Building trust between Learning Designers and Subject Matter Experts in online course development: A case study.

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Abstract

This thesis examines the trust dynamics between Learning Designers (LD) and Subject Matter Experts (SME) in online course development within Technology Enhanced Learning (TEL) environments. This research is underpinned by Wenger's Communities of Practice (CoP) framework (1998) overlaid with an adapted version of Martins and Baptista Nunes' Conditional/Consequential Matrix (2016) along with definitions of trust. The methodology comprises a case study with interviews, and a focus group.

I conclude the research findings with the introduction of a new model which I have called T.I.M.E. (Trust Integration Model for Educators), a framework for the cultivation and integration of trust, emphasising continuous communication, feedback, and collaboration between LDs and SMEs. Trust is crucial for effective collaboration in TEL contexts. This research shows how initial trust experiences are shaped by multiple interactions, including prior collaborations, communication efficacy, mutual understanding, and resistance to change. As collaborations mature, trust (cognitive and affective) manifests through collective values, open communication, adaptability, and a mutual commitment to shared goals.

This research emphasises the significance of role clarification and available support mechanisms while establishing and following procedures or guidelines that build relationships and create and maintain trust. The T.I.M.E. model provides a structure to navigate challenges and offers potential applications across Higher Education (HE), Further Education (FE), and workplace Learning and Development (L&D). It addresses issues such as resistance to

technological change, communication gaps, and internal hierarchies. The model aims to integrate trust within the broader CoP of LDs and SMEs, as well as the quasi-communities that evolve through institutional collaboration. This area has been under-researched, and the data collected, along with the analysis, combined with the T.I.M.E. model, I offer as new original knowledge.

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List of abbreviations

AI: Artificial Intelligence

CoP: Communities of Practice

CAQDAS: Computer-Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software

FE: Further Education

HE: Higher Education

HEI: Higher Education Institutions

ICT: Information and Communications Technology

LD: Learning Designer

L&D: Learning and Development

LMS: Learning Management System

LT: Learning Technologist

RQ: Research Questions

SME: Subject Matter Expert

TEL: Technology Enhanced Learning

VLE: Virtual Learning Environment

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Background and context

Literature has emphasised the importance and effectiveness of the team-based approach for successful Technology Enhanced Learning (TEL) practice of introducing and integrating technology into teaching practices and designing online learning. Considerable effort is required to enable Subject Matter Experts (SME)[1] to become comfortable with integrating technology into their teaching and subsequently support student learning technology integration within their teaching methods. As found by Armstrong (2019), this includes guiding SMEs to effectively incorporate technological tools, address initial barriers like infrastructure limitations, time constraints, technical skill gaps, and fostering the development of strategies to navigate these challenges. Additionally, building staff confidence, fostering a willingness to take pedagogical and technical risks, and leveraging the support of peers, change agents, with access to innovative ideas is crucial. Martins and Baptista-Nunes (2016) stress the importance of overcoming both personal and organisational barriers to trust in the adoption of eLearning. This highlights a progressive integration process that includes

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[1] The term 'Subject Matter Expert' (SME) is used to represent both a teacher and/or an SME. While a teacher can be an SME, they are not always the individual providing expertise to the Learning Design team. Sometimes, a separate SME is brought in to develop online learning materials. This distinction also highlights the complex identity of teachers, who can be pedagogical, emotional, moral, and nurturing educators, not just providers of factual information. In learning design, different SMEs are often assigned to provide content efficiently (Popper-Giveon & Shayshon, 2016).

development of new insights into eLearning experiences, achieves consensus within the academic community, and embeds eLearning within institutional structures and strategies.

Communication enhancement between LDs and faculty is vital for improving project outcomes and ensures effective technology integration (Botturi, 2006; 2008). The adaptation process is fraught with challenges, such as overcoming technical knowledge gaps (Armstrong, 2019; Conole, 2013) and addresses the nuances of teacher confidence and competence (Alazam et al., 2012). Also, teachers often rely on implicit design approaches based on prior experiences and practices rather than adapting to effective online learning design (Falconer & Littlejohn, 2008; Koedinger & Corbett, 2008). This critique is supported by Fawns (2022), who argues that the tendency of educators is to default to traditional methods without fully considering the integration of technology in educational settings. Cutri et al. (2020) further explore this by discussing how faculty were forced into online teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic with little preparation, often transferring in-person practices directly to the online environment without adapting to the demands of online learning. There is also a discrepancy between teachers' self-perceived abilities and actual skills, characterised by the Dunning-Kruger effect (Bradley et al., 2022). Masterman (2008) identifies several barriers to technology uptake, including technophobia, time issues, an aversion to experimentation, and fear of displacement by technology. Conole (2004) argues that despite the potential for transformative change, the reality shows limited fundamental shifts in educational practices due to technology, often replicating ineffective classroom practices. In some

TEL settings, SMEs, and instructional support teams (e.g., LDs and educational technologists) work closely together to improve TEL practices (Salmon & Wright, 2014). However, building a trusting relationship between SMEs and LDs is often challenging (Bawa & Watson, 2017; Halupa, 2019).

Trust is an essential relational component between these two parties, which can lower levels of uncertainty, for example, around perceived project issues lessened by the confidence and risk processes that trust facilitates (Marsh et al., 2012; Martins & Baptista Nunes, 2016). As discussed by Edwards (2011), relational expertise is a fundamental component of successful collaboration between SMEs and LDs, especially in complex, inter-professional contexts. Relational expertise involves the ability to recognise and respond to the knowledge and contributions of others, which is essential for enhancing collective understanding and action. Effective relational expertise fosters a deeper engagement with the diverse resources that different professionals bring to the table, facilitating more responsive and integrated approaches to complex problems.

Furthermore, relational expertise is closely linked to developing and strengthening trust. As explored by Frederiksen (2012), trust is not a monolithic concept, but one that varies significantly based on the nature of social relations, the objects of trust, and the situational context. It exists between an outer threshold of expected deceit and an inner threshold of confident reliance, influencing the dynamics of inter-professional collaboration. Thus, relational expertise relies on and enhances trust, creating a foundation for more effective and nuanced professional interactions.

Trust can lead to smoother design processes, creative results, and satisfied learners, but mistrust can be problematic, as discovered in my pilot study (Love, 2019)[2] (trust and definitions of trust are explored in greater depth from section 2.6 in this chapter). Relationships can have issues related to personality clashes, entrenched positions of roles and expectations, and power struggles that may ensue. For instance, Campbell et al. (2007) discuss how LDs often feel powerless to create meaningful change due to entrenched institutional values and the resistance of institutions to change. This illustrates the complexities of navigating these dynamics in HE settings. Rotar et al. (2021) echo this, indicating that LDs had to adapt rapidly during the Covid-19 pandemic, facing increased responsibilities without adequate support, highlighting institutional resistance. Bisset (2018) adds that LDs often struggle for recognition within rigid hierarchies, reinforcing the sense of powerlessness, yet their ability to work across boundaries offers potential for innovation despite these challenges. Castro-Figueroa (2009) highlights specific communication conflicts between LDs and SMEs, highlighting personality clashes and power dynamics that can disrupt collaboration.

Halupa (2019) and Xu and Morris (2007) explore the collaboration between faculty and LDs, noting that resistance from SMEs often stems from a perceived interference in their expertise, leading to tension and conflict. Mistrust

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[2] 'Learning Design Unfettered by Subject Specific or Educational Context Limitations' An unpublished paper as part of the E-Research and TEL programme at Lancaster University.

can lead to low levels of collaborative interaction between LDs and SMEs due to academic attachment to content around design languages (Gibbons & Brewer, 2005) and a sense of inequality due to whether their efforts are acknowledged within hierarchy and their status within organisations (Chen & Carliner, 2020).

Interpersonal trust is critical in the dynamic of shared work values, team member effectiveness, trustfulness, and trustworthiness between LDs, Learning Design teams, and SMEs or faculty (Chou et al., 2008). Paliszkiewicz (2018) discusses how trust is a multifaceted concept, noting its role as a foundation for social relationships and a catalyst for enhanced organisational communication, engagement, and cooperation. It encompasses both trustworthiness (how much others trust a team member) and trustfulness (how much a team member trusts others). Trust is essential for efficient cooperation, especially when team members are interdependent (also see McAllister, 1995). Cheng et al. (2020) consider two components of trust: reliability-based trust, which reflects trustworthiness, and openness-based trust, which is aligned with trustfulness. Both are vital for collaboration in virtual teams. Similarly, Uttenthal (2024) identifies trust as a complex interplay of rational and emotional aspects, incorporating both interpersonal and institutional trust as distinct subtypes that govern different spheres of interaction.

Trusting relationships within teams is essential for acquiring necessary information and assistance, leading to better acceptance of each other and improved performance, satisfaction, and cooperation. Further Tourky et al. (2023) argues that trust within teams enhances the alignment of individual and

organisational values, nurturing a cooperative environment where members feel valued and understood (also see Chatman, 1995).

Breuer et al. (2020) argue that trust is essential for encouraging cohesive and diverse teams, enabling open communication, risk-taking, and cooperation (also see Harrison, 2002). They argue that trust promotes a sense of security and mutual support, allowing team members to be vulnerable with each other, regardless of whether they are working face-to-face or in virtual settings. This makes trust a key factor in the success of both physical and virtual teams.

Jehn (1994; 1997) highlights that trust mitigates the negative effects of conflict by encouraging open communication and collaboration, leading to higher team performance and satisfaction. Jehn's later work (Jehn, 2001; Jehn & Bendersky, 2003; Jehn & Chatman, 2000) support these findings, noting that trust is crucial for maintaining harmonious relationships and effective cooperation in team settings. Harrison and Klein (2007) discuss the 'separation' differences in position or opinion among team members regarding values, beliefs, or attitudes, which can lead to division within teams, characterised by disagreement and polarisation, potentially leading to conflict and reduced cohesion if not appropriately managed. They argue that low separation, particularly in team goals and task-related values, facilitates the realisation of team members' diverse expertise, enhancing creativity and performance through increased cooperation and information sharing. Additionally, D'Silva (2016) finds that when managed properly, task conflict can enhance team performance by promoting better decision-making and problem-solving through diverse viewpoints and collaborative efforts. Overall, the presence of trust within

teams is a critical factor in transforming conflict into a productive force that enhances team cohesion and effectiveness.

Despite the importance, little is known about the mechanisms underlying the trusting or mistrusting relationships, or how they are developed and maintained, between LDs and SMEs working within TEL environments. Therefore, this study explores why trust and mistrust occur so there can be an improvement in relationships between SMEs and LDs.

1.2 Personal Motivation

My motivation for this study stems from my extensive experience as an LD with almost three decades in the field, where I have encountered the complex nature of establishing trust and fostering effective interpersonal relationships between SMEs and LDs. My career has spanned sectors including HE, corporate training, and consulting, working with renowned organisations such as, Anglo American, BT plc, Walkers/PepsiCo, Hewlett Packard, Kings College London, Coventry University, and many more. I have designed and delivered award-winning training programs, leveraging innovative technologies such as games-based learning, augmented reality (AR), virtual reality (VR), and generative AI (Gen AI).

My diverse global experience, collaborating with teams across multiple time zones in countries like the UK, US, Chile, Brazil, South Africa, India, New Zealand and Australia, has highlighted the critical role of trust in achieving impactful learning outcomes.

Bennet (2007) discusses how trust is critical for collaboration and the successful implementation of learning technologies, noting that a lack of trust can lead to resistance and ineffective teamwork. Conole (2004) highlights the complex, multifaceted nature of eLearning and highlights the importance of trust and effective communication in integrating technology into educational practices. Trust is crucial in creating authentic and meaningful online learning environments, where effective relationships between LDs and SMEs are necessary to avoid the pitfalls of digital myopia and to promote innovative pedagogies (Herrington et al., 2005). Technological and generational changes have occurred since that study and Chan and Lee (2023) explore the use of AI within these settings, highlighting generational differences, particularly in how Generation Z (Gen Z) engages with online environments, which play a critical role in shaping trust dynamics. Gen Z students, who are accustomed to constant digital connectivity, may require specific approaches to developing trust in online learning, as they prioritise technology integration and immediate feedback. These generational preferences highlight the importance of establishing trust early in the design process to ensure effective collaboration and engagement in TEL environments, as Gen Z students mature and may themselves become SMEs or LDs. Therefore, addressing trust (or the lack thereof) from the outset and throughout the learning design process is essential for the success of TEL initiatives.

1.3 Researcher's Position

The problem identified in this research is based on my experience as an LD and can be subject to bias, but the approach to this research is a clear focus on finding a good balance between the perspectives of trust between LDs and SMEs. I seek to understand how LDs and SMEs experience and construct knowledge in their TEL collaborative efforts. There is awareness that there is not one answer to trust in these relationships, and there is not one side to congratulate or blame for trust or mistrust. It is clear from the literature and my experience that both sides have strong views, and I am not trying to solve the issue of Trust with SMEs as a problem. Trust is relational and complex, based on different perspectives, agendas and motivations, and there is a desire to find practical approaches to unite both parties sustainably. Having worked within many organisations as a contractor on project-based timeframes, I have faced the challenge of being unable to effect change over the long term. My goal, however, is to enable lasting change in the field by developing sustainable strategies that foster trust and collaboration between LDs and SMEs.

1.4 Pilot Study

I conducted a pilot study[3] in 2020 based on looking at a model of learning design across three fields: L&D, HE, and FE. Several issues arose that were

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[3] Learning design unfettered by subject specific or educational context limitations (unpublished paper while studying at Lancaster University).

blocking SMEs from taking on board learning design, working with LDs, and fully incorporating TEL into their classroom—e.g., confusion about what learning design means and what the SMEs' role will be within this sphere, for example, content developer, content provider, advisor, and what level of collaboration they will be giving, or are expected to give. SMEs and LDs, respectively, also appeared to be overly attached to their work and status, requiring their own 'stamp' on things, and being seen as the learning design provider.

1.5 Pilot Study Major Findings

Trust is a powerful ingredient of success at the heart of this research. The pilot study I conducted, the FE case in particular, showed that trust was powerful and 'implicit' from the SMEs to the learning design and development team as they have become used to how they operate, and the output was reported to be of excellent quality. I noted at the time that the LDs and SMEs enjoyed a more trusting relationship than other educational environments examined in the study and seemed to require further exploration.

Areas of success emerged from the pilot study to include variations in how LDs and SMEs interacted or collaborated, with some fully engaged and open to adapting content to the online medium. In contrast, others resisted change or the implementation of content into other mediums. For example, one participant noted "If you have a positive relationship with a subject specialist, we can only deliver a flat online experience. We can be imaginative, but we can't achieve creativity without their engagement to meet the learning objectives." Another

added, "The teachers are struggling to write technology into what is seen as quite a traditional curriculum." Additionally, one participant remarked on the reluctance of some teachers to integrate digital tools, noting, "There is quite a culture change that's needed to embrace digital, but it's about that reassurance that actually teachers also need it."

1.6 Implications for the Study

The pilot study[4] findings indicated a necessity for a deeper examination of specific components of those trusting relationships. This encompassed the resistance of SMEs to perceived intrusions of creative alterations to their subject matter, low collaboration stemming from SMEs' attachment to content, clashes between faculty subject matter pedagogical cultures and learning design methodologies, reluctance among faculty to share their teaching methods with non-faculty collaborators, ambiguity in learning design roles, challenges in communication, workload strains, apprehensions regarding ownership, and the dynamics of status and power. Schwier and Wilson (2010) discuss how LDs often face resistance from SMEs who are protective of their content and hesitant to accept changes as LDs operate within internal 'political' hierarchical structures. They also highlight the ambiguity in learning design roles, which can lead to misunderstandings and conflicts. Chen and Carliner (2020) highlight the challenges in communication and collaboration between faculty and LDs, noting that faculty often fear losing control over their course

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[4] Love, 2019

content, which affects the dynamics of power and status in these relationships. They further point out that workload strains and unclear roles can exacerbate these issues, making it essential to establish clear expectations and trust from the outset.

As found in the pilot study, a lack of trust between SMEs and LDs seems to be a primary issue in the learning design process, leading to inadequate collaboration and disappointing outcomes. Whilst not peer-reviewed, there is a body of grey literature[5] that can inform the debate around the area of LDs and SMEs; for example, Intentional Futures (2016) noted that the main challenge for LDs was the absence of faculty engagement due to mistrust and misunderstandings between faculty and designers. Building and maintaining trust is essential to address these challenges (Halupa, 2019).

Therefore, this study addresses these areas to determine how the focused TEL team within the FE study managed and went through these areas to find effective collaboration with successful results. It explores how trust developed between SMEs and LDs and how communication occurs across various disciplines. It also looks for areas of improvement and then considers how to apply these for HE, FE, and eventually corporate L&D.

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[5] Not peer reviewed but published elsewhere.

1.7 Structure of the thesis

Having introduced the research in Chapter one and contextualising the study within the broader dynamics of trust in TEL, I have explained the focus on the relationship between LDs and SMEs. In Chapter two, the Literature Review, I explore trust and its definitions, collaboration, and role ambiguity in education, addressing the barriers to TEL implementation and the importance of social capital in LD and SME collaborations. I also identify gaps in the literature that this research attempts to bridge. Chapters three and four describe the theoretical framework selection process, research design, methods for data collection and analysis. Chapter five, Findings, presents the research findings, analysing data to uncover insights into trust dynamics between LDs and SMEs from semi-structured interviews with research participants. I present research findings, exploring shared perspectives, thematic insights, and answers to the research questions. In Chapter six, I make recommendations and introduce a new framework for trust cultivation and integration in educational settings and look at potential further research by using the new Trust Integration Model for Educators (T.I.M.E.) framework. Chapter seven, discusses the findings in the context of existing literature and the findings, analyses their implications, summarises key findings, discusses limitations, and suggests the areas proposed for further research. Chapter eight concludes and summarises the whole research.

The next section looks at the Research Questions that form the basis of the research.

1.8 Research Questions (RQ)

The research focuses on three primary Research Questions (RQs) that explore the intricacies of trust in the collaborative process of online course development between LDs and SMEs. These RQs are complemented by a series of questions, aimed at seeking understanding of the roles, interactions, and practices that contribute to the formation and evolution of trust. The goal is to gain a thorough insight into how trust emerges and becomes integrated and institutionalised within these collaborations or "…embedding it in the structures, routines and strategies of the organisation… "(Martins & Baptista Nunes, 2016, p.310). The combination of main RQs underpinned with detailed interview questions help to unravel the complex layers of trust dynamics, highlighting the unique interplay and challenges faced by LDs and SMEs in their collaborative efforts. The RQs and these supporting questions are discussed in more detail in chapter 5. Additionally, they are strategically aligned with the theoretical framework which is outlined in chapter 3.

RQ1: What were the initial experiences of trust and trusting relationships between LDs and SMEs when working together in online course development?

This question seeks to understand the foundational dynamics of trust as LDs and SMEs begin their journey in online course development. It sets the stage for exploring how trust is initially established, and the challenges faced during the initial phase.

RQ2: What are the shared aspects of trust that have changed or developed within successful working relationships between SMEs and LDs?

