the learning organisation culture encourages the organisation and individuals to pursue change in a proactive and positive manner. Johnstone et al. (1998) argue that change has a great impact on people, organisations and society. More interestingly, Shove et al. (2012) revised the issue of collective awareness of leaders and employees of adapting change to improve the performance of organisations in the short and long run.

In general, the concept of a learning organisation is directly linked to how organisations cope with organisational change (Redding 1997). The learning organisation model stresses that employees in organisations are regarded as the hearts and minds of productive change (Millett, 1998; McGill, 1993). According to McGill (1993) the major difference between learning organisations and traditional ones, is the aim to enact transformational change.

Senge (1990) brings something new and powerful to the debate. Senge (2006:3) stated that:

“Learning organisations are those that have in place systems, mechanisms and processes, that are used to continually enhance their capabilities and those who work with it or for it, to achieve sustainable objectives - for themselves and the communities in which they participate.”

Senge (1990: 3) adds:

“Organisations where people continuously expand their capacity to create the results that try to desire when new and expensive patterns of thinking and nurtured, where collective aspiration is set free and where people are continuously learning to see the whole together.”

Another definition for learning organisation is given by Moilanen (1999a) who had a slightly different view from Senge’s. Moilanen (1999a: 51) states:

“A learning organisation is a consciously managed organisation with “learning” as a vital component in its values, visions and goals, as well as in its everyday operations and their assessment. The learning organisation eliminates structural obstacles of learning, creates enabling structures and takes care of assessing its learning and development. It invests in leadership to assist individuals in finding the purpose, in eliminating personal obstacles and in facilitating structures for personal learning and getting feedback and benefits from learning outcomes.”

A review of the literature reveals there is no single definition of what constitutes a learning organisation. Leithwood et al. (1995:63) state:

“Learning organisation is a group of people pursuing common purposes with a collective commitment to regularly weighting the value of those purposes,

modifying them when that makes sense, and continuously developing more effective and efficient ways of accomplishing those purposes”.

This presentation of the different types of definitions of what constitutes a learning organisation points to the fact that there are a number of varying opinions on the matter. For example, Senge's (2006) definition focuses on system thinking, mechanisms and processes that enhance organisations' capabilities to achieve their sustainable objectives. On the other hand, Moilanen's (1999a) definition is centred on eliminating structural obstacles of learning, involving leadership and eliminating personal obstacles. Moilanen (2005) states that the problem with Senge's (2006) model is that it focuses on evaluating the learning organisation as a whole entity. From another point of view, Leithwood and Aitken (1995) focus on collective efforts among people in organisations to achieve their purposes. These definitions complement one another since each one addresses a specific issue. In general, a learning organisation is one, which considers the organisation itself to undergoing a learning experience. Therefore, the development of an organisation as a learning organisation depends upon the characteristics that shape that organisation's development, and progress towards learnability.

Garvin (1993) states that for an organisation to be a learning organisation its ability to solve problems, learn from experience, transfer knowledge and learn from other organisations' experience and best practice effectively must be considered. Garvin's (1993) definition was supported by Goh (1998) who defines a learning organisation as being one which builds strategic objectives that focus on shared leadership and

subordinates' involvement, collaboration and team work and knowledge transfer from other successful organisations. Similarly, Bonnet et al. (2006) identified a number of factors that may have an impact on an organisation's ability to become a learning organisation, which leads to change. These factors include ability to set a vision, mission and strategic objectives, provide best practices for managers, show trust and openness, support continuous learning and encourage teamwork, training and development.

It can be concluded from the above presented definitions that a learning organisation is characterised by an expansion of the organisation's capabilities and capacities through continuous learning, which depends upon the organisation's experience, the employees' experience and its readiness to change. The disparity between the different definitions may be attributed to differences in the measurement of what constitutes a learning organisation.

This study has not relied on any of the definitions of learning organisations given above, not because these definitions are weak or invalid, but because they have been applied to western organisations or adapted to organisations in other countries (United Arab Emirates). The definition of a learning organisation used in this study is based on empirical work generated from the interviews and focus groups conducted with leaders and followers. Therefore, the definition used for a learning organisation in this study is as follows:

“A learning organisation is the notion through which an organisation aims to achieve its vision, mission and organisational objectives. An organisation can become a learning organisation through continuous training and professional development, leaders’ and followers’ social practices and team work. Within a learning organisation the role of the leaders in developing and maintaining good relationships with their followers is crucial. A learning organisation can develop an effective reward system, develop good sources of information and instil a vision and a sense of mission in its followers.”

2.3.2 Discussion of the Definition of Learning Organisation

Argyris and Schon (1978) suggest what is called a “learning system” that is related to double-loop learning. In contrast, Senge (1990) suggests what is called “system thinking” which has been considered to be the cornerstone of learning organisations. Although many scholars and authors have supported Senge’s (2006) work on system thinking, many have also criticised his model (Bui and Baruch, 2010). Bui and Baruch (2010) suggest that the theoretical implication of Senge’s (2006) model has not been empirically explored. As mentioned above, Senge (2006) examined five disciplines related to the learning organisation: system thinking, personal mastery, mental models, teamwork and shared vision. Senge (2006) himself stated that the five disciplines should be treated with caution. Senge (2006) linked system thinking with practice, which leads to the creation of a learning organisation. Moving from

“system” to a learning process creates theoretical problems particularly when it comes to defining how individuals and organisations learn. Individual learning is complicated especially in terms of concepts such as cognitive and sensory learning. Individual learning is of no advantage if organisations do not translate theory into practice and enhance the capacity of the organisation itself to learn (Caldwell, 2012).

In general, Senge’s model follows Argyris’ theory of learning in its classical form which argues that learning is led by practice (“theories-in-use” or learning by doing) rather than by theoretical knowledge (“adopted theories” or what an organisation is doing). In relation to this, theoretical knowledge should be transformed and translated into practice. At the same time, Argyris (2004) states that individuals cannot learn until their behaviour is changed.

According to Senge (2006: 384), learning is not an individual issue or an individual behaviour but a shared, double loop process. In this sense, the process of cognitive learning may change within organisations if the mental model of the individuals (leaders) is changed. Based on this, learning should be shifted from an individual level to the organisation level but a shared cognitive vision between individuals and the organisation should be created so that the vision can be translated into practice (Marshall, 2008). The problem with Senge’s model is that Senge (2006) considered practice to be the second order of knowledge and linked it to social behaviour that can be changed over time (Senge 2006). Senge’s argument is based on our understanding of the system, which leads us to better practices.

There has been a debate about the difficulties of linking learning to either the individual level or the organisational level (Argyris and Schon, 1978: 15). Learning on the individual level comprises the fundamental groups of learning where learning is an individual process. The question, however, is: how do organisations learn? If organisations are learning, what is the role and function of the individuals within the organisation? There has been a great deal of debate about these questions (Friedman et al., 2005: 22) and others related to the characteristics of a learning organisation (Reed, 2003). Senge's (1990) model attempted to incorporate the organisational process with practices in one construct. This is partly the reason why it failed because it attempted to focus on the structure of the organisation itself. Senge's model focused on the system rather than on the actions, consensus over conflict and norms over practices (Caldwell, 2012). According to Caldwell (2006), assimilating the learning organisation into structuration theory (Giddens, 1984) would require focusing on organisational learning as an essential process of practice-based learning assuming that learning is a focus of human practice. According to this view, organisational change and organisational learning are almost synonymous with each other and organisational practice.

This chapter has presented and discussed several definitions of what constitutes a learning organisation. However, studies should not necessarily rely on definitions initiated by others as every organisation, be it public or private, in a developed or a developing country has its own circumstances and its own leaders and followers.

2.3.3 Senge's Five Disciplines

Senge (1992: 7) stated that for an organisation to become a learning organisation it has to accept a set of attitudes, values and practices that support the process of continuous learning within the organisation. In the learning culture, training is a key element in the business strategy of an organisation dedicated to continuous learning. Senge (1990) states that there are a number of factors that distinguish traditional organisations from learning organisations, and these factors might motivate organisations to evolve into learning organisations. These are system thinking, personal mastery, mental models, building a shared vision and team learning. System thinking is deemed to be the cornerstone of the learning organisation. It is described by Senge (2006) as the pivot in creating a culture of learning and change. System thinking is a conceptual framework, which focuses on the ability of the theory to examine the interventions between all parts of the organisation. Senge (2006) describes the five disciplines of a learning culture that contribute to the building of a robust learning organisation as follows:

- **Personal mastery:** individuals learn to expand their own personal capacity to create the results that they most desire. Employees also create an organisational environment that encourages all fellow employees to evolve toward the goals and purposes that they desire.
- **Mental models:** one's 'internal' picture of one's environment will shape one's decisions and behaviour.
- **Shared vision:** this involves individuals building a sense of commitment within particular work groups, developing shared images of common and desirable futures and the principles and guiding practices to support the journey to such futures.

- **Team learning:** transforms conversational and collective thinking skills, so that a group's capacity to develop intelligence and ability reliably is greater than the sum of its individual member's talents.
- **System thinking:** develops the ability to see the 'big picture' within an organisation and understand how changes in one area affect the whole system.

Jackson (2003) states that critical system thinking of imposing five main constraints for compatible arguments. The system focuses on critical awareness and social awareness, which inform freedom to deliver. The system is also committed to the development of all of its various strands within the organisation at the theoretical level. It can be concluded that Senge's suggestions are not sufficient for an organisation to become a learning organisation. This is because Senge's model did not consider the role of leaders and followers in transforming organisations into learning organisations. Additionally, Senge's and other models have not taken social practices into account in the learning process where learning may take place through daily life practices and through other individuals' values and traditions. These issues are investigated in this study, which looks at the relationship between social practices and learning.

As mentioned previously, there is no specific definition of a learning organisation because it is a process that requires different types of effort to be achieved. Therefore, this study is not based on a specific definition but uses a mix of approaches comprising social practices, organisational factors (vision, mission, strategic planning, financial resources, etc.), rewarding system, team working, the role of leaders and followers, the role of information resources and training. The following sections and

sub-sections present and discuss the theoretical and empirical studies related to these issues.

2.3.4 Types of Organisations: Traditional and Learning Organisations

Becoming a learning organisation may be a desirable aim but it is a difficult one to achieve in practice. The difficulties can be tackled by emulating the characteristics of a learning organisation. A learning organisation has particular characteristics that are complex and interdependent (Cofessore and Kops, 1998). There are two types of learning organisation characteristics: traditional and contemporary. Using Senge's model of a learning organisation as a basis, Hitt (1995) distinguished between a traditional and a learning organisation (the characteristics of both are summarised in the table below). Table 1 indicates that the shared values of a learning organisation focus on organisational excellence and renewal that creates a shift in the minds of leaders and the minds of all stakeholders (its leaders and employees). This belief focuses on the idea that organisations are social constructs that reflect the collective belief of leaders and employees in order to achieve excellence (Charlotte et al., 2002). In contrast, traditional organisations attempt to achieve effectiveness and efficiency through the effectiveness of their leaders. The management style of the leaders of learning organisations is based on coaching and facilitating while in traditional organisations leaders control the achievement and productivity of their employees. In learning organisations, everyone in the organisation is consulted regarding any problem while in traditional organisations leaders are responsible for mapping the road for the organisation. Other characteristics are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Characteristics of traditional organisation and learning organisation

Element	Traditional Organisation	Learning Organisation
Shared values	Efficiency Effectiveness	Excellence Organisational renewal
Management style	Controlling	Facilitator coaching
Strategy/ action plan	Top down approach Road Map	Everyone is consulted Learning map
Structure	Hierarchy	Flat structure Dynamic Networks
Staff Characteristics	People who know (experts) knowledge is power	People who learn Mistakes tolerated as part of learning
Distinctive staff skills	Adaptive learning	Generating learning
Measurement system	Financial measures	The financial and non-financial measures
Teams	Working groups Department boundaries	Cross-functional teams

2.4 Characteristics of learning organisations

In the last two decades, the literature on leadership and management has placed a great deal of emphasis on organisations that create efficient information feedback loops in the short and long term. Furthermore, restructuring of organisations is regarded as essential since it contributes to incremental flexibility and adaptability to technological change and globalisation (Salner, 1999).

In order for an organisation to become a learning organisation, it should have particular characteristics including the commitment of its leadership, communications, cultural values, upgrading performance, knowledge transfer, employee characteristics, and empowerment. Each of these characteristics could be achieved depending upon the liability and capacity of the organisation that aims to become a learning organisation, to guarantee change. The most important characteristics to start with is cultural values, which relates to the creation of a learning culture within the organisation and whether the cultural value affects the change process. Furthermore, it is very important for organisations to establish an open and effective formal communication system. The proposed communication system may be used as an organisational learning model. An organisation should be able to measure its learning orientations using a survey questionnaire that uses a Likert scale. The major goal of the survey instrument is to examine the actual behaviour in organisations. This, in fact, will provide the gap in information between the actual and desired state of the organisations in terms of learning and other issues (Appelbaum and Reichart, 1998). Furthermore, Morgan (1997) suggests that if an organisation wishes to become a learning organisation, it should have the capability and capacity of developing a number of guidelines. Not all organisations have the same leadership and the same cultural values. Therefore, such type of organisation should be investigated to examine the similarities and dissimilarities between them. Some organisations tend to

link learning and leadership. According to Maguire and McKelvey (1999) leadership can be distributed between employees in the organisations which leads to the distribution of the responsibilities. Therefore, everyone in the organisation is responsible for achieving part of his/her initiatives and tasks. Therefore, all employees are responsible for achieving the aims of the organisations.

According to Appelbaum and Reichart, (1998), the learning style of an organisation uses what is called orientations and the effectiveness of the organisation's learning since this effectiveness may be measured using a number of facilitating factors. According to Argyris (1977), the learning process consists of three elements (the learning process in an organisation is identified in a number of stages): acquisition of knowledge, utilise learning, dissemination, and documentation of continuous education. Acquisition of knowledge is represented in the creation and development of skills, insights and relationships. Sharing of knowledge focuses on the dissemination of what has been learned and finally the utilisation of knowledge is centred on the integration of learning in the organisation.

The success of an organisation may occur if the organisation develops facilitating factors that suggest learning (Argyris, 1977). In relation to facilitating factors, Appelbaum and Reichart (1998) developed a model based on learning organisations (values and practices that reflect learning and what is to be learned). These organisations define the patterns of the organisation's learning style. The table below presents the definition of learning orientations and facilitating factors.

Table 2: Learning Orientation and Facilitating Factors of Learning Organisations

Learning Orientation	Facilitating factors
<p>Knowledge source</p> <p>Internal – external</p> <p>Preference for developing knowledge internally versus preference for acquiring knowledge developed externally.</p>	<p>Scanning imperative and performance gap</p> <p>Shared perception of a gap between actual and desired state of performance, performance shortfalls seen as an opportunity for learning. Information gathering about conditions and practices outside the unit, awareness of the environment.</p>
<p>Product – process focus</p> <p>What? – how?</p> <p>Emphasis on accumulation of knowledge about what products are versus how organisation develops and makes its product.</p>	<p>Concern for measurement</p> <p>Considerable effort spent on measuring key factors, striving for specific quantifiable measures, and discussion of metrics as learning activity.</p> <p>Experimental mind set</p> <p>Support for trying new things, curiosity about how things work, failures are accepted, changes in work processes policies and structures are a continuous series of learning opportunities</p>

<p>Documentation mode</p> <p>Personnel – public</p> <p>Knowledge is something individuals possess versus publicly available knowhow.</p>	<p>Climate of openness</p> <p>Accessibility of information, open communication, problems/errors are shared, debate and conflict are acceptable ways to solve problems</p>
<p>Dissemination mode</p> <p>Formal – informal</p> <p>Formal prescribed organisation-wide</p> <p>Methods of sharing learning versus informal methods.</p>	<p>Continuous education</p> <p>On-going commitment to education at all levels of the organisation, support for member's growth and development.</p> <p>Operational variety</p> <p>Variety of methods procedures and systems, appreciation of diversity, pluralistic rather than singular definition of value competencies</p>
<p>Learning focus</p> <p>Incremental – transformational</p> <p>Corrective learning versus radical change</p>	<p>Involved leadership</p> <p>Leaders articulate vision, are engaged in its implementation, frequently interact with members, become actively involved in education programmes.</p>

<p>Skill development focus</p> <p>Individual – group</p> <p>Development of individual's skills versus team and group skills</p>	<p>System perspective</p> <p>Interdependence of organisational units, problems and solutions seen in terms of systemic relationships among processes, connection between the unit's needs and goals and the organisation's.</p>
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2.5 Organisational Learning Compared to Learning Organisation

2.5.1 The Concept of Organisational Learning and Learning Organisation

Argyris (1977) defines organisational learning as the process of “detection and correction of errors”. In this view, organisations learn through individuals acting as agents for them: individuals’ learning activities, in turn, are facilitated or inhibited by an ecological system of factors that may be called an organisation learning system (p. 117). In other words, Argyris and Schon (1978) suggest that organisational learning is the process of managing organisation experience components and transformation into production entities. Huber (1991) argues that the defining property of learning is the combination of same stimulus and different responses. However, this is rare in organisations, meaning either organisations do not learn or that organisations learn but in non-traditional ways. Huber (1991: 119) further notes: “perhaps organisations are not built to learn. Instead, they are patterns of means-end relations deliberately designed to make the same routine response to different stimuli, a pattern that is antithetical to learning in the traditional sense.

The concept of organisational learning has been criticised, as there is no clear direction and it is a relatively wide notion (McGill and Slocum, 1993). While carrying out the literature review relevant issues related to organisational learning were also documented. For example, organisational learning has been documented as the process of involving individuals and groups in learning inside the organisation. In contrast, learning organisation places its focus on actions directed towards identification, promotion and evaluation of the quality of learning processes in organisations (Tsang, 1997; Easerby and Araujo; 1999). Ortenblad (2001) identified these differences between a learning organisation and organisational learning. Firstly, organisational learning focuses on processes or a set of activities while the learning organisation is viewed as a form of organisation. Secondly, learning usually takes place in an organisation where learning organisation requires some efforts to develop learning. Thirdly, literature on organisational learning primarily emerged from the academic literature while literature on learning organisation mainly developed from practice (Easerby, 1997).

As mentioned earlier, the concept of a learning organisation appeared as a new concept in the early 1990s. The learning organisation has been considered as a development in the area of organisational learning and its perspective because its potential benefits are embedded in developing transformational change in organisations and reconceptualising organisations. The focus on learning organisation is not only placed on information transfer and training but has a wider perspective since it comprises a desire to change, team work, social practices and rewarding.

Notwithstanding the several differences between organisational learning and learning organisation, Tseng and McLean (2009) argued that these two entities are interrelated. For instance, the authors found that the theories on organisational learning contribute to how an organisation may become a learning one. Thus, organisational learning is regarded as a process and an activity that can be used to reach the ideal learning organisation (Finger and Brand, 1999).

2.5.2 Individual Learning versus Organisation Learning

Organisational learning theories have addressed and debated three levels at which learning takes place: individuals, groups and organisation. Some authors believe that learning should take place at the individual and group levels (Dogson, 1993). However, other authors argue that learning should take place at the level of the organisation (Glynn et al., 1994). Dogson (1993: 377) suggests that learning is most effective at the individual level since individuals make up an organisation and when individuals learn it result in organisational learning. In contrast, Glynn et al. (1994) argue that learning on the group and organisational levels influence the learning on the individual level because of the hierarchical structure of organisations. This view is supported by Nicolini (1995), who argues that learning on an individual level is too narrow and cannot explain how consensual knowledge is developed and communication can be promoted. Driver (2002) adds that organisations have the ability to preserve key employee characteristics, such as certain behaviours, values and norms over time. Individuals working for organisations share these characteristics and use them to understand and interpret their environment. Therefore, an organisation's values may become the foundation for new learning and help individuals learn new things (DiBella and Gould, 1998). Wilkinson, B., & Kleiner

(1993:24) differentiate how individuals and organisations learn. Wilkinson, B., & Kleiner (1993) state that the main difference lies in the way individuals and organisations learn, where individuals have memories that organisations do not have. Individuals can store what they learn in their memories while organisations store learning in their culture and documentation. Finally, Wilkinson, B., & Kleiner (1993) suggest that individuals learn through activities and by updating their memories while organisations learn through change in their culture.

The author of this thesis feels that learning should be taken on both at the individual and at the organisation level since the two complement one another. Individual learning can be transferred to group learning and to organisational learning. Organisations can work to instil change and a learning culture in individual employees and groups of employees. It can be said that individual learning and organisation learning are complementary because individuals can use what they have learned to benefit the organisation while individuals to change social practices, carry out teamwork and thereby achieve the organisation's goals can use what is learnt by organisations.

2.6 Leadership and Followership

This section presents and discusses the definition of leadership and followership, different styles of both and the role of leaders and followers in organisations.

2.6.1 Leadership and Organisations

This sub-section presents and discusses the definition of leadership and leadership styles and the relationship between leadership and a learning organisation.

2.6.1.1 What is Leadership?

The nature of leadership has been a topic of great interest to academics since the early Greek philosophers including Plato and Socrates. However, arguably the need for effective leadership is being challenged more than ever. It is argued that in today's changing environment an effective leadership style holds the key, to not only the success of individuals and organisations, but to whole sectors, regions and nations (Grint, 2004: 1).

To understand the nature of leadership one must usually start by examining what leadership is not. For instance, leadership is not hierarchical, top down or based on authority and positional power. In order to understand leadership, one must consider the value of leadership and the process of engaging leaders and followers in a reciprocal relationship that leads to the achievement of common aims. It can be said that the role of a leader is to get his/her followers together and make things happen. In relation to this aspect, Burns (1978: 12) states:

"I define leadership as leaders inducing followers to act for certain goals that represent the values and the motivations--the wants and needs, the aspirations and expectations—of both leaders and followers. The genius

of leadership lies in the manner in which the leaders see and act on their own and their followers' values and aspirations."

2.6.1.2 Leadership Styles

Hersey and Blanchard (1982) suggested four leadership styles, which follow the situational leadership theory. The authors believe that the success of leaders depends upon what style they use with followers and how followers are prepared for performing the tasks they set.

The first leadership style is “telling” which is used with followers who lack training, the confidence or willingness to perform tasks. When using this style, leaders are required to direct their followers and guide them to the right path by giving them detailed instructions to enable to perform tasks and monitoring their performance.

The second leadership style is “selling” which is used with followers who are confident and have a desire to work but are not capable of completing the tasks. In this case, leaders are required to strengthen their relationship with followers and guide them by clarifying decisions and giving followers the opportunity to ask questions about the tasks they have been set.

The third leadership style is “participating” which is employed to motivate followers who have the capabilities and abilities to achieve the organisational goals but lack the confidence to perform the tasks. Relationship oriented leadership predominates in this type of leadership style. Leaders encourage followers to participate in decision-making processes and support their efforts.

The last leadership style is “delegating”. This style is used with followers who have the ability to and are confident in performing the tasks set. Followers who exhibit varying levels of relationship and task oriented behaviour are self-directed. Leaders can turn over responsibility to these followers and delegate them key tasks.

It can be concluded from this overview of leadership styles that leaders are required to deal with their followers based on their background. The following section discusses matching leadership styles and followership styles.

2.6.1.3 Transactional and Transformational Leadership and Learning

Organisation

In general, transformational leadership was developed from transactional leadership. In relation to this aspect, McGregor (1978: 50) stated, “what today is needed is not the old style of transactional leadership but the new style of transformational leadership.” This statement was supported by Bass (1993) suggested that transactional leaders define and determine what their followers should do through the realisation of personal and organisational goals. These goals are identified by leaders and help

followers to become more engaged in decision-making and other activities in the organisation.

Transactional and transformational leadership are not mutually exclusive but lie on a continuum (Bass and Avolio, 1994). According to Bass (1985), transactional and transformational leadership styles are not two different constructs, but comprise complementary constructs, such as the relationship between leaders and followers. The main difference between them is the reward given to followers by transactional leaders to control their followers. Transformational leaders, in contrast, compare their followers' commitment to achieve the goals of the organisation and for motivation (Reffert and Griffin, 2004; Goodwin et al., 2001). The main weakness of transformational leadership styles is embedded in the limited effect of the followers' characteristics on the charismatic leadership process. Furthermore, this style of leadership makes followers more obedient and loyal to leaders that suggest that followers become servant to leaders thus ending up with passive followers and active leaders (Graham, 1991; Beyer, 1999; Yukl, 1999). Leaders have to motivate followers to perform better than their expectations thus exceeding the goals of the department/organisation (Howell and Avolio, 1993). The weakness of such leadership style is that the leaders do not participate in the decisions concerning the tasks (Howell and Avolio, 1993). When followers build a good and close relationship with their leaders, they do not accept and cannot tolerate the failure of their leaders. Moreover, committed followers are disappointed when their leaders fail (Kersten, 2009). Therefore, building a good relationship between leaders and followers is critical in achieving the goals of a learning organisation. Goldman (2011: 10) praised the role of followers stating:

“Sustained followership demands the continuing connection with and engagement of associates”
(Goldman, 2011, p.10).

In a learning organisation, transformational leadership assumes that followers are given responsibility and accordingly leaders believe that followers can deal with complex issues such as arise in a learning organisation. Therefore, transformational leaders empower followers (Conger and Toegel, 2002) to change social practices (values, beliefs, attitudes, etc.).

According to Millet (1998), there are two primary differences between the traditional viewpoint of leaders and leadership in relation to a learning organisation. The traditional view suggests that charismatic leaders have certain attributes that promote followership since the leaders make decisions based on their own learning experience and use them to influence followers (Senge, 1996). In a learning organisation, the leader is regarded as a facilitator of learning and encourages followers to learn. Besides, the leader concentrates on team working, mentors followers and plays a coaching role.

Developing dynamic followership is essential, and requires a focus on skills and the conceptualisation of the leaders’ role in an innovative way, to ensure that the leader does not fail. Therefore, valuing followership is a priority in effective transformational leaders who have the capability to motivate followers to achieve the vision and mission of the organisation particularly in the absence of a transactional

rewards system (i.e. financial incentives). Therefore, the shift from transactional to transformational leadership requires developing and sustaining transformational followership, which leads to the development of a transformational learning organisation (Sharon, 2008).

2.6.2 Followership and Organisations

This subsection presents and discusses the role of followers in organisations and followership styles.

2.6.2.1 What is Followership?

The concept of followership has only recently emerged in the literature on organisations. The literature review identified three authors who have contributed to the issue of followership: Robert Kelly, Ira Chaleff and Barbra Kellerman. All have different views on followership. Kellerman (2008: 231) defines followers as:

“Followers are subordinates who have less power, authority, and influence than do their superiors, and who therefore usually, but not invariably, fall into line”

This definition reveals that followers are of secondary importance in organisations because they have no role in decision-making and must take their managers’ lead. Kelly’s (2008) perspective supports this view: he reiterates that the majority of people in organisations are followers who do not hold valuable positions at the workplace. Kelly (2008) is convinced that followers should be recognised in organisations as they

are in a position to participate in the day-to-day events. According to Switzer (2011), followership can be used in both positive and negative ways. When used as an adjective, it becomes active and positive but when it is used as a noun, it becomes a negative. In general, the power of followership is embedded in the ability of leaders to realise the full potential of their followers to achieve the organisation's goals. Curphy and Roelling (2010) suggest that the role of followers and leaders may be considered equal in importance to the organisation, but the role of followers is often overlooked in the success of learning organisations and the focus has been placed only on the role of the leaders. Virtually everyone in an organisation has been a follower at some point in his or her career.

Organisations consist of people with different skills and knowledge who have different types of activities to perform (Drucker, 1988). Therefore, all employees (leaders and followers) have specific responsibilities. Followers have the power to be critical thinkers who may become engaged in all activities within the organisation, including participation in decision-making. Senge (1990) stressed that everyone in the organisation should be involved in a learning organisation including top management, middle management, the head of division and employees (followers).

2.6.2.2 Followership Styles

Prior to discussing followership styles, it would be useful to first focus on two dimensions of followership as proposed by Kelly (1992): the “independent and critical thinking followership” dimension and the “dependent and uncritical thinking followership” dimension (as seen in Table 3 below). The first dimension proposes a

question: do followers think for themselves? Do they think critically and independently? Or do they expect their leaders to think for them? The second dimension brings up the question: are followers actively engaged in creating positive energy for the organisation or is there negative energy or passive involvement? Kelly (1992) classifies followership into five styles (see Table 3: the sheep, the yes people, the alienated, the pragmatics and the star followers.

The “sheep” followers are passive and look to their leader to think for them and motivate them. In relation to this aspect, Kelly (1998: 7) states:

“If you are the boss and in your car on the way to work, and you are thinking about what you are going to get your workers to do and how you are you going to do that, then you are dealing with sheep.”

This statement indicates that these type of followers wait for their leaders to plan their daily tasks for them.

As for “the yes people”, they are always positive and on the side of their leaders. However, such followers still expect their leaders to think for them and direct them towards the vision of the organisation. If the leader asks such people to perform particular tasks, they do it immediately, and once they finish they ask for more tasks. These categories of followers see themselves as doers, because they believe that their leaders are paid for thinking and they get paid for doing.

The third style is the “alienated followers” who think for themselves but have a lot of negative energy. When their leader or the organisation attempts to move forward, these types of followers try to stand still and come up with a number of reasons why their leader and organisation should not move forward. These types of followers do not suggest solutions and are cynical and sceptical about current plans of action and programmes. It is worth mentioning that these people are energetic and smart and can determine for themselves if they are moving in the negative direction. These followers view themselves as rebels and dissidents, and believe they are the only people in the organisation who are brave enough to stand up to the boss.

The fourth style of followers are “the pragmatics” who sit on the fence and wait to see which way the winds blow, that is, how things are going and in what direction. Once they see where things are headed and they get on the board. This type of followers will never be the first on board, but they will never let the leaders and colleagues get on board without them. They consider themselves preservers of the status quo¹. In relation to this type of followers, Kelly (1998: 9) says:

“If I got all exited every time there was a new leader or a change of direction, my wheels would be spinning constantly. Leaders come and go. New vision comes and

¹ Basically, status quo is defined as bias in making decisions at work (Jungermann; 1998). Individuals and organisations tend to choose alternatives rather than status quo. In other words, organisations have two choices: whether adopt new alternatives (i.e. moving towards learning organisation) or stay in the current situation.

goes. If I sit here and wait, I will not have to do all that work.”

This statement reveals that these types of followers do not care about what is happening in the organisation; they care only about their own interests. They are not interested in accomplishing the tasks that may lead to achieving the goals of the organisation. The statement quoted above indicates also that that these followers cannot participate in teamwork because they take their time to get on board. Therefore, pragmatic followers do the thing that helps them to survive but wait to do it until the storm blows over.

The fifth and final followership style is “the star followers” who consider themselves as active, energetic and do not rely on their leaders to think for them. These types of followers do not accept their leader’s decision until they have evaluated it and examined its soundness. If they agree with the leader, they support them, but if they do not agree, they challenge them and offer a more constructive alternative to improve their course of action.