This question looks into the evolution of trust as collaborations mature, highlighting how trust dynamics shift and solidify as working relationships become more integrated and institutionalised.

RQ3: How did LDs and SMEs develop trusting, successful working relationships?

This question further explores the mechanisms and practices through which trust is nurtured and solidified in established collaborations.

To explore the research questions, interviews were carried out, which were semi-structured based on five questions. These are designed to draw out detailed, narrative-style responses that provide diverse insights into the dynamics of trust (Bennett, 2016; Ezebilo & Mattsson, 2010). The purpose of these questions is to reveal the unique expertise of the participants and to understand the community dynamics within which LDs and SMEs operate. This approach is aimed at shedding light on their distinct roles and contributions to the collaborative process.

Within the questions, participants are asked about their roles, how they exchange information, their past collaborations and trust levels, changes in collaboration over time, and the development of trust in successful working relationships. The interviews address different aspects of the LDs' and SMEs'

collaboration. They explore the resources shared between these groups, how they communicate and work together, and the challenges and solutions that arise from their interactions. This part of the research emphasises the value of shared understanding and mutual learning. I also investigate the historical backdrop of SMEs' and LDs' collaborations, offering insights into their collective experiences, stories, and the trust dynamics that have shaped their previous interactions. Additionally, the study looks at how collaborative practices have evolved over time and the factors influencing these changes, emphasising how SMEs and LDs collaboratively tackle recurring challenges and continually improve their cooperation. Lastly, the research probes the subtleties of trust dynamics within these collaborations, aiming to comprehend the shared practices, experiences, and community interactions that are fundamental to the development and evolution of trust between SMEs and LDs.

The forthcoming Chapter two explores the intricacies of trust and relationships within educational settings, with a particular focus on the interactions between SMEs and LDs. It also considers the concept of trust from both a theoretical and practical standpoint and examines how it manifests and evolves in the professional interactions among staff members. This examination aims to unravel the multifaceted nature of trust and its critical role in the collaborative dynamics of online course development. The chapter provides insights into the foundational elements of trust, its development over time within successful working relationships, and the practices that foster and sustain trust between LDs and SMEs. It then looks at what the gaps are in the literature that this thesis seeks to address.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

In this literature review I look into the core subject of 'building trusting relationships between LDs and SMEs', covering variations of this theme, including establishing and breaking trust and trust-related aspects like psychological safety in team and virtual team settings. The focus is primarily on the dynamics of trust within the workplace, emphasising teamwork, collaboration, and trust-building, and particularly addressing the challenges in relationships between SMEs and LDs in educational environments.

2.1 Search Terms and Sources

The review employed a comprehensive set of search terms to explore facets of trust in educational settings:

- Building trust between faculty and LDs.

- Building relationships between faculty and LDs.

- Building trust between faculty and LDs in further education.

- Building trust between faculty and LDs in higher education.

- Building relationships between faculty and LDs in higher education.

- Building relationships between faculty and LDs in further education.

- Developing trust in higher and further education.

- Collaboration and trust between LDs and teachers in further education.

- Online learning collaboration and trust between LDs and teachers in further education.

- Online learning collaboration and trust between LDs and teachers in higher education.

- Trust between designers and teachers when designing for online learning.

- Stages of building trust: establishing foundations.

- Stages of building trust: building communication and collaboration.

Literature sources were accessed through Lancaster University's OneSearch library resource, Scite.ai (an advanced tool for identifying existing literature and highlighting specific areas of interest), Google and Bing (with co-pilot), and Perplexity.ai's enhanced search function, to ensure a broad and relevant collection of literature and meta-analysis of included citations within the literature. The literature was chosen by reading abstracts and extracts of the papers, which helped me identify relevance and discard non-relevance.

2.2 Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

The inclusion criteria focused on literature discussing trust within workplace teams, HE and FE, mechanisms of trust-building, the roles of faculty and LDs, and the social capital in relationships related to trust, specifically within an educational setting. Conversely, the exclusion criteria ruled out literature that did not directly address trust, its development, collaboration, or building trustful relationships.

2.3 Intersectional Themes

The intersectional diagram below (Figure 2.1) visually maps the literature themes, relationships and overlaps among different identified themes, showing how trust and collaboration interact within the broader educational context.

Figure 2.1. Intersectional themes in the literature review
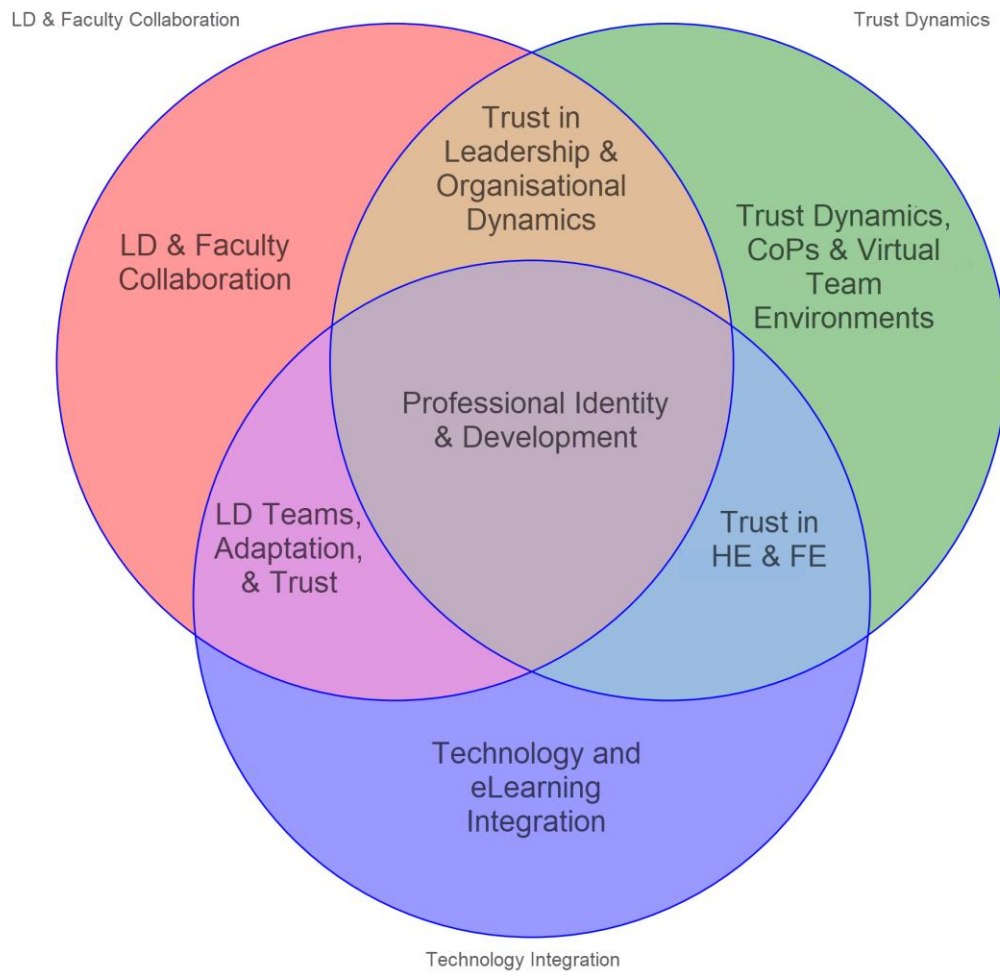
Relevant Literature Themes and Intersectional Diagram Themes:

- **LD & Faculty Collaboration**: Examines the dynamics and challenges in collaborations between LDs and faculty, focusing on strategies, frameworks, and barriers to effective educational material creation.

- **Trust in Leadership & Organisational Dynamics**: Studies how trust between staff and leadership influences organisational outcomes, encompassing leadership practices that foster trust and manage institutional changes.

- **Trust Dynamics, CoPs & Virtual Team Environments**: Explores trust as a catalyst for safe risk-taking and meaningful discourse within CoPs and virtual teams.

- **Professional Identity & Development**: Focuses on the development and identity formation of LDs and educators, examining the competencies needed for excellence in HE.

- **Trust in HE & FE**: Trust is considered a foundational element affecting interpersonal relationships and organisational effectiveness in HE and FE.

- **LD Teams, Adaptation & Trust**: Highlights adaptive strategies and innovation in response to external pressures like the COVID-19 pandemic, emphasising resilience and creativity.

- **Technology and eLearning Integration**: Looks at the adoption and impact of eLearning tools and platforms by faculty, emphasising the role of LDs in enhancing learning outcomes through technology.

Research areas: The literature review reveals a varied and complex landscape (as reflected in section 2.4 onwards) regarding the research focus on trust and collaboration in education. My use of the literature review dashboard in Scite.ai revealed citation numbering and mentions according to titles and subjects. Notably, certain areas have garnered considerable attention. Topics like 'work team trust and effectiveness' have seen substantial research interest, particularly in team trust dynamics. This subject aligns with the intersectional themes shown in Figure 2.1 of 'Trust Dynamics, CoPs and Virtual Team Environments', and 'Trust in Leadership and Organisational Dynamics'. Additionally, the evolution of Wenger's concept of CoPs (1998) indicates strong research foundations exploring their evolution and functionality, which correlate closely with the same themes. Wenger (1998) argues that a CoPs exist in many different forms and locations including "virtual spaces" (p.7), and shared practice connects participants through diverse and complex relationships, encompassing collaboration, power, dependence, pleasure, pain, expertise, helplessness, and many other dynamics. When CoPs cross institutional boundaries, for example, around "emerging technology"...spread across different units, or span[ing] multiple organizations", this can create a "bridge" across those boundaries, which is "often critical to getting things done in the context of – and sometimes in spite of – bureaucratic rigidities" (p.119) . Another well-explored area, 'spheres of trust' delves into how trust influences

organisational and educational outcomes, fitting into the broader 'Trust in HE & FE' intersectional theme shown in Figure 2.1.

Conversely, specific topics have been notably under-researched. For instance, despite its relevance, especially in modern remote working environments, the subject of 'building and maintaining trust in remote and virtual teams' has not attracted strong research attention, aligning with the 'LD Teams, Adaptation and Trust' intersectional theme in Figure 2.1. Similarly, 'virtual instruction support for faculty', essential for understanding support mechanisms in virtual educational settings, ties into the 'Technology and eLearning Integration' intersectional theme in Figure 2.1 yet remains under-explored. Furthermore, the subject of 'building collaboration with faculty and LDs,' despite its importance in effective educational programme design, lacks research, highlighting a critical gap under the 'LD and Faculty Collaboration' intersectional theme in Figure 2.1.

There are areas that have received a moderate level of research focus which include the 'critical relational practice of instructional design in HE', and 'faculty and LDs building successful collaborative relationships' which indicates focused research under the 'LD & faculty collaboration' intersectional theme in Figure 2.1. Additionally, 'applying learning theories and instructional design models for effective instruction' has received considerable attention and fits well under the Technology and eLearning Integration' intersectional theme in Figure 2.1.

I now move on to the literature review of the material that was included in the research, beginning with an overview of the complex landscape of LDs in HE.

2.4 The Complex Landscape of LDs in Higher Education: A Multifaceted Exploration

This section considers the role and challenges of LDs in education and examines why the ambiguous roles of LDs in HE led to collaboration challenges, as well as how these complexities impact their effectiveness. Educational institutions frequently pair faculty with LDs to streamline the transition from conventional classroom teachings to online environments. This essential collaboration brings challenges, encompassing potential conflicts and misunderstandings (Pollard & Kumar, 2022).

2.5 Ambiguous Status and Role Differentiation

I now explore the perception of unclear roles of LDs and how this ambiguity impacts their relationships with faculty. Role clarity is crucial for LDs, as well as for faculty and the organisations they work in. When roles are not clearly defined, it can negatively affect the professional relationships between LDs, faculty, and the organisation, impacting job satisfaction for LDs. Pollard and Kumar (2022) look into the intricate dynamics between LDs and faculty within HE, shedding light on the complex challenges and relationships underpinning this collaboration. Further, Nworie (2022) highlights the ambiguity often faced by LDs regarding their roles within the academic framework that are pivotal in fostering successful relationships with faculty, while Cowie and Nichols (2010) identify the "tensions surrounding power" within relationships where trust had not yet been developed (p.86).

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LD Foundational Skills

LDs will have a foundational skill base emerging from, for example, Gagné's nine events of instruction (Gagné et al., 1992) and Merrill's principles of instruction (Merrill, 2002). This foundation enables them to address different approaches to learning design, including problem-centred learning, practicing and applying new skills, and integrating and enhancing retention.

The 'pickle' of role misunderstanding

My own experience tells me that there is misunderstanding of what the role and status of LDs is within the wider industry and is 'in a pickle,' which is echoed in the literature. LDs are often given roles that are unclear and are introduced as different role titles to faculty because of misunderstandings about who or what they are or what they actually do. "As the field has evolved…the list of titles has grown to include Educational Technologist, Learning Experience Designer, Learning Technologist, Learning Designer, and Instructional Systems Designer." (Nworie, 2022, p.12). The lack of clarity in defining the roles of LDs often stems from institutional policies. Bird (2004) observed those vague policies in an Australian university setting that resulted in poorly defined roles for LDs, causing them to be undervalued and often viewed merely as technical support rather than key contributors to educational development. This pigeonholing of LDs as technical support can hinder their recognition as integral players in the educational process. The lack of understanding by faculty (and the organisation in these situations) about who or what LDs are or what they do can be problematic:

> …instructional designers often experience mixed perceptions
> surrounding their professional expertise and status both inside and
> outside their respective workplace settings…This is likely linked to IDs'
> having to consistently clarify their roles within collaborative projects…
> (Mueller et al., 2022, p. 582).

Richardson et al. (2019) further emphasise the importance of clear role definitions, highlighting that well-defined roles are crucial for fostering effective collaborations between LDs and faculty. Such collaborations are essential for creating engaging and successful learning environments. Ren (2019) illustrates the benefits of these collaborations in American HE, particularly through partnerships in the development of Open Educational Resources (OER), where LDs apply their skills in learning analysis and innovation to enhance course quality and overcome barriers to OER adoption. Ritzhaupt and Kumar (2015) argue that the role of LDs in HE requires a broader skill set beyond technical expertise, including a strong understanding of instructional design and learning theories and soft skills such as effective teaching, communication, time management, problem-solving, stakeholder management, diplomacy, relationship building, and emotional intelligence. These competencies are vital for LDs to be successful and independent in their field.

However, it is important to note that faculty may often be more likely to take the advice of a fellow faculty member because they believe that such colleagues understand the unique challenges of teaching. Bawa and Watson (2017) explain this dynamic, showing that faculty members may feel discomfort with LDs who do not have direct content knowledge or teaching experience.

Sometimes faculty are less receptive to input or feedback from LDs yet are open to accept similar advice from faculty peers, preferring the insights of those who have teaching experience (Bawa & Watson, 2017). This preference for advice from faculty with teaching backgrounds is further supported by Chen and Carliner (2020), who note that familiarity built over time can increase faculty comfort and reliance on LDs. However, in many cases, initial buy-in is achieved more readily when faculty know LDs have teaching experience as the perception is they are more likely to provide relevant and empathetic guidance (Chen & Carliner, 2020).

Creative Collaboration

John-Steiner (2000) explores successful creative collaborative endeavours and suggests that effective collaboration requires an emotional and intellectual exchange where individuals acknowledge the limits of their own expertise and appreciate the depth of their collaborators' knowledge. This process involves creating an "emotional scaffolding" to support the collaborative relationship, where "collaborative partners can build on their solidarity as well as their differences" (p.128), thus allowing for a productive meeting point where different areas of expertise intersect and complement each other. When LDs and faculty work together with a mutual understanding of each other's expertise and roles, the potential for innovation in course design and delivery increases significantly; and can also address common issues like technology integration, content flexibility, and the balancing of power dynamics between faculty and design staff. Power dynamics can be evident when, for example, there is academic snobbery as LDs described, "I have...the 'ticket', the PhD...so if I

interact as a faculty member that kind of gets me in... If I go out as an Instructional Designer, I certainly don't feel that same level of respect" (Campbell et.al., 2007, p.6).

Amaral (2022) argues that equity in HE is important across all areas, (not just with LDs), with the need for fairness in social exchanges, relying on the "ratio between the investment and the return of an individual [being] perceived as being identical… to that of other people or groups" (p.24). This perception of fairness is essential to trust-building among different roles and hierarchies in HE.

Cowie and Nichols (2010) highlight that understanding each other's roles and maintaining clear communication is critical for successful collaboration in online learning environments. Drysdale (2019) discusses the importance of relationship-building and shared leadership between LDs and faculty to enhance the quality and scalability of online course design. Hart (2018) suggests that fostering mutual respect and clear role definitions between faculty SMEs and LDs can mitigate conflicts and improve course quality, leading to better student outcomes. Ritzhaupt and Kumar (2015) recognise that LDs must possess strong, soft skills, such as communication and relationship-building, to effectively collaborate with faculty and address the unique challenges of online course development.

Agents of Change

Tracey et al. (2014) highlight that as a professional group, LDs appear to have a clear understanding of their identity and operate as "agents of change" (p.1),

(see Kumar et al., 2024), which is also explored by Campbell et al. (2006) who describe how LDs construct their professional identities through social interactions within CoPs, emphasising their role as change agents in educational settings. Ashbaugh (2013) argues that LDs perceive their role as critical in leading the adoption of emerging technologies, highlighting their leadership competencies, attributes, and duties for high-quality design. Dykstra (2020) points out that LDs have embraced their leadership and support roles, balancing these identities to contribute to university goals effectively. Obexer and Giardina (2016) explore how LDs' professional identity is characterised by their continuous learning and adaptability to technological advancements. Ritzhaupt and Kumar (2015) and Kumar and Ritzhaupt (2017) identify the comprehensive skill set of LDs, including both technical and soft skills, for example, communication, time management, and problem-solving, crucial for effectively supporting faculty and managing educational projects, which reinforces their professional identity and effectiveness in HE. Schwier et al. (2004) assert that LDs have a strong commitment to learner empowerment and recognise the importance of their role, even as they navigate the challenges of broader acceptance within the educational community. LDs have a wide range of knowledge and skills around learning design, pedagogy, evaluation, and other areas of the design and development processes. As highlighted by Richardson, et al. (2019), designers are expected to possess a range of knowledge and skills, including the implementation of learning and instructional models and theories, application of technologies, evaluation skills, and cross-cultural competencies. Christensen and Osguthorpe (2008) highlight that LDs often rely on dynamic interactions and practical experiences rather than solely

theoretical models when making instructional strategy decisions. This pragmatic approach enables LDs to effectively tailor their strategies to meet specific educational demands. In support of this, Dooley et al. (2007) discuss the 'Roadmap to Effective Distance Education Instructional Design' project, a collaborative initiative by six American universities aimed at enhancing the skills of LDs in supporting distance education. This project highlights the role of LDs beyond mere technical support, emphasising their central role in integrating educational methodologies with technology to boost the teaching and learning experience.