Additionally, Kelly (1988) suggested that there are critical differences between effective and ineffective followers. For instance, one of the chief characteristics of followers is their ability to determine their goals and decide what role they wish to perform at a certain point in time to help achieve the goals of the organisation. Effective followers demonstrate their unique commitment to the organisation and go

beyond their personal goals. They are also more likely to seek higher levels of competence than ineffective followers are. They are characterised by courage, honesty, enthusiasm, intelligence and self-reliance.

It can be concluded from the overview of these five types of followership styles that followers differ in their behaviour and ability in thinking about and accomplishing the tasks assigned to them. It is not reasonable to rely on these five followership styles as they are related to the leadership styles presented above. Transformational leaders encourage their followers to participate in decision-making and in achieving the mission and goals of the organisation in an effective way. Furthermore, leaders are responsible for their followers' achievement and non-achievement because, at the end of the day, leaders are expected to explain the performance of their departments.

2.6.3 Leadership and Followership Relationship

The core of leadership is followership simply because there are no leaders without followers. There are many more followers than there are leaders in the world. A person could be both a leader and a follower in an organisation's hierarchical structure. Studies have focused almost exclusively on leadership paying little attention to followership (Lave, 1996).

One of the major purposes of a learning organisation is to bring about a transformational change in the organisation and re-reconceptualise the organisation. This is to create a new way of thinking and new relationships within the organisations

both between the leaders and the followers and among the followers themselves. This can only happen in an organic, non-mechanistic system when human beings are not considered in a deterministic way as an object within the organisation.

According to Arolio and Reichard (2008), leaders and followers play an important role in the success or failure of organisations. However, followers are not recognised as fully as leaders because the success of any organisation is attributed to its leaders. Empirical studies emphasise that followers play as a critical role in organisations as the leaders but the focus of research in the last four decades has been on leadership (Henry, 2012; Bennis, 2008; Kelly, 2008; Dixon and Westbrook; 2003). It is worth mentioning that there are no leaders without followers and that they must co-exist. Empirically, Dixon and Westbrook (2003) argued that followership does exist in all levels of the organisation and this existence and visibility enhance the understanding of the leadership process because the parties depend on each another. In other words, leaders and followers are interdependent because the role of the latter influences the role of the former.

2.6.4 Leadership and Followership and Learning Organisations

Kupers (2007) believes that there is a range of ways that could determine the ability of followers to perform their tasks successfully in different conditions, for instance gaining new skills and knowledge and pursuing higher level of education. Issues related to social practices, behavioural development and the ethical lives of the leaders and the followers could also influence the followers' ability to perform their tasks. According to Martineau and Hennem (2004), developing an integral leadership and

followership is a long process which requires effort and time particularly when the organisation is continually learning and developing. Therefore, becoming a learning organisation is a strategic aim that should be translated into an action plan, which includes the development and promotion of teamwork, the development of a good rewards system and the development of social practices within the organisation.

Moilanen (2006), in her study on German organisations, indicated that top management and leaders play a critical role in developing learning organisations. In another study, Moilanen (2001) suggests that the investment in leadership assists followers in finding their purpose and coping with challenges encountered in their personal learning within the organisation. When organisations have effective leaders, a learning organisation could be created. However, it is difficult to develop a learning organisation if the leaders do not manage the organisation properly. According to Foster (2010), both followers and leaders orbit around the goals of the organisation but followers do not orbit around leaders. In general, leaders try to find the best methods and ways to develop the organisation they lead, be in the public or private sector. Leaders focus on specific goals to be achieved without resistance from other leaders or followers. Nevertheless, both leaders and followers have specific roles to play in organisations. The style of leadership and followership plays an important role in moving towards a learning organisation rather than the position and the ability of leaders and followers to influence the change in the organisation. From a social practice point of view, the focus of leaders is on their followers, and ensuring attitudes and behaviours are congruent with followers' interests. Thus, the concept of leaders-followers has been changed and is different from the conventional concept that states followers are subordinate to their leaders (Patterson, 2003: 3).

According to Gilbert and Matviuk (2008), both leaders and followers are responsible for creating a learning organisation through their engagement in addressing and solving problems related to followers and organisations such as issues related to training and development, and team working. Simply, these problems are related to learning which are considered as the end product of processes within organisations. Daft (2004) suggests that leaders may work on transferring and building knowledge that enables an organisation to continuously improve and increase its followers' capability. In learning organisations, leaders place their interest in empowering their followers and encouraging them to learn and collaborate internally with one another to help in learning about the learning organisation (Daft, 2004). Northhouse (2001: 260) emphasises that the main role of leaders in a learning organisation is to find the best ways to achieve the vision and the goals of the organisation. In this case, leaders try to integrate followers in the process of building a learning organisation. According to Humdyn (2012), the role of leaders in a learning organisation is coaching, empowering, learning and visioning. The results of this study and Humdyn' views are in line with Rajal's (2010) suggestion that leaders can bring out the best in their followers through coaching and empowering them. From a social practice point of view, the shared vision between leaders and followers leads to shared learning (Wenger, 2000). Furthermore, the social practice view revolves around the position (leader), status, ambition and capability of the position to coach followers in an effective way (Shove et al., 2012). In relation to this aspect, Humdyn (2012) claimed that leaders who experience a high degree of uncertainty about their leadership role lack a clear power base. This was due to the fact that leaders are not selected on the basis of a learning organisation' requirements. Singh (2008) claimed that changing an

organisation to a learning organisation requires a total change in the system, which requires a total change in the leadership. Sing (2008) argued that the main characteristics of the transformational style of leadership is to state the vision and initiate creative thinking which may lead to the creation of a learning organisation. Mellet (1998) stresses the fact that the role of a manager (leaders) is to facilitate the followers' work and to act as a mentor and coach their employees. This suggests active learning among employees.

Conger (2002) suggests that leaders are the strength and weakness of followers, which may lead to the creation of either positive or negative organisations. In relation to this aspect, Senge (2000) stresses that the leaders' role in the organisation enhances individuals' capacity to increase productivity that leads to achieve common goals. Furthermore, Gilbert and Matviul (2008) state that a leader-follower is created when "at any one time, leaders assume followers' roles and followers' assume leaders' role. Nevertheless, leaders and followers have the same aim, but in practice, followers do not orbit around their leaders (Patterson, 2003: 3). Avolio and Raichrad (2008) stress that the success or failure of an organisation largely depends upon the roles of the leaders and followers. However, eighty percent of the recognition of an organisations' success is given to leaders (Kelly, 2008). In general, successful leaders can influence their followers to learn and resolve all problems related to empowerment and retention (Weaver and Mitchell, 2012).

In order to achieve the goals of the organisation, Daft (2004) asserts that sharing information and building relationships and networks are critical in achieving a

learning organisation. The relationship between leaders and followers may be represented as an interaction between two independent individuals (Dotlich et al., 2004). In general, leaders are responsible for controlling their followers and therefore, both parties may construct joined relationships of mutual dependence. A strong relationship motivates and coordinates the actions of followers. When followers act appropriately, they can increase their leaders' ability to compel others to implement decisions that has been made (Srivastava and Cooperideer, 1998).

Bennis and Nanus (1997) found that the relationship between leaders and followers meets the followers' needs and wants which consequently creates a learning environment. Furthermore, the relationship is valued because it suggests an initiative to create a learning organisation. From the social practice perspective, the concentration is on the social component of learning which means that the challenge of a leader is to strengthen the relationship with followers particularly when they intend to convey what and how they have learned and, therefore, leaders encourage followers to learn from them (Connors and d'Arbon, 1997). Srivastava and Cooparrider (1998) argue that having effective and successful leaders and followers depends upon having interrelated practices that can create social practices such as understanding and helping one another. Social practice theory stresses that when a good relationship is constructed between leaders and followers, followers listen to leaders and watch how they do and behave and learn from them. Mahoney (2000: 241) stresses that:

“Directors and senior managers who find reasons for not valuing their staff and colleagues and not creating a

learning environment are in my view going to the way of the dinosaur, to extinction. The director who is afraid of being questioned and cannot abide diversity in the organisation is missing the great riches that can abound and if unleashed will be of immense value to all in the organisation.”

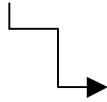
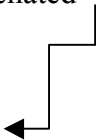
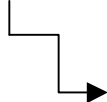
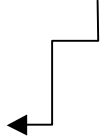
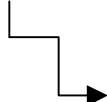
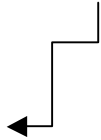
It can be concluded that leaders can influence followers and the organisation as a whole by creating a relationship with the followers thus playing the role of facilitator not of power and control.

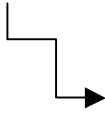
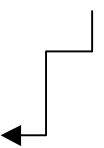
2.6.5 Matching Leadership and Followership Styles

Table 3 below presents the matching of leadership styles with followership styles. Leaders characterised by participative styles share ideas with their alienated followers making them feel more active so they feel more involved in the organisation. As mentioned above, alienated followers are capable but they need attention in order to create trust and respect and remove some of their scepticism. Leadership selling style is a good match for passive followers who need some guidance and direction as well as encouragement. The telling leadership style matches conformist followers who usually do what they are told to do. Conformist followers required instructions and monitoring. The delegating leadership style is ideal for exemplary followers where leaders are responsible for making decisions. Exemplary followers usually challenge their leaders for the benefit of the organisation (Bjugstad et al., 2006). It can be concluded from this brief description of matching leadership and followership styles that by matching the followers and leaders' styles well organisations can minimise

weaknesses in followers and strengthen follower-leadership relationships as well as the organisation.

Table 3: Matching Leadership and Followership Styles

Leadership Quadrant	Leader Behaviours Recommended	Follower Behaviours	Followership Quadrant
Participating 	The inclusion of followers in decision making to cause alienated followers to take ownership.	Becoming more involved through participation. Changing insider vs. outsider mind-set.	Alienated 
Selling 	Explaining decisions and clarifying expectations to engage passive followers.	Doing as requested.	Passive 
Telling 	Detailing expectations and monitoring performance to direct conformist followers.	Showing that results are important.	Conformist 

Delegating 	Turning over decision making responsibility and implementation.	Demonstrating results with increased responsibility.	Exemplary 
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2.7 Social Practices

This section presents and discusses different issues related to social practices including the definition of social practices and its relation to practice theory. Scholars have different perspectives on the role of social practise in relation to a learning organisation.

2.7.1 Practice Theory

In the last three to four decades, a number of social theories arose such as practice theories or theories of social practices. These theories, to a large extent have established a conceptual framework that provides an alternative to theories which proved dissatisfactory to some audiences (Reckwitz, 2002). There are several cultural theories, such as practice theory, which focus on the explanation and understanding of action. According to Reckwitz (2002), there are four types of cultural theories: culturist mentalism, textualism, inter-subjectivism and practice theory. Since this study focuses on practice and social practice theories, the focus will be on practice theory. Several scholars suggest that practice theory should be categorised as a cultural theory (Giddens, 1984; Foucault, 1977; Latour, 2005). In fact, cultural theories are primarily rooted in structuralism, hermeneutics and phenomenology.

Cultural theories are centred on explaining and understanding actions through the reconstruction of structures of knowledge that enable people to interpret the world using certain forms and to behave in certain ways (Reckwitz, 2002). There are a number of differences between the theory of social practice and other forms of cultural theory. The most important difference between the theory and social practices leads to other issues, such as practice theory. This separates social practices from other cultural theories and argues that the location of social identity is not culturally dependent. Social theory focuses on social identity as cognitive, and as the location of social actions and knowledge. In general, this is embedded in the idea of cultural mentalism. However, practice theory places the social in practice rather than in mental qualities or interaction. These practices are considered as the smallest unit of social analysis. For the purposes of this study, it is important to understand what these practices are. There is a distinction between practice and practices. Practice is a singular and emphatically describes the whole of human action. In contrast, practices can be defined in the sense of social practices. A practice is a human action represented in routine behaviours such as body activities, different forms of mental activities, state of emotions and know, how, etc. Furthermore, a practice may focus on ways of working, consuming, cooking, investigating, etc. It can be said that a practice is social because it is a type of how to understand and to behave at different point of time.

According to Reckwitz (2002), there are different aspects related to practice theory such as body, mind, things, knowledge, discourse, structure, process, etc. The *body* is regarded as the core of practice theory where practices and activities occur on a

routine basis and depend upon the movement of the body. Reckwitz (2002: 251) links social practices and body and gives the following definition of a social practice:

“A social practice is the product of training the body in a certain way: when we learn a practice, we learn to be bodies in a certain way.”

According to this definition, a practice is the regular and skilful performance by people. It should be pointed out that the body is not regarded here as an instrument that is used by humans but as a routine action that leads to performance. The body activities include routine emotional and mental activities that take place on certain levels.

The *mind* is related to the body. Social practices are a performance of routine bodily activities but they are also regarded as mental activities. They focus on routine ways of how to understand the world and to know things. Therefore, from a practice theory point of view, a social practice encompasses certain mental and body activities.

2.7.2 What are Social Practices?

Fairclough (2003: 25) suggests that social practices are the articulation of different sorts of social elements which may be associated with certain areas of social life, for example, social practices in the workplace that include actions, interaction, social relations, people's beliefs, attitudes and discourse. A social practice may be a product of training a body in a certain way. A social practice can be understood as the regular and skilful performance of human resources.

Conner and James (2002) concentrate on the social component of learning. One of the challenges of a leader is to foster relationships among people in the organisation, particularly as they convey what and how they have learned. If leaders were to try to automate learning by replacing real-time human interaction with technological solutions they would lose the creative tension inherent in face-to-face encounters with instructors and with peers. They also would also forgo the lasting relationships that are forged when people learn from one another. Strivastava and Cooparrider (1998) argue that the successful and effective leaders and followers and their interrelated practices can create a type of social practice such as understanding and helping one another. According to Northhouse (2004), ethics and morals are central in the leadership and followership context. For instance, leaders who assign tasks to followers try to motivate followers to accomplish mutual goals based on moral and ethical behaviours. These, in fact, reinforce organisational values, which lead to learning organisations particularly when connected with teamwork. It is worth emphasising that culture includes social practices (behaviour, language, informal practices, rules and system within the organisation) (Hartman, 1996). Leaders in organisations try to send important messages to their followers. According to Schein (2004), followers do not only listen to their leaders but they also watch their actions and behaviour. Some followers assume that their leaders' behaviour is important and tend to imitate them. Additionally, Hanges et al. (2001) stress that values are critical in determining followers' preferences for different sorts of leaders. These values include their influence on effectiveness and the environment in which they work, and willingness to learn from leaders, and to work to achieve common goals. In relation to this aspect, Gardner et al. (2005) mention that when leaders devote their values,

identify goals and emotions to their followers, authentic followership is created and reinforced and therefore followers learn new things from leaders. Gardner et al.'s (2005) perspective is in line with Ehtart and Klein's (2001) study who found that follower-leader relationship has an impact on their values and personality. The authors also found that such values contribute to the achievement of an organisation's goals and tend to represent transformational leaders rather than transactional leaders.

In social theory, two schools of thought exist: functionalism and structuralism, which have similarities and differences. The aim of both schools is to express a naturalistic stance and both are inclined to objectivism. Functionalism focuses on the biological sciences, which is comparable to the model of social sciences. Biology has been considered as a guide to conceptualise the structure and the functioning of social systems. On the other hand, structuralism is free from biological analogies and is centred on linking the social and natural sciences. Both functionalism and structuralism place a large emphasis on the superiority of the social whole of individuals (i.e. human agents and human actors). According to structuration theory, the main domain of social sciences is studying neither the experience of human actors nor the existence of any form of social totality². However, the theory focuses on social practices ordered across time and place. According to this view, actions related to learning organisations may not be seen as values, beliefs and people's attitudes but as part of their social practices. Shove (2004: 117) suggests that the performance of social practices is seen as part of people's routine accomplishments which may be

² Social totality is also called mode of production in the widest sense, and it may be considered as "structural whole" which make up of distinct and relatively autonomous levels or instances (Burke et al, 2010).

considered as normal ways of life. Furthermore, Reckwitz (2002) argues that individuals carry out different tasks and activities required by the practices. Practice theory stresses that individuals can understand the world around them and develop a more or less intelligible sense of themselves (Warde, 2005). This helps individuals identify their skills, negotiate, and perform tasks in the normal course of everyday life.

In general, human social activities (practices) are self-reproduced. However, social practices are not brought into being by social actors but are constantly recreated through some means such as learning from surroundings. Organisations reproduce knowledge which enables them to form their programmes but using distinct and cognitive skills. The theory of structuration states that a hermeneutic perspective is accepted as a type of human activity, which demands familiarity with the forms of daily life expressed in these activities. Giddens (1984) emphasises that human activities rely on reflexive forms of knowledge, and reflect the ability of individuals, which are largely used in relation to the order of social practices. In other words, the continuity of social practices assumes reflexivity. However, this reflexivity is possible only when social practices are distinctive and similar across space and time.

A number of practice theorists (Turner, 1994; Giddens, 1984; Foucault, 1977, 1982; Rouse, 2006) place an emphasis on different characteristics of human agents such as bodily agency, intentionality, expressiveness and effective responses. These characteristics rest uneasily alongside the role of social constraint in practice theories. An agent or individual is the core of practice theory since individuals are minds and

bodies who carry out social practices. Therefore, the social world is populated by a range of social practices (Caldwell, 2012).

According to practice theory, social practices shape individual actions. At the same time, social practices and norms shape the exercise of power (Foucault, 1977). Foucault (1977) addresses the issues of power relations and causal imposition of force. Power may be exercised and practiced only over free individuals which means that individuals who are faced with possibilities such as a way of behaving and different reactions (Foucault, 1982: 221). According to practice theory, the social structure encompasses routine activities. Therefore, social practices consist of routine activities moving body, wanting and wishing things and using things. Routinised social practices occur over a sequence of time in social order and repetition, which leads to social reproduction (Reckwitz, 2002). Moreover, social practice theorists (Warde, 2005; Shove and Pantzar, 2005; Shove, 2010; Giddens, 1984) argue that social practices lie between organisation and structure.

Turner (1994) suggests that the broad attractiveness of the practice idiom arises from the deceptive appearance that it has resolved some fundamental recurrent problem in social theory, in ways that turn out to be superficial or empty. In relation to this aspect, Turner (1994: 16) states:

“The idea of practice and its cognates has this odd kind of promissory utility. They premise that they can be turned into something more practice. But the value of concepts is destroyed when they are pushed in the direction of their promise.”

2.7.3 Social Practices and Learning Organisations

Lave (1996) suggests that the concept of learning may be considered as a social practice because learning is considered as an important aspect of changing participation in changing communities of practice.

The idea of social practice will be empirically explored in relation to the issue of a learning organisation at ADEC, through an in-depth interview with leaders and followers employed by ADEC. There is a belief that organisations are regarded as social constructs, which reflect the collection of beliefs and values of leaders and followers to achieve excellence (Charlotte, et al., 2002).

Boreham (2002) suggests there have been several dimensions of social and economic as well as environmental changes that have taken place in the last three decades such as the recognition of learning in the workplace. Furthermore, public and private institutions have realised the importance of continuous improvement in their organisations. According to the socio-cultural point of view, learning is understood as an entity embedded in the social and cultural context and is best understood through participation in these contexts (Boreham and Morgan, 2004). The concept of learning suggests the instantaneous transformation of social practices and the individuals who participate in them. Therefore, the social and individual dimensions of learning are mutually established. The combination of social and individual dimensions may lead to the development of social practices that would become a source of change in

organisations (Warde, 2005: 140). As mentioned above, social practices transform organisations to learning organisations but with the essential infrastructure associated with these social practices.

In general, a community or an organisation's members, function on an individual and collective level, and according to a certain social order. For example, within an organisation that learns through people living together in communities, certain practices can be seen to have been reproduced through everyday interactions and learning. According to Holmberg (2000), social practices within organisations are relational, that is they connect people with other people in a specific context. Organisations learn because their employees engage in social practices that enable them to coordinate different subjectivities with different viewpoints and experiences (Boreham and Morgan, 2004). This also depends upon how individuals in organisations work together to learn. According to Easterby-Smith et al. (2000), social practice can be used as a conceptual tool to analyse knowledge and knowledge practices in organisations. In this case, organisational learning consists of everyday activities, which are the unit of analysis as regards work practices. It can be said that learning does not mean that individuals learn cognitively, but that they use social practices to learn and solve certain problems. In relation to this aspect, Lave and Wenger (1991: 31) argue, "learning is an integral part and inseparable aspect of social practices". Lave and Wenger (1991) argue that human beings participate in social formation and engage with one another and learn from one another. There is also a kind of learning which is social and collective rather than individual. Therefore, there has been an attempt to move from the psychological theory of learning to social practice theory. This is because human beings live in a social environment and

relationships matter to them (Lave, 1996). Brown and Duguid (2001) emphasise the fact that social practices are used in a learning organisation and can provide an insight into how the learning process happens in organisations. According to social theory, learning is a social phenomenon that involves interaction and dialogue between individuals (Wenger, 1998).

According to Giddens (1984) human actions and learning are produced, reproduced and transformed through social practices of learning that are constantly changing. Senge's (2006: 6) view is that the non-hierarchical features of the work place depend upon "active participants that shape their reality". However, Senge's (2006) identification of a learning organisation is as a leadership oriented organisation engaged in the restructuring and reproduction of the system. This, in fact, limits the autonomy of the people in the organisation (Caldwell, 2011). In other words, Senge's (2006) view focuses on the distributed leadership that hinders the creation of a learning organisation. Although Senge (2006) created a semantic vision of a learning organisation that is centred on leadership, which works as well as system thinking, he was criticised by many scholars who considered his work as flawed because Senge focused on practices associated with distributed leadership. For Senge, the learning organisation is fundamentally reconstructed and restructured by leaders who follow what is called "top down leadership theory of systematic organisational change". Senge does not consider the learning organisation as a theory of agency, change and learning in organisation (Caldwell, 2011). Senge's view was not premised on what is called practice based exploration and how a learning organisation arises, develops and changes (Flood 1998, 1999; Raelin, 2007; Ortenblad, 2002, 2007; Wenger, 1998). In other words, there is no suggestion of the role of social practices in developing a

learning organisation and its development over time. Furthermore, this view does not take into consideration the potential for learning (Giddens, 1984). Giddens (1984) stresses that people (agents) can play multiple roles in a learning organisation using their social practices, such as their daily interaction with their world, and learn from their experience.

2.8 Factors Contributing to Becoming a Learning Organisation

This section presents and discusses the factors contributing to the development of a learning organisation which include information, team working and reward systems.

2.8.1 Organisational Factors

There is a range of organisational factors that affect the creation of learning organisation practices within organisations, including the vision and mission of the organisation (shared vision), strategic planning, financial and human resources. These factors are not only related to the development of a learning organisation but also impact change in the organisation (Esposito, 2008).

Shared Vision and Strategic Planning

Leaders in organisations are required to build a sense of commitment among followers by developing a shared vision of the future of the organisation (Collins, 2001). In other words, leaders need to change the vision for the future to ensure that it remains realistic, credible and consistent with the values of the organisation. This

suggests that followers may become committed to the change process of learning (Limerick et al., 2000). Senge (1990a) suggests that leaders may work on changing the vision of the organisation by focusing on the empowerment of followers, promoting coordination and collaboration between leaders and followers, providing support and encouraging open and honest communication.

According to Stata (1989), there are several benefits to strategic planning, since learning can occur during the planning process, and then be transformed into a strategic objective that may be developed and worked on over time. Redding and Catalanello (1994) suggest that a successful strategic change is not generally achieved by leaders alone, but by all the individuals in the organisation.

2.8.2 Information and Learning Organisation

One of the main purposes of learning organisations is to create change. In relation to this aspect, Argyris (1991) stresses that learning encourages individuals to use information that can produce real change in organisations.

Hirschman (1997: 9) states that post-modern firms rely on rich information and knowledgeable employees. According to Hirschman (1997), a knowledge intensive workplace prospers and thrives on the exchange of thoughts and experiences among employees and external organisations. Glasmeier et al. (1998) claim that information absorption is critical to learning in organisations since an organisation's ability to absorb new information depends on previous experience in the collection and

manipulation of information. The employees' knowledge base and experience enhance information sharing among employees, which leads to share learning. This also may include information on learning practices, social practices, communication and teamwork.

Therefore, employees can learn from the exchange of information to enhance their work. Delone and McLeans (2003) suggest that information influences an individual's behaviour, leading to good performance. Information also plays an important role in understanding the decision content and decision-making processes. Individuals are able to carry out their jobs more effectively based on reliable information. This encourages the development of a collective pool of knowledge and generates new ideas. These ideas tally with Wenger's (1998) conclusion that daily tasks in information rich organisations are more decision intensive and encourage employees to create their own knowledge. The more informed a workplace is the more decisions employees will have to make.

Cors (2003) suggests that organisations developing into learning organisations should encourage meaningful information exchange with other departments and external organisations working in the same field. Learning organisations depend on different sources of information both from inside and outside the organisation. They need to establish the type of information individuals need to perform allocated tasks and activities, the content of the information needed and identify whether the information is manipulated. Access to information is critical (Marrapodi, 2003).

Plessis et al. (2008) suggest that information about an organisation may be obtained through files documented in the departments within organisations. Each employee should be able to access information about the vision and mission of the organisation and its strategic planning. Millett (1998) maintains that employees need to share knowledge and information on the internal (organisation) and external levels (cooperation with other organisations).

The learning organisation requires a system to be in place to make information freely available to all employees in the organisation (Black and Synan, 1996). Access to information within the organisation requires the establishment of a communication process that ensures that all employees have access to the information they need to carry out their job. Access to information helps the organisation develop strategies to improve the team learning processes.

Organisations may be over supplied and overflowing with information but still have few of the characteristics that make up a learning organisation. In reality, information overload is often cited as a barrier to individual learning. Information is valued when it is converted into knowledge and used as a guide for performing activities (Britton, 1998). Therefore, a learning organisation can support leaders and followers by translating information into explicit knowledge that can be accessed by all employees in the organisation as well as by others outside the organisation for the purpose of information exchange (Smillie, 1995). The core of a learning organisation and

organisational learning is the translation of information into successful organisation through individuals, teams, organisational and wider learning processes (Tsang, 1997). Information is adapted for intensive use among employees in organisations.

2.8.3 Team Work and Learning Organisation

First it is important to define what is meant by team work. McBain and Kusy (1997: 21) define a team as:

“A collection of individuals who are interdependent in their tasks, who share responsibility for outcomes, who see themselves and who are seen by others as an intact-social entity embedded in one or more larger social systems ... and who manage their relationships across organisational boundaries”.

Wageman (1997) referred to the link between teamwork and a learning organisation, increased learning and adaptability. According to Froebel and Marchington (2005), working in teams enhances members’ skills and abilities that help in performing their tasks. Hitt (1995: 18) stresses that teams should be synergistic because they help members to learn together develop collective intelligence that is better than the intelligence developed at the individual level.

Senge (1990) suggests two dimensions related to learning and teamwork. Firstly, organisations need to think insightfully about complex issues in organisations and

work together to overcome these issues. Secondly, understanding of the organisation's goals and outcomes is essential by team members and is achieved through collaboration between employees and teams. This is because one learning team enhances other learning teams and learned skills and practices are spread more widely. Senge (1992) adds that team learning involves relevant thinking skills that enable teams and groups to develop their ability to utilise what they learn to the benefit of the organisation. The team should also have a shared vision that motivates them to build a sense of commitment and support the journey of change.

In general, team learning does not take place in isolation. Followers, leaders and groups within organisations may motivate or hinder learning (Cummings and Worley, 1997). The authors suggest that team learning strengthens relationships within the organisation. This suggestion is in line with Martin's work (2003: 74) where he states that inter-professional teams with multiple skills and experiences is better able to deliver in a more effective way. It is expected that the team members take a more holistic view of their work and that they understand the context in which they are engaged and the reasons for change and are able to share responsibilities. Hill (1996) suggests that when there is a mix of team members and a system of job rotation is used the pool of knowledge is maximised and thereby the organisation is transformed into a learning organisation. Furthermore, building team-learning skills changes the negative picture of learning. Marquardt et al. (1996) suggest that the team-learning model considers a learning organisation as a union between individuals and organisations. According to this model, a learning organisation happens through shared insights and knowledge among the team members. Therefore, team or group

learning motivates the members to share their knowledge and create an entity of learning.

It is not sufficient for a member of an organisation to confine him/herself to his/her own knowledge and expertise (Martin, 2003: 75). Table 4 below shows the team tasks and maintenance of behaviour developed by Martin (2003: 76).

The table below demonstrates the collaboration among the team members working on the allocated tasks. This suggests that ideas are discussed and built on a professional rather than a personal basis. If problems arise during the tasks progression team members should resolve them based on professionalism and compromise between members.

Table 4: Task Progress and Maintenance Behaviour

Tasks Progression	Maintenance behaviour
Proposing ideas to move forward in achieving the tasks giving to the team	Team members are involved in contributing to discussions related to the tasks
Building on ideas	Team members create a friendly atmosphere for building new ideas
Challenging ideas	Compromise on ideas and accommodate others' ideas for the benefit of the task

Providing data and opinions	Emphasise positive feedback for team members
Summarising action point and voting	Recognise the personal feelings of the team members.

Edmondson (1999) addressed the issue of team learning behaviour, which he considered a process that focuses on reflection and access to information. Team members learn from asking questions, experimenting, seeking feedback, reflecting on outcomes, discussing mistakes and errors and suggesting actions (Gibson and Vermeulen, 2003). Team members also interact, share and incorporate knowledge (Argote et al., 1999; Gibson, 2001). Few studies have been conducted on the relationship between teamwork and the learning organisation. In an empirical study conducted by Argote et al. (1995), the performance of the team members is increased with the team members' learning, which suggests improvement in a learning organisation. Edmondson (1999) argued that learning allowed the team members to adopt change and adapt themselves to that change.

2.8.4 Reward System and Learning Organisation

Zigon (1998: 47) defines a reward as “something than increases the frequencies of an employee action”. Therefore, the primary goals of rewards and recognition are to build feelings of confidence and satisfaction and to increase the employee's commitment thereby retaining the employee. Therefore, to achieve these goals, a reward system should be closely aligned to organisational strategies. For example, an organisation that focuses on a learning strategy could design reward practices to foster

learning and innovation that contribute to the achievement of the goals of the organisation and thereby provide unique services.

Employee reward is about how people are rewarded in accordance with their value to an organisation. It is concerned with both financial and non-financial rewards and embraces the philosophies, strategies, policies, plans and processes used by organisation to develop and maintain a rewards system (Armstrong, 2002:3). According to Armstrong (2002:4) the employee reward system consists of an organisation's integrated policies, process and practice for rewarding its employees in accordance with their contribution, skills and competence and their market worth.

Pay accounts is one of the greatest investments an organisation makes. Although a fair wage is the cornerstone of the contractual and implied agreement between employees and employers, the underlying assumption is that money can directly influence behaviour. Empirical evidence shows that many employees and managers believe that simply increasing what people are paid will make them more motivated, productive and loyal (Parker and Wright, 2001).

Lowler (1995) suggest that rewards systems are important parts of the organisational design of organisations. Reward system practices contribute to important changes that take place in organisations such as moving to a learning organisation structure (Schuster and Zingbeim, 1992). The main objective of reward systems is to attract and retain experienced people in the organisation because this leads to high satisfaction

and minimises turnover (Gerhert and Milkovich, 1992). Nonaka (1996) suggests that learning is the core element of an organisation's vision and mission. Therefore, learning activities can be achieved through rewards including financial rewards. Reward systems also change individuals and organisations behaviour particularly in relation to learning. A good pay system can motivate employees' performance and motivate learning and development. It also allows the organisation to target learning strategically at both the individual and organisational levels (Lowler, 1993).

The learning organisation viewpoint stresses that the highest rewards encourage organisations to be competitive and to achieve a high performance. Therefore, reward systems should match the needs of the learning culture and meet individual motivations (Gedenk, 1994). Nilsson and Ryman (2005) stress that learning in an organisation that requires dialogue and reflection, which should lead to a common understanding among team members. However, individual reward systems may negatively affect group learning. If the organisation centres its efforts on individual learning, team members and groups may not work together to achieve certain goals. Armstrong (2006) argues that organisations may link learning and pay (financial rewards) because pay improvement suggest skills development.

2.9 Conclusions

This study aimed at investigating learning organisation in the United Arab Emirates through focusing on ADEC. Thus, it was essential to review literature and examine the gap in knowledge. This chapter aimed to look through the definition of learning and its types as well as learning organisation and its relation to organisational learning. The chapter found a few studies that link between learning organisation and social practices. Lack of literature on this particular area indicates the potentiality of adding knowledge to the literature on learning organisation not only on the level of UAE but also on the regional and international levels. Reviewing literature showed that there are several theories on leadership but did not link to these theories to learning organisation. Although literature is rare on followership, this study attempted to dig literature and find construct theoretical framework on followership and its relationship with leadership as well as with learning organisation. The chapter did not overlook the factors that believed to affect learning organisation, thus it reviewed literature on organisational factors represented in vision, mission, information sources and reward systems. Teamwork is essential for developing learning organisation, therefore, the chapter reviewed relevant empirical studies.

Chapter Three

Research Design and Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter will present the research design and methodology used to answer the research questions, and it will cover research philosophy, including the epistemology and ontology of research, positivism and interpretivism, as well as induction and deduction paradigms. It will also consist of sections dedicated to quantitative and qualitative research methods, the case study approach and the reasons for using this approach, sampling strategy, sample size, interview schedule and design, data collection and data analysis. The chapter will also feature sections on the trustworthiness of qualitative data as well as any relevant ethical issues in conducting this study.

3.2 Addressing the Research Questions

Shipton (2001) emphasises that the researcher's choice of research design should depend principally on the research questions to be investigated. This is because research questions are by nature unique and thus should be addressed using the appropriate methods. Therefore, this chapter will begin with an overview of the research questions, which will be answered using a qualitative method; the choice of method will be summarised and justified in later sections.

The primary aim of this study is to investigate the role of leadership and followership in affecting learning organisation practices at ADEC. In other words, this study aims to explore the effect of leaders and followers on learning organisation practices, with a particular focus on social practices with in ADEC. Specifically, the study intends to answer the following questions:

1. What is the impact of the roles of leaders on developing learning organisation characteristics with in ADEC?
2. What is the impact of the relationship between leaders and followers on developing learning organisation characteristics with in ADEC?
3. What is the impact of training and professional development on developing learning organisation characteristics with in ADEC?
4. What is the impact of social practices on developing learning organisation characteristics with in ADEC?
5. What is the impact of the teamwork on developing learning organisation characteristics with in ADEC?
6. What is the impact of organisational factors (vision and mission of ADEC, division of work, information and reward system) on developing learning organisation characteristics with in ADEC?

3.3 Background to ADEC

The United Arab Emirates is still a very young country; it celebrated the 43rd anniversary of its foundation in 2014, under the Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan. In the early 1980s, the United Arab Emirates Government began investing not only in wealth and oil, but also in people, through developing education, health and social welfare, in pursuit of benefits for its population, (Kirk, 2009). Since then, the United Arab Emirates Government has initiated a plan to expand the educational infrastructure in all regions, or ‘Emirates’. Despite this progress, particularly in the education sector, the education system was the subject of much criticism in the early 2000s. This criticism prompted Sheikh Nahyan Al Nahyan to deliver a speech about developing public sector education; the Sheikh again criticised the system and announced new initiatives at the federal level, meaning they would apply to all Emirates. Based on this the Sheikh’s initiative, the Ministry of Education adopted a reform agenda to improve education in the country. The initiative was adopted in 2006, and included a development policy for the education system; one of the main developments was the establishment of the Abu Dhabi Educational Council (ADEC), the main aim of which was to plan the reform of the school system in the Abu Dhabi region (Macpherson *et al.*, 2007).

3.3.1 The Mission of ADEC

ADEC was established with a clear vision and mission, which drives its current and future activities; the vision is to be “Recognised as a world class education system that supports all learners in reaching their full potential to compete in the global market” (ADEC, 2013). ADEC’s mission also focuses on the production of world-class learners who embody a strong sense of culture and heritage and are prepared to meet global challenges. The ADEC values can be summarised as follows:

- **Teamwork:** Emphasise the virtues of cooperation and coordination.
- **Integrity:** Doing the right thing, no matter what the circumstances may be.
- **Transparency:** Open, true and honest communications and actions.
- **Respect:** Respect children, colleagues, parents and community.
- **Accountability:** Take personal responsibility for actions.
- **Compassion:** Care and responsibility towards others.

Dr Mughee Al Khaili, the Director General of ADEC, has stated that the mission of ADEC focuses on improving the quality of education in Abu Dhabi to match high international standards. He stresses that this work should reflect 21st century trends in pedagogy, curriculum, teaching and learning, as well as developing teachers' professional skills. He states that, "We don't just want to improve our education system, our schools and the performance of our students; we want to be ranked as one of the best education systems in the world." ADEC also focuses on the acquisition of learning and knowledge through socialisation and assimilation of national culture, attitudes, values, local opinions, and to learn from other nations' experiences particularly Western countries (ADEC, 2013).

ADEC has set an ambitious ten-year strategic plan (2009-2018) that targets both public and private schools and aims to perform above the international standard. It also aims to increase students' knowledge of their culture and history, and improve their access to high quality schools (ADEC Presentation, 2009). ADEC began with what is called the New School Model (NSM), which targeted Grades 1-3 and was expanded to other grades in 2012. The key aspect of this plan was to focus on students' learning rather than teaching, not only through schools but also through

family engagement in the education process, teachers and the community. The plan took into consideration the development of a standardised curriculum and pedagogy, and allocated sufficient resources to support all schools in the Abu Dhabi region. The new initiative also focused on developing students' critical thinking skills, language skills, both Arabic and English, and knowledge of cultural and national identity (ADEC New School Model Documentation, 2009).

3.3.2 Services Provided by ADEC

As mentioned above, ADEC is solely responsible for developing primary and high school education in Abu Dhabi; therefore, their services focus on helping schools and teachers. In general, ADEC provides two types of service, one for the general public and the second for businesses. ADEC is responsible for developing and monitoring curriculum, developing and upgrading teachers' skills, and implementing contemporary teaching methods. Additionally, ADEC provides services for public schools, in terms of issuing and attesting educational certificates, and helps investors and organisations to establish educational institutions in Abu Dhabi.

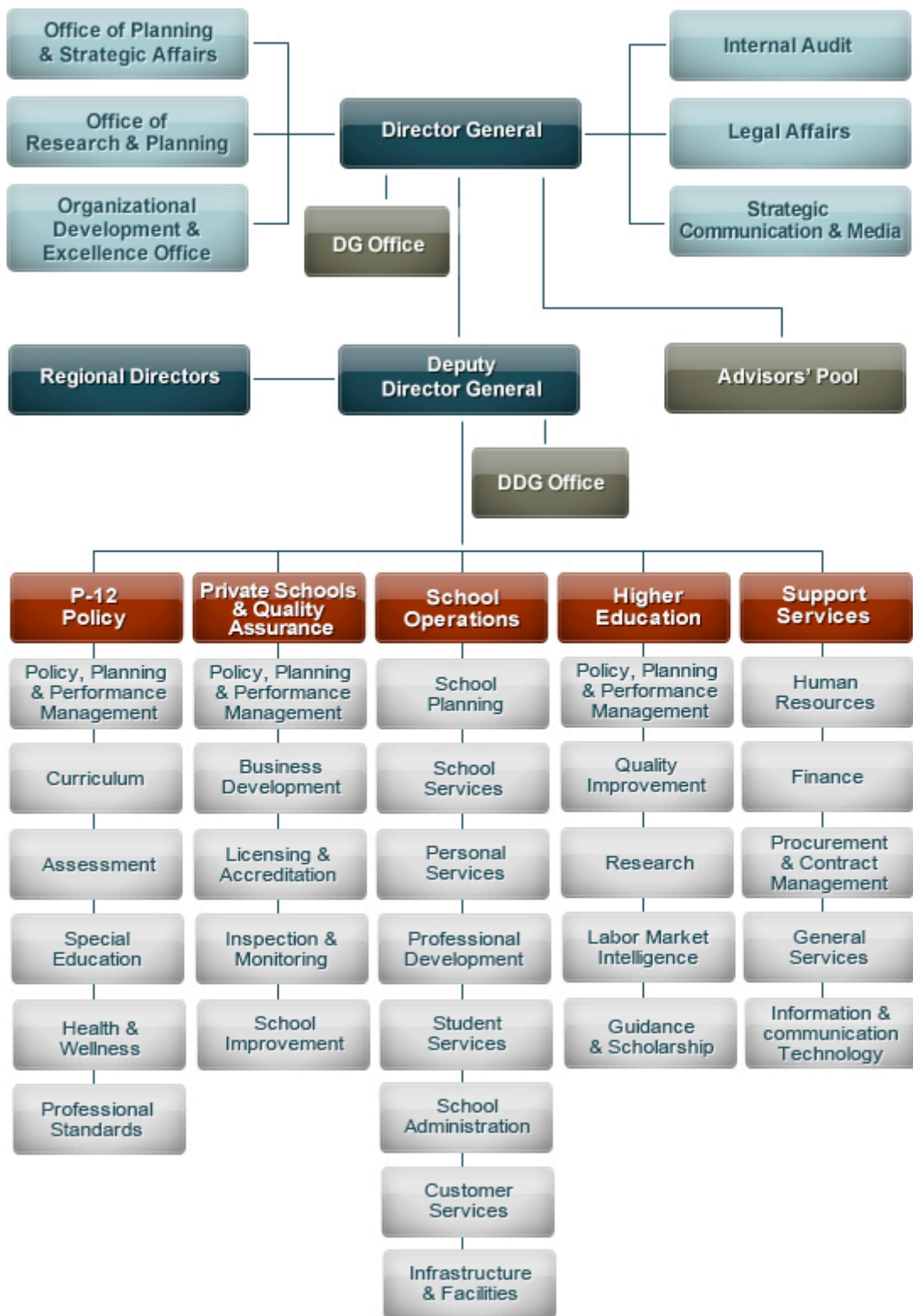
3.3.3 Organisational Structure of ADEC

In addition to the office of Director General of ADEC, there are six main general directorates led and run by Executive Directors. The chart below presents these directorates and entities of ADEC, which include the Office of Planning and Strategic Affairs, Office of Research and Planning, Organisational Development and Excellence Office, Internal Audit, Legal Affairs and Strategic Communication. There is also an office for the Deputy General Director of ADEC. The other five offices

support the General Director and directorates, represented by General Directors and Advisors.

However, ADEC also consists of other entities, which are connected with the General Directors and their Deputies. For example, the P-12 Policy Division focuses on policy, planning and performance management, curriculum, assessment, special education, health and professional standards. The second entity is Private Schools and Quality Assurance, which includes policy, planning and performance, business development, licensing and accreditation, inspection and monitoring and school improvement. The third entity is School Operations, which works on school planning, school services, personal services, professional development, students' services, school administration, customer services, infrastructure and facilities. The fourth entity is Higher Education, which works on policy and planning and performance of higher educational institutions, quality improvement, research, labour market intelligence, guidance and scholarship. The fifth entity is concerned with human resources, finance, procurement, general services and information and communication technology.

There are 591 employees work for ADEC, of which five are Executive Directors, 34 managers of divisions, while 65 are managers of sections. Four hundred and eighty two employees work in these directorates and divisions (see Table 5 in Chapter 3).



3.4 Cultural and Traditional Background of United Arab Emirates

In general, people in the Arab world are affected by the Islamic religion, cultural and social values and norms; the people of the United Arab Emirates are no exception. Arab traditions and values profess that a community should look to a leader for guidance, for instance a tribal leader or an organisation manager. Many commentators claim that cultural values influence managerial practices (Ali, 1995; Hofstede, 1993a; Al-Jafary & Hollingsworth 1983). Arguably, these values have led to inadequate managerial practices that have hindered the development efforts of organisations in the Arab world Al-Jafary & Hollingsworth 1983). A study by Dadfar (1993) concludes that sociocultural factors, such as norms, values and beliefs, affect Arab managers in terms of dealing with their subordinates, or followers.

Research on individual cultural values indicates that these values are related to the collective values of the society's culture (Schlegelmilch & Robertson, 1995, Conner & Becker, 1994). In the workplace, these cultural values and beliefs directly relate to beliefs about work, affecting performance within the organisation. Furthermore, these values dictate and dominate the relationships between individuals in the workplace (Robertson *et al.*, 2002).

In general, the cultural issues in the United Arab Emirates differ from the issues in other countries in the Arab world. Cultural values play a critical role in the United Arab Emirates society and organisations; according to Al Yousif *et al.* (2000), they affect everything in the country, including social norms, business transactions, government policies, labour relations and managerial practices.

3.5 Research Philosophy

The following section will discuss topics relating to research philosophy, including the epistemology and ontology of research, positivism and interpretivism.

3.5.1 Positivism and Interpretivism

Positivism argues that reality consists of what is available to the senses and what can be seen, touched and smelt. It also argues a research should be based on scientific observation and thus based on empirical investigation (Lin, 1998). Positivism is in fact, opposed to philosophical speculation and argues that human and natural sciences share common logical and methodological principles and deals with facts and not with values (Bryman and Bell, 2004). Positivists claim that the natural sciences are accumulation of facts about people and about the world they live lead to generate scientific knowledge such as scientific laws. From positivists' point of view, the natural and social sciences are operated within strict set of laws, which enable researchers to discover facts using empirical inquiry (Gray, 2010). Some scholars such as Sharrock (1997) showed some limitations of positivism where some of its assumptions are not reliable. For example, as scientists, we are interested in producing theoretical explanation but not relying on what can be observed. Generally, science does not begin from the observations but from theory that make observation intelligible (Williams and May, 1996).

Interpretivism is regarded as the main anti-positivism stance. Interpretivism looks for focusing on the interpretation of social life-world (Crotty, 1998). It assumes no direct or one-to-one relationship between subjects (ourselves) and object (the world). According to Williams and May (1996), we interpret the world through the classification schemes of the mind. Interpretivists claim that the laws of natural sciences and social reality are different and thus, they are investigated using different methods such as interviews and focus groups.

As mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, this study aimed to explore the main effect of some factors on developing learning organisation practices within ADEC. In order to address the research objectives and questions, the study sought to use qualitative research methods represented in interview and focus group approaches. It was clear from using the two methods that the study did not aim to use quantified numbers and statistical methods and focused on interpretation of themes and patterns emerged from the interviews and focus groups. Furthermore, this study aimed to understand what has been going on in ADEC and explore the role of leaders, relationship between leaders and followers as well as social practices that were believed to contribute to develop learning practices. Exploration of issues related to learning organisation was not possible through using positivism paradigm since there were no previous studies conducted on learning organisation and social practices particularly on the level of UAE.

3.5.2 Epistemology and Ontology

Epistemology is one of the main branches of research philosophy (Struubert & Carpenter, 1999). It focuses on how researchers determine what is true by exploring the relationship between the researchers and reality (De Vos, 1998). The main purpose of this study is to examine learning organisation with in ADEC from the perspectives of leaders and followers, and seeks reliable knowledge that can be translated to policy implications or strategies. In other words, the study aims to understand the reality of learning organisations and social practices with in ADEC, and how the organisation can be transformed into a learning organisation. In this context we should understand that epistemology is the process of producing knowledge, which is considered part of the process of compiling the real-life world (Ontology).

3.6 Quantitative and Qualitative Research Methods

The key difference between qualitative and quantitative methods lies in their focus. Quantitative methods focus on numbers and numerical analyses that use statistical techniques, whereas a qualitative method analyses individual's experiences, which can be presented as a narrative (Lobiond-Wood & Haber, 1994). When using quantitative methods, respondents are required to answer closed-ended questions designed by the researcher. By contrast, qualitative methods seek data regarding individual experiences, so respondents are free to express their views in a less structured way (Polgar & Thomas, 1995). Furthermore, researchers listen to

participants' views, leading to an understanding of the what, why and how questions concerning the phenomenon being investigated.

Quantitative methods begin with a hypothesis, which is based on the research questions but does not emerge from quantified data; by contrast, qualitative research methods are based on patterns or themes that emerge from the data (Polit & Hungler 1995). Qualitative methods follow an inductive approach championed by interpretivism, which avoids the use of natural science methods (positivism). In this way, researchers seek to understand the ideas and perceptions explored by participants in the study and address different issues from the participants' perspectives. Therefore, when using qualitative methods, researchers are required to build a trusting relationship with participants (Holloway & Wheeler 1996).

This study addresses an area that has not been studied at the United Arab Emirates level; moreover, social practices, in general, cannot be directly observed by researchers, or subject to statistical analysis based on hypotheses. Therefore, using qualitative methods will allow for a better understanding of the relationship between leaders and followers, how leaders deal with employees on every day basis, and so on. According to Holland and Lave (2009), there are some questions related to social ontology that focus on the configuration of social existence rather than familiarity with configuration of knowledge. This suggests the assumption of social practices is predicated on relations within the organisation, which require the use of critical ethnographic research methods, such as open-ended questions that bring empirical dialectic change. This approach helps to provide clarity in understanding the

relationships between individuals. Holland and Lave (2009) also stress that there is a relationship between intimate, embodied subjectivities and local practices.

Assumptions of Qualitative Methods

There are several assumptions underpinning qualitative research methods; Lo Biondo-Wood and Harber (1994) describe these. First, researchers are required to understand that individuals lead complex lives, but through this gain a wealth of experience. Second, truth, in a qualitative study, depends upon subjective context. Third, the researcher is regarded as an instrument of the research process, which can lead to bias; however, bias can be reduced, for example through reflexivity. Fourth, the validity of sampling depends upon how participants are selected, and whether they have the ability and capacity to speak about the problem or phenomenon under study. In short, qualitative methods collect data from individuals and their environments.

The research questions to be addressed in this study require an exploration of social practices within ADEC and its relation to learning organisations. This requires that the attitudes and views of both leaders and followers regarding social practices to be examined. As described earlier, listening to individuals constitutes the substance of the qualitative research method. Thus, the decision to use a qualitative method for this research was based on the objectives of the study, which relate to individual and social experiences. Additionally, similar past studies have also used qualitative methods. For this study, leaders and followers working for ADEC were interviewed and asked to describe their experiences and daily life within ADEC in a holistic way.

Advantages and Disadvantages of Qualitative Research

Using a qualitative research method gives researchers the opportunity to collect rich information that may not be obtainable using quantitative methods. The data generated from interviews or focus groups can be used to explore new ideas and areas, and describe these in detail. The main disadvantage of qualitative research is that it takes time to collect and analyse; qualitative data can also be affected by the researcher's own views (McNeill & Chapman, 1990). Results generated using qualitative methods can be generalised to a larger population, due to the small sample size. It is worth noting, however, that some qualitative studies use samples that are not properly representative of a population, in which case, the results may not be generalizable to the population under study. In this study, the interviews and focus groups gave leaders and followers the opportunity to speak freely about their experience with in ADEC in terms of leaders, social practices and organisational factors and their relation to learning organisation.

3.7 The Choice of a Qualitative Case Study Approach

3.7.1 Case Study Approach

According to Shipton (2001) and Polit and Hungler (1995), the appropriate research design depends upon the research objectives. It is worth mentioning that every study is unique in its objectives and, therefore, the choice of the research design is dependent on the questions to be addressed.

The case study approach is primarily used when a researcher wishes to examine an issue or a phenomenon in detail, as well as its real-life manifestation (Baxter & Jack, 2008). The literature documents a range of definitions of the case study approach; for instance, Yin defines a case study as “an empirical inquiry that aims to investigate a contemporary phenomenon in-depth and within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident” (2003: 13). However, Stake (1995) offers a different perspective, claiming that a case study focuses on the process of learning about a phenomenon and the product of what is learned about that phenomenon. George and Bennett (2005) develop the definition of case study to include theory building, stating that a case study is an instance of a ‘class of events’, a term that refers to a scientific phenomenon that investigators choose to study with the aim of developing theory regarding causes of similarities or differences among instances (cases) of that class of events. These various definitions reflect the authors’ views of the case study approach; of these, George and Bennett (2005) offer the most exhaustive and comprehensive definition, and so is the one that this study will be based on, as it will explore the differences between leaders’ views in comparison with those of followers.

The case study approach is appropriate when examining just one organisation, in a study aiming to improve organisational functioning. Where a case study research method is used, it generates information and findings at the individual level; additionally, a case study can be used to investigate a phenomenon that includes complex relationships. Easterby-Smith and Araujo (1999) used a case study approach to investigate the development of learning organisations in the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce; the study explored the capacity of the bank and the capabilities of its

people to develop learning organisations. Another case study of the development of a learning organisation was undertaken by Plessis *et al.* (1999); the case study discussed the practical steps taken by Exco, an Australian company, to develop learning organisations, and also tackled the social aspect of managing relationships across the company. In a study of the relationship between leadership and followership, Russell and Scott (2003) used an ethnographic case study approach that enabled an investigation of people's lived experience, exploring the intimate contact between leaders and followers on daily basis.

The present study tackles the issue of learning organisation practices from the perspectives of both leaders and followers. There are several departments within ADEC, and each department employs a number of individuals, leaders and followers. Leaders and followers are assumed to interact with one another on a daily basis, which motivates them to learn from each other's experiences. For these reasons, a case study approach was selected for use in this study, which, to a large extent, is similar to other studies using a qualitative and ethnographic approach, such as the one conducted by Russell and Scott (2003).

According to Yin (2003), there are three types of case study: exploratory, descriptive and explanatory. Clearly, the use of one of these types depends upon the objective of the particular study; for instance, the exploratory approach can be used to develop proposition or hypothesis, while explanatory is used to identify cause and effects relationships. Descriptive studies are primarily used to describe an issue within a

particular context (Yin, 2003); however, researchers may use more than one type of case study to answer different research questions.

According to Stake (1995), the types of case study can be classified as either intrinsic, instrumental or collective. The intrinsic case study approach is used when a researcher seeks to learn about an issue or a phenomenon; the research requires an in-depth description of the phenomenon, which distinguishes it from other issues. In other words, the research focus is solely on the problem being investigated. The second type, the instrumental case study, aims to gain broader insights and indications about a phenomenon. Finally, the collective case study approach addresses several cases, simultaneously or sequentially, and aims to generate a broader view of certain problems.

The descriptions of different types or forms of case study help researchers to focus on their research questions and the most appropriate approach to answering them. For this study, the intrinsic case study approach was chosen to enable an in-depth examination of learning organisations and social practices, and help illuminate the differences between the views of leaders and followers. This study is the first to examine ADEC at the United Arab Emirates level; therefore, it is essential to use an in-depth approach that will provide an in-depth understanding of social practices within the organisation.

3.7.2 Advantages and Disadvantages of the Case Study Approach

This study uses a case study approach since it targets only the Abu Dhabi Education Council (ADEC), as the main provider of educational facilities in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi. There is no similar organisation in the United Arab Emirates offering comparable services to the education sector. Therefore, it was essential to use the case study approach to address the research questions. Furthermore, there are many advantages to the use of this approach, such as its ability to use both descriptive and exploratory techniques, although it requires the researcher to take extra care. Although the approach has been criticised in terms of its external validity, since the results cannot be generalised to a larger population (Yin, 2003), it is able to address issues in detail. For this study, it was not necessary to adopt another research method, as the sole focus is issues related to the transformation of ADEC to a learning organisation, thus, it was sufficient to use a case study approach. Cohen *et al.* (2007) suggest that a case study describes the case vividly and generates rich information, whilst also providing a chronology of events. In addition, the case study approach focuses on individuals or groups, in order to understand how they perceive events and their environment. The case study also gives investigators the opportunity to be integrally involved in the study.

However, every research method has advantages and disadvantages, and the case study approach is no exception. The main advantages of the case study approach are its ability to provide a good source of ideas and information about different types of problems and phenomena. It is also considered to represent an opportunity for innovation (Yin, 2003); for example, in the present study, the focus is solely on

designing the teaching sequence and its internal and external evaluation, therefore, it is critical to develop a teaching sequence that addresses the aims of the study. Moreover, the case study method investigates a case, such as an organisation, such as a school, individuals, for example students, or groups of people; in general, the method facilitates an in-depth investigation of a phenomenon and addresses it from different perspectives (Yin, 2003).

Despite these multiple advantages, the main disadvantage of the case study approach is its inability to generalise the results to larger populations (Punch, 2005; Cohen *et al.*, 2007) as the intention of a case study is to understand the complexity of the particular problem and phenomenon being investigated. Therefore, the results represent only the respondents who participate in the study.

3.7.3 Interviews

As mentioned above, the main objective of this study is to understand the relationship between social practices and learning organisation. Seidman (2006) suggests that interviews are conducted to not only answer a number of questions, but also to reveal what is going on in organisations; as well as the experiences of and problems faced by research participants.

There are three different types of interviews: structured, semi-structured and unstructured. Structured interviews ask closed-ended questions, and are mainly used

in quantitative research methods, such as surveys. By contrast, semi-structured interviews mainly use open-ended questions; while unstructured interviews are completely open (Sorrell & Redmond, 1995). This study used semi-structured interviews, and a number of questions were put to leaders and followers. The use of semi-structured interviews helped to maintain a focus on the research questions, but still allowed leaders and followers to express their opinions (Smith *et al.*, 2009). For this reason, the interview schedule consisted of a set number of questions. Interviews are a useful approach in studying the relationship between people, and allow researchers to explore issues within the context in which they occur (Xenitidou & Gilbert, 2009).

3.7.4 Focus Groups

Over the last three decades, most authors and researchers have written about the use of the focus group approach from a marketing research point of view. Nonetheless, this approach has become one of the main research methods used in social sciences and education, as well as in health research (Morgan, 1997).

Jasper (1994) suggests that qualitative studies are usually designed to collect data concerning individual experiences and lives. In organisations such as ADEC, employees are able to express their views regarding their relationship with leaders, problems they face in performing specific tasks, learning problems and so on. Thus, the focus group approach can be used as a primary data collection method or in combination with another quantitative method, such as a survey, or alongside another qualitative method, for instance interviews.

For this study, it was not advisable to use interviews alone; as such an approach would have been insufficient to answer the research questions. For this reason, it was essential to use another qualitative method, such as focus groups, to compare and complement the results. In this way, the focus group approach was utilised to help overcome the shortcomings of the interview approach. For example, interviews typically depend upon the researcher who conducts the interviews, and how they ask the questions; sometimes, interviewers give unconscious hints or cues to the interviewee (Boyce & Neale, 2006), and they may be prone to bias, which can affect the results. Throughout the interviews in this study, the researcher made every attempt to remain neutral while interviewing leaders and followers, and did not give any cues or suggest ideas or responses to any question.

In addition, the relationship between leaders and followers must be taken into consideration, which may have prevented followers from participating in decision-making and speaking freely with leaders. For this study, followers needed to express their opinion, which was achieved through interviews and focus groups (Bradbury-Jones *et al.*, 2010). Leaders and followers alike were able to speak openly and addressed several problems related to learning organisation and social practices. This was the main rationale for using the focus group approach; the major advantage of focus groups over interviews is that they allowed interaction between both leader and follower participants (Litosseliti, 2003). Discussion between participants encourages them to speak and address their problems and highlight any similarities and differences between viewpoints (Morgan, 1997). Litosseliti (2003) suggests that focus groups can reveal a shared understanding of a certain topic, and help to generate new ideas through brainstorming and discussion.

3.8 Sampling Strategy

3.8.1 Study Population and Unit of Analysis

A study population is defined as the population that is under investigation and from which the study sample is drawn (Rubin & Babbie, 2001). It follows, therefore, that the sample should have the same characteristics as the population. This research studies two target populations: leaders and followers working for ADEC. These two groups also represent the units of analysis investigated in the study. Ogle (2000) considers the unit of analysis to be the most important aspect of research, as data collection and analysis centred on that unit.

3.8.2 Selection of Participants

In qualitative research, researchers do not seek to generalise the results to a larger population. This study aims to address the relationship between social practices and learning organisation from the perspectives of leaders and followers. Moreover, the context of these social practices affects the nature of learning organisation and thus entails the use of a qualitative research method that does not require a representative sample. According to Holloway and Wheeler (2002), there is no specific guide or formula to determine sample size. The selection of participants depends on how much information is needed to answer the research question. This study targets both leaders and followers working for ADEC. ADEC is divided into five main directorates, each run by an Executive Director; each directorate consists of a number of divisions, and each division is comprised of a number of sections. Therefore, it was decided to interview the 10 Directors (Executive Directors, Division Managers and Section Managers). In terms of followers, four employees from each directory were interviewed, a total of 20.

Table 5: Leaders and Followers Working for ADEC

ADEC –HQ		
	Total	Participants
Executive Director	5	3
Division Manager	34	4
Section Manager	65	3
Total Number of ADEC - HQ		20
Employees	492	
Total	591	30

For the focus groups, 32 leaders and followers participated in the groups' discussion (16 leaders and 16 followers). Four groups discussions were moderated where two were conducted with leaders and two with followers.

3.8.3 Sampling Strategy

As this study uses a qualitative research method, represented in a case study approach, a theoretical or purposive sampling technique was inevitable. Patton (2002) stresses that purposive sampling depends upon the subjectivity of the researcher responsible for conducting and analysing the data; in other words, the researcher's awareness of the area of study. Qualitative research methods do not seek to generalise the results to the population being investigated (Nachmias & Nachmias 1992). A purposive sample was selected from leaders and followers working for ADEC; the following selection criteria were used.

Leaders were chosen on the following basis:

- Executive, Division Manager or Section Manager

- Currently working for ADEC and has been in a managerial position for at least three years.
- Willing to take part in the study
- Is responsible for at least three employees (followers)

Followers were voluntarily participated in both interviews and focus groups. I personally visited all departments, talked to employees about my research, and invited them to take part. Some of them were motivated to participate while others apologised particularly leaders who expressed the lack of time.