Kenny et al. (2005) detail how LDs integrate various instructional theories to create learner-centred environments often involving the skilled use of technology, customisation of learning management systems (LMS), and the application of multimedia tools to enhance learner engagement. McDonald and Mayes (2007) found that the role of LDs has evolved within blended learning environments, to become more collaborative, working closely with faculty to apply learning theories and pedagogical principles effectively. This continues as technology changes and Kumar et al. (2024) discuss how LDs serve as "change agents" (p.222), particularly with the integration of Generative AI (GenAI) for online and blended learning in HE. In this role, LDs consult with faculty around the introduction of GenAI as a brainstorming partner and offer guidance on ethical and academic integrity issues. By embedding GenAI in online and blended learning, LDs not only assist in content development but also lead training and create resources to help faculty adapt to emerging technologies.

LDs within Organisational Structures

The integration of LDs within organisational structures and the management of collaborative relationships are critical for effective instructional design, and Rothwell (2016) examines how LDs should navigate organisational dynamics to effectively promote learning and development, which involves understanding and aligning with the strategic goals of the organisation. Additionally, Russ-Eft et al. (2008) discusses the competencies required for evaluators, which are also applicable to LDs, highlighting the need for LDs to develop skills in technical evaluation methods and interpersonal management to practice effectively within organisations. This comprehensive skill set underlines the multifaceted nature of their role in enhancing educational outcomes across diverse learning environments. These "… designers are called upon to make complex, emotional decisions within a shifting learning environment while maintaining a rational approach…" (Dykstra, 2020, p. 12).

LDs as Practitioners

Part of LDs' practice and role is that they are practitioners who reflect and engage in a socially informed dialogue. As such, these LDs want to communicate and collaborate effectively, are curious about the impact of their work on others, and actively seek to understand it (Kenny et al., 2005). LDs want to be understood and collaborate effectively with faculty, and as such, their approach is collaborative, forming, and making use of CoPs, both within their circle and with faculty, offering and drawing support from peers, colleagues, and collaborators. According to Dykstra (2020), LDs emphasise the

benefits of engaging with other practitioners within a community, as these interactions facilitate networking, introduce new and diverse ideas, and provide opportunities to discuss best practices and collaborate on projects. Keppell (2004) highlights that LDs use CoPs to foster a collaborative culture that bridges the gap between instructional design and teaching practices, ensuring that both groups benefit from shared knowledge and experiences. Schwier et al. (2004) discuss how CoPs are vital for LDs to engage in continuous learning and professional development, allowing them to navigate and influence the educational landscape actively. Additionally, Campbell et al. (2007) argue that LDs' participation in CoPs enables them to function as change agents, promoting innovative practices and fostering a supportive environment for both designers and faculty. Through such collaboration, they effectively navigate the various challenges they encounter. Within a CoP, LDs described "…the value they found in interactions with other instructional designers as those interactions allowed for networking, exposure to new and different ideas, and opportunities to discuss best practices and even collaborate on projects." (Dykstra, 2022, p.143)

LDs and Adaptation

LDs have many skills and adapt to different areas within their role and within the context of the team and organisation. As the roles of LDs diversify, they develop a dynamic and continually evolving skill set influenced by advancements in learning theories, instructional design models, emerging technologies, growing interest in online learning, and progress in communication technologies. Kenny et al. (2005) found that the evolving roles

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and responsibilities of LDs require them to acquire new competencies and adapt to various settings. Nworie (2022) noted that the growing demand for LDs is also driven by their ability to integrate technology into instruction and apply instructional design models effectively across diverse environments, from HE to corporate settings, while Kumar and Ritzhaupt (2017) argue that LDs should stay current with technological advancements and pedagogical strategies to effectively support and enhance the learning experiences they design.

LDs as Advisors

LDs often need to advise faculty on design practices for the online medium and Halupa (2019) highlights this as "the word "advisor" is the key to a successful working relationship with faculty" (p.59), and this advisory role is crucial in guiding faculty through the maze of online course creation. Chao et al. (2010) further looks into the dual roles of LDs:

> Not only do instructional designers play the role of advisers to faculty and department on issues of curriculum and course quality, they also play a vital role in faculty development and institutional change when it comes to researching and implementing new learning technologies. (Chao et al, 2010, p.108).

However, it is noteworthy that when designers dictate content rather than focusing on design, they might face resistance from faculty:

> An instructional "dictator" is likely to be perceived negatively by faculty. Instructional dictators often cross the line into dictating content rather

than design. This is a key error instructional designers can make

because it leads to conflict and prolongs course creation (Halupa, 2019,

p.59).

2.5.1 'Pulling Tigers' Teeth' and Collaboration Complexities

This section explores how power dynamics and communication barriers

develop and why they are significant in LD–faculty collaborations. There are

complexities and challenges in the collaboration between LDs and faculty,

including power dynamics and communication barriers. The collaboration

between LDs and SMEs is likened to a Chinese proverb of "pulling tigers' teeth

without getting bitten" (Pan et al., 2003, p. 299), highlighting the complexities

inherent in these relationships. They explain,

> The instructional designer's role is not dichotomous. The robust
>
> interpersonal dyad relationship is reinforced by the complex role (both
>
> leading and supporting) …[reinforced by] distinctive personal traits, such
>
> as humor, humanity, patience, and empathy, and [their] professionalism
>
> … particularly as a change agent" (p. 299).

However, factors such as unclear roles, communication barriers, workload

pressures, concerns about content ownership, and "power and influence in the

educational hierarchy" (Schwier et al., 2004, p.96) and the "form and

distribution of power" (Richardson et al., 2019, p.857) can hinder effective

collaboration. Chen and Carliner (2020) also note the importance of addressing

these challenges to foster successful partnerships. They explore this further

where they discuss how "a power differential exists between instructional

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designers and faculty, who often lack formal training in education yet, in most organisational contexts, outrank instructional designers in the relationship by virtue of their faculty status" (p.20). Pollard and Kumar (2022) also emphasise the power differential between LDs and faculty, echoing the view by Chen and Carliner (2020) around power dynamics (also see Gottler, 2023), which can affect the important relationships between LDs and faculty. Drysdale (2019) explores 'relationship-centred instructional design' and the importance of collaboration in these relationships and found that "…designers often struggle to persuade resistant faculty to collaborate and often find it challenging to stay focused on … consultation with faculty" (Drysdale, 2019, p.58). These power dynamics can lead to resistance against LDs' recommendations, especially when they suggest innovative pedagogical approaches. Hart (2018) highlights that misunderstandings of LD roles can cause friction, leading to a breakdown in communication and resulting in low-quality online courses. Ren (2019) discusses the challenges faced by LDs when asserting their expertise in educational technology and navigating collaborative efforts with faculty. Miller and Stein (2016) note that LDs often face resistance from faculty who are sceptical of new pedagogies and technological innovations, which further complicates collaborative efforts. Further, Richardson et al. (2019) emphasise that equal collaboration between faculty and LDs is essential for effective partnerships, yet it is often difficult to achieve, as mentioned earlier by Cowie and Nichols (2010) due to inherent power imbalances and faculty resistance and are described in their study:

…tensions surrounding power were further heightened because of a difference in status between the lead academics and the instructional designer…each academic is a member of …faculty while the instructional designer is a member of general staff. In addition to this formal distinction, the instructional designer was perceived as a member of [a different department], primarily there to provide course development and support services for the e-learning systems and students of that Centre. This distinction in status resulted in a 'them' and 'us' mentality and a defensive posture from both sides in their eagerness to maintain a sense of status (Cowie & Nichols, 2010, p.86).

2.5.2 Social Capital in Learning Design Collaborations

This section looks at how social capital is built in LD communities and why it is crucial for successful collaborations. Schwier et al. (2004) look into observations by LDs on their identity, CoPs, and the capacity for change, especially concerning trust, relationships, collaboration, and the broader institutional context. Brown and Duguid (1991), followed by Hung and Nichani (2002), emphasised the essential nature of learner engagement in the educational process, identifying three primary modes of learning within a community: and that there are three principal ways in which learning takes place in a community: "…event driven learning; socially driven learning; and identity driven learning" (Schwier et al., 2004, p.73). In the realm of CoPs, particularly those involving LDs and SMEs, these social processes are important.

For these CoPs to function effectively and realise their full potential, they must be aware and responsive to various issues, for example Erickson and Kellogg (2002) argue that socially translucent systems, which emphasise visibility, awareness, and accountability, support coherent communication and collaboration within CoPs by making socially significant information visible and thus enable participants to draw upon their social experience and expertise to structure their interactions. Millen et al. (2002) highlight the importance of both formal and informal social interactions in the workplace, such as "hallway exchanges and water-cooler conversations" (p.69), which are crucial for the development of effective CoPs. Wenger et al. (2002) emphasise that systems should facilitate active participation and collective knowledge creation, moving beyond conventional information management to nurture social capital within the organisation. Though definitions of social capital may vary, they commonly revolve around themes of connection and mutual reciprocity and play a crucial role in enhancing future collaborations among its members (Daniel et al., 2002). Lesser and Prusak (2000) assert that CoPs act as the main mechanism for developing social capital. In CoPs involving LDs and SMEs, "social capital is the glue that holds a Communities of Practice together. It includes the stock of active connections among people, and it involves trust, mutual understanding, respect and shared values and behaviours within a community" (Schwier et al., 2004, p.73). It includes the dynamic network of relationships, trust, mutual understanding, respect, and shared values and behaviours characterising such communities. Social capital is crucial in uniting individuals, facilitating collaborative efforts, and driving innovation in learning design (Cohen & Prusak 2001).

Trust, in particular, is a critical component of social capital, especially in CoPs where LDs and SMEs collaborate. Schwier et al. (2004) highlighted the importance of identity, CoPs, and the role of LDs as agents of change, all of which are intricately linked to the development of trust. Cultivating trust strengthens the community's bonds and enhances the effectiveness of the collaborative efforts between LDs and SMEs, ultimately contributing to the success of their educational initiatives. These are "relationships that build trust and mutual obligation; shared language; and shared context" (Schwier et al., 2004, p.74)

Social capital in virtual teams is discussed by Daniel et al. (2003):

> Constituent variables to social capital, such as shared understanding, trust, reciprocity, shared values, shared social protocols, and shared goals can affect the process of knowledge construction in virtual learning communities. Effective interactions among these factors can help group members solve collective problems, collaborate, learn, and develop social relationships that can tie them to a community. (p.22)

2.5.3 Building Trust and Relationships in Diverse Contexts

This section focuses on how trust is established in different organisational settings and why it is foundational for effective collaboration. Trust remains a cornerstone across various organisational and economic contexts. The shift from hierarchical structures towards more socially oriented relationships in workplaces accentuates the importance of comprehending the nuances of trust-building. For example, Holbeche (2018) argues that organisational agility and

resilience hinge on trust, which is crucial for fostering involvement, shared purpose, and engagement among employees. These elements are foundational to adapting quickly and thriving in changing environments.

Further, Maurer (2010) emphasises the importance of trust in inter-organisational projects, noting that trust facilitates knowledge acquisition and product innovation by fostering a stable and cooperative environment where team members feel secure sharing their expertise and insights.

In a global context, Wylde (2023b) stresses that trust is crucial for achieving the goals of the UN's Global Digital Compact (GDC), which aims for an open, free, and secure internet, that also impacts TEL. However, global cooperation is hindered by mistrust among states due to issues like surveillance, election interference, and conflicting cyber norms. She proposes a trust-building framework based on factors like ability, benevolence, and integrity to assess and improve trust among stakeholders. Without trust, internet fragmentation and polarisation are likely to increase, making collaboration difficult. Wylde argues that practical steps to build trust are needed to reduce tensions and support global digital governance, ensuring progress toward shared goals.

Trust has different dimensions, and McAllister (1995) claims that cognition-based trust is based on rational evaluations of competence and reliability, while affect-based trust is built on emotional bonds and mutual care. Similarly, Nooteboom (1996) describes cognition-based trust as relying on observed behaviour and rational assessments and affect-based trust as developing

through social bonds over time. According to Morrow et al. (2004), a blend of these components are the antecedents of general trust within organisations.

Giorgi et al. (2024) highlight how language serves as a powerful indicator and facilitator of generalised trust. They found that encouraging and inclusive terms like "love," "we," and "friends" signify higher trust levels, while the use of hostile language such as "hate" and "stupid" were associated with lower trust levels, indicating affect-based trust is not only reflected in emotional bonds but also in the specific language individuals use (p.8).

To establish trust, recognising these nuances is essential, especially in culturally diverse settings where the focus within the relationships may vary. For example, "… cognition-based trust (related to behavioural factors, such as honesty and fairness) and affect-based trust, rooted in more emotional and interactive factors…" (Hirvi, et al., 2020, p.19). This also depends on contextual and cultural importance as exemplified by Xin and Pearce (1996) who describe how in cultures with underdeveloped legal frameworks, personal connections are crucial for establishing trust.

2.5.4 Navigating Trust Dynamics between LDs and Faculty

I now look at how tensions arise in the collaborations between LDs and faculty, and why understanding these dynamics is important for building trust. These tensions may often arise due to differences because of differing views on pedagogy, the role of technology, or the boundaries of individual contributions, leading to miscommunication and strained relationships. Awareness of these

underlying dynamics is important, as trust plays a key role in creating a productive and collaborative environment.

The collaboration between LDs and faculty is not devoid of tensions and potential conflicts, which occur in many TEL settings including education and the commercial L&D sectors (Gottler, 2023). Disagreements often arise from differing perspectives on pedagogical expertise, the perceived value of technology, and role delineations within the partnership (Rubley, 2016). LDs also often feel disrespected by faculty, for example, when there is an attempt to "influence content" rather than focusing on content delivery (Halupa, 2019, p.55). From experience, trust can also be impacted when an external LD professional is brought into a project and is seen as lower in the hierarchy. Due to the nature of their contractual arrangement, they can also be quickly dismissed which can create tension between the LD and SMEs.

As discussed by Castro-Figueroa (2009), communication conflicts are common, especially among LDs working with multiple SMEs from different disciplines, leading to increased difficulties and interpersonal conflicts. Power dynamics and personality clashes also play a significant role in these conflicts, with assertive behaviours often leading to competition rather than collaboration. Bawa and Watson (2017) add to this that LDs often feel under-appreciated by faculty and administrators, indicating a communication disconnection that could lead to issues with morale and engaged collaboration.

Resistance on the part of faculty in working with LDs may also arise from the unbundling of their roles (the separation of different aspects of teaching that

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traditionally were handled by faculty alone, such as content creation, delivery, and evaluation, which now might involve the LD in a more integrated approach) which is often perceived as a way to minimise or even devalue faculty's role in academia (Richardson et al., 2019). Mueller (2022) offers insights into how LDs adeptly navigate these challenges, emphasising the indispensable roles of trust, effective communication, and collaboration to develop and maintain these relationships.

Trust-building can be challenging due to short durations of collaboration between LDs and SMEs as explored by Gottler (2023). Short-term or contract-based roles for LDs can hinder the development of camaraderie and familiarity, which are essential for creating a foundation of trust in collaborative settings. This has also been my own experience, and because faculty members may never work with the same LD again or may work with different LDs each time, this can disrupt the continuity needed to build rapport. However, when LDs and faculty have the opportunity to collaborate repeatedly, subsequent interactions tend to be smoother, as familiarity and shared understanding develop, facilitating more effective collaboration.

2.5.5 Embracing Collaboration and Constructive Conflict

Conflict can be constructively managed, and it is often a vital component of collaborative work in education. Collaboration is intrinsic to the LDs' role (Keppell, 2001). While the aspiration is for seamless collaborations, the reality is that conflicts are an inherent facet of human interactions. For example, Donohue (1992) notes that constructive conflict tends to bolster

interdependence between parties, suggesting that if approached productively, conflict between LDs and faculty can yield stronger interdependence. Hocker & Wilmot (2017) assert that conflict is an inevitable part of collaboration, which can foster growth and understanding when managed properly. Conversely, Rahim (2010) highlights that conflict can lead to perceptual and behavioural changes, making parties more focused on winning rather than collaborating if not managed well. However, when channelled constructively, these conflicts can be catalysts for good. Tjosvold (2008) claims that:

> conflict can be highly constructive, indeed, essential to teamwork and organisational effectiveness. Why have a team if team members have similar backgrounds and think alike? The very rationale for an organisation is to combine the energy, ideas, and knowledge of diverse people (p.19).

Tjosvold et al. (2019) similarly argue that by framing conflicts cooperatively, team members transform disagreements into opportunities for innovation and mutual support, strengthening team dynamics and resilience. Kim et al. (2015) further show that a shared focus and effective communication enhance constructive conflict outcomes, particularly in complex environments like healthcare, highlighting the value of conflict management training to support these outcomes.

> Conflicts can have very constructive effects, so useful that we may hesitate to call them conflicts. Through discussing opposing ideas in conflict, protagonists can deepen their understanding of their own ideas

as they defend their views. They can also listen to and understand the

views of their protagonists; they put themselves in each other's shoes.

They open the possibility of combining the best ideas to create new

solutions (Tjosvold et al., 2019, p.3).

2.5.6 Educational Cultural Challenges

LDs have to adapt to various pedagogical cultures and this adaptability is

crucial for their role. While LDs are skilled at integrating technology into

teaching and learning, they are not typically domain experts in the disciplines

they support (Bawa & Watson, 2017), which necessitates adaptability to

different subject matter pedagogical cultures and can sometimes be at odds

with their own beliefs as described by Schwier and Wilson (2010):

> …instructional designers find themselves in learning cultures that are
>
> deeply entrenched in a particular approach to teaching and learning.
>
> These are often tenaciously held belief systems, and they differ from one
>
> academic discipline to another. The variety of cultures requires the
>
> instructional designer to adapt to dramatically different contexts, and to
>
> align designs with the prevailing culture of the discipline (p.144).

LDs may have difficulties that need to be overcome and will have to adapt to

situations, when the values and motivations of faculty or the overarching

institution pose challenges, or if they seem to diverge from the LDs'

commitment to delivering quality educational experiences. For example, Kenny

et al. (2005) highlight that LDs often do not adhere strictly to prescribed models,

but adapt their practices based on situational demands and the specific needs

of their projects, which can lead to challenges when institutional expectations are rigid or misaligned. Campbell et al. (2007) discuss the role of LDs as change agents who must navigate complex interpersonal and institutional dynamics, advocating for the needs of learners and striving to align their work with broader educational goals despite potential conflicts with faculty or institutional priorities. It must also be remembered that many LDs are brought in on short-term contracts and must navigate the complex landscape of their new environment and are seen as lower down in the hierarchy. Salmon and Wright (2014) add to this discussion the 'culture of teaching' where:

> most academic teachers are embedded in the culture of teaching in their disciplines and usually start by teaching how they were taught. In practice, many of the drivers of innovation tend to be self-motivated individuals or very small groups, with many academics failing to see the need or find the time (pp. 53–54).

Some of the embedded issues include the LD untangling prior perceptions, for example, raising awareness of the general debunking of learning styles and the meshing hypothesis, when an SME, or organisation, is strongly wedded to this pedagogy (see Dinsmore et al., 2022; Pashler et al., 2008). These types of discussions can slow down collaboration and communication and the pedagogical debate can affect the design process by misalignment and opposing viewpoints (see Mueller et al., 2022; Van Leusen et al., 2016). From my own experience, delays in the process can occur when LD contracts end before a project is completed affecting the design and delivery, and SME availability may not align with the LDs' timelines, especially when working on an

academic schedule. This can result in SME missed appointments, unpreparedness for meetings, or delays in providing requested resources (Richardson et al., 2019).