3.9 Designing the Interview Schedule for Interviews and Focus Groups

Designing an interview schedule allows researchers to focus on the main areas to be investigated in the study (Lindolf & Taylor, 2002). The interview schedule should be a translation of the research questions being investigated as well as knowledge identified in the literature. Thus, researchers cannot progress with their research until they develop relevant instruments to collect data.

The interview schedule for this study included sections on the following:

- Evidence of role of Directors: Could you tell me how you consider yourself and your role? A manager, a mentor, a coach to your employees?

- Evidence of relationship between leaders and followers: Could you describe the relationship between you and your line manager, and with other departments?
- Relationship between departments: What issues/areas do you discuss with other departments? Do you learn from them?
- Teamwork: How do your employees work as a team or a group? What do they discuss? How do they cooperate and deal with others? Do you think they learn from each other and working in a team?
- Learning programmes: Could you tell me something about what programmes are designed for learning, new things, training, skills development and so on? How do you learn from mistakes?
- What support do you offer employees to develop their skills and learning?
- Do you think employees are satisfied with the division of tasks? If they are not satisfied, why?
- Information and resources allocated for learning: What types of information do your employees need to accomplish the tasks allocated? Have you developed a database of skills and learning initiatives in the department, or at ADEC?
- Appraisal and rewards: How do you appraise and reward your employees who learn skills and develop them significantly? What type of time, human and financial resources do you afford for employees learning and developing new skills?
- Social practices: Could you tell me about a time where there was conflict between yourself and an employee regarding how to go about

their work? What did you do to address the problem and restore the relationship? Were you successful?

- Could you give me an example of a time when your values and beliefs affected your relationships with employees?

- Some people say that a 'learning organisation' is one that accepts a set of attitudes, values and practices that support the process of continuous learning within the organisation. How close is this to describing ADEC in general and your department in particular?

It is worth mentioning that the same questions in general were asked to both leaders and followers. The main purpose of that was to make comparison between the two perspectives.

In relation to the interview schedule of the focus groups, it was difficult to ask all questions ask in interviews. For this reason, the focus was on questions related to the role of leaders in the organisation, the relationship between leaders and follower, social practices, teamwork and mission of ADEC.

3.10 Data Collection

In regards to qualitative methods, there are a range of data collection methods that can be used including interviews, participant observation and focus groups. However, the interview approach is regarded as the main data collection method, since it gives interviewees the opportunity to express their views freely and without any

interruption. Thus, according to Denzin and Lincoln (2005), interviews are a powerful method for understanding human beings.

This study employed the interview approach for two reasons: first, it provides in-depth insights regarding the area under investigation, and second, the approach is regarded as a flexible approach to data collection and enables the interviewer to orient the flow of data (Polit & Beck, 2004). Whilst interviewing participants, the researcher was careful to achieve a balance between maintaining a focus on the study and allowing interviewees to speak about their views. Although semi-structured interviews were used, leaders and followers were free to speak about different issues unrelated to the study.

3.10.1 Interview Setting

In this study, it was difficult to interview leaders and followers at home, or anywhere other than their offices. The human resources department within ADEC was consulted regarding this matter, and they provided a small and comfortable room in which to interview some participants. Leaders, such as Head of Departments and Divisions were interviewed in their offices; this was intended to mitigate any possible effect of location on followers' ability to speak about their work, relationship with leaders and so on. In general, the offices were suitable for conducting interviews.

3.10.2 Conducting Interviews with Leaders

Cohen *et al.* (2000) state that the data collection stage is very important for the researcher, as their ability to answer the research question depends upon the data collected. In this study, the researcher listened carefully to participants to understand their views about learning organisation and social practices.

3.10.3 Data Collection: Pilot Study

A pilot study helps researchers to identify any problems with the study instruments, such as the questionnaire and interview schedule. In other words, it gives researchers the opportunity to eliminate any errors in the study instruments (Leedy & Armrod, 2001). According to Bryman and Bell (2004), a pilot study helps researchers to pre-test the instrument before taking it to the field. It also helps to identify any problems in the wording or context of each question. To conduct a pilot study, a small number of participants are chosen to complete the questionnaire or interview schedule. In this study, two leaders and two followers were interviewed from different divisions of ADEC as a pilot test; this helped to reduce any anticipated problems (Bryman & Bell, 2004) with the interview schedule, which could be amended before the main phase of data collection began.

From the presentation of the pilot results and asking directors questions about the process, it was concluded that there were no problems in understanding the interview questions or with the interview probing. Directors and employees were relaxed and able to respond to all aspects of the questions. There were no sensitive questions that would prevent participants from answering them and therefore, no changes were made to the interview schedule, which was then used in the main data collection phase.

3.10.4 Data Collection: Main Fieldwork

This study uses a semi-structured interview approach, which gave participants the opportunity to speak about their views and experiences of problems related to learning

organisations. Semi-structured interviews were organised around a number of areas, where each area required a certain degree of probing to encourage participants to speak freely and develop their thoughts during the interview (Creswell, 1994). As mentioned earlier, in the sampling strategy section, eligible leaders and followers were identified to participate in the study.

Consent was obtained from all Heads of Departments, Divisions and employees. In face-to-face interviews, it is necessary to build rapport with participants, as this helps the interviewer to elicit data comfortably. For instance, in this study, interviews began with general questions such as: How are you? How do you find ADEC? How do you carry out your work? Followed by questions related to the research. Probing as used to help participants provide relevant examples from their daily work and relationships, with one another and with Directors. According to Rubin and Rubin (2005), probing and flexible semi-structured interviews help interviewers to create a dialogue with interviewees. At end of each interview, the participants were thanked for their participation in the study and time given in the interview. They were also informed that if they wished to have a copy of the interview or the study, they were free to contact the researcher at any time.

On average, each interview took approximately 60 minutes, to enable all questions to be covered. Furthermore, probing was a helpful technique for encouraging participants to talk more and give some real world examples of their experience. Seidman (2006) stresses the importance of allowing sufficient time for interviewing, and states that 60 minutes is enough to collect relevant data. Long interviews create a

boring atmosphere that negatively affects interviewees' ability to focus and present their ideas.

3.10.5 Conducting the Focus Groups

All Heads of Departments were contacted regarding their participation in the four focus groups. A time was then specified to conduct the focus groups in coordination with the leaders and followers. The meetings were conducted in a clean and quiet venue. At the beginning of each focus group the participants received an introductory package describing the study, including its objectives. The length of the meetings were approximately 90 minutes. All participants signed the informed consent form, and their permission was sought to use a tape recorder. In additions, notes of answers to some questions were taken. The discussion began with broad questions about life with in ADEC, and then progressed to the main questions related to the study. Participants were encouraged to interact and discuss different issues relating to the role of leaders, the relationship between leaders and followers, social practices and learning organisations.

3.10.6 Challenges in Data Collection

Although the data collection process progressed smoothly, there were some concerns about recruiting Directors and employees to take part in the study. Some of the participants were reluctant to be interviewed as they believed they would not be able to answer the research questions. As indicated in the pilot study section, no sensitive questions were included in the interview schedule; however, some follower participants were embarrassed to talk about their relationship with their leaders, as

they felt that this relationship was not good. Otherwise, there were no substantial problems during the data collection stage.

3.11 Data Analysis Strategy

The analysis of qualitative data is completely different to the analysis of quantitative data. The point of data analysis is to link the objectives of the study to the results that emerge from the data. In other words, analysis translates the data into results that address the study questions. In qualitative research, researchers initiate data analysis at the outset of data collection, they do not wait until the end of the data collection process. Therefore, the data analysis phase of this study began after the first interview was completed, which was conducted with a director. The researcher's role in data analysis is to explore and interpret (Stewart *et al.*, 2006) leaders' and followers' experiences and views regarding the learning organisation practices with in ADEC, and to make sense of the data.

This section will present the data analysis strategy used in this study. Stewart *et al.* (2006) stress that data analysis connects the data with Conclusion, as well as makes recommendations regarding the case being investigated. For this study, the main purpose of data analysis is to explore the differences and commonalities between leaders' and followers' views of learning organisation and related practices. This requires the categorisation of transcripts into themes (codes), in order to identify differences and similarities between leaders and followers.

First, a data analysis plan was developed, which describes the method of data analysis to be used. The first decision required concerned whether to begin with a case analysis, or a cross-case analysis. The experience of the researcher and the Conclusion from the literature review suggested beginning with a cross-case analysis of three to four interviews, using the constant comparison method to group answers according to common questions, and to analyse different leader and follower perspectives regarding issues related to the research questions. The use of the constant comparative method provided the opportunity to compare incidents across each category, integrate categories, delimit and nurture the theory (Patton, 2002). Yin (2003) explains that the analysis of case study data should focus on identifying themes and patterns that emerge from interviews. In qualitative research, the focus is on the data rather than the hypothesis. In this study, the process of data analysis was accomplished through the following steps:

3.11.1 Transcription and Organisation of Data

There is no generally accepted method of transcribing collected data (Kvale 1996); however, there are certain steps that can be followed. For example, Long-Sutehall *et al.* (2010) suggest that the focus should be on the study objectives, in reference to which the researcher can write notes during the transcription process. The researcher should listen to the recording three or four times to ensure they understand what the participant says in the interviews; during this listening period the researcher should identify the main themes or patterns relating to the study questions and differentiate between contrasting views. For this study, the transcription of the leaders' interviews was completed first, and main themes within the emergent data identified. The same process was used when transcribing the followers' interviews.

Transcription of data is time consuming and requires significant concentration, because the trustworthiness of results depends on what is transcribed (Robson, 1993). Therefore, the first step of the data analysis was to transcribe the interviews conducted with leaders and followers. According to Stewart *et al.* (2007), transcription is done for the sake of transcription itself, but to reduce the data, code and categorise it. Transcripts are not only beneficial for the study under investigation, but also for future studies, as researchers can review the transcripts to help write research papers (Dey 1993). Transcription also helps to compare the results of a study with the results of other studies conducted in the same field.

Due to the importance of transcription and extracting relevant information, the digital recordings of the interviews conducted were listened to several times, to ensure the data was properly understood. In terms of the text transcripts, if researchers do not read these several times, they may not be able to check the spelling, grammar and sentence coherence; they may also miss important aspects of the data that are relevant to the research questions (Morse *et al.*, 2002). Thus, in this study the recordings were transcribed, and then the transcripts were edited for spellings and potential quotations. In order to organise the transcripts, each leader and follower was assigned a number.

3.11.2 Data Analysis

In analysing interview data, the aim is to clearly understand the transcripts, the meaning of the data, and its structure of data and the real experiences of participants

(Patton, 2002). As mentioned above, this study aims to understand learning organisation practices with in ADEC, from the perspectives of both leaders and followers.

To understand the data, the transcripts were read multiple times, line-by-line, as reading the data several times is critical to understanding its contents. Dey (1993) stresses that accurate reading is fundamental to qualitative data analysis, as it aids researchers in identifying the main themes related to research questions and objectives. The data analysis phase of this research began when interviews of leaders and followers commenced, through reading and rereading the transcripts.

3.11.3 Thematic Analysis

There are several methods of qualitative data analysis, such as thematic analysis, content analysis and the narrative approach. Content analysis, for example, focuses on the number of words and/or phrases that emerge from the data that are related to the study; the researcher counts the number of particular words and/or phrases and conducts an analysis on this basis (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999). The main disadvantage of content analysis is the summarisation of vast data into brief findings (Bernard & Rayan, 1998). Consequently, this type of analysis is most appropriate for analysing documents.

By contrast, thematic analysis, which is widely used in social and health research, does not depend on words. Rather, thematic analysis describes thoughts and ideas that emerge from the transcripts of interviews, allowing researchers to categorise and code themes and patterns that emerge from the data. Furthermore, this type of analysis can

be linked to the constant comparative approach, which compares different views and experiences of participants in a study (Wright, 1997). Thematic analysis was used in this research to pick out the views and experiences of leaders and followers in relation to learning organisation practices and social practices. According to Smith *et al.* (2009), the themes and sub themes extracted from the data will generally reflect participants' views, experiences perceptions and so on. Table6 below presents the themes and sub-themes emerged from the transcripts.

Table 6: Themes and Sub-themes

Themes	Sub-themes
Role of leaders	Leader
	Executive
	Role
	Efficiency
	Excellence
	Change
	Managers
	Followers
	Coaching
	Directing
	Mentoring
Relationship between leaders and followers	Leaders
	Flowers
	Friendly relationship
	Self-confidence

	Flowers
	Friendly relationship
	Self-confidence
	Tasks
	Functions
	Commitment
	Professionalism
	Respect
	Collaborative
	Structure
	Painful
	Problems
Problems facing the relationship	Challenges
	Lack of competencies
	Hitting the target
	Expectations
	Commitment
	Performance
	Team work
	Department
Training and professional development (learning)	Learning
	Development
	Training
	Skills
	Change
	Programmes
	Courses
	Resources
	Choices
	Experience

	In-house training
Team work	Employees
	Structured
	Mind-set
	Environment of discussion
	Progress report
	Social activities
	Celebrating birthdays
	Harmonisation of the team members
	High level of commitment
	Cooperative
Organisational factors	Mission
	Transformation
	Utilise skills and knowledge
	Right practice
	Satisfaction
	Tasks
	Measuring performance
	Annual targets
	Evaluation
	Organisational performance
Appraisal and rewards	Reward system
	Bonus
	Incremental
	Support
Social practices	Conflict
	Clash
	Meetings
	Beliefs

	Workplace
	Breaching values
	Challenge
	Obstacles

3.11.4 Coding and Categorisation

Coding is very important in the analysis of qualitative data, since it gives a sense of meaning to the data and attaches the main themes to a certain piece of text in the transcripts. Coding is conducted directly after a researcher finishes the transcription of collected data. In other words, coding transforms the data from large-scale statements to a more abstract interpretation (Chamaz, 2000).

In this study, coding was employed to attach themes and sub-themes to certain pieces of data reported by participants. Two types of coding were used: open and focused (selected) coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). In the open coding, and as mentioned earlier in this section, the transcripts were read through line-by-line, and a label given to each line and paragraph. This helped to identify the key paragraphs in the transcripts and understand the main issues related to learning organisation practices. However, open coding alone was not satisfactory, as it yielded a large number of themes and labels. It was thus essential to re-read and refine the themes and sub-themes, as well as the paragraphs. Thus, selected (focused) coding was applied to several lines and paragraphs of the transcripts. The identification of selected codes (themes) entailed the selection of themes emerged from the data, representing the views of leaders and followers. After refining the themes, they were attached to specific quotations by leaders and followers, in order to finally answer the study questions .

3.11.5 Constant Comparative Approach

Coding and categorising the data into themes and sub themes was still not sufficient to report the results of the study. Therefore, constant comparative methods were employed to compare the views of leaders and followers. The constant comparative method is linked to the coverage of all data when addressing the research questions. In other words, the constant comparative approach utilises the number of participants targeted in the study and the data collected from them to answer the research questions. It can be said that the constant comparative method is linked with purposive sampling, which relates to the number of participants in the study, and is also connected to the number of interviews the researcher intends to conduct for the study. If the data collected is sufficient to answer all research questions, then the phenomenon under investigation can be adequately addressed (Boeij, 2010). An advantage of the constant comparative approach is the segmentation of data into a number of segments; the researcher can then compare these segments, which represent participants' views. In this study, leaders' and followers' views and experiences in relation to learning organisation were compared. The comparison of different views increases the internal validity of findings; for example, this study highlights the common views of leaders and followers, as well the contrasting ones.

3.12 Trustworthiness of Qualitative Data

The trustworthiness and reliability of qualitative data are often criticised by quantitative positivist researchers in terms of reliability and validity, which is judged lesser than in quantitative research. Nevertheless, several researchers emphasise the trustworthiness of qualitative research methods and highlight their ability to incorporate different measures that can deal with issues regarding the trustworthiness of the results (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Patton, 2002; Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Guba and Lincoln (1994) suggest certain criteria to ensure the quality and trustworthiness of qualitative methods. Cook and Campbell (2002) argue that the use of an experimental design can achieve this.

3.12.1 Credibility (Internal Validity in Quantitative Research)

No methods for validating qualitative data have been suggested by opponents to quantitative approach; positivists originally addressed the reliability and validity of results. According to Joppe (2000) 'validity' refers to the trustworthiness of the study results and whether or not these results are true and measured as intended by the researcher. Credibility in qualitative research is equivalent to internal validity in quantitative research. Internal validity refers to what is found in research or claimed by the researcher (Ray, 2003); in general, this type of validity measures whether the study results are based on the research design and operational definitions of main constructs in the study (Giorgi & Giorgi, 2003). In qualitative research, internal validity (credibility) is measured by how confident the researcher is in the results (Polkinghorne, 1989). Lincoln and Guba (1985) emphasise that credibility is critical to qualitative research in establishing trustworthiness.

In relation to this research, confidence and trustworthiness in the results is sought through the use of several steps. First, the researcher became familiar with ADEC, its departments and divisions prior to commencing the interviewing process. The researcher was introduced to the Head of Human Resources, who described the work of employees and the services provided in the departments. All documents relating to the research were provided to the target departments, who were cooperative and friendly.

In order to ensure credibility, followers and leaders were targeted, as it would not be fair or beneficial to target only leaders, and it was very important to compare the two perspectives. According to Morse and Field (1995), using more than one data source can improve the credibility of results. Guba and Lincoln (1994) state that using different groups in research compensates for the limitations of using just a single group and utilising the advantages of targeting two groups. As mentioned earlier, this study examines the views of both leaders and followers; this enabled a comparison of the two perspectives. Both groups of participants freely took part, and they were encouraged to be transparent and frank when answering the questions, particularly those related to the relationship between leaders and followers. It was critical to probe and encourage participants to provide detailed information. The researcher's experience at ADEC was an important factor in recruiting leaders and followers and dealing with them in a friendly manner. According to Patton (2002), a credible researcher, such as the researcher in this case, is able to design a reliable and valid instrument and collect reliable data.

3.12.2 Transferability (External Validity in Quantitative Research)

Quantitative research methods are used to generalise the results of a study to a larger population. Thus, the quantitative method usually uses a large-scale sample that represents the population under investigation and is drawn using probability sampling techniques such as simple random sampling where everyone in the population has a chance to be included in the sample. Stratified random sampling is where the population is divided into strata, such as gender, age, occupation and so on, or cluster sampling, where the population is divided into clusters. According to these sampling techniques, every person in the target population has the same chance of being selected for the sample (Frerichs, 2008).

In relation to the transferability of qualitative research, Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest that researchers are responsible for collecting sufficient data regarding the area under study. In the present study, adequate data was collected to address the study questions, by interviewing a sufficient number of informative leaders and followers. Thus, the readers of the results of the study support its Conclusion and recommendations.

In order to compare the results of this study with others, readers can consult the literature review chapter and relevant theories of learning organisation and social practices. Moreover, researchers are able to understand the results and compare the study results with other research settings (Cole & Gardner, 1979). For the purpose of transferring the study results to other learning organisation and social practice contexts, ADEC place no limitations on other researchers to replicate the study. It

should be noted that sufficient time was spent conducting interviews, with each interview taking between 50 and 70 minutes.

3.12.3 Dependability (Reliability in Quantitative Research)

Reliability in quantitative research is indicated by an instrument such as a questionnaire being completed and scored by two or more respondents (Innes & Straker, 1999). In survey research, for example, the main concern is the consistency of measurement and agreement among participants (Brown, 1997). In other words, reliability refers to the degree of consistency or dependability with which an instrument measures what it is designed to measure (Joppe, 2000). Thus, Joppe states that reliability is: "...the idea of replicability and repeatability of results or observation" (2000: 41).

Kirk and Miller (1986) identify three kinds of reliability in quantitative research: the degree to which a measurement can be repeated but remains the same; the stability of measurement overtime; and, the similarity of measurement within a given period of time.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) stress that in order for researchers and readers to be able to repeat the study being investigated, it is imperative to report all steps taken in the research. To ensure the repeatability of the study results, the research design used is described in detail, and the use of a qualitative rather than quantitative research method is justified. The data collection method, namely interviews and the data analysis strategy, the constant comparative approach, are also explained in detail.

3.12.4 Confirmability (Objectivity in Quantitative Research)

As mentioned earlier in the chapter, quantitative research methods are described as realist and objective, whereas qualitative methods are viewed as subjective. These notions reveal that the realist focus is on discovering existing realities, where the role of the researcher is to use objective research methods to discover the truth; this minimises the role of the researcher and maximises objectivity. However, it is difficult to measure objectivity (Creswell, 1994). Patton (2002) argues that even for quantitative researchers who design their questionnaires and test the results, bias is inevitable and therefore it is difficult to ensure true objectivity. By contrast, in qualitative research, the focus is on subjectivism, where participants play an essential role in the research process (Creswell, 1994). The subjectivism of qualitative research confirms that the results of a study depend on the participants rather than the researcher. Therefore, confirmability in qualitative research is comparable to objectivity in quantitative research. Confirmability refers to research findings resulting from participants' experiences and ideas rather than the preferences of researchers.

As described earlier, this study did not rely on one data collection method, but rather used both interviews and focus groups, as the use of more than one research method enhances confirmability (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Triangulation was also used, through interviewing both leaders and followers, which shows that the attention and intention of the study focuses on their views rather than on the researcher's own perspective. The data collection methods were also described in detail to enable researchers to understand on what basis the results were generated.

3.13 Ethical Framework and Ethical Approval

The use of qualitative methods requires researchers to attend to certain ethical issues, which should be considered throughout the research phases (Fouka & Mantzorous, 2011). For this reason, ethical issues were taken into consideration during the research design, collection and data analysis phases. The rationale for addressing ethical issues is to ensure high quality research and transparency³; according to Harrowing *et al.* (2010), researchers are required to situate their research within an ethical framework that considers this.

To ensure the reliability of information obtained, the researcher's engagement in qualitative empirical research requires that situate and position themselves between the study and interviewees. In other words, they should stand outside of the analysis and not put themselves in the shoes of the interviewees. The ethical framework for this study firstly comprised of seeking ethical approval from the University of Lancaster. An introductory letter was produced explaining the study, including the main purpose, consent form for participation in the study, an explanation of the confidentiality of the collected data, as well as privacy and anonymity assurances. The ethical framework followed by this study consisted of the following:

3.13.1 Ethical Approval

As mentioned above, a letter of approval was obtained from the University of Lancaster, which confirmed that all stages of the study would be conducted ethically,

³ Transparency in research ethics focuses on the full, accurate and open disclosure of relevant information (Wisely, 2013).

that the study would respect the privacy of participants and ensure the confidentiality of information obtained.

The procedure included obtaining an ethical approval form from the School of Education. This was read, understood, completed and signed by the researcher and then finally signed by the School. This process took approximately three weeks. A letter was also obtained from the main office of ADEC, which helped to recruit Directors, Heads of Divisions and employees.

3.14 Ethical Considerations

3.14.1 Information Package and Introductory Letter

As mentioned above, a letter and information package was prepared by describing the study, including the objectives and significance, asking potential Directors and employees to voluntarily participate in the research, explaining the time that would be allocated for the interview and how the interviews would be conducted, as well explaining the confidentiality of data. The introductory letter included the researcher's contact details in the United Arab Emirates, including address and mobile phone number, as well as details for the research supervisor and the School of Education.

3.14.2 Participants' Consent

An informed consent form was designed and signed by the participants. This provided participants with sufficient information about the study. Participants were also informed that they could make a free decision to participate in the study. Before data collection began, the researcher contacted the Head of Human Resources with in ADEC, who initiated contact with the Directors and Heads of Divisions. According to Nachmias and Nachmias (2000), a participant's signature on the informed consent form reduces the legal responsibility of the investigators and participants; therefore, the importance of signing the informed consent form was emphasised to all Directors and employees who participated in this study.

3.14.3 Anonymity

It was essential in this study to ensure that participants were anonymous, and names and titles did not appear on the interview sheets. Jordi and Herran (2010) suggest that participants' names and addresses should be omitted from the data; therefore these were removed from the interview schedule and did not appeared on any documents other than the consent forms, which were stored in a private, secure cupboard. The anonymity of information provided was taken into consideration at all stages of the study, including transcription, coding and data analysis, as well as writing up the results.

3.14.4 Privacy

Privacy indicates a particular domain of information, and is determined by social and cultural factors (Porter, 1998). In this study the background and characteristics of Directors and employees were respected, and further information was not requested, in order not to intrude in their private and personal life. During the interviews, the focus was solely on asking questions related to the research.

3.14.5 Confidentiality of Collected Data

Confidentiality refers to the non-disclosure of information under any conditions other than for research purposes (Porter, 1998). Directors and employees alike were informed that the data they provided would be stored in a secure cabinet at the researcher's home, to which no one else would have access. It was also confirmed that the computer files were secured using a username and password. The researcher is committed to not breaching the confidentiality of data and ensuring its protection both during and beyond the end of the study. Participants were told that, in the case that they felt confidentiality had been broken, they were free to stop the interviewing and withdraw their participation in the study.

3.15 Conclusion

The primary aim of this chapter is to present and discuss the research design and methodology used to achieve the study objectives. While this study uses a qualitative research method, specifically interview and focus group approaches, it is essential to

justify this choice through a comparison with other research methods, such as quantitative approaches. It is also helpful to understand the difference between quantitative and qualitative research methods, since the former follows the positivist paradigm while the latter subscribes to an interpretivist philosophy. In relation to the research objectives, these are achieved using a qualitative research method, specifically an interview and focus group approach.

Chapter Four

Results of Leaders' Interviews and Focus Groups

4.1 Introduction

The primary focus of this study is on investigating the role of leadership and followership, to understand how it affects learning organisation practices at the Abu Dhabi Education council (ADEC).

The findings reported in this study are based on ten semi-structured interviews and two focus groups conducted with leaders working at ADEC. The findings are also based on the main themes and sub-themes that emerged from, and were generated during line-by-line reading of the transcripts. The themes are; (i) the role of executive directors (leaders), (ii) the relationship between directors and employees, (iii) training and professional development (iv) team working, (v) social practices, (vi) appraisal

and rewards systems, (vii) organisational factors, and (viii) information systems (the sub-themes are listed and summarised in table 1 in the appendix).

To ensure the comprehensive presentation of results, the eight themes are explained and presented in five individual sections. The quotes in the study represent the participants' viewpoints concerning different issues. According to Morse and Field (1996:147), these quotations provide insight into people's views, and are considered one of the main dimensions in the analysis. The similarities and differences between leaders' and followers' views are summarised in chapter six (in the section covering the results of interviews conducted with followers).

4.2 Leaders' Role

This subsection is connected to the results of the interviews conducted with the executive directors regarding their role at ADEC, and in the departments, they manage and run. The results of the interviews indicate that the directors (leaders) have differing views about their roles within the organisation. According to Collins (2001), leaders play an important part in repositioning their organisations from good to great, through developing visions and missions, establishing organisational goals, developing employees (followers) skills in relation to the tasks assigned, mentoring and coaching. To some extent, the directors (leaders) interviewed in this study defined their roles in different ways. For instance, one of the directors reported working in different areas. In her own words, she stated that:

“I am an executive director of organisational development and excellence at ADEC. There are four main functions under my directory: efficiency, excellence, organisational development and Emiratisation (nationalisation) (Leader 1).

To a large extent, the second executive director held the same view, regarding working on different issues such as quality, efficiency and excellence. He stated that:

“My job is about quality, and when it comes to quality I do not believe there is something I can do to it. However, quality is everybody’s job and my role is to improve motivation leading others to achieve excellence (Leader 2)”.

Another leader stated that:

“Sometimes I find myself mentoring them rather than managing or supervising them. In some cases, such as with scenarios which are new to everybody, they wanted to know the direction, or how the role is changing, it becomes somehow more like managing (Leader 3)”.

In relation to the directors’ role in managing employees (followers), their role is embedded in mentoring, aligning with employees’ expectations, coaching, directing and orientation. One of the directors interviewed reported that her role varies and that

she relies upon the needs of the situation, rather than managing and supervising people on a daily basis.

“Yes, we plan our work, but I believe in practicality that enhances and motivate my employees to work.

Theoretical planning should be there but at the same should be largely supported by a practical implementation plan (Leader 1).”

Another director thinks that the leadership is not about managing, coaching and mentoring people, but is a responsibility that extends further, to focus on how people deal with daily problems. He commented:

“I believe that leadership varies, you cannot always be acting like a coach, a mentor, and it depends upon the issue being addressed with employees. You should be smart enough to know when you need to observe the people who are working with you from a distance, and when you need to interfere (Leader 4)”.

The results of the focus group discussion conducted with directors revealed a consensus on the main role of leaders in the departments within ADEC. In general, the participants reported that the role of leaders was restricted to planning, coaching and supervising. One of the participants reported:

“My role is designing plans that support coordination with primary and secondary schools. I am also responsible for managing all employees working under my supervision. (Leader 7)”.

Another participant’s views are in line with this view:

“To a large extent, my department designs plans related to implementing the vision of ADEC. These plans are translated into tasks to be performed by my employees (Leader 5)”.

Another participant reported how he leads and supervises the employees in his department, stating that:

“My role is to coordinate all activities within the department. Of course, we work in teams, particularly when we visit schools for inspection. I believe that my employees learn from my daily experience leading the department and performing tasks. My role is also to build leaders who can deliver the mission of the department (Leader 12)”.

It can be concluded from these statements that directors (leaders), are aware of what is expected of them, and act based on the situation rather than on plans, finding this a more straightforward approach to managing employees easily in reality.

4.3 Relationship between Directors and Employees

The directors in the study were asked about their relationships with their employees (followers). The three directors interviewed revealed that their relationships with employees are good and that this brings numerous benefits to the department. They assert that establishing friendly relationships between directors and employees in their departments can increase employee's self-confidence when performing the assigned tasks. The interviews show that directors have the same opinions regarding their relations with employees. It can be argued that the leader-follower relationship is important for achieving the goals of the organisation in general and specific departments in particular. Empirically, they form conceptions of good leadership. There was a consensus among directors that multiple factors drive the professional relationship with employees, such as respect and honesty, commitment and accountability. One of the directors stated:

“I held them accountable, knowing their functions and how they perform does not affect the whole organisation performance. I do set expectations of commitment as well, I believe they reached a good level of specialisation in professionalization, as I directed them in three elements; accountable, committed, and responsible for their functions (Leader 1)”.

Apparently, other participants largely agree with the above statement. For instance, one of the directors described the relationship with his employees as professional,

based on respecting employees' viewpoints. He considers his employees not as subordinates, but rather as colleagues.

“I see my employees as my colleagues rather than subordinates, and have the expectations that they will do what they have been assigned to do. I keep in constant contact with them, on a daily basis (Leader 11)”.

However, this director was concerned about his employees' research background. He tried to address the issue of employees' ability to design studies, stating:

“They call themselves researchers; yes they can write reports they are able to prepare good presentations, numbers and tables. To do the research to see cause and effect, to see the structural effects, these things are missing, so here, the way I operate is to do everything. I try to teach them, I try my best to work with other departments, but there are certain things that are not clear (Leader 11)”.