2.5.7 Operational Challenges

Financial and time constraints impact LDs' work and these factors are significant for their job performance. Operational challenges, such as the financial implications of technology implementation and time constraints, can exacerbate LDs' difficulties. For instance, Brito (2017) asserts that the successful implementation of technology in educational settings heavily depends on the acceptance of educational professionals and the availability of robust technological infrastructure, highlighting the financial challenges involved. Additionally, Moskal (2012) points out that budget cuts in HE has led to resource constraints within LD departments, further complicating their work. Along with this, misaligned perceptions between LDs and faculty regarding the time needed for course development also complicate matters. Dykstra (2020) also notes that while online learning requires specific skills and considerable time investment, LDs frequently lack a voice in decision-making processes, leading to frustration and misalignment of priorities. Cowie and Nichols (2010) discuss the discrepancies between faculty expectations and the actual time required for course development by LDs, which can be a factor in conflicts and dissatisfaction:

> …learning projects require a considerable investment of time and resources before a course is taught… Each component of the course

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had to be carefully planned, developed, reviewed, and tested… Team course development and detailed course design plans were new to the lead academics. They would normally develop their courses very differently… (Cowie & Nichols, 2010, pp. 86–87).

2.5.8 Skills, Trust Building, and Institutional Support

There are skills needed for managing conflict and trust building, and institutional support is crucial. LDs have a diverse and evolving skill set honed through rigorous research and practice[6] (see IBSTPI, 2012; Sugar, 2014; Wakefield et al., 2012). Among these skills, interpersonal abilities, adaptability, and problem-solving are pivotal for managing conflicts and cultivating trust. Donohue (1992) adds that constructive conflict tends to "bolster interdependence" between parties, suggesting that if approached productively, conflict between LDs and faculty has the potential to yield stronger interdependence (p. 8). This also aligns with findings from Tjosvold et al. (2019), who highlight that cooperative conflict management enhances mutual understanding and collaboration, creating a foundation for interdependence in team settings. Similarly, Kim et al. (2015) discuss how constructive conflict, focused on shared goals and clear communication, promotes team functionality and a reliance on collaborative problem-solving, which implicitly strengthens interdependence. Rahim (2010) highlights that conflict can affect perceptions and behaviours, where parties

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[6] IBSTPI (2021) competencies are now integrated with instructor competencies reflecting blended and online learning, with collaboration and shared expertise as integral.

may focus more on winning rather than collaborating if the conflict becomes intense. This highlights the importance of managing conflict to maintain trust and cooperation (Wall & Callister, 1995).

Building rapport has been shown to be successful in many relationship-building situations (Gremler & Gwinner, 2008). Rapport is crucial in fostering mutual cooperation and achieving beneficial outcomes in conflicts by enabling negotiators to coordinate effectively (Drolet & Morris, 2000). Furthermore, the institutional backdrop significantly influences the dynamics between LDs and faculty, and a supportive institutional environment can amplify the effectiveness of collaborations by clearly delineating roles and responsibilities, thus preventing conflicts and enhancing the quality of educational content (Halupa, 2019). Effective communication and conflict management are essential for successful collaboration, for example, in interdisciplinary projects (Castro-Figueroa, 2009). "Written policies and procedures" play a crucial role in defining the collaborative process and ensuring its success (Halupa, 2019, p.55). Collaborative environments allow rich discussions and sharing of diverse expertise, which are fundamental to improving the learning experience for students (Richardson et al., 2019). Also, fostering mutual respect and understanding of each other's roles between LDs and faculty is vital for effective collaboration and reducing conflicts (Rubley, 2016). Further to this, Nielson (2023) discusses the importance of SMEs and LDs representing their expertise, establishing mutual expectations, and maintaining open, transparent communication. By aligning ideas within project parameters and valuing

constructive feedback, SMEs and LDs can build a strong and effective working relationship.

2.6 SME barriers to implementing TEL

I now look at how SMEs face challenges in TEL and why overcoming these barriers is crucial for effective TEL implementation. These issues may arise from limited technical knowledge and experience, varying levels of competence and confidence, openness to change, or the availability of adequate support. These factors can impact SMEs' engagement with TEL and determine how well it integrates into their teaching practices. With this in mind, I now consider SMEs' technical knowledge and experience.

2.6.1 Technical knowledge and experience

There are many areas within TEL development and delivery where technical knowledge or experience is lacking with SMEs (Armstrong, 2019; Conole, 2013). To address these gaps, many universities and colleges have established support to enable teachers to take the necessary steps in the right direction, which include LDs playing the role of supporting SMEs to use technology and to understand how online learning can be utilised. With this support in place, the process and outcome of learning design for online learning should improve (Armstrong, 2019; Martins & Baptista Nunes, 2016).

In the US, challenges in both online and face-to-face course delivery have led to the establishment of "Centres for Innovation in Teaching and Learning,"

"Centres for Teaching and Learning," or "Centres for Faculty Development."[7]

Kelley et al. (2017) examined the transformation that many of these centres have undergone in recent years, noting that nearly half are now involved in instructional technology and distance learning. These centres have evolved from simple support units to integrated hubs that drive institutional change and support strategic goals. However, many faculty members remain hesitant to fully utilise these resources, sometimes due to concerns that an increased emphasis on technology may shift focus away from traditional teaching methods. Additionally, these centres support a diverse range of faculty, including remote and adjunct instructors who may lack regular access to on-campus resources, which can make engagement more challenging. Strong campus buy-in is crucial for a centre's success, as institutional support is needed to encourage pedagogical innovation and improve the classroom experience.

2.6.2 SME competence and confidence

Salmon and Wright (2014) describe how "confidence and competence is at the heart of whether university academics succeed in transforming their teaching using new design and delivery methods" (p.52), noting that these two factors are different but difficult to separate. Adopting and using technology is considered by Alazam et al. (2012) and Hixon et al. (2012) exploring levels of teacher competence and confidence around the use of social media. Alazam et

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[7] Lieberman (2019): Inside Higher Ed.

al. (2012) explain that although teachers in their study had training around the use of Information Communication Technology (ICT) in their classrooms, and various levels of ability were reported, they found that skills were moderate. The question of whether self-reported levels of skill around TEL in FE are explored by Armstrong (2019):

> …asking a teacher if they can use social media safely will not tell you whether they can, only whether they believe they can. The fact that many research instruments designed to measure teachers' self-reported knowledge also contain elements of confidence and self-reported skills in this way can lead to questions about their validity (p.4).

However, this belief in what they can do (their self-perception) rather than their actual ability, is an example of questioning the validity of self-reporting by teachers of their abilities or what might be considered the Dunning-Kruger Effect which "…has manifested in numerous studies comparing subjective and objective assessment in a variety of domains, presenting as overestimation of skill or competency by low performers, and underestimation by high performers" (Bradley et al., 2022, p.24). The Dunning-Kruger Effect is summarised by the original authors of this concept (titled as 'Unskilled and unaware of it…') as:

> …people tend to hold overly optimistic and mis-calibrated views about themselves…those with limited knowledge in a domain suffer a dual burden: Not only do they reach mistaken conclusions and make regrettable errors, but their incompetence robs them of the ability to realise it (Kruger & Dunning, 1999, p. 1132).

2.6.3 Varying levels of risk-taking or being open to change

SMEs have varying confidence levels, and many have a risk-averse approach, meaning they are not curious about change. Some also have anxiety relating to the introduction of TEL, as indicated by Singh and Hardaker (2014), who also describe how the attitudes of SMEs to TEL form from their own experiences as both teacher and student and an apparent reluctance from inner concerns around their abilities and competence.

Hixon et al., (2012) conducted research around this subject and their findings categorised TEL adopters based on their willingness to adopt new innovations, dividing them into five groups. Innovators and early adopters (low population)

> …are the first ones to adopt a new innovation" (p.102), while Early and
> late adopters (highest population) are "typically much slower to adopt a
> new innovation. These individuals tend to be sceptical of new
> innovations and do not adapt as easily to change. Peer pressure and/or
> other outside forces may be the biggest factors influencing their
> decisions to adopt an innovation" (pp.102–103) Laggards (low
> population) "are the last to adopt an innovation. The laggards are very
> sceptical of innovations and change in general, and resultantly want to
> wait until an innovation proves successful before adopting" (p.103).

SMEs that were more open to change perceived risks as lower and the benefits as higher, making them perceive TEL as a more significant advantage to their situations (Howard & Gigliotti, 2016).

Discussions about Areas of Trust and HE adoption of new technology include Surry et al. (2005) highlighting the need for a supportive infrastructure, including resources, leadership, and a commitment to change, to address barriers to technology integration. Barriers to adopting new technology are often related to extrinsic obstacles like technical support and resources, and intrinsic factors such as beliefs about teaching, and challenges in classroom management, all of which require institutional commitment and targeted professional development (Chen et al., 2022; Regmi & Jones, 2020). Marshall (2004) looks at senior management within an academic environment as a feasible way to successfully create an environment of trust when adopting innovations (in this case the adoption of eLearning as a way of rolling out online materials within a university). The importance of clear governance and management frameworks is stressed to support new technology adoption and ensure ongoing engagement from staff and students (Benson & Palaskas, 2006; Chen et al., 2022; Regmi & Jones, 2020):

> The introduction of [new technology] raises a number of complex issues involving institutional responses at various levels to the adoption and diffusion of technological change. Issues include those related to governance, management and technical support, as well as to core learning and teaching matters associated with the professional development and teaching of academic staff, and the support of staff and students (Benson & Palaskas, 2006, p. 548).

Creating trust includes fostering a climate of support, creativity, and collaboration. However, there is the suggestion that this type of support only

works when management takes into consideration human dimensions around the management of change and the various motivators teachers are driven by, and there is role modelling from the top down with demonstrative willingness to use and support these new interventions (Chen et al., 2022; Hung, 2004; Regmi & Jones, 2020; Salmon, 2005).

Hung (2004) recognises "…the importance of…institutional support for innovation activity" (p.1481) while Salmon (2005) highlights that "…much of the focus has been into the development of technologies or top-down policy aspirations, and not on the human dimensions, scaling-up and embedding of innovation and the associated management of change" (p.205).

2.6.4 SME Support and Engagement in FE

Armstrong (2019) discusses how TEL was promoted in a large FE college by using a coaching model to engage staff to take part, which boosted confidence and transferable skills, enabling them to sustain their upskilling as technologies further developed and evolved. She explains that:

> Promotion of TEL has been based on a coaching model where 'champions' have modelled the use of technology in their subjects and provided peer coaching to other staff. Where this became embedded, the staff developed a strong sense of ownership towards the technologies they used (p.2).

The coaching was based around peer support through a

…network of people with ideas for using technology (Bennet, 2014, p.8) offering ideas and the concept of 'diffusion' which is based on "Rogers' 1995 model which defines innovation as 'diffusing' through the 'early adopters' to 'the early majority' (Armstrong, 2019, p.4).

This suggested that most people only adopt an innovation after observing their peers' successful experiences with it (Armstrong, 2019; Bennett, 2014; Rogers, 1995).

Burke (2015) discusses the creation of a supportive community through the FELTAG Special Interest Group, aimed at enabling FE practitioners to better engage with learning technology, emphasising the need for guidance, advice, and support for practitioners, acknowledging that peers most effectively provide such support. According to FELTAG (2014), an institutional buy-in or strategic vision was not established, resulting in a lack of good practice "if FE institutional cultures are to change, the regulatory and funding regimes must, at the very least, cease to inhibit innovation and ideally facilitate learning technology's optimal use to improve learner outcomes" (p.5). With this as a backdrop, ETAG (2014) describes how non-mandatory uptake of digital learning in education requires the assessment of teachers' digital competencies and their attitudes towards TEL. They "concluded that the use of digital technology in education is not optional. Competence with digital technology to find information, create and share knowledge is an essential contemporary skill set. It belongs at the heart of education…" (p.26).

Levels of collaboration within FE were high because coaching, training and support were prioritised, available, and taken up by teachers to allow them to readily adopt TEL and increase confidence and competence (Armstrong, 2019). Collaboration levels were influenced by the fact that there was a strong ethos and awareness that technology complemented teaching rather than replaced it, which allowed better confidence levels for faculty staff. By comparison, the HE examples given were that technology itself was focused on, caused confidence issues, and created barriers and lack of curiosity to include TEL, as described by Singh and Hardaker (2014). Citing Eynon (2005), they also explain that "although management support is a prerequisite to widespread adoption, such support is too often absent or is assigned a low priority in the academic scheme of things" (p.113).

Engagement levels by SMEs/teachers in FE were higher because of the support and inclusion offered (Ecclesfield et al., 2012) to work together cohesively, which resulted in them seeing TEL as advantageous to their teaching (Howard & Gigliotti, 2016). Once the SMEs/teachers were engaged, they became more 'curious' about what could be created and how their teaching materials could be enhanced for the online medium and became an institutional buy-in and strategic vision (Burke, 2015), which produced higher results in terms of output with better confidence and competence levels (Alazam et al., 2012; Hixon et al., 2012) and their self-perception of their abilities. Thus, they were more open to change, with lower perceived levels of risk and more able to integrate TEL into their situations. Howard and Gigliotti (2015) explain that support is particularly important as the integration of TEL

can be experienced as 'risk taking'. "Technology-related change in teachers'

practice is guided by confidence engaging in and beliefs about integration.

However, it is also affected by how teachers feel about taking risks,

experimenting and change" (p.1).

While examining the multifaceted aspects of learning design in HE and the

challenges associated with implementing TEL, it becomes evident that trust is a

critical factor within this framework. This thesis focuses on exploring how trust

is established and sustained in such educational settings. To this end, I explore

the various characteristics and subtle aspects of trust as highlighted in the

existing literature. Understanding these elements will provide a clearer

perspective on trust, aiding in the discussion and analysis of trust's role and

impact in the context of this research.

2.7 Trust

I now explore how various aspects of trust play a role in educational settings

and why each is significant for collaboration. To understand or recognise trust

within relationships, it is important to look at the components of trust and how it

impacts individuals within their professional settings.

2.7.1 Current Literature on Trust

Trust between LDs and SMEs, supported by institutional frameworks, can be

built through clear role definition (Halupa, 2019), open communication, and

shared objectives. Trust can evolve from initial interactions emphasising mutual

respect and competence (Pollard & Kumar, 2022), deepening over time through

consistent, supportive collaboration. Institutions can play a crucial role in nurturing this environment by providing resources, clarifying roles, and supporting continuous feedback mechanisms allowing LDs and SMEs to align their efforts effectively.

The literature on trust in educational settings further explores the dimensions and mechanisms that underpin successful collaborations. Research shows that trust is not monolithic (Frederiksen, 2012), but multifaceted, varying according to individual relationships, institutional structures, and cultural contexts. This section considers the foundational elements of trust as reflected in current studies, examining how it develops, sustains, and adapts within HE environments involving LDs and SMEs.

The extensive body of research on trust spans various fields, including anthropology, economics, education, health, organisational studies, philosophy, and exploring a wide array of viewpoints on the spectrum of trust and trustworthiness (for example see Riedl, 2021; Sanders et al., 2021; Simpson & Vieth, 2021; Weichselbraun et al., 2023). Jameson et al. (2023) observe that "an extensive, multidisciplinary research domain dedicated to trust has emerged in past decades" (p.424) looking into various facets of both deterrence-based trust (a reliance on the belief that harmful behaviour can be prevented by the threat of punishment, driven by fear of retaliation) and calculus-based trust (based on the idea that the benefits of maintaining trustworthiness outweigh the risks or costs of betrayal) (Rousseau, 1998). However, this substantial 'large literature' of research does not address the nuances of trust within the staff of higher education institutions (HEIs) or the

broader educational landscape. Further, Bormann et al. (2021) highlight the significance of trust in educational settings and how it impacts various educational outcomes. They argue that trust is a multifaceted construct that influences not only interpersonal relationships within educational institutions but also broader organisational and governance structures.

As mentioned before, there is extensive research on trust covering many fields and exploring various perspectives on trust and trustworthiness. Within the context of multidisciplinary organisational studies, trust is conceptualised as a "psychological state that involves willingly making oneself vulnerable based on the positive expectations of another's intentions or actions" (Rousseau et al., 1998, p. 395). Trust functions as both a catalyst for (enabler) and a result (by-product) of cooperative behaviour (Gambetta, 1988), enhancing organisational flexibility and playing a crucial role in the efficacy of leadership. It exerts both direct and indirect impacts on how an organisation operates (Dirks & Ferrin, 2001). The role of trust becomes especially critical in times of organisational crisis (Bachmann & Zaheer, 2006; Mishra, 1996), emphasising the necessity for trust to be placed judiciously in individuals who demonstrate trustworthiness (O'Neill, 2020).

2.7.2 Trust in Higher Education

There is little research exploring FE around TEL (Armstrong, 2019) or trust, which has been highlighted in grey literature (Stafford, 2023). This may be

because FE has low levels of research opportunities[8]. However, trust has been identified as a significant area for research within FE colleges[9] and is undergoing PhD research. Within HE, however, there is a current scholarship of existing international literature on trust which I now explore.

The findings on trust within HEIs by Jameson et al. (2023) emphasise trust as "…an essential underpinning foundation of effective functioning amongst all staff in higher education" (p.424) and a critical influence on both interpersonal relationships and organisational effectiveness. The exploration of trust spans several dimensions: from 'Trust of Staff in Their Leaders and Institutions' highlighting its correlation with organisational commitment and job satisfaction, to 'Trust Among Staff Members', where the emphasis is on the importance of interactions for knowledge sharing and motivation. Additionally, the 'Erosion of Trust Between Staff, Managers, and Institutions' delves into the challenges that diminish trust, including workplace bullying and inadequate responses to external pressures. Finally, 'Supporting Trust Through Management Practices' outlines the managerial actions necessary to foster a trusting environment.

2.7.3 Trust of Staff in Leaders and Institutions

Within the sphere of HE, trust is pivotal for a multitude of organisational outcomes, nurturing a positive and cohesive work environment. According to Abdillah et al. (2020) the relationship between staff and their leaders and

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[8] Pells, R. (2023, June 27). FE Week.

[9] Stafford, K. (2023, June 29). Association of Colleges.

institutions is deeply intertwined with job satisfaction and organisational commitment, and they found that trust in leaders significantly affects organisational commitment and can reduce 'employee silence' behaviour, (this includes 'Organisational Silence', where members withhold opinions and concerns about problems, and 'Individual Silence', where employees intentionally conceal ideas, information, or concerns that could benefit the organisation) highlighting the importance of trust in enhancing communication and engagement among staff. Also, Dalati et al. (2017) emphasise that sustainable leadership, which incorporates organisational trust, significantly impacts job satisfaction among university staff. Similarly, Dalati & Alchach (2018) argue that perceived organisational trust and leadership styles play a crucial role in promoting job satisfaction and organisational commitment in HE settings. Afridi et al. (2017) claim that the perception of fairness in the workplace serves as a mediating factor, significantly influencing these outcomes. Furthermore, the culture and structure of an organisation determine the levels of trust staff have towards their leaders and the institution. Hoppes & Holley (2014) discuss how trust within an organisation reduces the need for oversight from management, thereby improving the effectiveness of organisational strategies. Fatima et al. (2015) found that HR practices, when perceived as supportive by employees, foster trust and enhance employee performance, underlining the critical role of trust in achieving desirable organisational outcomes. Abdillah et al. (2020) found that leaders should:

> pay more attention to the development of a strategic social exchange relationship by understanding the conditions and needs of employees

and that when leaders exhibit concern for staff this creates a strong sense of attachment to the organisation…[but] distrust in their leaders tends to reduce their commitments toward the organisation and cultivates a strong desire to leave (p.11).

2.7.4 Trust Amongst Staff Members

According to Blašková et al. (2021), interactions among staff members are instrumental in enhancing trust, which is crucial for enabling processes such as knowledge sharing and assimilation, with effective communication playing a supportive role (Jonasson et al., 2014). Trust is associated with self-efficacy among staff (Okpogba, 2012) and, alongside a sense of belonging, significantly fosters motivation and creativity, "… trust, is one of the key determinants of the effective processes of motivating and developing the creativity of academic staff and students. Trust significantly affects overall academic performance" (Blašková et al., 2021, p.2). Additionally, trust is essential for fostering organisational commitment and energy by satisfying psychological needs related to relatedness and autonomy (Clément et al., 2020). Trust also encourages substantial organisational changes and is linked to social cohesion within university communities (Nesterova et al., 2020). Furthermore, horizontal trust among lecturers i.e. at the same level in the organisation, is crucial for cooperation, effective teaching, and organisational success and enhances mutual respect and understanding among academic staff (Westman et al., 2017).

2.7.5 Erosion of Trust Between Staff, Managers, and Institutions

Research shows that trust diminishes as staff members progress to more senior roles (Smith & Shoho, 2007), face workplace bullying (Patrick, 2016), or observe organisational politics, leading to feelings of exclusion (Karim et al., 2021). Organisations and managers' inadequate responses to external pressures, such as existential threats (Hoppes & Holley, 2014), fixed responses to government performance targets (Jameson, 2012), and the failure to safeguard staff professional autonomy (Hoecht, 2006; Jameson, 2012) also erode trust where "every decision has to comply with rigid … mechanistic performance targets… where documented process accountability replaces the quest for real teaching quality. Quite a number of academic writers are furious about a perceived loss of autonomy and purpose" (Hoecht, 2006, p.542).

2.7.6 Supporting Trust Through Management Practices

According to Awan (2017) managers enhance trust by being approachable, and Hoppes and Holley (2014) add that this is also attributed to maintaining clear and consistent communication and demonstrating reliability and consistency. For example, faculty members highly value openness and reliability in building trust because they reduce uncertainty (Osburn & Gocial, 2020). Integrity in decision-making is vital (Awan, 2017), as is transparency (Hoppes & Holley, 2014). Blašková et al. (2021) discuss how trust, motivation, and creativity are interconnected and essential for sustainable academic environments. Trust influences the motivation and creativity of staff, which in turn promotes autonomy and engagement. Hoecht (2006) explores how balancing external demands with internal values is also crucial, noting that rigid quality assurance

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systems can lead to bureaucratic controls that undermine professional autonomy and trust among faculty. Instead, there is a need for quality management that promotes learning and innovation while preserving professional autonomy. Aasen and Stensaker (2007) highlight the importance of adopting new collegial forms of governance that integrate leadership into a campus culture of joint effort. This approach positions academic leadership as "trustful mediation between external demands and internal institutional values and potentials" (p.379). Jameson et al. (2023) observe that "although trust is recognised as essential for effective staff functioning, there is a tendency to take this at face value. There is therefore limited knowledge of how trust operates or not" (p.425).

As such, I now explore the concept of trust, focusing on its role and operation dynamics in the workplace, educational institutions, and among teams of LDs and SMEs, and other collaborators, beginning with the 'quality of trust'.

2.7.7 The quality of trust

The exploration of trust in academic literature dates back several decades (for example, Deutsch, 1958). Research indicates that trust is a quality that enables individuals to manage risk within relationships (Zeckhauser & Viscusi, 1990). Decisions made within these relationships are fundamentally based on trust (Boon & Holmes, 1991). This is not to suggest that trust counteracts mistakes or wrong decisions made within any relationship. However, the literature suggests there is an implicit acceptance of mistakes between both parties in a relationship (Bok, 1978).

Hoy and Tschannen-Moran (1999) elaborate that trust involves an individual or group's willingness to be vulnerable, underpinned by critical attributes that establish trust, highlighting the importance of vulnerability and confidence in positive outcomes from trusted parties; "Along with a general willingness to risk vulnerability, five faces or facets of trust emerged: benevolence, reliability, competence, honesty, and openness" (p. 186).

According to Jones and Shah (2016), trust encompasses an interactive relational dynamic where trustors (individuals who make judgments) place their faith in the integrity, competence, and goodwill of trustees (those who are trusted) to behave suitably under specified situations, despite potential risks. Gheorghe (2020) emphasises the role of integrity, competence, and ethical behaviour in maintaining trust. Jones and Shah (2016) highlight the evolving nature of trust, influenced by trustors' perceptions and trustees' behaviours over time. The literature portrays trust as a 'grey concept' that does not adhere to a binary standing (black or white). Trust can be rational or irrational because individuals must deal with ambiguity and trust that situations will resolve within that grey area (Marsh et al., 2012). Shepperd and Sherman (1998) argue, "trust is evident only in situations where the potential damage from unfulfilled trust is greater than the possible gain if trust is fulfilled" (p. 422).

2.7.8 Trust and interdependence

Shepperd and Sherman (1998) discuss how trusting relationships comprise interdependence between people, and similar qualities persist within small and large-scale relationships and different environments. "Trust involves accepting

the risks associated with the type and depth of the interdependence inherent in a given relationship" (p.422), such as the dependence between parent and child or spouses. However, this state similarly exists between organisations and employees. Trust is "a manageable act of faith in people, relationships, and social institutions. Therefore, when properly understood and managed, the risks associated with interdependence can be mitigated" (pp.422–424). Within the interdependence and development of trust, there is the need to see the perspective of any situation with the intuition and ability to foresee or project what other stakeholders require (Sheppard & Sherman, 1998).

Trust within educational teams is reinforced when decisions and actions are mutually advantageous, extending to interactions with technological systems (Kelley et al., 2003). This interdependence emphasises the importance of trust in both personal and technological interactions within educational institutions.

2.7.9 Intersubjective Trust and Relational Expertise

Frederiksen (2012) suggests 'intersubjective trust' is a fundamental layer upon which fruitful collaboration can thrive. This type of trust, based on the sociological theories of Georg Simmel (1950), serves as an important social and emotional foundation to enable open and significant interactions between LDs and SMEs. Trust varies significantly in scope and mode across different social relations and is influenced by the intersecting dimensions of relations, objects, and situations, moving between "two thresholds of trust. The outer threshold concerns low proximity relations…" (or expected deceit) and the "…inner threshold concerns the highest proximity relations" (or confidence

reliance) (p.5). This intersubjective trust sets the stage for collaborative endeavours by establishing a mutual understanding and predictability among collaborators.

Edwards (2011) discusses 'relational expertise' as the understanding that both SMEs and LDs bring their own skills and knowledge to a project. But importantly, the individuals' understanding of their own expertise also needs to include an openness and responsiveness to the insights and contributions of the other with a responsive collaboration expanding the individuals' understanding of what is required (Engeström, 1999), involving:

> …the ability to attune one's responses to the enhanced interpretation with those being made by other professionals…based on confident engagement with the knowledge that underpins one's own specialist practice, as well as a capacity to recognise and respond to what others might offer in local systems of distributed expertise., and an ability to attune responses to the interpretations of others (Edwards, 2011, p.1).

Edwards' (2011) discussion around relational expertise, particularly how it facilitates collaboration across different professional domains, can be seen as a process that can build on and strengthen intersubjective trust highlighted by Frederiksen (2012) within the collaborative endeavour to effectively utilise shared trust and merge the unique strengths and knowledge of both LDs and SMEs.

Holbeche (2018) and Nooteboom (1996), also note that trust is foundational for effective collaboration, requiring attention to both the cognitive and affective

dimensions to accommodate the varied experiences and backgrounds of participants. However, the question arises of whether trust or collaboration precedes the other. The analysis provided by Shepperd and Sherman (1998) suggests that trust is an evolving construct, engaging in a dynamic relationship with collaboration. Trust and collaboration are not sequential but interdependent, continually influencing and being influenced by one another. McAllister (1995) argues that cognition-based and affect-based trust serve as foundations for interpersonal cooperation in organisations (see Legood et al., 2023). While there is a distinction between these two forms of trust, there is no strict prerequisite for collaboration, but these forms of trust are shown as interconnected elements that contribute to the development and maintenance of effective collaborative relationships. Hirvi et al., (2020) suggests trust and collaboration as mutually reinforcing. Trust emerges through ongoing interactions and is continuously reshaped by the collaborative dynamics within the TEL environment. Trust and collaboration are seen as evolving states that develop and strengthen through mutual engagement and shared experiences, which differs from the 'trust first' premise as described by Frederiksen (2012).

2.7.10 Trust as a tool

Trust can be a tool to reduce complexity where many considerations are made in a complex society or organisation concerning things not working well or going wrong. Both parties may take things on trust or in good faith that all will go well and be managed along the way (Baratella et al., 2023; Luhmann, 1979). For example, this view can be seen when working within technical and developmental environments, e.g. ICT, where trust can lower levels of

uncertainty within computational infrastructures (Marsh et al., 2012). Trust can be thought of as a process of confidence and risk, i.e. where there is uncertainty, there needs to be trust (Martins & Baptista Nunes, 2016), which is particularly relevant around trust playing a critical role in managing uncertainties inherent in AI governance (Wylde, 2024).

2.7.11 Understanding Trust

Martins and Baptista Nunes (2016) discuss how trust is something that a 'common citizen' can intuitively understand and is part of daily interpersonal interactions. However, that intuitive and interpersonal dimension of trust can become more considered and measured within specific environments where trust is part of essential processes. For example, within the realm of HE and eLearning adoption which is "…framed as a transaction that involves a certain degree of risk and difference to the traditional academic environment and practice" (p.422). Academics make decisions about outcomes, uncertainties and risks framed within the systems and methods that traditional teaching practices exist. Within this realm, trust moves beyond a strictly interpersonal dimension into more calculative and strategic dimensions.

2.7.12 Trust and mistrust

Trust encompasses trustworthiness (how much others trust a team member) and trustfulness (how much a team member trusts others). Trust is essential for efficient cooperation, especially when team members are interdependent (Gill et al., 2024; Khan et al., 2023; McAllister, 1995). Within eLearning adoption in HE, SME trust levels can be initially high when enthusiasm for the medium is

apparent, but trust may diminish following the processes of online teaching (Gill et al., 2024). For example, following intensive time spent moderating online students and other activities, which are not something academics were previously required to do (see de Vries et al., 2005; Hacker et al., 2019; Kester & Sloep, 2009; Nagel & Kotze, 2010). This new way of operating may influence their judgement more than any previous positive experience within the process (Kramer, 1999; Legood et al., 2023). Distrust and mistrust may also be pre-existing (Hacker et al., 2019; Marsh & Dibben, 2005). Grovier (1994) conceptualises distrust as a "lack of confidence in the other, a concern that the other may act so as to harm one, that he does not care about one's welfare or intends to act harmfully or is hostile" (p.240). Deutsch (1958) further identifies suspicion as a key cognitive element underpinning distrust, suggesting that it plays a central role in how distrust is experienced and understood. Duenas-Cid and Calzati (2023) complement this view by explaining how trust and distrust coexist in digital systems, with trust reducing uncertainty while distrust ensures oversight and checks. In contexts with limited personal interactions or institutional guarantees, trust often depends on the perceived reliability and fairness of algorithms and data processes, which fundamentally mediate relationships. Distrust and suspicion might arise from changes in teaching practice, the requirement of different learning materials or spurious organisational mainstreaming policies, and a lack of institutional support for development and implementation (Martins & Baptista Nunes, 2016). SMEs may display entrenched conservatism and resistance to changing their fixed views on how online learning could increase their workload and negatively affect their academic status (Shurville et al., 2008a, 2008b; Spector, 2005).

In virtual teams, trust is critical for effective collaboration. Hacker et al. (2019) discuss "swift trust" (p.19), a form of initial trust that develops quickly but needs reinforcement through clear communication and consistent actions. For LDs and SMEs working remotely, sustaining trust requires intentional, ongoing efforts to bridge the gaps left by digital interactions, such as delays and limited non-verbal cues. Regular check-ins and transparency are essential to cultivating trust that endures over time in these settings.

Trust is an essential component between LDs and SMEs, but conflict may pre-exist where the SME is passionate about the subject matter while the LD focuses on design. The relationship requires communication, explanation, and Trust (Campbell et al., 2007; Legood et al., 2023). Collaboration can be impeded by unclear roles and delineation of tasks (Bawa & Watson, 2017; Gill et al., 2024; Halupa, 2019; Tantivivat & Allen, 2006). Collaboration might be based on delicacy and negotiation as the LD enters the zone of the SME and their subject speciality as "…the relationship with faculty members is a delicate and negotiated role; the designer must have high-level interpersonal skills as well as technical and instructional design expertise" (Gill et al., 2024; Xu & Morris, 2007, p.37). Different personality types can influence the relationship. However, the LD brings an expertise in teaching or learning that the SME might not have, whereas the SME might believe their expertise supersedes that of the LD and that as they have taught for so long, they are the only expert in teaching. So, it is important "… that a team should have explicit responsibilities, shared values, an understanding of expectations, and mutual respect for each other's knowledge" (Gill et al., 2024; Xu & Morris, 2007, p.47).

In contrast, the LD may be more knowledgeable about current standards (which academics can view as an imposition on their freedom), particularly the online learning medium (Miller & Stein, 2016). The LD may be seen as an unwelcome interloper in the SME's area of expertise because:

> Instructional designers specifically apply their skills in other communities of practice as a core function of their role… instructional designers are process-oriented individuals who despite having no content expertise (in the Communities of Practice) have a set of representations based on a "design model". The design model includes general experience, educational background, and instructional experience (Keppell, 2004, pp.3–4).

Also, academics may be unused to working with non-faculty professionals, which could result in conflict along with power struggles and personality clashes (Castro-Figueroa, 2009; Halupa, 2019). LDs are frequently project leads, and there might be an assumption that guidance related to collaboration is their responsibility. However, clear and effective communication should be a shared responsibility between LDs and SMEs, and "hierarchical distinctions in roles should be avoided to foster true collaboration" (Gottler, 2023, p.3). Nielson (2023) describes a lack of focus on SMEs' contributions in LD and SME collaboration, noting that there might be an emphasis on the skills needed by LDs, such as trust-building and communication, while neglecting the SMEs' role in fostering effective and balanced collaborative relationships.

2.7.13 Trust Dynamics

In HE, FE, and other workplace environments, how staff perceive their supervisors' trust in them can influence workplace outcomes. Being trusted by a supervisor and reciprocally trusting them often leads to positive outcomes like improved work performance and increased organisational esteem (Brower et al., 2009; Lau et al., 2014). Brower et al. (2009) elaborate on this:

> A manager's trust in the subordinate is likely to influence the way the manager treats the subordinate, which in turn is likely to affect the subordinate's behaviour… a manager is more likely to delegate an important task to a trusted subordinate than to one who is not trusted because the manager has greater confidence that the task will be competently and conscientiously completed… In fact, belief in the subordinate's ability to successfully perform a task has been shown to be a precursor of trust (p.3).

Leaders' ability to accurately gauge their employees' trust levels, and vice versa, is also crucial in maintaining healthy workplace relationships (Campagna et al., 2020).

Trust is not only fundamental to healthy interpersonal relationships but also crucial in organisational contexts, where it affects everything from team dynamics to overall organisational performance. Schaubroeck et al. (2011) provides valuable insights into how cognition-based and affect-based trust in leaders mediate the relationship between leader behaviour and team performance. Their research highlights that cognition-based trust, built on

perceptions of competence and reliability, enhances team potency, while affect-based trust, grounded in emotional bonds and care, promotes psychological safety within teams.

McAllister (1995) discusses trust dynamics, particularly in relation to leadership, and how they significantly impact team functionality and success in organisational settings. Legood et al. (2021) argue that leadership styles that promote trust are crucial for team performance and that trust between team members fosters cooperation and effective communication, leading to better team outcomes. Cognition-based and affect-based trust in leaders play distinct roles in influencing team behaviour and performance. Legood et al. (2021) cite Yang and Mossholder (2010) and how they analysed the effects of trust in leaders on team performance, highlighting how trust influences cooperation and success within teams.

However, according to Legood et al. (2021), cognition and affect-based trust have distinct causes and effects, with some leadership styles fostering affective trust more effectively, though evidence is not conclusive. Citing Dirks and Ferrin (2002), they found that "cognitive trust had a stronger association with antecedents like procedural justice and attitudinal outcomes such as intention to quit compared to overall trust and showed a weaker relationship than overall trust with performance" (Legood et al., 2021, p. 17). Empirical research examined the connection between various forms of trust and performance finding a mixture of results with studies suggesting that affective trust serves as a more significant precursor to performance (e.g., Miao et al., 2014; Yang & Mossholder, 2010), while others indicated that cognitive trust has a stronger

correlation with performance outcomes (e.g., Yang et al., 2009; Zhu & Akhtar, 2014).

Trust is crucial in organisational contexts, influencing everything from team dynamics to overall performance. Transformational leadership, which heavily relies on trust, inspires followers to exceed expectations through charisma and individualised consideration (Bass, 1985). Trust in leadership fosters a psychologically safe environment, enhancing team performance and risk-taking (Burke et al., 2007; Schaubroeck et al., 2011). This trust is linked to positive organisational outcomes, such as job satisfaction and commitment (Dirks & Ferrin, 2001). Transformational leadership behaviours enhance trust, leading to increased organisational citizenship behaviour and satisfaction (Pillai et al., 1999; Podsakoff et al., 1990).

High-trust environments are typically characterised by lower staff turnover, stronger interpersonal relationships, and a decreased likelihood of groupthink. These settings promote an atmosphere where employees feel valued and are more likely to engage actively in organisational processes (Edmondson, 1999; 2014; Schaubroeck et al., 2011). Conversely, in low-trust scenarios, employees may hesitate to express opinions or help colleagues, leading to eroded morale and negatively impacting the organisation's shared values. This reluctance is often attributed to low levels of psychological safety, a distinct yet related concept to trust (Baer & Frese, 2003; Schaubroeck et al., 2011).

Baer and Frese (2011) describe this at organisational level:

> …a climate for psychological safety refers to formal and informal
> organisational practices and procedures guiding and supporting open
> and trustful interactions within the work environment...Thus, a climate for
> psychological safety describes a work environment where employees
> are safe to speak up without being rejected or punished (pp. 49–50).