The directors were asked about their relationships with other departments within ADEC. In general, they described the relationship as professional, interdependent, and collaborative. The directors also agreed that the relationship is based on developing ADEC, in relation to people, systems, and policies as well as performance. One of the directors stressed:

“Our relationships with other departments are good and help is to perform tasks is an excellence way. However, you have to know where exactly interdependency lies within the organisation. We are moving from acting in silos, as that does affect the level of services provided to our customers and stakeholders, to deliver integrated homogenised performance to achieve the desired outcomes (Leader 3)”.

Another director described the relationship with other departments as cooperative and helpful in achieving excellence and standardisation.

“In order to achieve excellence, we should be in charge of the organisational structure to enable ADEC to achieve their targets. We have to equip ADEC with the right structures, manpower, and specialisation, to be able to achieve these goals (Leader 1)”.

The directors were asked about their experiences of learning from other departments at ADEC. The semi-structured interviews demonstrated different perspectives. One director stated:

“Of course, you learn from everybody, and I believe sometimes it is painful learning, when I say painful, I mean sometimes you enjoy learning from people who know better, it becomes painful when it is the other way

around, you learn from people's mistakes, I have learned what to avoid (Leader 7).”

It was clear from the interviews conducted with the leaders that they have different perspectives on learning from other departments. One of the directors learns by addressing new issues, through discussing new ideas and research results.

“We all learn from each other, we discuss the results of research. For example, we usually look into various components, and we see what is affecting what, in a very broad way. However, the problem does not involve one department, it affects various departments, which are connected, and each one takes to play role in ADEC (Leader 9).”

Another leader added:

“I try my best to balance between being responsible and being supportive. So, sometimes people think that if you are in charge you have to be very serious and formal with your employees (Leader 10)”.

When the directors were asked about the problems facing their employees, they spoke about challenges rather than problems. These challenges are embedded in employees' inability to do the work assigned to them. One of the directors stated:

“There are a lot of challenges that are normally faced, and sometimes lack competencies in certain areas. Another challenge that I face from my team, is when I keep telling them you are all equal. You should treat each one in a very friendly way and you should be integrated because our jobs are also integrated, because everyone depends upon everybody within the organisation (Leader 4)”.

Another participant addressed the issue of urgency when performing the tasks assigned to his employees. In his own words, he stated:

“We face the difficulty of hitting the target or the expectations from leadership from a time perspective. Again, we need to classify what is urgent and what is not urgent or anticipate what is supposed to be done in a normal timeframe (Leader 6).”

The results of the focus groups show no substantial differences between participants when discussing different issues related to the relationships between followers and employers.

“My relationship with my employees is based on an exchange of ideas and teamwork. I deal with them on an equal basis and try not to put hurdles in the way of performing tasks. We meet regularly to discuss different issues related to work and the department. I have also built good relationships with other departments, since I am trying to understand what they are doing, and to provide them with some information about what they are doing. The purpose of this is to learn from the experience of those departments (Leader 2).”

4.4 Training and professional Development

Learning, development and training are regarded as an opportunity to put in place a process of upgrading and updating individuals’ skills, and addressing attitudes towards change (Palo et al, 2003, Robert et al, 2004). Learning also improves individuals’ ability to perform their tasks effectively and efficiently (Wills, 1994). In this study, different themes emerged from the interviews, such as the design of training courses, types of training and development, obstacles to learning and leadership supporting learning.

The directors interviewed were asked what training programmes had been designed for the purpose of learning. All the executive directors reported training programmes were designed based on needs of their departments. For instance, some departments design their training programmes in relation to investments, efficiency, excellence,

and education system, while other departments focus on performance management. One director reported these areas of training:

“When someone is working efficiently, then that person needs to become specialised in investment and programme management, so the training becomes very focused and targeted. When we are talking about excellence, we are then talking about an excellence framework. When we talk about human resources or organisational development, then we address the issue of strategic human resources. We, therefore, discuss specific programmes (Leader 1).”

Another participant spoke about coaching and leadership programmes, which were designed only for United Arab Emirates nationals looking for jobs. In his own words, he commented:

“One of the main training programmes that I have seen which was nice, was just initiating a coaching programme. It is for United Arab Emirates nationals, where you decide whether you want to enter or not, it is not self-payment. The coach will just discuss things related to new businesses with you (Leader 9).”

The directors were asked about obstacles to learning and cooperation when performing tasks. There was a general agreement that time is the main constraint inhibiting staff members' engagement in learning.

“I think we are doing well, employees can get even better, but the only obstacle is time, everybody is busy. By the way, we are a very small team, 9 people with big tasks. For example, we are utilising every single initiative in the organisation. This requires a lot of cooperation with the function owners, because today we are doing programme management, so what we do is set the activity, and establish the road map for efficiency for the coming five years (Leader 5).”

This participant then added:

“Despite some of obstacles, we cooperate with each other as much as possible, as time allows. I use the approach that I believe helps the team so that whenever I am not around there is someone acting on my behalf; that is rotation and it is one person each time. I believe this is a type of learning (Leader 5).”

The semi-structured interviews revealed the executive directors support the demands of their employees for training and skills development. The directors reported that there are relevant regulations to follow in an organisation. These regulations are explained by the quotation below.

“I am very supportive when it comes to programmes that they have to join; of course we have to follow the regulations of ADEC. However, the lack of time and financial resources are the main obstacles to planning training course (Leader 9).”

The directors were also asked about different types of training and development events. The semi-structured interviews revealed that the choice of training course depends upon the preference of the department, rather than the employees’ personal choice. One of the directors revealed that the choice of training should support the tasks assigned to the employee by his/her director.

“If the training that the employee wants, supports his/her current functions, then I am more than happy to support it. The organisation will also support that. However, if employees ask for something that is not even remotely relevant, I will apologise and tell them why, for example, that it does not fit our profile, or your career progression (Leader 3).”

Another director believes that the training courses should be certified, as this would be helpful for employees' future career and experience.

“I like training that comes with a certification because I do not believe in going to training where you just spent time and then in the end you do not have anything to prove that you understood it, or that you could implement it (Leader 1).”

It was clear from the interviews that most directors prefer in-house training; particularly when they are responsible for a large number of people. For instance,

“If we have a good number of employees registering for training, then that training will be conducted in the organisation, which basically adds more value to the organisation. Instead of one person getting the answer, there are more people who will know about it. If they do not receive many responses, they will be sent to external training (Leader 8).”

The results from the focus groups are, largely, consistent with the results of the interviews, since the participants reported no regular plans for skills development, for employees working for ADEC. One of the participants reported:

“There are no programmes designed for skills development in general. There are no plans for assessing employees' needs from training. Sometimes, human

resources ask departments about courses that will be conducted with in ADEC or outside ADEC. Some of these courses do not meet the employees' or departments' needs (Leader 7).

Another participant stated:

“Training and skills development are personal only since there are no regulations or policies. There are no clear strategies for departments, or even for the ADEC in general. ADEC its and departments should work toward developing learning and training policies in favour of all employees (Leader 12).”

One of the participants offered a different perspective; mentioning that training courses are designed according to employees' needs. He revealed that:

“Training and development programmes are designed by the human resources department at ADEC. Every employee assesses his/her needs and reports them on the assessment form. Then employees write their needs from training and development (Leader 2).”

However, this participant emphasised that training delivery depends on the approval of the head of the division and the director. He stated:

“Employees' needs should be approved by the head of the division and the needs of the department. If the

suggested training does not meet the requirements of the department, employees will not be able to apply for and attend these courses (Leader 2).”

4.5 Teamwork

In the last two decades, leaders worldwide have recognised the importance of teamwork. Evidence shows that teamwork can expand an individuals’ output, and enhance their skills by providing an environment that promotes learning from others (i.e. colleagues) (Jones, Richard, Paul, Sloane and Peter, 2007). Cohen and Baily (1999) highlight that teamwork can be deemed as a crucial factor in the smooth functioning of an organisation. In this study, directors were asked about teamwork, in particular how they achieve it. To a large extent, there was agreement among directors concerning the importance of working in teams, which also helped them with understanding related problems.

“Well, I believe in a structured approach, I am a very structured person, my mind set is also very structured which is sometimes annoying for me. I believe you should establish an environment that enables discussion, so we meet almost every week. In the meeting, we all sit together and update each other; we also have to sit and talk to determine where people are working together, because some projects require more teamwork. They have to work on the same floor every day, and they have to sit and talk in a structured way almost every week (Leader 1).”

Although there was agreement among directors about the importance of teamwork, one of the directors revealed that they assign people to teams, but because of business, and people working in different areas, they do not meet regularly. In his own words, he stated:

“To be honest with you, sometimes we work in groups and sometimes we do not because we are too busy. When we are working as a group that is a base requirement coming from the top, like for budget or something related to the whole office, but we are not really cooperating, this is my feeling (Leader 7).”

Simply put, the status quo incorporates bias in work-based decisions (Jungermann 1998). Individuals and organisations tend to prefer alternatives to the status quo. In other words, organisations have two choices; i.e. whether to adopt new alternatives (i.e. moving towards learning organisation) or to stay in the current situation.

In relation to cooperation and dealing with each other in departments, the semi-structured interviews revealed good cooperation between staff members from one side and directors on the other. Directors demonstrated their satisfaction regarding learning from employees and from their colleagues, who had the same level of leadership. One of the directors reported:

“That is definitely right, we learn from others and someone even is new to the department and the information is somewhere else they come and share it. In general, the relationship here is very nice and cooperative (Leader 4).”

Another director supported the above statement, stating:

“I see they are very cooperative together, because they need each other to achieve first of all, and I am blessed to have a very good team (Leader 2).”

The third director also focused on collaboration between departments, which enhances employees’ learning from other colleagues, and addressed the issue of a relationship between values and teamwork. In his own words, he commented:

“The collaborative work with other departments increases people’s ability to learn, they understand what others do. I believe that the loyalty among team members moves toward ADEC’s vision. So, if you understand the values of your team members then you can always affect them. You can always motivate them to develop their values (Leader 3).”

The results of the focus group discussion were consistent with the results of the interviews conducted with leaders. Participants in the focus groups reported working in teams but stated that their ability to do so depends upon the nature of the work. One of the participants stated:

“It depends upon the nature of the work. We wish to work in teams. However, there is no encouragement for employees to work in teams due to pressure and lack of time. I try to encourage my employees to work together and learn how to work in teams (Leader 6).”

Another participant reported:

“My employees are encouraged to learn how to work in teams and cooperate to achieve different types of tasks. I am also very cooperative with them, and participate in performing some tasks, as well as delegating other tasks (Leader 5).”

4.6 Social Practices

The social practices theme is a key area addressed in this study. This section addressed different themes, such as the conflict between directors and employees, changes in values and beliefs, attitudes and practices when supporting employees. The section also covers conflict, and problems affecting daily work, values, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviour.

Executive directors (leaders) were asked about conflicts with their employees, in particular how they arise. In general, the directors agreed that there is generally no conflict. One of the directors emphasised that everything is fine with her employees, and she does not allow the things reach to a state of conflict or disagreement. She stated:

“I do not leave it to reach that level, because we sit down together on a regular basis; so intervention happens or mitigation happens in the very early stages. That is the advantage of having structured meetings with your team, where you cascade down the message of the leadership, and you also understand where they stand today (Leader 1).”

This director advised other leaders to limit opportunities for conflict with their employees, to make things easy. She said:

“I seriously advise that any leader or any person who is heading a team to do the same because it makes the relationship much easier and it also saves the organisation from financial leakages, or loss of time, you should talk to your people continuously. Make it a norm, weekly and bio-monthly, to sit formally and talk with them about their achievements, so it will not reach a level that you cannot control (Leader 1).”

Another director emphasised that he has no any problem with his employees. He reported his position in the following statement:

“It should be clear from the beginning that this is your objective and it is what you need to achieve, and then always follow-up (Leader 5).”

This director also reported that some discussions take place with employees but they do not reach the level of conflict. He said:

“We discuss different issues, maybe it is not a conflict, it is just a discussion about the objectives and we have to align those (Leader 5).”

Sometimes the relationships between leaders and followers are affected by values and beliefs. The executive directors were asked about their views concerning values and beliefs in the workplace. There was an agreement among the directors that people cannot live without values. One of the directors revealed:

“It does happen and happened in my previous job. I have been in places where I went silent, I was not sticking to values, so I had to talk although that would create a lot of conflict with colleagues who might be the ones who were breaching the values or ethics of the organisation. I preferred to stand by my values, even if that will make me or put me in a bad situation or lead to conflict or confrontation (Leader 12).”

In relation to directors' views about the role of a learning organisation, some stated that it is one which accepts certain attitudes, values and practices that support the process of continuous learning. Participants were asked whether ADEC and its departments constituted a learning organisation. The semi-structured interviews indicated no consensus among directors. One director stated:

“I believe being aware is the first step to learning. So ADEC was aware that when we started, we began developing the mission and values of ADEC and developing each function separately, since each function was normal for a start-up organisation, so each function was necessary for employees to establish their roles (Leader 2).”

Another participant agrees with his colleague about the nature of learning with in ADEC, stating that:

“We have to integrate, it is very important and what is happening at ADEC today talking about integration, talking about interdependences across functions that will make us, in the end reach our optimum goal in a very effective manner, with less cost, less finance and more time to support employees (Leader 7).”

It was clear from the interviews that the third director, to a large extent, did not agree with his colleagues; instead he emphasised the process of encouraging employees' learning within ADEC, reporting that:

“As for ADEC, I really cannot tell you whether ADEC is a learning organisation or not, but as a department, we encourage people to learn and develop their skills (Leader 11).”

In any department or division, some problems centred on differences in attitudes and assumptions, particularly on how people perform the task assigned to them. The directors in the study were asked about the problems and obstacles facing the employees in their departments. In general, the directors reported some overlap and mixing between departments. There was no clear structure reported for each department or unit at ADEC. One of the directors stated:

“If you are talking about my office, the first obstacle or challenge that we faced was when we established the office, because it was a new one, was to help people understand our role . . . so the awareness of our role as an office within ADEC; some people thought that we were stepping on their toes, others thought we were supposed to do everything.”

Another director reported an additional challenge, as represented by combining human resources and organisational development.

“Some employees and even directors confuse organisational development and human resources, although we keep telling them they are different units. Therefore, departments and divisions should learn about their role, through defining a clear structure (Leader, 8)”.

In relation to attitudes towards the departments’ with in ADEC, the employees were found to mix with one another based on social values. For the most part, employees do not use formalities and work in an open-minded manner. One of the directors reported:

“At the beginning, there was some differences in attitude; I did not like to be social when talking with employees from different ethnic groups. I was very formal but discovered that was not appropriate and I was not happy about it and changed my attitude subsequently (Leader 1).”

The results of the focus group discussion support the leaders’ views in relation to social practices. One of the participants stated that:

“Values and beliefs are important at work because they help teach us how to deal with one another and they also help us to learn from others” (Leader 12).

4.7 Organisational Factors

4.7.1 Vision and Mission of ADEC and Division of Work

The leaders (directors) were asked about the organisational factors; these included awareness of ADEC's vision and mission, the division of work among employees in different departments, measuring departments' and employees' performance. Leaders broadly agreed on some issues but held differing views on others.

For instance, leaders agree that they and their employees were aware of ADEC's vision and mission, and that they were working toward achieving them. One of the leaders reported:

“Yes, I am totally aware of ADEC's vision and mission because without that we will not be able to work and perform activities. I am telling you about my department. Myself and my employees try to match our tasks to the achievements of the mission, so that we are satisfied with what we are doing (Leader 2).”

He added:

“Yes I have very skilful and knowledgeable staff who were recruited from various government departments. And I have noticed that people from other sections and departments come to consult with them about issues and misunderstandings. I feel very proud that my staff use

their knowledge and skills for the benefit of other departments (Leader 1).”

This view correlates with another leader’ view who reported that:

“Of course, if I were not aware of ADEC mission, how could I prepare my department’s plans? And how could I divide the work among my employees? However, the problem is that, there is not a sufficient number of people to work in my department and focus on the mission (Leader 8).”

Another participant reported that she and her followers support the vision and mission of ADEC.

“We support the mission of ADEC through our hard work. To be honest with you, nothing is easy, we need to be patient, and otherwise we will work in vain. Do you know why? Because there are several challenges that hinder our work, such as lack of time, financial resources, intention to work and change (Leader 1).”

The leaders were also asked about the utilisation of the employees’ learned skills and knowledge, and their implementation of them the benefit of ADEC. The results of the interviews provided a range of different views in relation to this issue. For instance, one of the leaders commented:

“Skills and knowledge of people should be assessed before we appoint them. Some individuals come with necessary and good skills, while others, no. Therefore, we should first understand the personality of people and how they think, particularly in reference to the tasks allocated to them (Leader 11).”

Another participant revealed:

“The most important thing is if directors and employees are ambitious towards performing tasks and using their skills. Some employees have sufficient skills but they are slow about performing relevant activities. Thus, we need an intention to exploit our knowledge in every aspect of our work (Leader 7).”

Leaders were asked how they divide work among their employees, and on what basis.

There was no consensus found regarding this issue. One of the participants reported:

“When an employee joins my department, I specify a number of aims to be achieved. These aims are related to the mission of my department. I then allocate tasks to be performed. I do this because some employees have qualifications; therefore, I have to give them specific work to do. As you know, I need to assess and appraise employees’ performance by the end of the year. On what basis should I do that? For this reason, I work on aims and tasks (Leader 2).”

Another participant had a different perspective:

“The way I divide work among my employees is centred on skills and qualifications, as well as experience. I will give an example; when they appoint an employee in my department, the first step is to understand what is his/her background is, and what he/she can do or cannot. I then allocate some relevant tasks along with some supervision and follow up (Leader 5)”.

When leaders were asked about measuring the division of labour, they had different views. For example, one of the employees stressed:

“First of all, I measure my employees’ performance through the quality of work they have performed. If you work under my supervision, you will be given some work to do; I will then assess your work. However, I try to assess my employees every month because I have to write an annual report on everyone in the department for the purpose of promotion and follow up by ADEC headquarters (Leader 2).”

Another participant reported another view, stating:

“I measure my employees, not on performance only, but on productivity, because some employees take a long time to perform a certain job, therefore, her/his performance is low and slow (Leader 6).”

Another leader emphasised:

“Productive employees learn from their leaders, that suggests the development of their skills and knowledge and then good performance. However, this depends upon the performance of the department as an entity (Leader 12).”

4.7.2 Appraisal and Rewards

Executive directors were asked to describe how they reward employees for their engagement in learning new skills and other achievements. There was a consensus that the United Arab Emirates government froze the reward system during the global financial crisis. One of the directors stated:

“It is a very challenging question because today I told you the government is freezing the reward system, and it is because of what happened with our economy. It is the case everywhere in all countries, so they stopped bonuses, they stopped annual incremental raises, so it is becoming challenging to reward with anything but support and recognition of employees’ work (Leader 2).”

Instead of rewarding employees for their performance and skills, executive directors recognise their employees in other ways. For example:

“I keep talking about making them feel recognised; I keep bringing them to meeting with the leadership of the organisation. We keep talking about how their work will affect all of society. Followers receive certificates for their performance (Leader 7).”

The results of the focus group are consistent with the results from the interviews. One of the participants stated:

“There is no system for rewards because this issue is the responsibility of the Ministry of Civil Services. Apart from promotion, there is nothing called rewards at ADEC (Leader 4).

Another participant supported this view but in different context:

“There is no formal system for rewards at ADEC. There is something called the appreciation of employees for significant and distinctive performance. There are no financial rewards that encourage employees to become creative (Leader 5).”

4.7.3 Information System

This section presents the leaders’ views on the sources and use of information and resources by employees when performing tasks and learning. Several themes emerged from the data, concerning types of information and the way the information is obtained.

In relation to types of information, the leaders expressed different views. For instance, some leaders spoke about sources of information, while others talked about the regulations that govern the production of data and information. One employee reported:

“There are several programmes and sources of information that can be used by leaders and employees. For example, we have a database on schools, and you can pick up the name of any school and get information, such as about number of students, teachers and the curriculum (Leader 3).”

This view is in line with another participant’s view who stated that:

“We usually use a database in schools that is designed and maintained by the ADEC information centre department. This database is comprehensive, and can serve employees and leaders in their work (Leader 9).”

When the leaders were asked about how they obtain data, they reported similar views. One of the participants stated:

“There are different ways of obtaining information. There is a directorate for knowledge management and information systems, and it is responsible for collecting and compiling data on schools, teachers and students. It

is also responsible for gathering data on training and the curriculum. However, sometimes this database is not useful in performing daily tasks, because you may need more information about the professional development of people or about your external stakeholders. Therefore, you need to look to other sources of information, such as the Ministry of Education, and the local education authorities, etc. To be honest with you, our employees need to be motivated to use different sources of information and to learn how to use the database, as well as developing their skills in information systems and research (Leader 2).”

Another participant has expressed a view consistent with this one. In his own words, he revealed that:

“I think we have a lot of information, but the problem I think is with both leaders and employees. We are not serious enough about using the information when designing our plans because we have insufficient experience of information systems and no intention to use such systems (Leader 11).”

4.8 Conclusion

This chapter has presented the results from the interviews conducted with leaders working for ADEC. The leaders agreed on some issues, such as the role of leadership,

and their relationship with followers. They did however; express different views in relation to social practices. In general, the chapter has provided details about leaders and their experiences associated with the factors informing the learning organisation, where reality has indicated a direct relationship between social practices and the learning organisation. Overall, the results have shown that ADEC has not become a learning organisation.

Chapter five

Results of Followers' Interviews and Focus Groups

5.1 Introduction

Chapter five presents the results of interviews conducted with leaders, while this chapter will present the results of interviews conducted with followers working under the supervision of leaders. It is essential for this study to examine the differences between the views of leaders and followers in relation to learning organisation practices.

As mentioned in the methodology chapter, this takes a qualitative approach and aims to reveal the views of leaders and followers in regards to learning organisation practices withat ADEC. Moreover, the study seeks to understand the relationship between leaders and followers, and related issues. To this end, ten interviews and two focus groups were conducted with followers. Questions in the interview schedule were designed to discuss and answer the research questions stated in the introductory chapter. Followers were asked to express their views freely in relation to the issues addressed in the interviews and focus group discussions. The results will be presented and structured according to the themes and sub-themes emerging from the transcribed data.

This chapter will be organised similarly to Chapter 5, which presents the results of interviews conducted with leaders. Regarding the similarities and differences between leaders and followers, these will be summarised in the last section of this chapter.

5.2 The Role of Leaders

Followers were asked about how they see the role of their directors (leaders) within the various departments of ADEC. The interview results indicate a range of views in relation to followers' perspectives of the role of directors (leaders). In general, participants reported that the directors' role involves planning, coaching and supervising.

For instance, one of the participants reported that:

“Our manager is responsible for designing plans for the department and sometimes he asks us for consultation (Follower 1).”

Another participant mentioned that his manager focuses on empowering people in the department. In his own words, he expressed that:

“The director of the department plans his work to empower us to be professional when performing tasks and teaching us how to perform different activities in an efficient way (Follower 2).”

Another participant:

“I may not be able to describe my manager’s role in the department because I see him as doing everything in the department. For example, he writes the plans, but without any contribution from us. We do not participate in designing these plans. He sometimes interferes in performing some tasks, etc. (Follower 3)”.

However, some participants had a different perspective, not in line with the views expressed above. For instance, one participant described his view:

“You asked me to talk about my manger and his role in the division. What can I say about him? It is really hard. However, my colleagues and I tried to change our role from followers to active individuals who can prepare plans and perform tasks. We talked with our manger several times to take on some parts of his job but he used to say, ‘OK, we will talk about that later (Follower 4)’.

This view is supported by that of another participant, who is not satisfied with his director’s role:

“I assume that a director plays the role of orientation where I am the orienteer, but our director unfortunately does not play such a role. He is moody and sometimes

delegates work to one colleague and ignores others (Follower 9).”

Another participant reported a different view yet again, and sees his director as positively leading the department in an effective way, stating that:

“You cannot imagine how effective our director is. Her role is to supervise and guide us in how to perform the tasks given and how to manage our time. Yes, she is very tough, but at the same time she is working hard and helps us in performing our tasks. I would say that she is successful leader who knows what she and her employees are doing (Follower 6).”

The view of another respondent, to large extent, is also consistent with the above view; he stated that:

“You know, my manager is cooperative and respects what we are doing. He divides the work among us and follows how we perform our tasks. In general, he works on designing short-term plans and translates them into tasks (Follower 12).”

5.3 Relationship between Followers and Leaders

This section will describe the relationship between followers and leaders, from the perspective of followers. In general, the interviews conducted with followers revealed different views. Some of the participants claimed that their relationship with their leaders is good, while others reported no professional relationship. In other words, some followers could build good relationships whilst others kept themselves away from their directors. The results also show that some followers believe that their manager is not cooperative.

On this relationship, one participant stated that:

“Well, the relationship is based on understanding. In the beginning, directors set the targets for all members and what we need to achieve. The director asked every member whether they were able to do particular job or not. It was really good opportunity for me and colleagues to learn new things from our director and from one another (Follower 1).”

Some participants reported that they have some problems with their directors that hinder their productivity and performance, as well as learning. For instance, one participant reported that:

“To be honest with you, I would say it is not about my director and how he thinks, but it is about how busy he is. His engagement in different issues hinders our

meetings. Sometimes it is easy to solve problems, but some other times you need to meet the director because you cannot make decisions. For instance, I wanted to discuss a plan for designing a new curriculum for secondary schools. Although there is a committee for that, it took a long time to catch up and sort out this matter with the director. Once I needed to resolve a problem with the Ministry of Education, I had to meet the director in the corridor and discuss the problem (Follower 7).”

The following conversation is with one of the followers, who answered all questions relating to their relationship with their leader honestly and frankly.

Interviewer: How would you describe your relationship with your leader?

Participant: My relationship with my line manager is based on the tasks I have been assigned. I discuss with her my plan for fulfilling my tasks, and difficulties I face.

Interviewer: That is all?

Participant: The fact that my line manager has delegated me some tasks that were not given to others.

Interviewer: Why did she do that?

Participant: I have been here for about five years and built a professional relationship with her and other colleagues, which generated mutual trust.

Interviewer: What did you learn from this good relationship?

Participant: My line manager has built a good relationship with all staff members in the directory, but due to the nature of some tasks and my long period of experience she involved me in different activities. I have learned several things from her. For instance, I have learned how to develop and implement plans and how to deal with my colleagues. I have learned how to focus on important matters related to managing procurement and content, market analysis and supplies. I have learned how to communicate with my colleagues and other departments. In general, all of my colleagues have learned from our line manager, because she tries to give everything and encourages us to work in teams (Follower 5).

However, by contrast, another participant stated that:

“I would say that our manager has a closed-door policy for me, but not for other colleagues. I cannot discuss issues related to performing tasks because I believe his work is exceptional ((Follower 5).

Interviewer: why do you think that he has this policy against you? Could you give some reasons?

Participant: To be honest with you, I have no specific reason. I have never had personal clashes with him. However, one day I discussed some matters related to

training and professional development. This was the only discussion that took place between he and I, and since then I have not talked to him about any other matters (Follower 5).

Another participant's response is also consistent with the above view:

“You could say the relationship between myself and my director is professional, but does not take into account the discussion of personal matters. He prefers to discuss issues in the weekly or monthly meetings. This, from my point of view, hinders us in performing our tasks (Follower 9).”

However, another participant takes a different view:

“The director of our department is friendly and we can knock on her door at any time and discuss issues related to performing our daily tasks. I also sometimes discuss my personal issues with her and ask for her suggestions and solutions to certain problems (Follower 2).”

The above statement is supported by one of the participants in the focus group discussion:

“My manager deals with all colleagues in a friendly way and has never been rude to us. She gives us the opportunity to participate in decision making (Follower 12).”

The results of the focus groups, to large extent, are in line with the results of interviews. The data reveals some agreement among participants regarding their relationships with their leaders. At the outset of the focus group, the interviewer asked a question about the relationship between followers and leaders; during the discussion that ensued, four participants described a stable and positive relationship with directors, while three reported unstable and unhealthy relationships. One participant, who reported a good relationship with his director, stated that:

“I believe that my manager can understand our situation in the department and deal with all colleagues on the basis of professionalism. He built a professional relationship with us through delegating certain tasks, collaborating with us on how to perform tasks and so on (Follower 3).”

This view is consistent with that of another member of the group:

“I would say that our manager is cooperative with me and other colleagues in the department, and she encourages us to contribute to planning and decision-making. She always stresses that her door is open and

we can enquire or ask about different professional and personal issues. I would say that my manager has a created friendly relationship with all colleagues (Follower 6)".

On the other hand, some followers reported unhealthy relationship with their managers; for instance, one participant stated that:

"The problem is that we do not see our director. I feel my relationship with him is not healthy, simply because we do not meet (Follower 8)."

This view is in line with a similar perspective, expressed in the following conversation:

"We sit on one floor and the manager sits on another floor. He is always busy."

Interviewer: Why do you think?

Participant: Sitting on a different floor prevents us from meeting with him; even if we go upstairs, we cannot catch him, because he is busy. Therefore, communication is not very good.

Interviewer: This is not his problem; you could contact his secretary and arrange meetings.

Participant: There is a misunderstanding; as I told you, he does not afford time for the department and colleagues. He does not give us the time to discuss different issues.

Interviewer: Do you think this problem is faced by all departments in relation to senior managers and directors?

Participant: I believe so, because all directors are busy and have no time for their employees.

Interviewer: How do you know?

Participant: Yes, this is because directors and executives have not built good relationships with employees. A good relationship can be developed through regular meetings, which do not take place in most of the departments. This is true for almost everyone here. The manager is always supposed to be with his team, but at ADEC, this is exceptional (Follower 12).

5.4 Training and Professional Development

Followers were asked several questions relating to training courses designed for teaching new skills and professional development. In relation to this topic, the results of the interviews do not indicate consensus among participants. Furthermore, participants did not praise the training programmes offered by ADEC. For example, one of the followers reported that:

“Well, if you ask me about this I would say that the training programmes here are really not good. I have attended three training workshops, but learned nothing from these workshops (Follower 2).”

Another participant expressed a viewpoint in line with the above; in his own words, he explained that:

“The problem at ADEC is the lack of planning for skills development and learning. There is no individual learning planning or personal development plans, and even if they have plans for each employee, they do not implement the plans. The plans are just kept in drawers (Follower 6).”

Similarly, another participant said:

“I am a fresh graduate; I do not have any prior experience and do not know how to develop my skills. I think that this department does not really have any training programmes (Follower 11).”

One participant elaborated, explaining that:

“You do not want to waste your time studying something you do not want to do. If you are going to do a PhD then you will not stay in the country. After graduation you can progress to higher studies, but your manager may hinder your attempts and say to you that it does not meet the requirements of the department (Follower 1).”

In relation to training and development, the following conversation took place with one of the followers:

Interviewer: What types of training and development are you interested in?

Participant: Well, maybe you can help me with this. I am not sure, because I am research assistant; I'm from a different background and I am working in a different area, so I am not clear about what kind of development or training programmes I want to join and what I am doing, or what I want to do in future. If I had to select a course based on this question, then I would say IT, something about computer programs, for example how to be successful as an IT developer and so on. I am not going to select something related to education, because this is not my background. So, I am not sure about this.

Interviewer: Did you learn about research methods, and qualitative or quantitative methods of analysis?

Participant: This is general knowledge, but if you want to go deeper into which road you should go where to head, is it education, is it IT what exactly it is.

Interviewer: That depends upon the field that you want to complete your research in, but as far as research is concerned you can do this in any field. For instance, I am a researcher; I can write on any field, but whatever field I specialise in, I will write on that field. If I write, it will be on leadership or administration, not on IT or science; the same is true for any researcher.

Participant: But you don't want to waste your time studying something you're not interested in. If you are going to do PhD course then you don't want to do education if you are not interested in education. This is the question, after graduation you can do whatever you want, but you don't want to waste five years studying something you don't like (Follower 3).”

5.4.1 Types of Training

Followers were asked about the types of training they received within and outside ADEC. The semi-structured interviews indicate that the choice of training depends upon the interest of the specific department and of ADEC, rather than being the personal choice of employees. In general, there is agreement among followers regarding types of training needs and types of training received. One follower stated that:

“I would like to tell you one thing: our directors do not give us the opportunity to choose what skills we need to develop. The director's decision is based on the requirements of the department (Follower 9).”

This statement is in line with the views of another participant, who reported that:

“You know, here the decision is in the hands of our manager, who is directly responsible for the training courses and choosing the candidates. Some of these courses are good for personal development, while some others are not related to our work (Follower 2).”

Another participant expressed, to some extent, a different view:

“I have been here for about six years. My director has asked me about what skills I need to develop. For example, I needed to take a course in project management, but unfortunately this type of course is not provided by the organisation (Follower 3).”

The results of the focus groups conducted with the followers reveal some disagreement about the types of training courses designed for learning programmes and skills development. Some of the participants reported that they have not received any type of training, while others have attended some workshops. One of the participants who had received some training mentioned that:

“One of the programmes that I have attended was really beneficial. We just initiated a coaching programme. The course was only for Emirati nationals and was funded by ADEC, but you needed to sign a contract stating that you would commit to serve one year after the course (Follower 7).”

However, another participant in the focus group expressed a different point of view, explaining that the department identifies training needs but then does not translate this into practice:

“At the beginning of each year, our director asks us to fill in a form that identifies our training needs. However,

the department does not work on translating these training needs into courses. I see it as the duty of the directors to take training needs into account more seriously in their implementation plans (Follower 1).”

“In terms of the ADEC, I do learn from other departments in how they plan and perform tasks. For example, my department works jointly with another department on designing curricula; we divide the work among us but through working as one team I have learned from their experience in managing activities and time (Follower 1).”

5.5 Teamwork

This section will present followers’ views of teamwork, formed by their experiences with ADEC. Participants’ views reflect their experiences of teamwork in their departments. It is important to accomplish tasks effectively; some participants reported that they work in teams to discuss tasks and issues within their departments, while others say that they do not work in teams.

One of the participants who do work within a team reported that:

“If I understand that teamwork is to work with colleagues within the department, then to large extent

this does not happen, because everyone works on their own and we do not meet to discuss the work (Follower 3).”

Another participant, to an extent agrees with this view; in his own words, he stated that:

“I would like to work in a team with my colleagues, but the problem is that we are all busy and have no time to give feedback and discuss different issues. Everyone is doing their own tasks and there is no time to help or work with others (Follower 7).”

However, another participant provided a different perspective:

“We do not usually work in groups, but when we do work in a group it is based on instruction from our director, otherwise we would not think to work in teams. One day we met in the department to discuss the budget (Follower 2).”

The focus group discussions reveal similar views regarding teamwork. There was agreement among participants about how they work in teams and collaborate to resolve different issues. On this topic, the following discussion took place between the interviewer and participants in a focus group.

Interviewer: What problems do you face in team working?

Participant: To be honest, I feel that this is a problem in all departments and sections, with senior executives, directors and managers.

Participant: You are right, this is a very crucial issue, because you don't get the time to see the director and get guidance or discuss things, so you have very limited time. It is almost the same for everyone over here. The manager is always supposed to be with their team, but at ADEC this is an exception, because our manager is on a different floor, which has a negative impact.

Interviewer: Describe your relationship with other colleagues in other departments.

Participant: You want me to describe my relationship with my colleagues in other departments; well, I would describe my relationship with others as very good. I maintain good relationships with everyone here, even with those who do not speak Arabic, so I think it is very good. That's how I would describe it.

Interviewer: What issues or areas do you discuss with other divisions of ADEC?

Participant: First we will discuss the collaboration between our division and the other divisions. For example, if they want to do a survey then they can come to us and we can discuss the questionnaire items and how to administer the survey to the respondents and so on. We also have communications in terms of the data that we can obtain from other divisions; so, for example, the course data, parents' data and so on. These are two major things we engage with other divisions.

Interviewer: Do you seek permission from your manager when you discuss issues with other colleagues in other departments?

Participant: No, we don't. I am not sure if it is the practice at ADEC that we have to get permission from the manager; because I do not see him it is not reasonable to go to him all the time to obtain permission (Follower 6).

5.6 Social Practices

This section will present the results of interviews in relation to social practices, on which followers were asked a range of questions.

First, followers were asked about conflicts that occur between themselves and their leaders. In general, there was no consensus among participants, as they tackle the issue of conflict in different ways. For instance, one participant stated that:

“Usually, we have no clashes or conflicts with our director. However, we sometimes have different views about a certain issue. For example, we discuss the department's annual plan; we discuss it in-depth and we differ in our views in relation to implementation, but we collectively agree upon one view (Follower 6).

This statement is in line with the view of a participant from another department.

“Our leader understands our views and the tasks given to us. The director discusses the given task with each member of the department and agrees upon these tasks (Follower 2).

However, other participants expressed different views to those described above, and described some examples of conflicts or problems with their directors. One reported that:

“We always have different opinions and problems, and we never reach an agreement. As the director has the final say and the decision making power, we have no real choice (Follower 11).”

The view of another participant is consistent with this, who stated that:

“We have conflicts; if our director says something, we have to follow it and not discuss it. We sometimes suggest solutions to certain problems but the director sticks with his opinion (Follower 12).”

Followers were also asked about how they address problems and restore their relationships with leaders. The participants expressed their opinions in a similar manner and showed no significant differences between them. For instance, one participant reported that:

“I did not face this, honestly; I did not have broken relationships with my colleagues and director. There is nothing to restore, as everything has been good so far (Follower 7).”

Another participant stated that:

“Yes, when I have a problem with my director I approach him and try to sort things out in a positive and friendly manner (Follower 4).”

Two participants, to a certain extent, reported a different view; one of them revealed that:

“I believe that my director takes things personally; thus, we cannot resolve conflicts or problems easily (Follower 1).”

This view is consistent with that of another participant:

“Our director is good, but it is difficult to resolve problems easily because he sometimes takes things personally (Follower 3).”

5.6.1 Social practices: values and beliefs

Followers were also asked about the impact of their values and beliefs on their relationships with directors and colleagues, and how they learned from these relationships. There was no consensus among the participants, who expressed a range of views, dependent upon the situation in which events occurred. For instance, one of the participants expressed his opinion through a short story.

“I will tell a story: I saw a female colleague who comes to the organisation in inappropriate clothes. I wanted to complain about her, but I told my line manager before

writing the complaint. What did he do? He talked to the lady's manager; he did not care about my feelings and complaint. I did not know why he did that. I uncovered later that he had a different view about the lady. I cared about this, because she offended my values and beliefs; when my director ignored my opinion this hurt me (Follower 4).”

Another participant also described the situation:

“To be honest with you, everyone at ADEC has their own beliefs and values, because employees come from different parts of the world. However, we learn from one another's values because these values are part of the system. I will tell you one thing; some of our employees are from China, they have their own system and values in relation to work and the performance of tasks, such as honesty, and commitment and valuing time. I have personally learned from their values and am happy to work with them (Follower 8).”

Another participant gave a further example:

“My religion and belief affect my daily work, in performing tasks honestly and perfectly, as well in my dealings with others. I also learn from other people's values and traditions, how to respect others and how to commit to work (Follower 11).”

Another participant revealed that:

“My colleagues in the division and at ADEC in general have different customs, which affect how they deal with others and how they carry out their work. They act in accordance with their values in all respects; for instance, I have a colleague who tries to help others in performing their tasks, although he also has to do his own work. One day he said, ‘I love to help people, to work with others and to think about them’. My father told me one day that we should learn from our religion, which has great teachings and traditions (Follower 5).”

Followers raised the issue of resistance to change among elderly employees, suggesting that these individuals do not wish to listen to younger colleagues. On this point, one participant reported that:

“I think there is a problem related to ego, where elderly people are not willing to change their style of working and do not accept suggestions from younger people, even directors (Follower 1).”

Another participant expressed the same view:

“I would say people of older ages are not keen to change and do not wish to learn new practices. Older directors still believe that change cannot occur, and this is acceptable to them. This could be attributable to the fact

that these directors are not aware of change management, or that things should be changed. They still hold beliefs that affect performing tasks (Follower 6).”

5.7 Organisational Factors

5.7.1 Vision and Mission of ADEC and Division of Work

Employees in this study were asked whether they are aware of ADEC’s vision and mission. This question was put for leaders and followers. The results of the interviews indicate that most of the employees who participated in this study are not aware of the vision and mission of ADEC. One of the participants who reported a lack of awareness of the ADEC mission stated that:

“I do not know the vision and mission of ADEC, other than making our life harder. So I do not know the mission of ADEC. Zero extent, because I do not know what ADEC’s mission is (Follower 1).”

Another participant expressed a similar view, stating that:

“I have never heard about the vision and mission of ADEC; when I joined here about four years ago no one made me aware of this (Follower 5).”

Furthermore, one of the participants, who joined ADEC a few months prior to the interview, stressed that the focus should be on the education system as a whole, rather than ADEC’s specific mission. In his own words, he reported that:

“That is one of the struggles that ADEC has. The mission is for the whole education system, but we are thinking only about ADEC, and that is stopping us from achieving our mission, I think. For me, when I joined, I was thinking that School Operations is the sector that relates to the schools, because they manage the schools. However, it’s not. Everybody at ADEC needs to think about the schools; that’s the end result, because our mission is about the school itself. I don’t think a lot of people adhere to that, and because that is the way we are structured we think School Operations takes care of the schools, but anything we try to implement, like if we in Quality come up with a framework for excellence, it needs to account of the schools in that system. When I joined, I had that mentality, but when we speak to people they don’t think that way, they don’t think you have to go to the schools. If you have been working here for a year then you should know that your focus should be on the schools (Follower 9).”

Employees were also asked about how their leaders divide the work among staff; employees expressed different views regarding this issue.

“This is a good question. The answer is that we agree on something, so first we set the project, the tasks we have

to do, then we agree on which task will be done by whom, so the division of tasks is agreed between everyone. Is that clear?”

Interviewer: To some extent it is clear; however, the agreement is between whom?

Participant: It is between employees and the Head of the Department, as well as between the employees themselves.

Interviewer: Do you discuss the skills of who does the work?

Participant: Yes, our director divides the tasks according to our qualifications and skills.

Interviewer: Thank you (Follower 9).”

Another participant expressed a contrary view in relation to the division of work, and criticised how older employees think. Specifically, he stated that:

“Well, age is important because if the director is 50 he thinks he has to be involved in everything. Usually, we divide tasks based on experience, so if he has experience then I will make sure he is involved in the task. Also, workload is important; if he is overloaded then I can't give him too many tasks. I also make sure the task is appropriate in terms of time and experience (Follower 7).”

Another participant expressed a further differing view:

“Our work is actually very integrated, because I look at excellence and my colleague, Ziad, looks efficiency. So these are two elements, and a third element is organisational development, which is looked after by Sonya. All of these tasks are integrated, and so when we work we work together. All the elements affect each other; what I do affects them, and what they do affects my work too. Whenever we begin a new initiative, we have to think about it as a whole system. We don’t think in sections, because if think as a section we will fail. We thinks as one system, any new system or advantages must be thought about for all (Follower 2).”

Followers were then asked about their satisfaction with the division of work among employees. Almost all were not satisfied. The following conversation took place between the interviewer and one participant:

Interviewer: Do you think the employees in the division are satisfied with the division of tasks among them?

Participant: Unfortunately, no.

Interviewer: Why?

Participant: I think they are not satisfied because they are over qualified. For example, people here have come

from different organisations and they have different experience in years; some of them have 15 years or 20 years' worth, so they have really good experience, but the assigned tasks are below their experience level. Therefore, they don't feel satisfied, they are just doing something that they can do very easily. The task and their experience are not matched in terms of their actual capability (Follower 3).

Some other followers agreed with perspective; one reported that:

“In this department I think staff are definitely not satisfied.”

Followers were also asked about how their performance is typically measured by leaders. They expressed different views; one participant stated that:

“I would say we are all performing; we are six people and our outcome is high. We are doing a lot of good things for ADEC; we are looking over a lot of student issues and we are putting a lot of effort into outcomes. However, this performance is not measured properly by our director (Follower 1).”

Another participant stated briefly that the performance of his or her department is low and is not correctly measured.

“I don't think the performance is very good, it's below average.”

Interviewer: Do you think the performance of the division affects employees' performance?

Participant: Sometimes it affects it in a good way, and sometimes in a negative way. On the negative side, employees will be depressed and discouraged, because the performance is not good. The positive outcome is that you learn from mistakes and discover new, better ways to do your job (Follower 6).”

However, another participant disagrees with this view, as their leader is different to others:

“We have a weekly meeting, then there are performance appraisals, which happen mid-year and at the end of each year. We discuss all of this with the director, as well as what kinds of issues we might have; for instance, if I was struggling with one of the objectives and I did not discuss this with Salama, then if I told him I could not complete a task because of this reason, she would not accept that. She needs you to be proactive, not reactive, and discuss things with her in advance. This is something I learned from one of my colleagues, who shared this information with me. So, if you have any obstacles, or you are not achieving something, not because of you but due to certain obstacles, you need to tell him rather than fail to

achieve your objective; she understands what you are facing (Follower 12).”

5.7.2 Appraisal and Reward System

Followers were also asked about how their managers appraise them, and what types of reward they receive. There was agreement among participants that the reward system has ceased as a result of financial problems. One of the participants reported that:

“Our directors appraise all employees using a specific form, but there is no difference between high performance and low performance, because there are no rewards (Follower 6).”

Another participant agrees with this view, stated that:

“I think that because of miscommunication we are not rewarded or appraised frequently. Since the director sits in a different office he knows if we have done something good; at the same time, he knows if we have done something bad, so it is self-appraisal (Follower 4).”

Another participant stated:

“When we were preparing the budget for the department I requested that my manager allocate funds to be utilised for rewards and high performance. However, the rewards item was deleted from the budget (Follower 9).”

Another participant who asked for rewards for employees with good performance revealed that:

“When we initiated ISO certification I informed the team of the work certification. The team worked very hard to achieve the first ISO for ADEC. The department rewarded us with a certificate only, without any financial reward. We wished to receive appreciation that translated into a tangible item (Follower 11).”

Participants were also asked about the kinds of human and financial resources afforded to employees’ learning and developing skills. In general, there was consensus among participants on this issue. One participant reported:

“There is no specific body responsible for training and skills development. However, human resources (HR) provide training, but they have certain limitations. When HR receives a request for training, they ask to evaluate the training needs. The probability of a positive evaluation is 50 percent (Follower 1).”

Another participant suggested hiring an external organisation to work on developing employees’ skills withat ADEC. He described how the situated unfolded:

“I asked my manager to bring in professional organisations to provide us with a programme to develop the team, or the entire department, not just one

or two individuals, but everyone in the department. We got the approval and they are undergoing training and studying; it does not affect their work because it happens twice in three months, on Saturdays from 9 to 5 (Follower 3).”

The results of the focus group discussion, to large extent, are consistent with the results of interviews conducted with followers. There was consensus among the participants in relation to rewards and employee appraisal. One of the participants reported that:

“I think there is no reward system at ADEC, since it depends upon the director and the budget of the department. However, there are no clear regulations that encourage directors to reward their employees (Follower 8).”

5.7.3 Information and Resources Allocated for Learning

Followers were asked about how they obtain information from different sources, and they reported, to large extent, similar views. One participant stated:

“Usually the information required is school data. For example, student numbers, the students in Cycle 3; information related to schools is usually what we need. The information related to students’ scores is for the Strategic Affairs department, and the Knowledge Management team. I hate them because they have all the information, and for any information we need to

send them a request; I don't want to send requests, I want the data just like that. We should be one division, because if you want to do research you must have data immediately; it is frustrating that whenever I need data I have to send a request, and I have to wait three days or two weeks. Why? I want to do research, so give me the data (Follower 7).”

Another participant described the kind of data they need and where they source it:

“I need all the information that the strategic office have, such as performance reports, programme management reports and knowledge management reports. The other thing I need to know about is initiatives that each sector or department is planning to implement, because I need to embed excellence into these initiatives. For instance, some initiatives are put in place because they represent good practice that is done somewhere else. When it comes to excellence, I need to know exactly why we are doing it, what the prospective objective it is. Just because something works somewhere else, this doesn't mean it will work here; you need to do a lot of planning in this sense. So for me, my work is linked with the OFSA, the Office of Strategic Affairs; I need to know about all strategies, and I also need to know about the performance of the employees in order to develop the right kinds of

programmes, such as coaching programmes. I also need to know about customer satisfaction and customer complaints (Follower 2).”

Followers reported similar views in relation to how they obtain information from different sources. The following conversation about this topic took place between the interviewer and one of the participants:

Interviewer: How do you usually obtain such information?

Participant: By request.

Interviewer: Have you or the division developed a database of skills and learning initiatives in the divisions of ADEC?

Participant: We do have a knowledge database in our division, but the knowledge database is the survey database, because we have surveys for parents, students, teachers and principals. Nothing has been produced for skills and learning.”

Another participant focused on knowledge management; in her own words, she stated that:

“Because we have Knowledge Management I ask them for the information and it is provided for me; if the information isn’t available I can go directly to the stakeholder or the owner of the information and ask them to provide it. Sometimes they cannot get it for me because I need the information in a particular format;

that's when I go back to Knowledge Management and ask them to put it in the required format, and they will do it in the same format (Follower 11).”

5.8 Similarities and Differences between Leaders' and Followers' Views

Table 7: Summary of Similarities and Differences between Leaders and Followers According to Main Themes

Themes	Leaders	Followers
Role of leaders (Directors)	1. There are four main functions under my directory: efficiency, excellence, organisational development and Emiratisation (nationalisation).	1. A director's role involves planning, coaching and supervising
	2. Quality is everybody's job and my role is to provide motivation that leads to achieving excellence.	2. Our manager is responsible for designing plans for the department, and sometimes he consults us.
	3. Followers' roles involve mentoring, aligning to employees' expectations, coaching, directing and orientation.	3. The manager focuses on empowering people in the department.
	4. Her role varies and depends upon the situation rather than managing and supervising people on a daily basis.	4. He writes the plans but without our contribution. We do not participate in designing these plans. He sometimes interferes in performing certain tasks.
	5. The role of leaders is restricted to planning, coaching and supervising.	5. I assume that a director plays the role of orientation, unfortunately our director does not play such a

		role.
	6. Their role is to coordinate all activities within the department.	6. Her role is to supervise and guide us in how to perform given tasks and how to manage our time.
Relationship between Followers and Leaders	1. The three directors revealed that their relationships with employees are good and bring a lot of benefits to the department.	1. The relationship is based on understanding. In the beginning, directors set targets for all members, and what we need to achieve.
	2. I see my employees as my colleagues rather than subordinates, but with an expectation that they do what they have been assigned to do. I keep in constant contact with them, on a daily basis.	2. Some participants reported that they have problems with their directors that hinder their productivity and performance, as well as learning.
	3. In general, they described the relationship as professional, interdependent and collaborative	3. My relationship with my line manager is based on the tasks I have been assigned.
	4. The relationship is based on developing ADEC in relation to people, systems, polices and performance.	4. My line manager has built good relationships with all staff members in the directory, but due to the nature of some tasks and my lengthy experience she involves me in different activities.

	5. The relationship with other departments is cooperative, to achieve excellence and standardisation.	5. The relationship between myself and my director is professional.
	6. My relationship with my employees is based on exchange of ideas and teamwork.	6. The director of our department is friendly.
Learning	1. Directors reported that training programmes were designed on the basis of the needs of their departments.	1. I would say that training programmes here are really not good.
	2. Some departments design their training programmes in relation to investments, efficiency, excellence and education systems, while other departments focus on performance management.	2. The problem at ADEC is a lack of planning for skills development and learning. There is no individual learning planning, or any personal development plans.
	3. The semi-structured interviews reveal that executive directors support the demands of their employees through training and skills development.	3. The department does not really have any training programmes.
	4. Training courses should be certified; this will be helpful for	4. Directors do not give us the opportunity to choose what skills

	employees' future career and experience.	we need to develop.
	5. Directors prefer in-house training, particularly when they have a large number of people.	5. At the beginning of each year, our director asks us to fill in a form that identifies our training needs. However, they do not work on translating these training needs into courses.
	6. There are no programmes designed for skills development in general. There are no plans to assess employees' training needs.	6. In terms of the ADEC, I do learn from other departments in how they plan and perform tasks.
	7. One of the participants had a different perspective; he mentioned that training courses are designed according to employees' needs	
	8. Training depends upon the approval of the Head of the Division and the director.	
Teamwork	1. One of the directors explained that they work in a team, but due to how busy they are working on different areas, they do not meet regularly.	1. Some participants reported that they work in teams to discuss tasks and issues in their departments, while others claim they do not work in teams.

	2. Sometimes we work in groups and sometimes we don't because we are too busy.	2. Everyone works on their own and we do not meet to discuss our work.
	3. Good cooperation takes place between staff members on one side, and with directors on the other side.	3. Everyone completes their own tasks and there is no time to help or work with others.
	4. Collaboration between departments helps employees to learn from other colleagues.	
	5. There is no encouragement for employees to work in teams, due to pressure and lack of time.	
Social Practices	1. Directors agree that there is no conflict, to large extent. One of the directors expressed that everything is fine with her employees, and that she does not allow things to reach conflict or a clash.	1. Usually, we have no clashes or conflicts with our director. However, we sometimes have different views about a certain issue.
	2. This director advises other leaders not to allow conflict with their employees, and to make things easy.	2. Our leader understands our views and the tasks given to us. The director discusses the given task with each member of the department and we agree upon these tasks.

	3. Some sort of discussion takes place with employees, but it does not reach the level of conflict or a clash.	3. We always have different opinions and problems, and we have never reached an agreement.
	4. Sometimes relationships between leaders and followers are affected by values and beliefs	4. We have conflicts; if our director says something, we have to follow this and not discuss it.
	5. Employees mix with one another on the basis of social values. To a large extent, employees do not use formalities and are open-minded.	5. I believe that my director takes the things personally; thus, we cannot resolve conflicts and problems easily.
	6. Values and beliefs are important at work because they help in dealing with one another, and also help us to learn from others.	6. Our director is good, but it is difficult to resolve problems easily because he sometimes takes things personally.
Organisational Factors	1. Leaders agree that they and their employees are aware of the ADEC vision and mission, and they work to achieve these.	1. Most of the employees who participated in this study were not aware of the vision and mission of ADEC.
	2. Skills and knowledge of potential employees should be assessed before we appoint them. Some individuals already have the essential skills, while others do not.	2. I do not know the vision and mission of ADEC, other than making our life harder.

	3. The most important thing is that directors and employees are ambitious in performing tasks utilising their skills.	3. Usually we divide tasks based on experience, so if someone has experience then I will make sure they are involved in the task.
	4. The way I divide work among my employees is based on skills and qualifications, as well as experience.	
	5. I measure my employees not only on performance but also on productivity, because some employees take a long time to perform a certain job, therefore, their performance is low and slow.	
Information System	1. The database on schools means you can enter the name of any school and get information such as number of students, teachers and the curriculum.	1. Usually the information required is school data.
	2. There are different ways to obtain information. There is a directorate for Knowledge Management and Information Systems, who are responsible for	2. Information such as performance reports, programme management reports and knowledge management reports.

	collecting and compiling data on schools, teachers and students.	
	3. Other sources of information include the Ministry of Education and local education authorities.	3. The knowledge database is the survey database, and we have surveys for parents, students, teachers and principals. Nothing is in place for skills and learning.

5.9 Conclusion

This chapter aimed at presenting the results of interviews and focus groups conducted with followers. The chapter covered the explanation and quotations of followers' views on the role of leaders and relationship between leaders and followers in developing learning organisation practices within ADEC. The results showed that leaders have not yet developed the skills that enable them to play critical role in developing learning organisation practices. The relationship

between leaders and followers was not mature enough to contribute to developing learning organisation. The chapter addressed the issue of social practices that were found to have direct impact on developing learning organisation. The chapter also addressed the issue of teamwork and its impact on creating learning organisation within ADEC. Finally, the chapter tackled the issue of organisational factors, which are represented in mission, and vision of ADEC, information sources and reward system. These factors were not found to affect the developing of learning organisation.

Chapter Six

Discussion of the Study Results

6.1 Introduction

Prior to conducting this study, it was difficult to classify ADEC as a learning organisation. It was also not possible to understand the factors affecting the creation of a learning organisation without speaking to leaders and followers working for ADEC. It was essential to explore leaders' and followers' perceptions of occurrences

at ADEC in relation to learning organisation practices, which are affected by several factors.

The results from interviews and focus groups were based on a number of themes and sub-themes that emerged from the data and represent leaders' and followers' views of the factors influencing learning organisation practices. The results of this study were based on five main themes: the role of leaders, the relationship between leaders and followers, teamwork, reward systems and social practices.

In exploring leaders' and followers' views, several issues emerged from the results contributing to the existing body of knowledge of learning organisation in the United Arab Emirates. As mentioned in Chapters 5 and 6, the analysis of data was based on the main themes emerging from the interviews and focus groups, which contributed to learning organisation at ADEC.

6.2 Discussion of Research Question 1: What is the impact of the roles of leaders on developing learning organisation characteristics with in ADEC?

The section discusses each question by presenting the results and discussing them in relation to the relevant literature. The main results relating to leaders' and followers' views of the role of leadership in contributing to learning organisation practices are summarised and the findings from the existing literature reviewed in Chapter 2 are discussed.

Largely, leaders and followers in this study reported that leaders should play a critical role in organisations. Both leaders and followers also stressed that leaders can and should play a different role that is embedded in planning, coaching and supervising. The results of interviews with leaders indicated that their role centres on planning and supervising their employees. On the theoretical level, leaders' and followers' views are consistent. These results indicate that leaders can play a critical role in the organisation if that is their intention. Humdyn (2012) argues that the role of leaders in a learning organisation involves coaching, empowering, learning and visioning. The results of this study and Humdyn's view are in line with Rajal (2010), who suggests that leaders can bring out the best in their followers and are responsible for flexibility and adaptation through coaching and empowering followers. This suggests that followers are empowered to be active individuals in the organisation. There has been a change from a placing a focus on command and control to assuming a creative and enabling role. Theoretically and from a learning organisation perspective, the results indicate that leaders are ready and committed to change and enhance their followers' ability to learn. Northouse (2001: 260) argues that leaders play a critical role in learning organisations, in which they try to find the best ways to achieve the vision and goals of their organisations. For example, one of the main roles of leaders is to integrate their followers into the process of creating a learning organisation. In other words, leaders' and followers' views are in theory consistent.

In practice, however, the majority of followers have expressed different views and believe that although their directors (leaders) are effective in planning their work,

some tasks are not delegated. Leaders at ADEC do not work effectively at empowering their followers through delegation and participation in planning. It may be argued that followers and leaders do not share the same views about the role of leaders, since leaders are responsible for planning while followers are responsible for performing the tasks assigned by leaders. Leaders at ADEC are therefore characterised as transactional leaders. Bass (1993) suggests that transactional leaders (see Chapter 2, p. 40) define and determine what their followers should do through the realisation of personal and organisational goals. These goals are identified by leaders and help followers to become more engaged in decision-making and other activities within the organisation. From a learning organisation point of view, followers are regarded as pivotal in learning organisations as they normally focus on learning. Delegation of important activities and authority can therefore motivate them to learn from delegated tasks and to maximise their duties and authority. Although the followers believe that leaders should assume the role of planners, they stressed that they should participate in departmental planning and its associated tasks. In practical terms, followers mentioned that their leaders do not orientate them in the right direction, particularly when they are assigned some tasks to perform. Only one follower complemented his leader and praised what she had done for colleagues in the department. The leader is aware of what is going on in the department and plays the role of coach and supervisor as well as being aware of the followers' training requirements. These results show that followers, to a large extent, are not satisfied with the role of leaders at ADEC. It may be argued that leaders need to realise the importance of their role and how they should work towards building a learning organisation. The difference between leaders' and followers' views may be attributed to a lack of a shared vision of the nature of the role of leaders and followers. From a

social practice perspective, a shared vision between leaders and followers leads to shared learning (Wenger, 2000). Furthermore, the social practice view revolves around the position (leader) and the status, ambition and capability of the position to coach followers in an effective way (Shove et al., 2012).

Although followers expressed a negative image of the roles of their leaders, leaders themselves reported that they perform different activities. The results of the interviews indicated that leaders could not specify their role but rather reported what they are currently doing, involving a range of tasks, such as planning and allocating tasks to followers. The results demonstrated that to a large extent, some leaders at ADEC know what they have to do as leaders but do not perform what they are supposed to perform. However, a few of the leaders were not able to define their role and could not describe certain roles. Generally, they are neither effective nor efficient in establishing the role of leader. In relation to this, Humdyn (2012) claimed that leaders who experience a high degree of uncertainty about the leadership role lack a clear power base. This is due the fact that leaders are not selected on the basis of the requirements of a learning organisation.

In this study, both leaders and followers were asked about the role of followers in their departments. The results of the interviews and focus groups revealed different views. For instance, some leaders reported that their followers participate in planning and performing the tasks allocated, while others stressed that followers are engaged in activities such as departmental meetings, collaborate with other departments and work towards achieving the goals of the departments. On the other side, followers to large extent reported different views. For instance, the majority of followers reported that

they do not participate in planning and decision-making and instead just work on the tasks assigned to them by their directors. They believe that their role is to be subordinate to their leaders and to wait for orders. These results suggest that leaders follow a transactional leadership style that focuses only on allocating tasks to employees (see Chapter 2, p. 37, 38 and 39). It may be concluded that the leaders at ADEC are not transformational, as transformational leaders in a learning organisation would delegate some responsibilities and duties to their followers who are able to deal with different types of issues. Followers may therefore be able to become good learners in the long term. Conger and Toegel (2002) suggest that transformational leadership is a process that happens between leaders and followers. Additionally, strong leaders are characterised as people with a good sense of humour who emphasise followers' needs, values and attitudes. These positive aspects of leadership positively reflect on followers who are able to learn from leaders. In other words, if leaders are strong their followers will also be strong and able to create changes. However, the weaknesses of transformational leaders are represented in the potential for them to receive abuse from followers and there may sometimes be a lack of conceptual clarity. The results of this study indicated that leaders within ADEC are mostly characterised as transactional leaders who just want followers to deliver the activities assigned to them. In this case, leaders will not be able to motivate followers to be creative, learn new things and increase their productivity. In this respect, Senge (2000) stressed that the role of leaders within the organisation enhances individuals' capacity to increase productivity, which leads to the achievement of common goals. Furthermore, Gilbert and Matviul (2008) stated that a leader-follower is when "at any one time, leaders assume followers' roles and followers assume leaders' roles." Nevertheless, leaders and followers are generally singing from the same hymn sheet,

although in practical terms followers do not orbit around their leaders (Patterson, 2003: 3).