While psychological safety and trust are separate constructs (Newman et al., 2017), trust is a critical component of psychological safety within an organisation. It encourages employees to contribute to the continuous improvement of processes and practices, thereby fostering a culture of learning and innovation. In their study, Schaubroeck et al. (2011) highlight the importance of trust in leaders, demonstrating how both cognition-based and affect-based trust mediate the relationship between leader behaviour and team psychological states, which subsequently influences team performance (Baer & Frese, 2003; Edmondson, 1999; 2004; Yang et al., 2009). Teams in organisations "… displaying a strong climate for psychological safety perform better than companies that fail to establish such a climate" (Baer & Frese, 2003, p.50).

To clarify what this means, trust in organisational contexts can be understood through two primary types: affect-based trust and cognition-based trust where affect-based trust is centred on the emotional connections between individuals, characterised by genuine care, concern, and empathy for each other's welfare. This form of trust fosters a sense of affiliation and rapport based on mutual respect and shared regard for one another (McAllister, 1995). Further, as

exemplified in the acronym CHAMELEON[10] described by Bawa and Watson (2017), "…empathy… [is] a key characteristic affecting a collaborative environment. Empathy included building rapport and trusting relationships, understanding the other group members' needs, and being transparent about the process, role distribution and associated responsibilities and boundaries" (p.2346).

On the other hand, cognition-based trust is built upon performance-related cognitions such as an individual's perceived competence, responsibility, reliability, and dependability. This type of trust is grounded in the rational assessment of a person's abilities and their track record in fulfilling tasks and responsibilities (McAllister, 1995; Schaubroeck et al., 2011). McAllister (1995) suggests that achieving a certain level of cognition-based trust lays the groundwork for developing the emotional attachments characteristic of affect-based trust. Cognition-based trust can be seen as a precursor or foundation that facilitates the development of deeper, affect-based trust in workplace relationships.

The research by Schaubroeck et al. (2011) highlights the mediating role of cognition-based and affect-based trust in transforming leader behaviours into positive team outcomes. Cognition-based trust positively impacts team performance through enhanced team potency, whereas affect-based trust influences team performance through increased team psychological safety.

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[10] CHAMELEON: Communication, Humility, Adaptability, Mentorship, Empathy, Looping, Engagement, Oscillation, Networking (Bawa & Watson, 2017).

This study contributes to the understanding of how trust dynamics, and in relation to leadership, can significantly affect team functionality and success in organisational settings (see Gully et al., 2002; Guzzo et al., 1993; McAllister, 1995; Morrow et al., 2004; Yang & Mossholder, 2010)

"Cognition-based trust refers to trust that is based on performance-relevant cognitions such as competence, responsibility, reliability, and dependability" (Schaubroeck et al., 2011, p.864). According to McAllister (1995) Affect-based trust operates between individuals via "emotional Bonds" describing this as when individuals believe in a reciprocal sharing of sentiments around making "…emotional investments in trust relationships, express genuine care, and concern for the welfare of partners, [and they] believe in the intrinsic virtue of such relationships… ultimately, the emotional ties linking individuals can provide the basis for trust" (p.26).

In short, people need to know that others know what they are doing. Sometimes these interactions might be transactional, but what is needed is empathetic engagement to improve the collaboration.

2.7.14 Psychological safety and trust

Edmondson (1999) describes team psychological safety as "involves but goes beyond interpersonal trust; it describes a team climate characterised by interpersonal trust and mutual respect in which people are comfortable being themselves" (p.354). Newman et al. (2017) consider how psychological safety and trust overlap; "although psychological safety shares some overlap with trust, psychological safety is conceptually different as it focuses on how group

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members perceive a group norm" (p.522). In the workplace, psychological safety in a team is about feeling secure that teammates will support each other consistently, even in the face of challenges, errors, or risks. It relies on the mutual trust that team members have in one another's abilities and intentions:

> Psychologically safe teams are characterised by interpersonal trust, respect for the competence of all team members, and care and concern about members as people. Psychological safety has been found to promote team learning behaviour and team performance in qualitative studies of highly interdependent teams (Schaubroeck et al., 2011, p.864).

On the other hand, "…trust focuses on how one person views another" (Newman et al., 2017, p.522). Trust is an individual's belief in their teammates' competence, reliability, and ethical conduct (see Brion et al., 2015; Campbell et al., 2007; Cannon-Bowers et al., 1993; Chou et al., 2008; Halupa, 2019; Pollard & Kumar, 2022; Schwier et al., 2004). This distinction highlights that fostering psychological safety goes beyond establishing trust; it involves cultivating a group culture where risk-taking is normalised and supported. Edmondson and Bransby (2023) discuss the role of psychological safety and that it is helpful to surmount obstacles to team performance, including professional boundaries, functional diversity, and hierarchical structures.

Despite various definitions, the most widely accepted conceptualisation of psychological safety follows Edmondson's (1999) description "Team psychological safety is defined as a shared belief that the team is safe for

interpersonal risk taking" (p.354). In such an environment, employees feel accepted and respected, enabling them to engage in open communication, voice concerns, and seek feedback—behaviours considered interpersonally risky yet crucial for positive workplace outcomes, including learning and performance (Edmondson et al., 2007; Edmondson & Lei, 2014; Pearsall & Ellis, 2011).

Organisational environments encouraging behaviours such as voicing innovative ideas, collaborating, and experimenting are essential for continuous improvement and learning (Edmondson, 1999; Nembhard & Edmondson, 2011). However, these behaviours inherently carry risks for the individual. Proposing new ideas may challenge established norms and vested interests (Detert & Burris, 2007; Edmondson et al., 2001), while experimenting with new approaches might result in perceived failure, potentially harming the individual's reputation (Van Dyne & LePine, 1998). Such risks can deter staff from engaging in activities that promote learning, thus hindering both personal and organisational development. To mitigate these risks, creating a psychologically safe work environment is crucial. In such an environment, employees feel secure in voicing their ideas, seeking feedback, collaborating, taking risks, and experimenting (Edmondson, 1999). "If relationships within a group are characterised by trust and respect, individuals are likely to experience greater psychological safety" (Nembhard & Edmondson, 2011, p.499).

Google's People Analytics Unit's longitudinal study highlights the significance of psychological safety, deeming it a primary characteristic of successful, high-performing teams (Bergmann & Schaeppi, 2016). Psychological safety can

reduce employee errors and enhance overall safety, as well as foster team and individual learning across various organisational settings (Leroy et al., 2012; Nembhard & Edmondson, 2011).

2.7.15 Values and Effectiveness

According to Chou et al. (2008), shared work values play a pivotal role in team member effectiveness, both behaviourally and attitudinally. Behavioural effectiveness encompasses aspects like performance, citizenship behaviour, and creativity, while attitudinal effectiveness relates to psychological states such as satisfaction and commitment (Cannon-Bowers et al., 1993; Cannon-Bowers & Salas, 2001) and interpersonal trust is another critical component in this dynamic. Trust includes both trustworthiness (the degree to which others trust a team member) and trustfulness (the degree to which a team member trusts others). Trust is essential for efficient cooperation, especially when team members are interdependent. "In working relationships involving high interdependence, peer performance can have a determining impact on personal productivity, and evidence that peers carry out role responsibilities reliably will enhance a manager's assessments of a peer's trustworthiness" (McAllister, 1995, p.28). Trust and respect within teams are crucial for acquiring necessary information and assistance, leading to better performance and satisfaction. Jehn and Mannix (2001) show that high-performing teams have high levels of trust and open conflict norms. Harrison et al. (2002) emphasise that effective collaboration and social integration improve task performance.

Mueller et al. (2022) discuss how content conflicts arise from differences in individuals' beliefs, values, and goals. For instance, while using interpersonal

skills when building rapport, LDs and faculty might unearth opposing viewpoints on various subjects, from pedagogical beliefs to contentious campus issues and interpersonal skills. As such, it is important "… to be able to extract information regarding the characteristics of a faculty's particular instructional needs (e.g., pedagogical objectives, learners, and context) in an efficient and effective manner" (Van Leusen et al., 2016, p.253). Disagreements over procedures or processes to achieve mutual goals can also lead to content conflicts (De Dreu & Weingart, 2003), while written agreements detailing the course design processes can be beneficial (Halupa, 2019). There are times when LDs and faculty find themselves at loggerheads over these processes. For instance, Rubley (2016) notes that LDs often express frustration with faculty who miss deadlines and do not follow the established course design processes. Additionally, Bawa and Watson (2017) report that LDs face challenges when faculty sidestep the online course design protocols, impacting overall performance and collaboration.

2.7.16 Trust in Workplace Relationships: Its Uniqueness and Importance

Trust is pivotal in workplaces, influencing daily interactions and organisational dynamics. Unlike voluntary relationships, professional relationships in workplace settings often involve working with individuals not personally chosen, necessitating a degree of trust for effective collaboration and negotiation, and fostering a positive work environment (Mislin et al., 2011). Hamilton et al. (2023) highlight how trust in health care teams hinges on respect and communication across individual, team, and organisational levels. These principles, when applied to workplace settings, could enhance collaboration and

learning, highlighting the universal relevance of trust-building in professional

contexts. This workplace trust encompasses unique social roles and power

differentials, distinguishing it from other relationships.

2.7.17 Perception of Trust Among Team Members

Brion et al. (2015) asserts that how accurately individuals perceive the trust

placed in them by their teammates is another critical factor. Higher trust meta-

accuracy correlates with increased trust over time. However, "…individuals can

either overestimate or underestimate how much others trust them" (Brion et al.,

2015, p.824) and can lead to reduced trust and may impact team cohesion and

performance.

2.7.18 The Role of Trust in Navigating Workplace Negotiations

Mislin et al. (2011) discuss how in workplace settings, trust extends beyond

formal agreements to subtler aspects like 'small talk' which "…is thought by

some to promote social cohesiveness, reducing the tension of a potentially

threatening or competing situation…[and] in negotiation contexts it may help

parties build rapport, fostering a relationship based on mutual liking" (p.63),

thereby significantly enhancing trust between colleagues. This aspect of trust is

crucial in navigating work negotiations, where open communication can lead to

a more harmonious and effective working environment (Mislin et al., 2011).

2.7.19 Impact of Intrateam Trust on Team Performance

De Jong et al. (2016) consider how the level of trust within workplace teams,

particularly between faculty members and administrative staff, can influence the

outcome of collaborative projects. A meta-analysis has shown that "…intrateam trust has unique predictive validity above and beyond alternative key predictors of team performance and is robust across key dimensions of trust. Intrateam trust significantly predicts team performance, especially when tasks require high interdependence" (De Jong et al., 2016, p.1145). This finding is essential for structuring teams in educational settings, where cooperative projects are commonplace.

2.7.20 Building and Developing Trust

Tabancali and Öngel (2020) explore establishing the foundations of trust. They focus on "mindfulness" (p.14) and how this is a beneficial approach in the educational organisation to enhance trust as they are complex entities and cater to diverse interests and demands (Smith & Larimer, 2004). Teachers often remain entrenched in their established methods and the reliance on past successes can hinder adaptability and responsiveness to a dynamic educational landscape (Hoy et al., 2006). Mindfulness, emphasising present-moment awareness, can significantly enhance this understanding, particularly in educational settings (Hoy et al., 2006).

> When teachers do not trust each other… they hesitate to interact with each other and mostly focus on protecting themselves rather than focusing on their common goal. This situation damages collaboration and the desire to participate in decision-making processes, and a school becomes a place of destructive conflicts and increasing distrust. Trust-based environments encourage stronger collaboration, collective actions,

and constructive conflicts, while reproducing trust. A trusting relationship would likely result in positive behaviour as well as student success… (Tabancali & Öngel, 2020, p.20).

Individuals' thoughts, emotions, and actions, underpinned by trust, profoundly impact the organisations they are part of (Brief & Weiss, 2002). In recent years, the mindfulness approach has garnered attention in management studies, aiming to harness the human potential for the betterment of organisations (Dane, 2011). Mindfulness challenges static worldviews, fostering an environment that emphasises the importance of trust and encourages individuals to be present, open to new experiences, and discern situational nuances (Langer & Ngnoumen, 2017).

Mindfulness is characterised by developing a unique perspective for every situation, actively processing its meaning and context (Langer, 1992). It encourages individuals to be present, devoid of prejudices (Giluk, 2009), and to critically evaluate their perception processes (Bjurström, 2012). This heightened awareness and reflection enables individuals to continuously reassess their interpretations of events, fostering trust by allowing them to transcend past experiences and seek apt solutions (Fiol & O'Connor, 2003). Within organisations, trust and mindfulness can be cultivated through various processes, such as effectively managing crises, being responsive, avoiding oversimplification, committing to resilience, and valuing expertise. When adapted to educational settings, these processes form a conceptual framework that emphasises the importance of trust in fostering mindfulness (Hoy et al., 2006).

Halupa (2019) explores navigating the collaborative process's challenges and understanding different focuses is essential, "… because of the differences in focus, instructional designers and faculty need to become familiar with each other's working styles. Instead of causing conflict, these different views can actually result in a better course that is content-rich and well-designed" (p.65). Chao et al. (2010) note that LDs and faculty often use different quality standards. Recognising and valuing each other's perspectives can lead to richer courses and build trust. Clear written policies can help delineate roles and expectations, reducing potential conflicts (Halupa, 2019). Such guidelines can serve as a foundation for trust between faculty and designers. An initial meeting can establish roles, expectations, and deadlines, fostering a positive relationship from the outset (Campbell et al., 2009).

Proper planning ensures that faculty and designers have time for collaboration, reducing potential friction and building a relationship based on mutual respect (Halupa, 2019). Mueller et al. (2022) discuss relationship conflicts and highlight that they often revolve around the need for an equitable exchange in the relationship. Such conflicts can manifest when there is a perceived infringement on one's professional identity or a lack of recognition in the workplace (van de Vliert & De Dreu, 1994). Some faculty members might feel that collaborating with LDs infringes upon their professional domain (Bawa & Watson, 2017; Halupa, 2019). Conversely, LDs often grapple with mixed perceptions regarding their professional expertise within and outside their workplace (Campbell et al., 2007; Rubley, 2016; Sharif & Cho, 2015). This is likely because LDs must

frequently explain their roles in collaborative projects (see Halupa, 2019; Kenny et al., 2005; Sharif & Cho, 2015; Tate, 2017). However:

> LDs must be careful not to overstep their roles and act like SMEs. Faculty need to not push off aspects of the course development to the instructional designer that he/she would not normally do. Both designers and faculty need to learn to respect the expertise that each brings to this collaborative role to ensure the creation of quality courses that enhance student learning (Halupa, 2019, p.66).

Specifically, there is a sentiment among LDs of not being adequately recognised for their 'professional agency' or expertise in teaching, learning, and technological advancements, and overcoming this (Bawa & Watson, 2017; Campbell et al., 2007; Rubley, 2016).

> Professional agency… also encompasses professional education and the question of academic credentials. Most often, designers indicated that they had graduate training, usually a master's degree in education, with a focus on media, educational technology, or instructional design theory. The implication of instructional designer holding a PhD or EdD in higher education was frequently raised in terms of credibility within the academic culture (Campbell et al., 2007, p.8).

Building trust in modern educational environments requires a nuanced approach where educators navigate a landscape of the coexistence of interpersonal trust and trust in technology, ensuring both aspects develop and foster a supportive, innovative educational environment (Haas, 2021).

2.7.21 Understanding the Foundations of Trust

In educational settings, research shows that understanding trust includes the complex interplay between different forms of trust, such as "trust, untrust, distrust and mistrust" (Marsh & Dibben, 2005, p.1) and lack of trust, active distrust, and cautious mistrust, each having its own unique impact (Haas, 2021; Marsh & Dibben, 2005). Baratella et al. (2023) describe trust as a complex concept that involves not just belief in competence but also the interplay of capabilities, vulnerabilities, intentions, and specific situations. They identify different types of trust, including 'Ground Trust' (basic trust that does not require explicit commitments), 'Weak Trust' (trust involving implicit commitments between the trustor and trustee), 'Strong Trust' (trust based on explicit commitments and a higher level of belief), and 'Trusted Delegation' (the deliberate delegation of goals, grounded in trust). Trust inherently involves vulnerability and risk, as it requires the trustor to depend on the trustee to achieve specific goals. The authors distinguish trust from reliance, highlighting that trust often involves uncertainty and cannot be entirely based on concrete evidence, unlike reliance.

Along with other factors, "consistent evidence also exists that trust and distrust judgments are formed, in part, based on how people feel, and/or their emotions. For example, feelings of compassion tend to influence trust-based decisions, and feelings of anger tend to influence distrust-based decisions" (Haas, 2021, p1). Trust complexity is particularly noticeable in the relationships between faculty and administration and in the use of digital tools for education and

administration (Campbell et al., 2007; Chen & Carliner, 2020; Martins & Baptista Nunes, 2016).

Part of understanding trust includes recognising there are psychological aspects, and it also involves looking at how people viscerally respond to and process trust (Riedl, 2021; Sanders et al., 2021; Simpson & Vieth, 2021). Some key factors for consideration include recognising that developing and maintaining trust is essential for our emotional health and the strength of our relationships, whether in personal lives or in broader contexts like workplaces and societies. Building trust leads to improved social harmony and productivity. To enhance trust, we need careful effort, clear and honest communication, and a commitment to keeping our promises. In HE and FE, trust is crucial in shaping the educational experience. It affects how faculty, students, and administrative staff interact, playing a vital role in creating a collaborative and innovative environment. Trust is not only important in personal interactions but also in how we adopt and use digital technologies and automated systems in education (Riedl, 2021; Sanders et al., 2021).

2.7.22 Digital and Automated Trust Dynamics

The increasing reliance on digital platforms and automated systems in education introduces the concept of human-computer trust. This form of trust, crucial in HE, hinges on the interaction between individuals and technology, influenced by factors such as system reliability, transparency, and the user's propensity to trust (Dijkstra, 1995, 1999; Sanders et al., 2021).

Wang et al. (2024) explore trust in human-robot interaction (HRI), highlighting that overall trust is shaped by both subjective and objective factors. Subjective trust depends on the trustor's perception of the robot's trustworthiness, which can change based on personal experiences and emotions. In contrast, trustworthiness is seen as an intrinsic property of the robot, determined by its actual performance, reliability, and consistency. Trust in robots is influenced by three key dimensions: ability (competence in tasks), benevolence (acting in the user's best interest), and integrity (predictable and consistent behaviour). These factors interact to form the trustor's overall trust, which may not always align with the robot's true capabilities, leading to either 'overtrust' or 'undertrust.'

Khan et al. (2023) examine what influences citizens' trust in using social media for e-government services. They identify factors like personal traits (e.g., education, internet experience), government integrity, security concerns, and social media quality. The study highlights that trust is crucial for adopting e-government services and suggests that governments can build trust by improving privacy, security, and the reliability of information shared on social media platforms.