Although the role of followers at ADEC in terms of coaching and supervising followers is not clear, the results showed that they are engaged in several activities and work under pressure. For instance, leaders reported that due to a lack of sufficient staff to deliver what is required from their departments, they do the work themselves. This affects their role as leaders and supervisors. In other words, it influences their supervision and follow-up of what followers do in the departments. Avolio and Raichrad (2008) emphasise that the success or failure of an organisation largely depends upon the roles of leaders and followers.

It may be concluded from this discussion of the study results and literature that leaders at ADEC still do not realise the critical role that they should play in the organisation. The followers' role is restricted to performing the tasks given by the directors; followers do not participate in planning tasks and decisions related to the development of the department. It is concluded that leaders do not play a role that may lead ADEC to become a learning organisation. Leaders are required to take the initiative to change their transactional style of leadership and to become more transformational. Singh (2008) argued that becoming a learning organisation requires a total change in the system, which requires a total change in leadership. Singh (2008) argued that the main characteristics of the transformational style of leadership involve stating the vision and initiating creative thinking, which may lead to the characteristics of a learning organisation being developed.

In relation to this, Foster (2010: 4) states the following about leaders and followers:

“A leader-follower relationship is simple. Leaders assume followers’ role and followers assume leaders’ role. Followership and leadership are not so much about position, but about their ability to influence through behaviour and self-concept”.

This statement reveals that the position in the organisation is not the problem, which instead relates to how leaders and followers can configure changes in the organisation. In relation to this, Shove et al. (2012: 21) suggest that leaders should track the configuration of changes over time. This is because leaders have a clear vision about the organisation and have the ability to motivate, inspire and influence followers. This is also because decisions are mostly made by leaders on the basis of vision and contribution of followers. This can be done through the configuration of social practices connected to the position of leaders in organisations and by transforming the organisation to a learning organisation.

It may be concluded from the above discussion that leaders at ADEC do not play the role required to help become a learning organisation. This role should simply be represented in planning, coaching, supervising and empowering followers. Leaders at ADEC still need to strengthen their followers’ roles through participation in decision-making and the planning and delegation of important tasks. It is worth mentioning that whilst leaders play a critical role. It is the responsibility of both leaders and

followers to work on a shared vision and to explore possibilities and initiatives that leads to learning organisation.

6.3 Discussion of Research Question 2: What is the impact of the relationship between leaders and followers on developing learning organisation characteristics within ADEC?

This section summarises the results of the interviews and focus groups and discusses them from the perspective of the literature. Findings from Chapters 5 and 6 showed the differences in views between leaders and followers. These differences are grouped into two themes: good relationships and bad relationships. Good relationships between leaders and followers in this study were based on good communication, professionalism in dealing with followers, delegation of work, collaboration, regular meetings and learning from leaders. If these do not occur, the relationship will not be effective.

Almost all leaders reported that they had developed a good relationship with their followers based on professionalism and respect. All leaders agreed that the relationship should be driven by multiple factors, such as professionalism, honesty, commitment and accountability. Some leaders considered their followers to be colleagues rather than subordinates. On the contrary, half of the followers described their relationship with leaders as good. They reported they had built a professional and respectful relationship with their leaders. These results indicate a poor relationship between leaders and followers does not motivate followers to learn from leaders. When both parties do not meet every day and discuss a range of work-related

issues, they will not be able to achieve the goals of the department and the aims of ADEC. Leaders and followers are in this case unable to resolve problems that arise every day. Followers reported that when they meet their director, they understand the nature of work and perform it in a proper way. It may be argued that the relationship between leaders and followers at ADEC is not good, which negatively affects the process of learning in the departments and at ADEC as a whole. The results of this study are not consistent with Bennis and Nanus (1997), who found that the relationship between leaders and followers meets followers' needs and wants, which consequently creates a learning environment. Furthermore, the relationship is valued as it suggests the initiative to create a learning organisation. Graen and Uhl-Bien (1995) argue that leadership becomes successful when both leaders and followers create and maintain a high-quality relationship. When leaders and followers work together, they learn from their experience, which leads the relationship to change and improve over time (Gerstner and Day, 1997). According to "the leader-member exchange theory" (see Chapter 2, p. 49), a good or bad relationship between leaders and followers depends on an exchange between them. For example, an exchange could involve support provided by leaders and respect.

From a social practice perspective, the focus is on the social component of learning, which means that the challenge of a leader is to strengthen the relationship with followers, particularly when they intend to convey what and how they have learned. Leaders therefore encourage followers to learn from them (Conner and James, 2002). Strivastava and Cooparrider (1998) argue that effective and successful leaders and followers require interrelated practices that can create social practices, such as understanding and helping one another. Social practice theory stresses that when a

good relationship is constructed between leaders and followers, followers listen to leaders, watch how they behave and learn from them.

Mahoney (2000: 241) stresses that:

“Directors and senior managers who find reasons for not valuing their staff and colleagues and not creating a learning environment are in my view going the way of the dinosaur, to extinction. The director who is afraid of being questioned and cannot abide diversity in the organisation is missing the great riches that can abound and if unleashed will be of immense value to all in the organisation.”

It can be concluded from the results and this quotation that a good relationship between leaders and followers increases confidence between both of them and thereby achieves the organisation’s aims in becoming a learning organisation. Hack et al. (2000) suggests that the relationship between leaders and followers is interdependent and synergistic and facilitates the transformation of an organisation into a learning organisation. Hack et al. (2000) argue that a learning organisation is not required to be an obedient or a subordinate but rather should be given the opportunity to become innovative. Organisations are therefore concerned about how they may be transformed into learning organisations (Nonake and Nishiguchi, 2001, Davenport and Prusac, 1998, Senge, 1990). For the sake of achieving organisational goals, Yukl et al. (2010) and Cavell (2007) stress that followers should be supported to become leaders who are effective in their work. Nonetheless, the authors suggest that followers are

independent and active. The leadership process is therefore, significantly supported by the followership as followers are characterised as team players who are energetic, patient, good listeners and have a positive attitude (Cavell, 2007).

In the case of a poor (bad) relationship between leaders and followers, leaders have complained about their followers due to the difficulty they face in hitting targets and achieving appropriate performance. This to some extent has affected the relationship between the two parties. On the other hand, the majority of followers stressed that their relationship with leaders is based on the tasks allocated to them. The notion of transactional leadership suggests that leaders define and determine tasks according to the aims of the department and organisational goals. These goals are identified by leaders and help followers to become more engaged in decision-making and other activities in the organisation. The weakness of such a leadership style is that leaders motivate followers to exceed expectations and do not participate in decisions related to the allocated tasks (Howell and Avolio, 1993). When followers build a good and close relationship with leaders, they do not accept and cannot tolerate the failure of their leaders. Moreover, committed followers are disappointed when their leaders fail (Kersten, 2009). Goldman (2011: 10) praised the role of followers:

“Sustained followership demands the continuing connection with and engagement of associates.”

It may be concluded from the discussion of this section that leaders and followers at ADEC have not built a good relationship that is regarded as part of their social environment. This has led to a failure to create the feature of a learning organisation

that involves followers learning from leaders. Foster (2010) argues that it involves mutuality of learning between leaders and followers.

6.4 Discussion of Research Question 3: What is the impact of training and professional development on developing learning organisation characteristics with in ADEC?

The main purpose of training and personal development programmes is to strengthen followers' capabilities and organisational capabilities. When an organisation invests in its people by developing their skills, this increases employees' productivity and their effectiveness (Watad and Ospina, 1999). In this study, both leaders and followers were asked about learning and professional development (training and upgrading skills) at ADEC. This research question is discussed through the themes emerging from the transcripts of the interviews and focus groups, such as training courses attended, obstacles to learning and leadership support for learning.

The results of the study showed that leaders and followers held different views. Leaders talked about training programmes designed for followers, such as coaching programmes and training related to the vision and mission of their departments. It was also reported by leaders that the training programmes are designed by the human resources department who are responsible for conducting training workshops and seminars. Followers appeared to have different views from their leaders and reported that training and professional programmes were not suitable for their area of specialisation, and did not meet their needs, particularly in relation to task

performance. Followers emphasised that there is a lack of planning concerning skills development and learning in the departments. Followers were not consulted about which training programmes they had to attend. In other words, followers do not participate in decisions relating to the choice of training courses. One of the main characteristics of learning organisations is followers' participation in planning and decision-making. Charlotte et al. (2002) argues that in a learning organisation employees (followers) participate in solving problems related to work, which empowers them in the organisation. Gilbert and Matviul (2008) emphasise that both leaders and followers should be responsible for involvement in planning training and development programmes. This is because skills development is regarded as the end product of individuals' development processes in the organisation (Daft, 2004).

The results of interviews and focus groups indicate that learning and skills development are not priorities at ADEC and occur on an ad-hoc basis. There is no transfer from training activities to systematic human development in the departments. Price (2004) emphasises that many organisations have moved from concentrating on training individuals to focusing on continuous learning. Price (2004) suggests that performance and competitiveness comes from the development of learning experience for individual employees and is in turn beneficial for the organisation as a whole. It is worth noting that learning may be translated into training courses, for which strategic planning is required. Furthermore, from the perspective of the learning organisation and its characteristics, it is essential to create a learning culture based on organisational strategic objectives. In relation to this, Senge (1990) stresses that training is the key element in the learning strategy dedicated to continuous learning.

Leaders and followers were also asked about obstacles and challenges to learning and personal development in the departments. In general, there was a consensus among both that there are a number of obstacles, such as a lack of time and financial resources. These results show that the reported obstacles hinder the development of ADEC as a learning organisation. The results of this study are consistent with that of Roper and Pettit (2003), who found that time, work pressure and resources were considered the main challenges to learning and personal development in organisations. This made it difficult for learning to become an action rather than a strategy. The authors reported difficulty in shifting from programme implementation to strategy planning.

Another theme that emerged from the transcripts of interviews and focus groups was the choice of training courses by followers. The results showed different views between leaders and followers. Leaders reported that the choice of a training course or personal development depends upon the priorities and needs of the departments rather than the followers' choice. Leaders also mentioned that training courses should be related to the tasks assigned to followers. Leaders demonstrated their willingness to support their followers' personal development. Only one leader reported that training courses are designed to meet her followers' needs and choices. It was clear from the results of the interviews and focus groups that followers had different view from their leaders. Followers reported that they had no choice in training course, as this depends on the interests of ADEC and the departments, rather than on their personal choice. They also stressed that everything is in the hands of the leaders, who decide upon which course followers should attend. Only one follower reported that he could choose the training course he wanted. These results emphasise that followers have no

say in decisions on their training and personal development. As mentioned at the beginning of this section, that there is no strategic planning for learning within departments at ADEC. Kuhnert and Lewis (1997) suggest that a choice of training courses is not necessary as they serve the leaders and the organisation, although it should be directed towards the current interests of followers. This is the right thing to do and should be followed by leaders. Millett (1998) argues that individuals' learning should focus on how to learn rather than solely on receiving training in certain areas. The role of leaders is therefore to facilitate the professional development of their followers.

It may be concluded from the discussion of this research question on learning and professional development that ADEC has not developed a strategic plan for individual and group learning and development. This has deterred the creativity and innovation that might have helped ADEC become a learning organisation. In other words, the training and development procedures within ADEC's departments are underdeveloped and require more attention on a strategic level. Training courses in departments are arranged occasionally and are not strategically planned, but instead are mostly forced when something happens, problems arise or when followers require development in particular areas. Followers thus join workshops, seminars or training courses for few days. It was also concluded that ADEC is regarded a single-loop learning organisation that often focuses on first order problems and symptoms (Roper and Pettit, 2003). It is worth emphasising that learning styles and the learning environment are regarded as one of the main characteristics of a learning organisation, as organisational development has always been based on individuals' knowledge and skills. Furthermore, the results of this study showed that learning is not produced and

reproduced in ADED as it has not become a practice. In addition, the departments have not constantly changed their plans. This suggests that learning has not emerged and changed through social practices, as it is not practiced according to a defined system that focuses on learning organisation. Giddens (1984) argues that learning is as ongoing social practice that is reproduced and transformed when employees in the organisation (leaders and followers) active and potentially participate in the reproduction of learning. For this reason, organisations that have met the requirements of learning organisations have paid more attention to the professional development of their employees.

It is worth distinguishing between formal learning that takes place in colleges and universities and informal learning that is done in training courses, particularly on the job. Students in colleges and universities obtain knowledge about certain subjects, whilst in on-the-job training; employees learn how to perform the allocated tasks and to deal with others. More importantly, employees in on-the-job training may benefit from social interaction with colleagues in the classroom. Lankshear and Knobele (2003) suggest that classroom learning and training may establish a benchmark for trainees, who will be able to learn through participation, collaboration and working collectively. This is, in fact, the notion of the social practices used for understanding how learning processes take place in organisations (Brown and Duguid, 2001). Wenger (1998) stressed that learning is a social phenomenon that involves interaction and dialogue between trainees. Gee et al (1996) suggest that learning is a matter of social practice as it bounds up with social and institutional relationships.

It may be concluded from this section on the impact of training on learning organisation that the results indicated that followers are not satisfied with the training courses provided by ADEC in general and their departments in particular. It may therefore, be argued that ADEC has not yet reached the level required to become a learning organisation from a training and personal development point of view.

6.5 Discussion of Research Question 4: What is the impact of social practices on developing learning organisation characteristics within ADEC?

The discussion of this section is based on the themes that emerged from the transcripts of interviews and focus groups conducted with leaders and followers. These themes included conflicts and problems between leaders and followers, followed by values, beliefs, attitudes and behaviours. All of these themes represent social practices practiced by leaders and followers.

The results of the interviews and focus groups indicated that leaders agree that any conflict that occurs in their departments between leaders and followers is resolved within the department. Some leaders mentioned that they do not allow any conflict and that everything is resolved easily and smoothly. In order to resolve any problem or conflict, structured meetings are held to discuss the issues involved. In general, leaders emphasised that these are not conflicts but rather a misunderstandings that occur between them and their followers. To a large extent, few followers reported serious conflicts with colleagues and leaders. Some followers reported that some problems occurred with leaders, while others revealed that no conflicts occurred. Although followers did not report serious conflicts or problems with leaders, the majority of them reported that problems in decision-making occurred in the

departments, which may lead to conflict. Followers believe that leaders make individual decisions creates problems as they feel they have been overlooked by leaders and have not been consulted. Two followers mentioned that their leaders take matters personally, which affects their performance. It may be concluded from these results that there are no high-level conflicts between followers and leaders at ADEC, which could be attributed to the hierarchy system in the organisation.

As mentioned in Section 1 of this chapter, leaders at ADEC are regarded as transactional leaders and take all decisions in their departments. For this reason, conflicts do not reach higher levels as everything is in the hand of leaders. It may be concluded from these results that when a conflict takes place, it affects the relationship between leaders and followers as well as followers' performance and productivity. From the perspective of the learning organisation, leaders who maintain a good relationship with followers provide them with the opportunity to learn from their mistakes and from experience. From the perspective of social practice theory, learning takes place through collaboration between leaders and followers as well as in groups set up to resolve conflicts and problems. It may also occur also within departments and the organisation as an entity. Individuals may adopt social practices from their colleagues in the organisation and learn from them (Schummer and Haake, 2010, Nicolini and Holti, 2001, Brown and Duguide, 2001, Gherardi, 2000). Despite the distinct difference between social practice theory and learning organisations, there are knowledge transfer links between the two notions. The greater the interaction between employees, the more encouragement there is to learn through acquiring and transferring knowledge (Bresman, et al., 1999). Furthermore, conflict between leaders and followers as well as between groups may significantly hamper an organisation's

drive for promotion and advancement and damage employees' wellbeing (Williams, 2011). It is worth remembering that conflicts and problems may occur between leaders and followers in any organisation and ADEC is no exception. However, conflicts should be managed and resolved internally. In other words, conflict is an intrinsic part of employment relationships. This is because modern and large organisations are complex rather than static and consist of a diverse background of people who have different social practices, such as values, opinions, beliefs and attitudes, as well as expectations (Whittell, 2010).

As noted above, the second group of themes that emerged from the transcripts were described how values and beliefs affect the relationship between leaders and followers as well as the workplace. The results showed that some leaders did not adhere to personal values inherited from their parents or grandparents. They believed that these values might lead to conflict or confrontation with colleagues. Although leaders mentioned that their values did not affect them in the workplace, they emphasised that social practices, such as values, attitudes and beliefs, contribute to the process of learning within the departments and ADEC as a whole. In other words, social practice theory is used to understand how learning processes takes place within an organisation (Brown and Duguid, 2001, Gherardi, 2000). Social practices are ordered across time and place. According to this view, actions related to learning organisations may not be seen as values, beliefs and attitudes, but rather as part of their social practices. Gardner et al. (2005) note that when leaders devote their values and emotions to their followers this makes it easier for followers learn new things from leaders. Leaders learn also from interaction with colleagues in other departments. The perspective of Gardner et al. (2005) is in line with Ehthart and Klen

(2005), who found that the follower-leader relationship has an impact on values and personalities. Such values were found to contribute to achieving an organisation's goal as well as representing transformational rather than transactional leaders.

The results also showed that social practices are important in the workplace as they help deal with colleagues from different cultures and facilitate learning from experience. Followers emphasised that they learn from one another through daily communication with colleagues from both the same department and other departments. In other words, employees apply social practice in a direct way in the workplace. Greeno et al. (1997) argue that learning is regarded as a social practice as the focus is placed on learning outcomes. This depends on establishing collaborative learning among individuals as well as learning from relationships between them. Organisations recognise and realise that they are part of a complicated social system in which individuals (leaders and followers) cannot isolate themselves from the environment in which they work (Duesterberg and London, 2001). From a sociological point of view, social and cultural practices may either enhance or inhibit learning within organisations (Roper and Pettit, 2002). According to the social practice theory, organisations are characterised by internal conflict, power, values and beliefs (Roper and Pettit, 2002). These views are in line with Argyris and Schon (1996), who argue that organisations are social constructions in which leaders and followers are appointed to act on behalf of their social values, beliefs and power. However, DiBella and Navis (1998) argue that learning may not take place if the social construction is not appropriately prepared for use in learning. In other words, in order for learning to occur, it should be shared among people as individuals may share knowledge and learning, particularly if they have reason to collaborate and share

common aims. It may be argued that individuals can learn new skills, values and behaviour that are created and acquired over time. This has occurred at ADEC, where followers learn from one another by using personal values, beliefs and attitudes. In relation to this, DiBella and Navis (1998: 25) have linked learning organisation and social practice. In this sense, they states:

“There are three criteria for learning organisation: first, new skills, attitudes, values and behaviours created or acquired overtime... Second, what is learned becomes the property of some collective units,... what is learned remains within the organisation or group even if individuals leave.”

This suggests that learning in an organisation depends upon how people learn from one another using values, behaviour and attitudes. This leads to the argument that learning is the property of the organisation and cannot be attributed to one individual, as learning has occurred on a collective rather than individual basis. Shove (2004: 117) argues that people’s beliefs, values and attitudes may not be directly correlated to learning organisations, but rather are part of people’s social practices. Shove (2004) suggests that the performance of social practices can be seen as part of individuals’ routine achievements and accomplishments that may be deemed as part of normal life.

It is clear from the results that to a large extent follower’ views differed from leaders’ views. There was also consensus among followers themselves. Some followers noted that they still maintain their traditional values. It is worth remembering that ADEC is a diverse workplace with many employees from different parts of the world.

Followers stressed that they learn from other people's values and beliefs, particularly in relation to time management, respecting appointments and organising work. These values, from the followers' point of view, have become part of the system in some departments. Emirati followers mentioned that they have learned from expatriates (foreign workers), who still use their beliefs at ADEC, such as performing tasks in a proper way, valuing time-keeping and punctuality and being more committed to their work more. Lave and Wenger (1991) argue that human beings participate in social formation and engage with and learn from one another. There has therefore been a transformation from the psychological theory of learning to the social practice theory of learning. Human beings live in a social environment and are interested in building new relationships. Giddens (1984) stressed that human actions and learning are produced, reproduced and transformed constantly through changing social practices of learning. Furthermore, Sackman (1992) stresses that performing daily activities in an organisation entails collective cultural knowledge which is built and rebuilt through interaction among individuals. Consequently, individuals become aware of other colleagues' cultural practices. Barrett (1995) and Schein (1996) suggest that variation in social practices may appear among different cultures and subcultures inside a certain organisation.

Followers stressed that their religion and beliefs affect their daily work, particularly when they perform tasks honestly and to the highest possible standard. Some followers are affected by the social practices (values) that encourage them to help other colleagues by teaching them how to perform tasks properly. Values and beliefs represented in social practices are therefore inevitably important in the workplace and require some people to learn from others. This also depends on how leaders encourage

their followers to collaborate with and learn from one another. Conner and James (2002) stress that the social component of learning is important in organisations and that the leader's role is to enhance and foster relationships between followers.

It may be concluded from this section that social practices are regarded as an important part of a learning organisation. The views of leaders and followers reveal that their social practices (values, beliefs, behaviours, attitudes, effective responses and the mobilisation of knowledge resources) affect them on daily basis and encourage them to learn the social practices of other colleagues (namely expatriates). Holmberg (2000) argues that social practices within organisations are relational, with individuals in the organisation connected to the world in which they spend the most of their time. Organisations learn as an individual learning organisation as employees engage in social practices that enable them to learn from the different point of views put forward by colleagues (leaders and/or followers (Boreham and Morgan, 2004).

It may be argued that ADEC has become a learning organisation from a social practice point of view since they people from one another through these social practices. However, as discussed in Sections 2 and 3, social practices are just one aspect of a learning organisation.

6.6 Discussion of Research Question 5: What is the impact of the teamwork on developing learning organisation characteristics within ADEC?

This section discusses the relationship between teamwork and the learning organisation. Both leaders and followers were asked about the importance of teamwork and how they work in teams within the departments and ADEC as a whole. In general, the results of interviews and focus groups demonstrate an agreement among leaders about the importance of teamwork for learning. For instance, leaders reported work in a structured and professional way. They mentioned that working in teams gives them the opportunity to work in a healthy environment and to learn from one another. This is because followers interact with one another on daily basis, which enables them to learn from their skills, knowledge and experience. In other words, followers perform some of their tasks through interaction with colleagues that creates a social context. In an ethnographic study, Orr (1996) found that participants benefited substantially from social interaction with other team members, which helped them gain new ideas for accomplishing their work and addressing related problems. Brown and Duguid (1991) suggest that organisations can become learning organisations through shared work practices in which these practices are upgraded and change in response to the changing conditions of the workplace.

From a social practice point of view, individuals in an organisation (social actors) learn from their surroundings by creating practices of learning. Senge (1997) stresses that leadership influences the creation of a learning organisation and proposed a shared vision and the promotion of thinking. However, Senge (1997) does not address the issue of team learning and does not provide a deeper analysis of leadership styles

in relation to the learning organisation. Despite the fact that leaders and followers work together, they stressed that the lack of time sometimes hinders their collaboration, with no time available for meetings and discussion of relevant issues. The interviews and focus groups conducted with followers showed that they have different views from their leaders, since they do not work in teams at all due to a lack of time. Followers also reported that they do not meet to discuss tasks within the department. Some followers revealed that they work in teams if asked to do so by their leaders. Other followers complained that their leaders do not guide them and cannot afford time to meet them. In relation to this, James (2003) notes that whilst leaders usually work apply in teams, they do not implement any changes to their beliefs and re-design their departments and organisations. Leaders therefore fail to create a learning organisation. James (2003) concluded that organisations are required to orient their attention towards organisational design. Kayes (2004) argues that effective teamwork leads to and serves to foster team learning. This may occur through the acquisition of necessary skills and the creation of new knowledge.

In relation to cooperation and dealing with other departments, the results indicated that collaboration and coordination of some tasks between some departments occurred. Respondents expressed satisfaction about being able to learn new things from followers and colleagues. Leaders focused on the importance of teamwork from an information point of view, as it enables them to exchange and share information with other departments and to learn from this sharing. Leaders also demonstrated that working in teams has enhanced their relationship with other departments and improved values and teamwork. Followers' views are in line with those of leaders,

since they have developed a good relationship with other departments. This was because departments as well as experts cooperate and exchange information.

From the leaders' point of view, working in teams enhanced their followers' loyalty to ADEC and towards achieving ADEC's vision and mission. Although leaders work together in teams, the nature of work and business sometimes hinders their collaboration. Some of them mentioned that due to work pressure and a lack of time they are not encouraged to meet and work together.

It may be concluded from the above discussion of the results of teamwork and learning organisation that followers do not work in teams due to a lack of time and high workload. Learning from team members thus becomes difficult because followers do not mix with colleagues on a daily basis.

6.7 Discussion of Research Question 6: What is the impact of organisational factors (vision and mission of ADEC, division of work, information and reward system) on developing learning organisation characteristics within ADEC?

Organisational factors are critical in enhancing learning, sharing a vision and consequently on the learning organisation (Martins and Martins (2011). Bonnet et al. (2006) argues that setting a vision, mission and strategic objectives is the best practice for a learning organisation. This section discusses the relationship between a learning organisation and the organisational factors represented in leaders' and followers' awareness of ADEC's vision and mission, the division of work among followers, followers' satisfaction with the division of work as well as the measurement of

followers' performance, information sources, reward systems and impact of these on learning.

6.7.1 ADEC Vision and Mission

The results of the interviews and focus groups conducted with leaders and followers revealed different views. Leaders agreed about awareness of ADEC's vision and mission and work towards achieving ADEC goals. Leaders emphasised that their departments perform relevant activities to achieve not only the mission of the department but also of ADEC as a single entity. In general, leaders reported that their followers are aware of what they doing in the departments and of the ADEC vision and mission. The results of interviews and focused groups conducted with followers indicated a number of different views, since they had different views from their leaders. Almost all followers reported that they are unaware of the ADEC mission and vision. Some followers claimed that the mission of the departments and ADEC is to make employees' life harder. It may be argued that followers' unawareness of ADEC's mission may attribute to their focusing only on the tasks assigned to them. This means that there is no shared vision between leaders and followers in relation to the departments and ADEC as a whole. The theory of learning organisation assumes that multiple actors in an organisation share a vision. Mitchell and Silver (1990) argue that leaders in learning organisations have to learn how to create a shared vision among their followers and teams, which may lead to fostering an atmosphere and environment of learning. Mitchell and Silver (1990) found that when leaders and their employees have clearly defined aims, this is likely to result in the department having a clear objective and higher performance by people in the organisation. When teams have a shared vision, this helps establish a vision of a learning organisation. These results are consistent with Finger and Brand (1999), who emphasise that establishing

a vision of a learning organisation allows leaders and followers to use a systematic measurement to evaluate the performance of their departments and organisations, and consequently the organisation's goals. In relation to this, Eisenberg and Goodall (2007) suggest that leaders in learning organisations can achieve collaboration by creating a shared vision and clear aims. Leaders should therefore be able to communicate vision to followers, which will allow them to change their own individual vision and position in the organisation as a whole (Wheatley, 2001). Furthermore, Wheatley (2001) stresses that the ability of leaders to communicate the goals of particular tasks and activities is imperative in maintaining collaborative learning within a learning organisation. Regarding this issue, a study of Linux software development by Hertel et al. (2003) found that clear communication of specific aims within the system led to the successful completion of the organisational tasks, which suggested continuous learning in the organisation. The first duty of new employees (leaders and followers alike) should be to learn about the vision and mission of the organisation. As head of departments and divisions, leaders should be able to inform new followers of the vision and mission of the organisation as well as the departments. Similarly, learning about the vision and mission can occur through collaborative teamwork and discussion between members. From a social practice perspective, the idealised vision can be learned through shared learning (Driver, 2002). The results of this study indicate that leaders at ADEC do not allow sufficient time for their followers to convey the vision and mission of ADEC. This was attributed to the fact, as reported by followers, that leaders have no time to discuss different issues with followers. Followers perform only the tasks allocated to them rather than those that are in accordance of the vision and mission of ADEC.

6.7.2 Division of work among Followers

There was a consensus between leaders and followers regarding the division of work, in which leaders divide the work according to followers' skills, knowledge and qualifications. For instance, the results showed a range of views, whereas leaders reported that followers' skills and knowledge are assessed before they are appointed. However, some leaders stressed that followers are slow in performing relevant tasks. Leaders' views are consistent with their perspectives, with the work reportedly divided in coordination with the head of departments on the basis of qualifications and experience. Followers reported that the division of work is based on skills, knowledge and qualifications. In relation to learning organisations, Engeström (2002) suggests that the nature of rules and division of work in organisations helps promote learning. The results showed that work is divided by directors of the departments. These results reveal that leaders at ADEC are the main decision-makers and are characterised as transactional leaders who assign specific tasks to followers. Roper and Pettit (2011) argue that the division of work in organisations is usually related to structure, power and authority in the organisation. In other words, power and authority are in the hands of leaders who are responsible for managing in their organisations. Rocchigiani and Herbel (2013) claimed that the significant division of work among employees is fundamental in learning organisations and their missions. The learning theory allows everyday tasks within organisations to be viewed through the lens of learning and the deployment of tasks (Engeström, 2002). In a study of trade unions, Engeström (2002) found that the weak division of work could not create affordances of learning.

6.7.3 Rewards system

Reward systems are a crucial part of organisational design and play an important role in developing employees' skills (learning) and quality of life, which encourages them to perform effectively (Schuster and Zingheim, 1992).

This section discusses the relationship between reward systems and learning organisation at ADEC. Lawler (1993) argues that reward systems are a crucial part of any organisation system. Rewards have an impact on the organisational effectiveness and productivity of people and the way in which they engage in different tasks in the organisation. Lawler (1993) stressed that pay and rewards systems play an important role in motivating employees' learning and development and motivate the organisation to strategically target employees' learning. Both leaders and followers were asked about how the reward system developed with in ADEC and how this affected ADEC as a learning organisation. There was an agreement among leaders and followers regarding the reward system, whereas the United Arab Emirates government has frozen any form of reward for productive and recognised leaders and followers due to the financial crisis of 2008. The government also stopped the bonus system and annual incremental pay rises. This has proved challenging for ADEC. Leaders also stated that instead of rewarding followers for performance and significant work, other ways were used to reward employees, such as certificates. Followers' views are consistent with their leaders' views in this regard. Leaders and/or followers wish to feel that they are doing their best and actively contributing to the achievement of ADEC's vision and mission. Gerard (2010) argues that acknowledgment from the leader of a colleague or follower's work is regarded as a fragile human self-image as this type of reward serves as feedback and does not encourage employees to learn new things. Employees are appraised and rewarded

according to their performance, which is reflected in the organisation's commitment to creating a learning culture. Thomsen (2001) argues that the reward system as a learning frame has a high impact on the learning environment from employees' perspective. Furthermore, Marsick (2004) suggests that learning is rewarded and promoted from the top to down and via different reward systems. This suggestion is in line with the literature review conducted by Human Dynamics (2010), which indicated that a learning organisation offers a high reward system if it aims to increase its employees' competitiveness. The study also showed that organisations could match their reward systems to employees' learning requirements, thereby creating a learning culture. Furthermore, several studies (Weinert, 1998, Kressler, 2003, Bau and Dowling, 2007) argue that low reward systems may have a significant negative impact on individual and group learning. Armstrong (2006) suggests using skill-based pay, which is used in some organisations to promote learning. This idea is consistent with Henemen (2002), who argues that reward systems encourage employees to learn how to perform allocated activities and to become more widely trained. The problem at ADEC is that the majority of leaders follow a transactional rather than transformational style and focus only on allocating tasks to their followers. Senge (2002) suggests that transformational leaders are more likely to focus on change, efficiency and effectiveness in work through creating high reward systems and incentives that encourage teamwork, systematic thinking and decision-making.

It may be concluded from the discussion of this section that ADEC has not succeeded in creating an effective and high-value reward system that would encourage employees (leaders and followers) to learn new things and to be more effective and productive in their work.

6.7.4 Information sources

This section discusses the relationship between information and learning organisation from leaders' and followers' perspectives. The two themes that emerged from the transcripts are types of information and the way in which leaders and followers obtain information.

The results of interviews and focus groups indicated that leaders and followers expressed different views about sources of information, since different types of information and data are used. There are several programmes and resources, such as the database on schools, teachers, students and the curriculum. It is worth noting that ADEC maintains a large database on schools in Abu Dhabi state (Emirates). This database is comprehensive and serves all departments within ADEC. The results also showed different ways in which leaders and followers obtain information. Participants reported that there is a directorate for knowledge management and information systems. Nonetheless, leaders stated that this database cannot help leaders and followers perform daily tasks as more sources of information that meet their needs are required, as is information about certain issues related to plans for all departments. Leaders also reported that they need more information on professional development in departments and by external stakeholders. Leaders must look for other sources of information outside ADEC. In general, sharing information among employees and departments is a key characteristic of a learning organisation. If a learning organisation is to grow and flourish within a particular field, leaders are required to encourage the sharing of information between members and departments. Senge

(1990) found that articulation the importance of the sharing of information is vital to the success of organisations. Bogerrieder and Nooteboom (2004) argued that organisations need to establish knowledge and information links between employees (leaders and followers) and departments. Organisations are therefore able to establish a relationship between members and knowledge.

Leaders stressed that their followers are not motivated to use external databases and sources as they are not skilled in using information systems. Furthermore, leaders reported that directors and employees do not take the need to use relevant information in designing plans seriously due to their lack of experience in using external data sources or relationship with external organisations such as the national Ministry of Education and private sector education organisations. Nonetheless, followers stated that it is difficult obtain the necessary information due to bureaucratic systems, since they have to fill a request form for knowledge departments and information. Followers become frustrated with delays to their work, which affects performance and productivity. Followers also reported that the process of obtaining some information can take about two weeks. Willett (1999) argues that an organisation's members cannot assume positions of responsibility until they are able to access relevant knowledge and information. In a large organisation such as ADEC, granting members access to information is essential if all of the members of the organisation are to work effectively (Willet, 1999).

It may be concluded from this section that ADEC has not developed a comprehensive information system that meets the requirements of all departments. The results

suggest that ADEC will not be able to become a learning organisation until it builds an information system linked to external sources of information.

6.8 Conclusion

This chapter aimed to summarise the main results and to discuss them from the perspective of both the researcher and the wider literature. Although there is some overlap between the research questions, it was useful to discuss the research questions separately. The results and discussion indicate that ADEC does not require more time to become a learning organisation as the leaders nor followers are currently ready to transform AEDC into a learning organisation. For instance, leaders do not play a critical role in their departments, which hinders the guiding and supervision of followers. Social practices at ADEC represented in values, attitudes, beliefs and social interactions have not yet been utilised and exploited by both leaders and followers; this could help them work effectively towards transforming ADEC into a learning organisation. It can be concluded that ADEC has not yet become a learning organisation.

Chapter Seven

Conclusion

7.1 Introduction

Before conducting this study, it was not known whether it would be reasonable to classify ADEC as a learning organisation. It was not possible either, to understand the

factors affecting the creation and development of a learning organisation. Therefore, to address both these knowledge gaps, the author spoke with leaders and followers working for ADEC. In particular, this research has explored leaders' and followers' perceptions of what was occurring at ADEC at the time of the study, in particular, in relation to learning organisational practices, which are affected by several factors.

This chapter summarises the main conclusions of the study and provides a summary of recommendations that could enable ADEC to progress further toward becoming a learning organisation. The chapter also focuses on the limitations of the study, and makes suggestions for further studies to be conducted by other researchers at the level of either the United Arab Emirates or the region.

7.2 General Conclusion

Based on the results of the in-depth interviews and focus groups, as well as the discussion of the main findings, this study arrived at the following main conclusion. It is worth remembering the study has adopted a new definition of what constitutes a learning organisation, based on the results of the in-depth interviews and focus groups, which were conducted with the leaders and followers at ADEC. Furthermore, the study introduced a number of key characteristics of a learning organisation, such as good leadership, creating good relationships between leaders and followers, social practices, teamwork, awareness of the vision and mission of ADEC, a good reward system, good sources of information, and training and personal development. These are the basis for transforming ADEC into a learning organisation. The conclusions below relate to these characteristics. It is worth mentioning that it may be possible for

ADEC to become a learning organisation from a social practice point of view, but not from an information perspective. This is because we cannot deal with the definition of a learning organisation as a single unit, although this study referenced the key characteristics of a learning organisation.

1. Leaders and followers agree that the role of leaders is to coach, supervise and mentor followers. Practically, however, leaders at ADEC have not yet realised their critical role in transforming ADEC to a learning organisation. The followers' role at ADEC is perceived to be one of simply performing the tasks assigned by departmental leaders; they do not effectively participate in decision making and planning. Therefore, this study concludes that the leaders within ADEC prefer a transactional leadership style, and not a transformational one. If they do not change their leadership paradigm, ADEC will not become a learning organisation, and certainly not in the short run.
2. This study concluded that followers and leaders have not developed good relationships based on respect, accountability and transparency. In other words, leaders and followers are unable to create their social practices based on the social environment, which helps them to learn from one another. This will not help to transform ADEC into a learning organisation.
3. One of the main characteristics of a learning organisation is to develop employees' skills and knowledge through training courses and workshops, as well as through formal education. The study results indicate that ADEC has not worked on this issue significantly, because of lack of resources and a clear strategic plan for personal development. The study results also show that training courses are not designed in accordance with followers' requirements,

which has led to their dissatisfaction with them. This in turn creates the critical delay in transforming ADEC into a learning organisation.

4. As mentioned in the literature review, and discussion of the results, social practices are critical for developing the practices of a learning organisation. The results revealed that social practices are the main contributors to encouraging followers to learn from one another and from expatriates (foreign workers). Based on the results, it is concluded from the results that using social practices may help ADEC to become a learning organisation since they learn about these social practices from one another, as well as from other departments. However, as discussed in sections two and three, social practices are one aspect of a learning organisation.
5. It is concluded from the results in the interviews and focus groups that leaders and followers, to large extent, do not work in teams, which will not help departments and ADEC to develop learning organisation practices. Leaders and followers attributed this to a lack of time and the burden of the activities they had to perform. Thus, learning from team members has become difficult for them, as followers do not mix with colleagues on daily basis.
6. Not all followers are aware of ADEC's vision and mission, because their leaders have not had sufficient time to inform them of such issues. It can be said that both the leaders and followers who have not developed shared a vision about the department and ADEC as an entity.
7. It is concluded from this discussion, that the work at ADEC in general and its departments in particular is divided between followers and between leaders, based on qualifications and experience. ADEC is certainly moving in the right

direction, in terms of becoming a learning organisation, as regards the division of labour.

8. It can also be concluded, that ADEC has not developed comprehensive information systems to meet the requirements of all departments. The results suggest that ADEC will not become a learning organisation unless it constructs an information system linked to external sources of information.

7.3 Contribution to Knowledge

Empirical studies emphasise that followers are playing a critical role in organisations to complement leaders; although the focus of the last four decades of research has been on leadership (Henry, 2012, Bennis, 2008, Kelly, 2008, Dixon and Westbrook, 2003). For this reason, this study focuses on both leaders and followers. Literature documents that organisations can become learning organisations by applying several factors. For instance, learning (Argyris and Schon 1978: 15), communication among leaders and followers (Morgan, 1997), leadership commitment (Maguire and Mckelvey, 1999), upgrading performance and knowledge and information transfer, as well as employees' empowerment (Appebaum and Reichart, 1998).

The vast majority of studies have drawn on Senge's (1990) model of learning organisation, which focused on five disciplines: system thinking, personal mastery, mental models, building and team learning. As documented in the literature (chapter two), Senge's five disciplines approach has been criticised. For this reason, this study distinguishes itself from the Senge model of learning organisations, and other

empirical studies conducted in this regard by focusing on eight characteristics that directly contribute to transforming organisations into learning organisations. These eight characteristics include: (i) the role of leaders in the organisation, (ii) the relationship between leaders and followers, (iii) the role of social practices, (iv) the role of teamwork, (v) the role of organisational factors, (vi) the role of information, (vii) the role of management systems, and finally (viii) the role of reward systems. Therefore, this study has significantly contributed to knowledge by exploring these eight factors.

This study mainly addressed the issue of social practice, and its relationship to learning organisations. Therefore, it was necessary to review relevant theories related to social practices. The study offers a critical review of the literature to practice theory and structural theory, and which social practice the theory it belongs to. The study also discussed cultural theories and their relationship to practice and social practices, and the relationship between social practices and those within a learning organisation. This analysis of social practices may unleash the potential of organisations to become learning organisations.

The study also provides a critical discussion and critique of Senge's model of a learning organisation, from different researchers and scholars' perspectives.

It was not considered sufficient to address the issue of a learning organisation and its characteristics from the leaders' perspective; thus, the followers' (employees') point

of view was also sought. The participation of followers has enriched the study, delivering more views that raise different issues related to learning organisations.

Researchers decide whether to use quantitative or qualitative research methods, depending upon the research questions/objectives and the depth and breadth of the study. The study triangulated semi-structured interview data with the focus groups to provide a wealth of data and details of the in depth experiences of leaders and followers. Leaders and followers in this study provided views about all the topics discussed in the interviews and focus groups and conveyed messages about learning organisations and social practices, as well as the factors that affect learning organisations.

7.4 Recommendations

The following recommendations were made after reviewing the study results:

1. Leaders and followers alike may work together to learn about the requirements for a learning organisation, and to learn from other experiences and successful stories in the field. This will help them to correct what they have been doing, and encourage them to focus on critical thinking and innovation that creates change within ADEC.
2. Leaders need to strengthen their roles in departments by focusing on coaching, supervising and empowering followers. Similarly, leaders are required to strengthen their relationship with followers, to help followers to learn and to

transform ADEC into a learning organisation. In order for ADEC to become a learning organisation, coaching and empowering skills programmes may be introduced. This will enhance the leaders' role in supervising and coaching their followers.

3. All leaders at ADEC are required to work collaboratively toward a shared vision, to achieve ADEC's goals that will bring it closer to becoming a learning organisation.
4. In order for ADEC to become a learning organisation, leaders and the top management, assisted by followers, need to articulate what is required, and the changes that need to be put in place to meet the requirements of a learning organisation.
5. To foster and introduce changes to ADEC, and work towards creating learning organisation practices, followers are to be praised and receive incentives to encourage them to work in teams toward achieving departmental aims. This may include education and training, rewards and promotions.
6. The results of the study indicate that leaders characterised as transactional leaders only focus on allocating and performing tasks. Therefore, leaders should be encouraged to practice transformational leadership, including monitoring followers' performances, correcting mistakes and resolve problems accordingly.
7. Some followers reported that some leaders deal with their employees on an individual basis. It is advised that leaders need to treat everyone within their departments as equals. Leaders might also work on each individual's

developmental needs rather than the team needs, so that they can identify the needs of followers.

8. ADEC may seek to embrace change and to work rapidly toward changing its policies and strategies. This requires addressing the matter of learning and development as strategic issues; otherwise, it will not be possible to achieve the goal of becoming a learning organisation.

7.5 Strengths of the Study

Recruitment of reliable participants is critical to any research, particularly when qualitative research methods are being used. The recruitment of leaders and followers was crucial in this study. Using purposive sampling to target leaders and followers with a range of work experience, and from different departments, increased the likelihood of ensuring a wide range of views about the topics and themes raised in the interviews and focus groups, to answer the research questions successfully. The final study sample included 10 leaders (directors) and 20 followers (employees), drawn from a number of departments at ADEC. According to Barriball and While (1994), the selection of a range participants improves representation and enhances the reliability and validity of results. In addition to the interviews, four focus groups were conducted (two with leaders and two with followers) where 32 participants took part in the focus groups. The limitations of this study are embedded, not in the purposive selection of the sample, but in the time available to allocate to interviewing the participants.

7.6 Limitations of the Study

All empirical studies conducted within an organisation using human subjects suffer from limitations and shortcomings. This study is no different; however, these limitations have not affected the results and conclusion of the study. First, the study was only targeted at governmental organisations that represent the education sector in Abu Dhabi. Due to the lack of time allocated to PhD project and resources, it was not possible to investigate more than one case study. Secondly, the study targeted only the state of Abu Dhabi (Emirate), while the learning organisation and social practices in other educational institutions in other states were not investigated. It was not possible in this study to analyse formal documents (strategic plans, actions plans, job description, budgets, etc.) produced by ADEC because there was no means to access such documents (many documents held by ADEC are not accessible to the public, and a long and bureaucratic procedure is required to obtain them). For this reason, both interviews and focus groups methods were used to strengthen the reliability and validity of the results.

7.7 Suggestions for Further Studies

This study attempted to address the issue of learning organisation practices at ADEC from leaders' and followers' perspectives. Although the study has addressed several factors that might have contributed for ADEC to become a learning organisation, it was not possible to cover every single issue related to the topic. Understanding the issues and factors related to creating a learning organisation entails undertaking additional research to address all relevant issues in a comprehensive way. This study addressed several issues, using qualitative research methods, as represented in

interviews and focus groups, which were conducted with leaders and followers at ADEC.

Although cultural issues and resistance to change were not targeted in this study, followers working for ADEC raised this issue during the interviews. This has led leaders to change their styles of leadership, particularly in relation to creating a learning organisation. Therefore, this study recommends conducting a study of the relationship between a learning organisation and cultural values, to explore what barriers exist to organisations becoming learning organisations. This could be addressed from both leaders' and followers' perspectives.

The study employed qualitative research methods, because it aimed to study ADEC as a single case study. Other studies may target other government and private organisations, to make comparisons between the two sectors in relation to developing of learning organisations. Such studies could also target different social, economic and health sectors in the United Arab Emirates, and other countries in the region.

As mentioned above, this study employed qualitative research methods, for comparative purposes; other studies may use a mixed methods approach (quantitative and qualitative) to delve in-depth into learning organisation issues and social practices. Social practices are broad in scope and so difficult to address in a single study. This study focused only on values and beliefs, therefore, other studies could

address other social practices such as attitudes and address from the perspective of both the public and private sectors.

7.8 Conclusions

This study aimed at investigating learning organisation in the UAE through focusing on ADEC. Reviewing literature on the level of the UAE indicated that, learning organisation has not been addressed or empirically investigated. Thus, it is regarded as original study that studied the main factors affecting learning organisation. It is worth emphasising that learning organisation is not affected only by the five disciplines suggested by Senge, but by social practices. For this reason, the contribution of this study to knowledge is not only on the level on UAE but on the international level. This study added seven factors to knowledge represented in the role of leaders in developing learning organisation practices, the relationship between leaders and followers, social practices, teamwork, vision and mission of the organisation, information and databases, reward systems.

In order to understand learning organisation, it was imperative to review literature and relevant theories. As mentioned in chapter two, Senge's was the first scholar who addressed the notion of learning organisation and suggested five disciplines that affect the development of learning organisation in organisations. Although Senge's work was seminal, however, it was criticised by many researchers (Moilanen, 2005, King, 2001, Marsick and Watkins, 1999). This study has contributed to the discussion of Senge's model through suggesting new factors that affect developing learning organisation in ADEC. As mentioned earlier, this study has not used any theoretical framework since the author believed that the UAE has

a different context that appeared in the interviews. Therefore, Senge's model was not the main model that can be applied to the UAE context.

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Appendix

Appendix One



Our Ref: AS/PT

Abu Dhabi Education Council

Dear Sir/Madam,

Mariam Kalbani, PhD Student

Mariam Kalbani is a PhD student in the field of Educational Research at the University of Lancaster. Mariam is working on investigating “The Role of Leadership and Followership in Affecting Learning Organization Practices: A Case Study Of Abu Dhabi Education Council”.

Among the data sources that are approved (in terms of both ethics and research design) by the Department of Educational Research supervising Mariam are the interviews and questionnaires that should be completed by general managers, middle managers and employees. The purpose of the questionnaire and interview schedule is to seek the views of people working for the ADEC. Therefore, I seek your kind approval to help Mariam in contacting relevant employees in ADEC.

Thank you for your kind co-operation.

Yours Faithfully,

Professor Paul Trowler

p.trowler@lancaster.ac.uk

Tel: 0044 (0)1524 592879.

Head of Department
Paul Ashwin, BA, MSc, PhD
Professors
Mary Hamilton, BA, MA, PhD
Carolyn Jackson, BSc, PhD
Colin Rogers, BA, PhD
Murray Saunders, BA, MA, PhD
Malcolm Tight, BSc, PhD
Paul Trowler, BA, MA, Cert Ed., PhD

<http://www.lancs.ac.uk/fass/edres>

Lancaster University
County South College
Lancaster LA1 4YD
United Kingdom

Tel. (+44) (0)1524 593572

Appendix2

The role of leadership and followership in Affecting Learning Organization

Practices: A Case Study of Abu Dhabi Education Council

1. PhD Project Objectives and Justifications

The main focus of this study is on investigating the role of leadership and followership in effecting learning organization practices in ADEC. Therefore, the study aims to explore the effect of leaders and their employees on learning organization practices in ADEC.

Specifically, this study aims to:

- Explore the current status of learning organisation practices at ADEC using background information ;
- Examine the effect of followers (subordinates) on ADEC acceptance of learning organisation practices;
- To explore whether there is an optimum matching of leadership and followership styles
- Explore the effect of social practices on learning organisation practices in ADEC;

2. Procedures of Study

The first step in the field work is to familiarise myself with ADEC. I will arrange a number of events and sessions with top management positions and employees working for ADEC. In these events and sessions I will explain the research objectives, the benefits of it to leaders and employees and ADEC as a whole and how to develop ADEC in terms of learning and improve social practices.

I will talk about the informed consent and voluntarily participation and withdrawal from the study, confidentiality of data and privacy.

Participants will be informed about the time to be taken for interviews and how they will be free to ask any questions during the interview. Once I finish the interviews and data analysis, I will revisit a number of participants to verify some of the quotations.

3. How Data will be used

The data will not be used for any personal reasons; rather it will be used for the purpose of this study and for the benefits of ADEC and its employees. The data will be stored in a safe place that no one can reach apart from data analysis and writing up the results.

4. Freedom of Consent

Participation in this study will be entirely voluntary since participants are free to decline the participation before and during the interview.

5. Confidentiality

All questions and responses of participants will be kept in a safe place and will not be accessed to anybody. Data will be treated with absolute confidentiality.

In case any participant has any concern or complains about the research project or the process of interviewing, please he/she can contact Professor Paul Trowler .

Professor Paul Trowler

County South
Lancaster University
Bailrigg
Lancaster
United Kingdom
LA1 4YL

Email: p.trowler@lancaster.ac.uk

Tel: +44 1524 592879

Yours Sincerely

Mariam Al Kalbani

Email: M.alkalbani@lancaster.ac.uk.

Tel:00971504474831

Appendix four

Interview Schedule

Leaders

1. Relationship/teamwork

I would like now to speak with you about your role in the department and your relationship with your employees.

- Could you tell me how do you consider yourself and your role? A manager, a mentor, a coach to your employees
- Could you describe the relationship between you and your line manager and with other departments
- What issues/areas do you discuss with other departments? Do you learn from them?
- How do you describe your relationship with your employees? How do you do with them? What sort of problems do you face with them?
- How do your employees work as a team or a group? What do you they discuss?
- How they cooperate and deal with others? Do you think they learn from each other and working in a team?

2. Learning

As you know learning is very important for developing organisations, I would like to ask you some questions in this regard.

- Could you tell me something about what programmes designed about learning, new things, training, skills development, etc.
- Could you tell me something about your employees work together in a team?
- How they cooperate together to perform the tasks?
- What support do you offer your employees to develop their skills and learning?
- What types of training and development do your employees interested in?

- From your point of view, what type of mistakes, your employees make in relation to work?
- Do your employees learn from their mistakes? How do you they learn from their mistakes?

3. Organisational Factors

As you know, ADEC has developed its mission and vision as well as values:

- To what extent do you and your employees commit to ADEC mission
- To what extent, employees in your department utilise their skills and knowledge learned for the benefit of ADEC
- How do you divide the tasks among your employees in your department? On what basis, experience, qualification etc.
- Do you think employees are satisfied with the division of tasks among them? If they are not satisfied, why?
- In general, how do you measure your department performance
- Similarly, how do you measure your employees' performance?
- How you and your employees learn from your and the department performance?

4. Information and Resources allocated for learning

I would like to talk about information and resources allocated for learning

- What types of information your employees need to accomplish the tasks allocated
- How do they usually obtain such information
- Have you developed any database on skills and learning initiatives in the department on in ADEC?

5. Appraise and rewards

- How do you appraise and reward your employees who leans skills and develop them significantly?

- What type of time, human and financial resources do you afford for employees learning and developing new skills?
- Is there any sort of appraisal rewards for the team/group work? Could you tell me about these rewards?

6. Social practices

1. Could you tell me about a time there was a conflict between you and an employee about how to go about their work? What did you do to address the problem and restore the relationship? Were you successful?
2. Could you give me an example of time when your values and beliefs affected your relationships with employees?
3. Some people say that a ‘learning organization’ is one which accepts a set of attitudes, values and practices that support the process of continuous learning within the organisation. How close is this to describing ADEC in general and your department in particular?
4. The Department you head, there were fundamental problems centred around fundamental differences in attitudes and assumptions about how the daily work of the Department should go on. In what ways is this similar or different to your Department?
 - How do you deal with female employees?
 - Do you notice any discrimination against female employees in your department?
 - How employees feel about the department? Do you think they are loyal to ADEC?
 - Employees sometimes have their personal problems, do you usually discuss with them such problems?

5. As I understand it, ADEC's work is fundamentally about on production world class learners who embody strong culture and heritage and are prepared to meet global challenges.
 - How far would you say there is fundamental agreement across the organization and your Department about encouraging employees to learn from national and international organisations?

Appendix five

Interview Schedule of Employees

7. Relationship/teamwork

I would like now to speak with you about your role in the department and your relationship with your line manager/head the division.

- Could you tell me how do you consider yourself and your role? An employee, a mentor,
- Could you describe the relationship between you and your line manager and with other colleagues in other departments
- What issues/areas do you discuss with other divisions? Do you learn from them? Do take permission from your manager when you discuss any issue with other colleagues from other divisions?
- How do you describe your relationship with the head of the division? How do you do with them? What sort of problems do you face with them?
- How do your colleagues work as a team or a group? What do you they discuss?
- How they corporate and deal with others? Do you think they learn from each other and working in a team?

8. Learning

As you know learning is very important for developing organisations, I would like to ask you some questions in this regard.

- Could you tell me something about what programmes designed about learning, new things, training, skills development, etc.
- Could you tell me something about employees in the division work together in a team?
- How they cooperate together to perform the tasks?
- What support do you receive from the head of the division to develop your skills and learning?
- What types of training and development are you interested in?
- From your point of view, what type of mistakes have you made in relation to work?
- Do you think you learn from your and other employees mistakes mistakes? How do you learn?

9. Organisational Factors

As you know, ADEC has developed its mission and vision as well as values:

- To what extent do you and you commit to ADEC mission
- To what extent, do you utilise your skills and knowledge learned for the benefit of ADEC
- How tasks are divided between you and your colleagues in the division? On what basis these tasks are divided? E.g. experience, qualification, skills, knowledge, etc.
- Do you think the employees in the division are satisfied with the division of tasks among them? If they are not satisfied, why?
- In general, how do you measure your department performance
- Similarly, how do you measure your performance?
- How do you and other employees learn from the division performance?

10. Information and Resources allocated for learning

I would like to talk about information and resources allocated for learning

- What types of information do you need to accomplish the tasks allocated
- How do you usually obtain such information
- Have you/the division developed any database on skills and learning initiatives in the divisions on ADEC?

11. Appraise and rewards

- How are you appraised and rewarded by your manager/the head of the division when you learn new things and/or you develop some skills significantly?
- What type of time, human and financial resources do you receive from the division/head of division to learn and develop new skills?
- Is there any sort of appraisal rewards for the team/group work offered by the head of the division? Could you tell me about these rewards?

12. Social practices

6. Could you tell me about a time there was a conflict between you and your manager about how to go about their work? What did you do to address the problem and restore the relationship? Were you successful?
7. Could you give me an example of time when your values and beliefs affected your relationships with your manager/the head of the division?
8. Some people say that a 'learning organization' is one which accepts a set of attitudes, values and practices that support the process of continuous learning within the organisation. How close is this to describing ADEC in general and your division in particular?
9. The division you work for, there were fundamental problems centred on fundamental differences in attitudes and assumptions about how the daily work of the division should go on. In what ways, is this similar or different to other divisions?
 - How do you deal with female employees?
 - Do you notice any discrimination against female employees in the division?
 - How employees feel about the division? Do you think they are loyal to ADEC?
 - Employees sometimes have their personal problems; do you usually discuss such problems with your manager/the head of the division?
10. As I understand it, ADEC's work is fundamentally about on production world class learners who embody strong culture and heritage and are prepared to meet global challenges.
 - How far would you say there is fundamental agreement across the organization and this division about encouraging employees to learn from national and international organisations?

Appendix Six

November 2009

THE UNIVERSITY OF LANCASTER

PFACT project information and ethics questionnaire

(To be completed by the student together with their supervisor in all cases)

Name of student: _____

Name of supervisor: _____

Project Title: _____

1. General information

1.1 Have you, if relevant, discussed the project with

the Data Protection Officer?

the Freedom of Information Officer?

N/A

(Please tick as appropriate.)

1.1 Does any of the intellectual property to be used in the research belong to a third party? Y / N

1.2 Are you involved in any other activities that may result in a conflict of interest with this research? Y / N

1.3 Will you be working with an NHS Trust? Y / N

- 1.4 If yes to 1.3, what steps are you taking to obtain NHS approval?
-
-
- 1.5 If yes to 1.3, who will be named as sponsor of the project?
-
- 1.6 What consideration has been given to the health and safety requirements of the research?
-
-

2. *Information for insurance or commercial purposes*

(Please put N/A where relevant, and provide details where the answer is yes.)

- 2.1 Will the research involve making a prototype? Y / N / N/A
- 2.2 Will the research involve an aircraft or the aircraft industry? Y / N / N/A
- 2.3 Will the research involve the nuclear industry? Y / N / N/A
- 2.4 Will the research involve the specialist disposal of waste material? Y / N / N/A
- 2.5 Do you intend to file a patent application on an invention that may relate in some way to the area of research in this proposal? If YES, contact Gavin Smith, Research and Enterprise Services Division. (ext. 93298) Y / N / N/A

3. Ethical information

(Please confirm this research grant will be managed by you, the student and supervisor, in an ethically appropriate manner according to:

- (a) the subject matter involved;*
- (b) the code of practice of the relevant funding body; and*
- (c) the code of ethics and procedures of the university.)*

(Please put N/A where relevant)

- 3.1 Please tick to confirm that you are prepared to accept responsibility on behalf of the institution for your project in relation to the avoidance of plagiarism and fabrication of results.
- 3.2 Please tick to confirm that you are prepared to accept responsibility on behalf of the institution for your project in relation to the observance of the rules for the exploitation of intellectual property.
- 3.3 Please tick to confirm that you are prepared to accept responsibility on behalf of the institution for your project in relation to adherence to the university code of ethics.
- 3.4 Will you give all staff and students involved in the project guidance on the ethical standards expected in the project in accordance with the university code of ethics?
Y / N / N/A
- 3.5 Will you take steps to ensure that all students and staff involved in the project will not be exposed to inappropriate situations when carrying out fieldwork?
Y / N / N/A
- 3.6 Is the establishment of a research ethics committee required as part of your collaboration? (This is a requirement for some large-scale European Commission funded projects, for example.)
Y / N / N/A
- 3.7 Does your research project involve human participants i.e. including all types of interviews, questionnaires, focus groups, records relating to humans, human tissue etc.?
Y / N / N/A

3.7.1 Will you take all necessary steps to obtain the voluntary and informed consent of the prospective participant(s) or, in the case of individual(s) not capable of giving informed consent, the permission of a legally authorised representative in accordance with applicable law?

Y / N / N/A

3.7.2 Will you take the necessary steps to find out the applicable law?

Y / N / N/A

3.7.3 Will you take the necessary steps to assure the anonymity of subjects, including in subsequent publications?

Y / N / N/A

3.7.4 Will you take appropriate action to ensure that the position under 3.7.1 – 3.7.3 are fully understood and acted on by staff or students connected with the project in accordance with the university ethics code of practice?

Y / N / N/A

3.13 Does your work involve animals? If yes you should specifically detail this in a submission to the Research Ethics Committee. The term animals shall be taken to include any vertebrate other than man.

3.13.1 Have you carefully considered alternatives to the use of animals in this project? If yes, give details.

Y / N / N/A

3.13.2 Will you use techniques that involve any of the following: any experimental or scientific procedure applied to an animal which may have the effect of causing that animal pain, suffering, distress, or lasting harm? If yes, these must be separately identified.

Y / N / N/A

Signature (student): _____ Date: _____

Signature (supervisor): _____ Date: _____

N.B. Do not submit this form without completing and attaching the Stage 1 self-assessment form.