Xiao and Tong (2023) highlight trust in social networks as dynamic and shaped by shared connections, user behaviours, and the reliability of interactions. The quality of interactions and trust paths significantly influence trust between users, addressing challenges like incomplete trust information and unreliable connections. Accurately assessing trust in digital environments enhances the strength of these relationships. Understanding these dynamics is vital for effectively integrating and utilising technology in educational processes,

particularly as we witness the growth of Artificial Intelligence (AI) as a disruptor in TEL, with some HE and FE organisations embracing AI.[11]

Wylde (2024) highlights the importance of trust in making AI governance effective, particularly in developing collaboration across regions and groups. Trust operates at multiple levels: interpersonal trust between individuals, institutional trust in policies, and technological trust in the fairness and reliability of AI systems. Promoting transparency, accountability, and inclusion is essential to building trust, especially when aligning policies across diverse stakeholders.

With the growth of AI, Wylde (2023a) examines how trust and zero trust apply to Intelligent Virtual Assistants (IVAs) in cyber security. While AI systems are often implicitly trusted, this conflicts with the zero trust protocols now required in cyber security. Wylde suggests using zero trust principles to manage AI, focusing on assessing trust based on factors like experience, ability, and risk-taking. She argues that zero trust can make AI systems more secure, reliable, and explainable, and calls for further research to develop these practices.

In TEL environments, the theory of distributed cognition as explored by Hollan, Hutchins, and Kirsh (2000) plays a role. Just as in ship navigation, where a captain and crew each have specialised knowledge and roles yet must

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[11] Examples include Queen Mary University London (HE), Bolton College and Activate Learning (Both FE).

coordinate to navigate effectively, TEL environments require each participant to understand their part in the educational process. Each person has their own expertise but needs to comprehend what others are doing to move the process forward to completion. This collective cognitive process is facilitated through the interaction with digital tools, highlighting the importance of system reliability and transparency to foster trust. As everyone learns through the same medium, i.e., TEL, the integration of AI and other digital tools must be managed to ensure that they support and enhance the distributed cognitive system, enabling seamless collaboration and learning.

2.7.23 Conformity and Trust in Automated Systems

In HE settings, the phenomenon of trusting inaccurate systems, as evidenced in human-robot interaction studies, highlights the complexities of trust in an increasingly digital environment (Hertz & Wiese, 2018; Volante et al., 2019), where studies revealed how "… a faster decline in overall trust after computer than human errors [occurred]" (Hertz & Wiese, 2018, p.1215) This aspect is important in contexts where critical thinking and evaluation of technological tools are paramount, and particularly where human-robot interaction is very prevalent with the advent of AI being used within educational settings, "…it is important for appropriate levels of trust to be given to a robot, as too little trust can cause disuse, whereas too much trust can cause overreliance and misuse" (Volante et al., 2019, p.806).

2.8 Positioning the contribution among existing scholarship

This section identifies where further research is needed, focusing on why these gaps exist and how they impact our understanding of trust dynamics in education.

In HE and FE, the implementation and effectiveness of TEL are significantly influenced by multifaceted challenges faced by LDs and SMEs. The literature emphasises the complex dynamics of trust and its pivotal role in educational settings:

1. **Complexity of LDs in HE**: LDs frequently encounter role ambiguity, characterised by unclear expectations and diverse perceptions of their roles within academic institutions. This ambiguity leads to collaboration difficulties, communication barriers, and reduced effectiveness, highlighting the necessity for clear role definitions and enhanced trust-building between LDs and faculty or SMEs. The challenges in educational organisations, including interdepartmental dynamics, further highlight the importance of clear communication and trust-building.

2. **Barriers to TEL Implementation by SMEs**: SMEs face numerous barriers in adopting and effectively utilising TEL, including technical knowledge gaps, varying levels of competence and confidence with new technologies, and resistance to change. The lack of trust in technologies and methods can severely hinder their integration into educational practices, pointing to the urgent need for trust-building initiatives that facilitate smoother TEL implementation. This highlights that trust acts as

a bridge to ease the integration of learning technologies by alleviating fears and resistance among SMEs, fostering a more receptive environment for TEL.

3. **Trust in Educational Settings**: Trust is foundational in fostering effective collaborations and operations within educational settings, influencing interpersonal relationships and organisational effectiveness. It is particularly critical in environments undergoing changes such as the adoption of TEL. The literature suggests that the relationship between LDs and SMEs can be fraught with challenges such as personality clashes, power struggles, and entrenched positions, which can be mitigated through the establishment and maintenance of trust. Effective collaboration, as highlighted in the literature, hinges on building and maintaining trust. This is crucial for cohesive teamwork and successful outcomes in learning design projects, where trust fosters open communication and mutual respect, enabling diverse teams to work effectively toward common goals.

These observations collectively illuminate the potential for further exploration and contribution in understanding how trust is manifested and maintained in the context of LDs and SMEs working together in HE and FE. Notably, the literature review has identified gaps in fully capturing both parties' perspectives on trust, its establishment, maintenance, and its impact on collaborative efforts.

The literature points to a range of issues that SMEs experience, along with LDs and teams that have to collaborate with them. Trust is at the heart of all this.

The pilot study that this research piece derives from revealed an 'ingredient of success' as discussed in Major Findings in chapter one. It indicated that trust was 'very strong' and 'implicit' from SMEs towards the LD and development team, resulting in consistent good quality relationships and output of content with high satisfaction levels across all areas within the organisation.

Trust issues between the two entities of LD and SME come from different perspectives (subject matter and design). Trust may not exist due to SMEs' experience of their institutional ways of implementing new ideas, and there can be feelings of mistrust of new ideas that might be perceived as damaging existing methods. Trust can be diminished by SMEs' belief that carrying out research and publishing are more critical than new ways of delivering learning. LDs have issues with SMEs that present as superior, and design languages (subject specifics) can mean that SMEs have trust issues with LDs because they perceive themselves as the expert in not only the subject but in teaching itself as they have done it for so long.

The literature on trust within the dynamics of LDs and SMEs offers extensive coverage on its various dimensions. However, there appears to be a significant gap in capturing the full scope of these dynamics. Notably, the literature does not thoroughly emphasise the specific levels of trust that have been and continue to be present between LDs and SMEs. This oversight extends to a lack of detailed exploration into how these trust levels were initially established and subsequently sustained.

Furthermore, there is a notable absence of comprehensive guidance on actively fostering and maintaining trust-based relationships. Such relationships are crucial for effective collaboration and cohesion within educational teams, especially in the context of educational design and development. The current body of literature falls short in offering a balanced and holistic exploration of trust-building strategies and practices from both LD and SME viewpoints. Understanding and implementing these strategies are essential for enhancing collaborative efforts and ensuring a productive and harmonious working environment.

Therefore, a more nuanced and inclusive approach is required in future research and practical applications. This approach should aim to fully understand and articulate the perspectives of both LDs and SMEs, focusing on the real-life application of trust-building measures. By doing so, it would provide a clearer, more actionable pathway for educational professionals to establish and nurture a collaborative atmosphere grounded in mutual trust and respect, contributing to the success and innovation in the field of TEL and learning design. There is a need to understand how to effectively develop and sustain these trusting relationships from the viewpoint of LDs and SMEs, taking a unified approach to replicate across a wide range of learning organisations and institutions to enhance collaboration and improve online learning design and development, particularly following the COVID-19 pandemic and the push from organisations to deliver better and more effective online learning through collaborative endeavours.

To address these gaps, I seek to contribute to this area by conducting a focused study on the dynamics of trust between LDs and SMEs in the context of TEL within educational settings (FE and HE). The subsequent chapter details the theoretical framework used in this study, which provides a structured approach to examining trust in these professional relationships. This framework guides the investigation, analysis, and interpretation of how trust influences the collaboration and overall success of TEL initiatives in HE and FE settings.

Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework

In this chapter, I outline the theoretical foundations that guide this study, beginning with an exploration of the ontological and epistemological positions underpinning the research. This section discusses the subjective and interpretivist stance that frames the investigation of LDs' and SMEs' experiences in TEL. Following this, I review various theoretical frameworks considered for understanding trust dynamics within educational contexts. After assessing several middle-range theories, I selected the Communities of Practice (CoP) framework and the Conditional/Consequential Matrix as the most fitting approaches for this study. These frameworks are integrated to offer a comprehensive perspective on collaborative practices and trust-building between LDs and SMEs in TEL environments.

3.1 Ontology and Epistemology

The ontological stance of this research is inherently subjective. It prioritises understanding the varied experiences and perceptions of LDs from diverse backgrounds, including HE, FE and L&D. The research aims to examine and interpret these experiences within a TEL environment, which encompasses aspects like technology for learning, content design, and individualised learning (Duval, Sharples, & Sutherland, 2017). The interpretivist approach is important as it acknowledges that collective sharing and achievements contribute to knowledge creation in this field (O'Connor et al., 2023).

3.2 The Interpretivist Epistemological Position

In this study, I adopt a social epistemological interpretivist approach to understand how LDs and SMEs experience and construct knowledge in a TEL environment. This approach, aligned with the principles outlined (O'Connor et al., 2023), enables a nuanced exploration of subjective realities and interpretations within the specific context of FE. The research seeks to understand the world of learning design within an educational setting through the interactions and interpretations of LDs and SMEs. This approach aligns with Cohen, Manion, and Morrison's (2018) interpretivist view which highlights understanding and interpreting the meanings and perspectives of actors within their specific context. The focus is on comprehending the intricacies, contradictions, and nuances within these interactions to provide rich, descriptive narratives that reflect the complexity of the educational environment.

3.3 In-depth Analysis of LD and SME Experiences

Methodologically, this study leans towards diverse, in-depth methods to capture the comprehensive nature of the phenomena under investigation. This aligns with the interpretivist principle of prioritising depth over breadth in research. Denzin and Lincoln (2011) and Yanow (2014) support this approach, emphasising the construction of knowledge through the research process, particularly within the realms of social interactions and contextual understanding.

3.4 Forming a Theoretical Framework

To explore the trust dynamics between LDs and SMEs within educational settings, it was important to develop an appropriate research methodology. This process involved assessing various research frameworks, each offering distinct perspectives and insights. Specifically, it entailed the evaluation of middle-range theories, concepts, and models so that I could then construct the theoretical framework for designing, conducting, and analysing the research as described in this chapter.

3.5 Social Learning Theory and Middle-Range Theories: Understanding Trust Dynamics in Educational Settings

3.5.1 Social Learning Theory

Bandura's Social Learning Theory (1977) underpins the importance of observational learning and modelling behaviours. The benefits of Social Learning Theory encompass flexibility in application, adaptability, and practical application in diverse settings (Bandura, 1977; Boone et al., 1977). Social theory in educational research refers to the use of theoretical frameworks to explain and analyse social action, social meanings, and large-scale social structures within the context of education. This theory is complemented by Vygotsky (1978) with a focus on social interaction and collaborative dialogue in learning, particularly through his Zone of Proximal Development concept.

3.5.2 Comparing Middle-Range Theories

When investigating trust dynamics between LDs and SMEs in collaborative TEL environments, several middle-range theories (that fall under the umbrella of Social Learning) were considered as methods to conduct research to provide valuable perspectives.

3.5.3 COI (Community of Inquiry)

Explored by Garrison et al. (2000), this theory Looks at cognitive, social, and teaching presences in digital spaces. COI focuses on online learning environments, highlighting three interrelated presences: cognitive, social, and teaching. This theory is grounded in constructivist learning theory, which posits that learning is an active, constructive process where learners actively construct their own understanding and knowledge of the world through experiences and reflection on those experiences.

In LD and SME collaboration, COI can guide the creation of effective online learning environments that balance cognitive challenges, social interaction, and instructional presence. However, it primarily concentrates on the learning process rather than interpersonal trust dynamics. (Garrison et al., 2000).

3.5.4 CHAT (Cultural-Historical Activity Theory)

CHAT, rooted in cultural-historical psychology (Vygotsky, 1978) explores the socio-cultural context of learning and development. This theory can provide insights into how LDs and SMEs use tools and collaborative practices within

their socio-cultural context to enhance TEL. However, it may not directly address trust between LDs and SMEs.

3.5.5 CoP (Communities of Practice)

CoP, conceptualised by Wenger (1998), extends sociocultural theories of learning by focusing on communal aspects within specific practice contexts. It emphasises mutual engagement, shared repertoire, and joint enterprise. In TEL, CoP offers a framework to explore trust dynamics, collaborative knowledge creation, and shared practices between LDs and SMEs. While each middle-range theory offers unique insights, the CoP framework's compatibility with Social Learning Theory makes it the most suitable for researching trust dynamics between LDs and SMEs in TEL environments within FE settings. It captures the essence of collaborative learning and knowledge sharing between LDs and SMEs, highlighting the social aspects of learning and trust-building. This framework aligns with the interpretivist methodology of the study, allowing for a comprehensive understanding of the complex, context-specific trust relationships (Wenger, 1998).

CoP facilitates a deeper understanding of the social, collaborative nature of these relationships within the specific context of TEL and emerges as the most pertinent framework for this research. Wenger & Lave's CoP framework (1991) aligns closely with the principles of Social Learning Theory. It emphasises learning as a communal, participatory process, resonating with Bandura's and Vygotsky's ideas on observational learning and collaborative guidance.

Building on the interpretivist methodology employed to explore the subjective

experiences of LDs and SMEs in a TEL environment, this research incorporates

two theoretical structures: The CoP framework, which is shown in figure 3.1,

and the Conditional/Consequential Matrix by Martins & Baptista Nunes (2016)

which is shown in figure 3.2. These frameworks are instrumental in further

analysing and understanding the complex dynamics at play within the

educational setting. I now explore the Theoretical Frameworks selected for this

research.

3.6 Using the CoP Framework

At the heart of this research lies Wenger's (1998) CoP framework, which finds

its roots in Vygotsky's (1978) social constructivist theories of learning. Wenger

(1998) defines a CoP as a group of individuals who share a common concern, a

set of problems, or a passion for a topic and who enhance their knowledge and

expertise in this domain through continuous interaction. Brown & Duguid (1991)

complement this by highlighting that a CoP in the workplace is distinguished by

specific characteristics, playing a crucial role in shaping the work environment

and practices.

According to Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner (2015), a CoP comprises

three essential components: Domain, Community, and Practice. Domain

provides the common ground, the Community offers the social fabric, and the

Practice involves the shared repertoire of resources, all of which are integral to

the functioning of a CoP. Brown & Duguid (1991) further enrich this

understanding by highlighting the self-defined working practices, the

development of professional identities, and the pursuit of a joint enterprise as critical aspects of a CoP.

Figure 3.1. Communities of Practice (adapted from Wenger, 1998, Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2015)
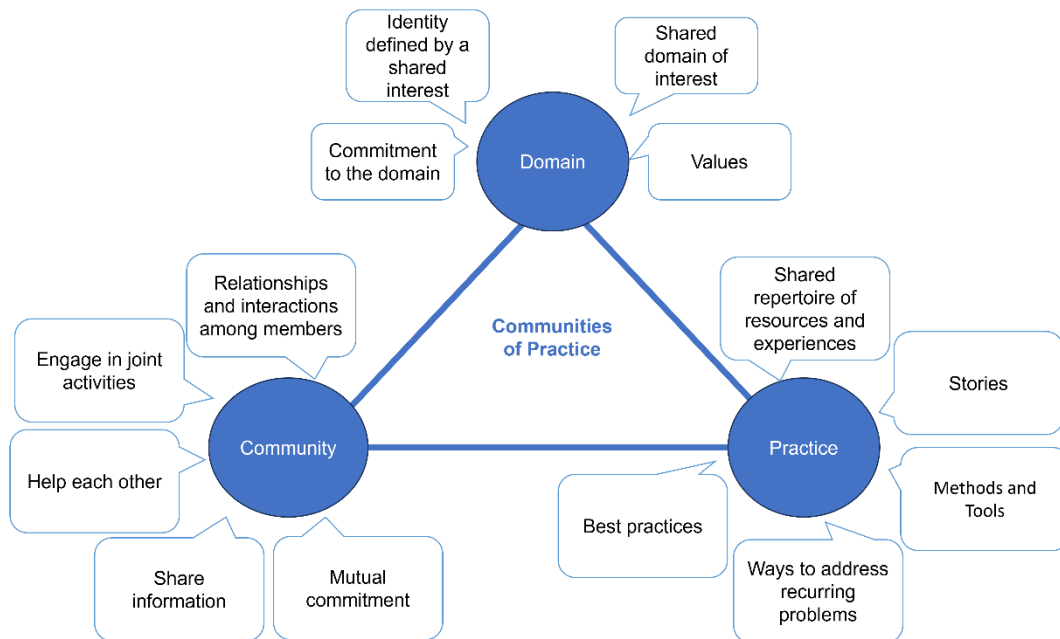
Pyrko et al. (2017) explore the concept of 'indwelling' within CoPs, emphasising the deep, tacit interconnectedness and shared understanding among members as they tackle common issues. Frederiksen (2012) notes that intersubjective trust is crucial for forming and sustaining CoPs, as it fosters an environment where members feel safe and valued, facilitating openness and vulnerability, essential for genuine sharing and collaboration.

Further explored by Pyrko et al. (2016), CoPs are often seen as a process rather than a mere entity, evolving organically rather than being simply "set up". They describe scenarios where CoPs were expected to implement pre-

specified strategies based on "evidence", illustrating the organic development of these communities (p. 390).

Trust within a CoP ensures that members are not only willing to share their tacit and explicit knowledge but are also open to the contributions of others, promoting a richer and more dynamic exchange. This exchange bolsters the collective capability of the CoP, enhancing its resilience and adaptability, enabling it to thrive over time through continuous learning and knowledge creation (Frederiksen, 2012; Pyrko et al., 2017).

Thus, intersubjective trust acts not just as a background element but as an active, structuring force within CoPs. It enhances the capacity for 'thinking together' and deepens engagement in shared practices. Through this trust, members can confidently navigate the vulnerabilities involved in sharing tacit knowledge and personal insights, thereby strengthening the collective identity and efficacy of the CoP (Frederiksen, 2012).

Domain: This refers to the field or area of interest around which the community revolves (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2015). In the case study presented, the domain is education, with a specific focus on online learning for students. LDs and faculty members, regarded as SMEs, collaborate to improve the quality of online education. This domain provides the common ground and shared interest that unites the members of the CoP.

Community: This component encompasses the individuals who interact, learn together, build relationships, and assist one another (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2015). In the case study, LDs and faculty members, referred

to as SMEs, work in tandem within the education sector to design and deliver online learning to students. Their collaboration extends beyond mere task completion; it involves cultivating enduring and trusting relationships. Through continuous dialogue and a shared understanding, they fortify the bonds within their community. Brown & Duguid (1991) emphasise that the community aspect is a defining characteristic of a CoP, where individuals come together, bringing their distinctive identities and expertise to the group, ultimately enriching the community and its practices. They suggest that within a CoP "…people work and learn collaboratively, and vital interstitial communities are continually being formed and reformed" (p.49).

Practice: This refers to the collective repertoire of resources, experiences, stories, tools, and methods for addressing recurring challenges (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2015). In this context, building and maintaining trust, as well as resolving any issues of mistrust, are essential for achieving the goals and objectives of the CoP. LDs and faculty members share a practice rooted in trust and mutual respect, striving to provide consistent and high-quality online learning experiences. (Nickols, 2003) asserts that the members of a CoP often define their working practices themselves as they navigate through and sometimes rectify incomplete or incorrect organisational processes and procedures. This shared practice not only helps in achieving their common goals but also plays a crucial role in the development of their professional identities.

In online learning design and development, LDs and faculty frequently are part of separate CoPs[12], but can engage in collaborative practices that may form overlapping CoPs. Oliver (2002) details how Learning Technologists (LT) collaborate with faculty in curriculum development, emphasising a CoP framework where mutual learning and professional development occur through sustained interaction. Although LT and LD roles are distinct, there is often an overlap in how faculty perceive these professionals, both contributing significantly to educational innovation and curriculum design. This overlap illustrates the organic and evolving nature of CoPs, which flourish and endure as long as there is mutual interest and perceived value in learning collaboratively (Agrifoglio, 2015). Berry (2017) stresses the importance of diverse technological and pedagogical strategies in creating a welcoming and community-oriented atmosphere in online educational settings, enhancing both social presence and educational efficacy. Also, Pollard and Kumar (2020) highlight the pivotal role of LDs as facilitators of pedagogical innovation and educational quality, noting how their collaborative work with faculty is central to effective curriculum design and delivery. Smith et al. (2017) complement this view by emphasising the importance of tools and a welcoming approach to enhance community engagement within these educational settings.

Agrifoglio (2015) discusses how new members of a CoP gradually become experienced members through collaboration and taking on increasingly

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[12] Grey literature also discusses distinct CoPs Kim, J. (2019, December)

complex tasks, a process known as 'legitimate peripheral participation' (Lave & Wenger, 1991). This concept illustrates how individuals enhance their skills naturally within a community by moving from the outskirts to full involvement, supported further by Matusov et al. (1994) and Herrera (2020). Both elaborate on how this natural learning process occurs within group settings, with an emphasis on social interactions and practical engagement over formal classroom learning.

Rather than being anchored in highly structured organisations, CoPs often maintain a more informal existence, underpinned by their members' collective knowledge and interactions (Ardichvili et al., 2003). Offering a broader perspective, Wenger et al. (2000) suggested that CoPs encompass groups who share concerns or passions and consistently deepen their expertise through regular interactions. This evolving understanding highlights that CoPs are not merely confined to formal organisational setups. Instead, they can be nurtured and cultivated to bolster knowledge exchange and problem-solving capabilities, thus enhancing both immediate business outcomes and prolonged organisational proficiencies (Cox, 2005; Wenger et al., 2000).

3.7 Quasi Communities of Practice

CoPs are dynamic and can change when different groups, such as LDs and faculty, come together to work on online learning materials. This illustrates that CoPs can exist informally and thrive on mutual interest and collaborative learning beyond formal organisational structures (Cox, 2005). Wenger & Snyder (2000) describe CoPs as groups of people who share common practices and

define these working practices themselves. This is important as organisational processes are sometimes flawed or incomplete. Members of a CoP develop their professional identities through their work, which also determines their membership in the community. "They are groups of people informally bound together by shared expertise and passion for a joint enterprise" (Wenger & Snyder, 2000, para. 2). Emad and Roth (2016) extend this idea to 'quasi-communities', highlighting the dynamic and relational nature of expertise within these groups, noting their suitability for formal educational settings where traditional CoPs might not fully capture the dynamics of learning and collaboration. These quasi-communities maintain the essence of CoPs—shared practices and collaborative learning—but are adapted to fit the structured and often temporal nature of formal education programmes, aiming to simulate real-world professional practices in a controlled manner. Hung (2002) distinguishes between real CoPs and online quasi-communities, arguing that real CoPs are characterised by tight-knit groups who may know each other well and share a common practice and identity, essential for effective learning and collaboration. Emad and Roth (2016) add that quasi-communities, while often lacking the deep integration of real CoPs, can still offer substantial benefits in terms of broad knowledge exchange and flexible participation, making them valuable in certain contexts. This necessitates nurturing social capital within the organisation.

In socio-cultural learning theories, the concept of a CoP along with frameworks rooted in this idea, such as communities of learners (Brown & Campione, 1994; Rogoff, 1994) and communities of interest (Fischer, 2001), have shifted

perspectives on learning from an individual focus to a collective one. According to these theories, learning is characterised by changing participation in activities driven by collective motivation, resulting from a history within a specific culture or society (e.g., Lave, 1991; Rogoff, 1990). The concept of community in a CoP highlights the role of collective activity in connecting individuals to their shared society, demonstrating how the group shapes, forms, and validates individual actions (Lave & Wenger, 1991). When individuals act in a manner others recognise as aligned with their behaviours, shared practices are established (Roth & Jornet, 2017). This reflects the communal nature of learning and highlights the importance of collaborative engagement in educational and societal development.

3.8 A Critical View of the CoP Framework

Some areas for consideration when using the CoP framework are explored by Hughes, et al, (2007) with Fuller (2007) and Jewson (2007) offering a critical examination, focusing on CoP's hegemonic, normative, and acculturation aspects. There is an important consideration around how a CoP framework, while valuable for understanding social learning processes, often overlooks the power dynamics and cultural hegemonies embedded within these communities.

Normative acculturation is a key critique, highlighting the tendency of CoPs to reinforce existing power structures and cultural norms. Barton and Hamilton (2005) explore how literacy practices within CoPs solidify social interactions, potentially leading to the marginalisation of alternative perspectives and practices as the dominant group within the community establishes what is

considered 'normal' or 'acceptable'. Fox (2000) emphasises the Foucauldian aspect of power within CoPs, suggesting that these communities can perpetuate surveillance and control, reinforcing the established norms without questioning their underlying assumptions. Similarly, Fuller (2007) points out that CoPs often do not adequately address how new members are socialised into these norms, which can stifle critical engagement and maintain existing power imbalances within educational settings. Jewson (2007) argues that the CoP framework often overlooks the complex dynamics of social differentiation and power, leading to an uncritical acceptance of the status quo. Giddens (1984) provides insights into how social systems and structures profoundly influence individual agency and the perpetuation of existing norms, suggesting that societal structures have a recursive relationship with individual actions, which in turn solidify those very structures. Beckett and Hager (2002) add that the focus on skill acquisition in traditional educational systems often neglects the holistic, contextual learning that occurs in CoPs, thereby overlooking how individuals assimilate into these communities through practice and informal learning. This oversight can lead to newcomers adopting the community's prevailing norms and practices without questioning their underlying assumptions or considering alternative approaches.

Socio-economic and political contexts: Fuller (2013) highlights that the CoP framework tends to overlook the wider socio-economic and political contexts in which these communities operate. This limitation can lead to a narrow focus on internal community dynamics, neglecting how external factors influence the formation, evolution, and practices of CoPs (Engeström, 2001).

Fuller and Jewson's critique calls for a more critical and reflexive approach to understanding CoPs, emphasising the need to consider power dynamics, cultural hegemonies, and broader socio-economic contexts in the analysis of these communities. With this understanding and awareness, I incorporate this into my approach to the research. I now explore the second framework that works alongside the CoP framework.

3.9 Conditional/Consequential Matrix Framework

The research also used an adapted version of the Conditional/Consequential Matrix along the subject of Institutionalism and individualism (Martins & Baptista Nunes, 2016). This Matrix was adapted by Martins and Baptista Nunes as a framework stemming from the conditional Matrix (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Martins & Baptista Nunes's (2016) grounded theory research explored "how the social world is composed of academics and their perception and attitudes regarding adopting e-learning" (p.312). Findings showed how trust is an issue within HE and considered potential ways to overcome the implementation of eLearning within HE Institutions that traditionally use face-to-face lecturing as the primary teaching mode. They considered how the success or failure of eLearning adoption for academics revolved around institutionalism and individualism.

Martins & Baptista Nunes (2016) found areas of sensitivity that need to be considered to promote trust, including academic values, a sense of self-worth, and how policies, resources and other action areas affect them. They identified

Figure 3.2. The Conditional/ Consequential Matrix (Martins & Baptista Nunes, 2016, p.312).
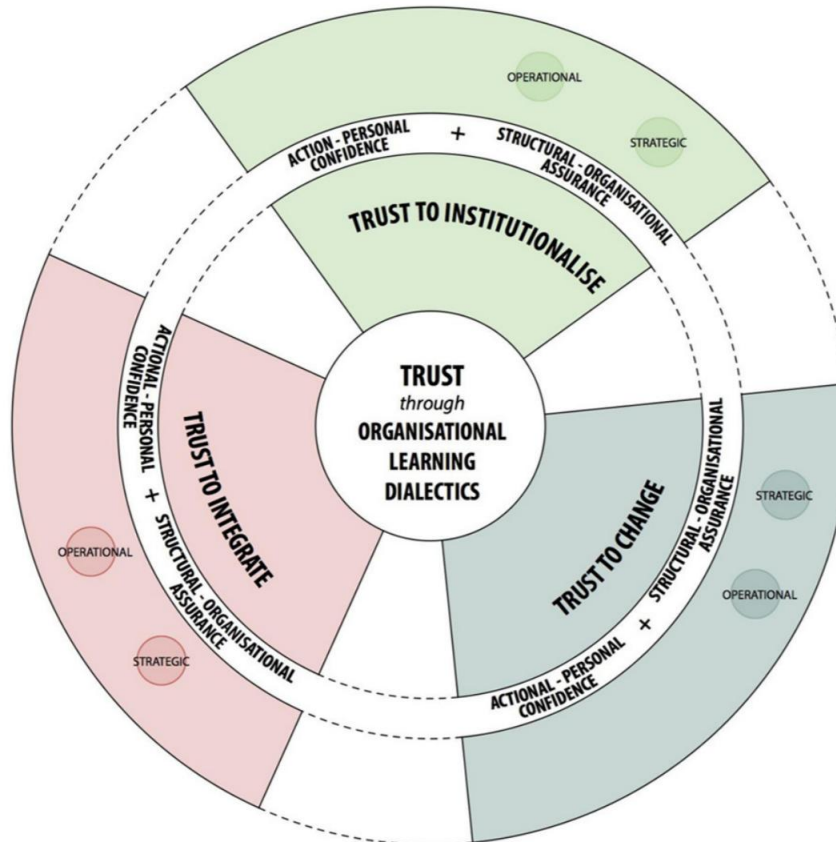
three aggregated areas: "1) Trust to change, 2) Trust to integrate, and 3) Trust to Institutionalise" (pp. 304–310). This is visualised in Figure. 3.2. They concluded that "emergent trust is a desired state of change, integration, and institutionalisation and that a strategic organisational approach can enhance organisational trust" (p.312).

Organisational Learning Dialectics

Engels' law of dialectics highlights how reality is always changing, how opposing forces are linked, and how conflicts lead to change (Engels,1954).

Martins & Baptista Nunes (2016) use the term 'dialectics' in their context, to describe a continuous process of action, perception, interpretation, and reaction, indicating a dynamic, interactive process where individuals act, perceive, interpret, and then act again, continually evolving their understanding and responses. Meaning is intentionally constructed, it is dynamic and will change as a result of ongoing interactions, because individuals act, perceive, interpret and act again – in a continuous dialectic process (Martins & Baptista Nunes, 2016). Their research refers to Singh & Hardaker's (2011) dialectic nature proposition based on Giddens (1984) "… structuration theory… [that] provided a sensitising framework for understanding the dialectical nature of adoption of eLearning within five universities in the UK" (Singh & Hardaker, 2011, p.21). They argue that while educational organisations adopt eLearning there is a synthesis around academics' agency with institutional structures such as strategies, training, access to technology, technical support, and time resources. This synthesis implies that effective eLearning adoption requires a bridging of the local context experienced by academics with top-down strategic change. Singh and Hardaker (2017) further this exploration by identifying change levers that unify top-down and bottom-up approaches in HE institutions, asserting that effective eLearning strategies must consider both macro-level institutional strategies and micro-level academic motivations and actions, thus facilitating a more comprehensive integration of structured strategies with the active agency of educators (Singh & Hardaker, 2017).

Reflecting on Martins & Baptista Nunes' (2016) synthesis of individual agency and institutional structures, my research looks into how this synthesis, or

integration, manifests in the trust-building process between LDs and SMEs within the educational environment. This synthesis is seen as a critical factor in fostering effective collaboration in online course development.

Dialectical Convergence in Trust-Building: Martins & Baptista Nunes (2016) identify a dialectical convergence between academic actions and institutional context. My research parallels this concept by exploring how this convergence facilitates trust-building between LDs and SMEs, supported and enabled by the institution, thereby enhancing collaboration in online course development.

Organisational Learning and Trust Dynamics: The organisational learning dialectic, as explored by Martins & Baptista Nunes (2016), focuses on challenges in academic environments, and finds resonance in my research on trust dynamics between LDs and SMEs. My research sheds light on the nuances of trust-building in the collaborative process of online course development, linking individual and group dynamics with institutional strategies.

Expanding Trust Dynamics in Collaborative Design: Building upon Martins (2012) 'Trust to Change' concept, my research explores how developing, maintaining and supporting trust between SMEs, LDs, and the institution is central to creating effective online courses. The stages of 'Trust to Integrate' and 'Trust to Institutionalise' are critical in my study, highlighting the evolution of shared understanding and collective actions towards a unified, trust-based approach in online course development. Martins (2012) explains that in the 'Trust to Change' process, individuals develop new insights and ideas about

building and maintaining trust in their collaborative relationships based on their individual experiences.

Trust Integration in Communities of Practice: This emphasises how trust is integral to seamless collaboration and the institutionalisation of trust-building strategies, crucial for the success of online course development initiatives. 'Trust to Integrate' occurs when there is a shared understanding among individuals within the organisation, and a collective comprehension allows for coherent and unified actions to be taken across the organisation, which, in the case study, means promoting a collaborative approach to designing and delivering online learning through mutual trusting relationships between SMEs, LDs, and the organisation.

At the 'Trust to Institutionalise' stage, the shared understandings that have been developed are solidified and implemented within the organisation's systems, structures, and strategies. Specifically, this means embedding the integration of trusting relationships and collaboration into the organisation's routine practices, strategies, and procedures, ensuring it becomes an integral part of the organisational framework.

3.10 Integrating the CoP Framework with the Conditional/Consequential Matrix

By adapting Martins & Baptista Nunes's (2016) Conditional/Consequential Matrix within a CoP framework, my research highlights the shared interests among SMEs and LDs. It explores how trust not only facilitates seamless collaboration but also supports the incorporation of trust-building measures into

institutional policies and practices. This integration enhances a cohesive environment, which is important for the effectiveness of educational activities. Related to the CoP framework, the **domain** has been identified in that it represents the common ground or shared area of interest among **community** members. In this research, the **community** refers to the collaborative environment where SMEs and LDs work together, and the community interacts and shares information and resources, which, in turn, develops the **practice** of utilising and integrating **trust** to work cohesively as a trusting CoP to effectively fulfil the aims and objectives of their educational activities. Within the Conditional/Consequential Matrix, **Integration** refers to the seamless collaboration between SMEs and LDs that is achieved through trust. **Institutionalisation** refers to the formal acknowledgement and integration of trust-building measures in the institutional policies and practices.

Chapter 4: Research Design Methodology

4.1 Methodology and Methods

This section outlines the research methodology, starting with methods considered and the rationale for selecting a case study approach. The chosen method aligns with the study's aim to explore trust dynamics between LDs and SMEs, providing a detailed, contextual understanding.

4.1.1 Methods that were considered

Initially I was encouraged to use Educational Design Research, which is instrumental in designing and assessing educational strategies, it primarily concentrates on practical solutions to educational challenges. But this focus makes it less suitable for probing into the subtler aspects of interpersonal trust dynamics in educational settings (McKenney & Reeves, 2012). I had also considered Phenomenography for its ability to reveal the spectrum of perceptions and experiences of individuals (Martin et al., 1992; Richardson, 2008). Phenomenography was ultimately deemed less effective for capturing the interactional dynamics central to this study. While it excels in understanding varied perceptions of phenomena (Marton, 1986), its potential to explore the depth of individual case contexts is not as pronounced as that of a case study and would potentially require further research iterations.

4.1.2 Method of choice: Case Study

The case study method emerged as the most fitting choice for this research as it allows for a comprehensive ability to capture both individual and collective

experiences and interactions within the broader context of educational institutions. This choice facilitates a nuanced understanding of trust dynamics that is enriched by the frameworks of CoP and the Conditional/Consequential Matrix (as described in Chapter 3), making it the most suitable method for this research as it is situated in time and place and bounded (Stake, 1995).

Its effectiveness lies in its ability to probe complex issues in real-life contexts (Yin, 2018). It enables a detailed exploration of the intricate trust dynamics that exist between LDs and SMEs, capturing the subtle interactions and nuances. This approach is particularly valuable for providing rich, descriptive narratives that illuminate the complexities and intricacies of trust relationships within their natural, organisational setting (Denscombe, 2014; Yin, 2018). The research leverages the CoP framework and the Conditional/Consequential Matrix, examining the adoption of TEL through collaboration between LDs and SMEs in an FE context. This methodology aligns with Passey's (2019) notion of the adaptable and descriptive nature of such frameworks in research.

As discussed by Tight (2017), case study research often faces criticism, particularly regarding generalisability. The core issue arises from the intensely detailed and context-specific nature of case studies. While they provide rich insights, the detailed nature may limit the extent to which findings can be applied to broader contexts. The challenge of generalisability stems from the tension between the depth of understanding specific contexts and the potential to apply these insights more universally.

To address this, I adopted strategic practices recommended by Shenton (2004) to ensure the trustworthiness and broader applicability of my findings, including data and theoretical triangulation, purposive sampling, participant engagement for feedback, and clear documentation. Shenton emphasises the importance of providing detailed and thick descriptions of the environments and participants involved in the study. This comprehensive detailing aids other researchers and practitioners in assessing the relevance of the findings to their own settings and helps bridge the gap between specific case study results and broader applicability.

4.1.3 Characteristics of the case study setting

In my pilot research, one of the participant's responses highlighted the relationships between LDs and SMEs within their institution, and 'trust' emerged as a potential area for deeper investigation, particularly in how SMEs and LDs were building trust during collaborative online design projects. I saw an opportunity for further exploration, and it was agreed that I should conduct additional research within their organisation to examine how these trust dynamics were functioning and evolving.

The research took place at Activate Learning in 2020, an FE education and training group offering diverse pathways across Oxfordshire, Berkshire, and Surrey. Activate Learning operates several colleges, including Banbury and Bicester College, Bracknell and Wokingham College, City of Oxford College, Farnham College, Guildford College, Merrist Wood College, and Reading College. Their programs encompass a wide range of adult education,

apprenticeships, cycling education, HE, international study programs, and specialised furniture education, while also supporting learners in accessing HE. With the cooperation of 'gatekeepers' within the organisation, I was able to access a diverse mix of participants across various disciplines and locations. This strategy enabled the collection of diverse experiences from practitioners within the central hub and its associated colleges. Recognising the influence of power dynamics and the 'gatekeeper' role in a CoP is vital. Jewson (2007) observes that communities may exhibit power imbalances, where dominant figures shape narratives and exert control over network expansion. Their position can confer significant power and status, potentially leading to a centralised network of influence and unequal power relations (Lave & Wenger, 1991). However, ethical protocols, anonymity in interviews, and the voluntary nature of SME participation across colleges were instrumental in mitigating these dynamics, ensuring a balanced and unbiased approach in the research process.

The research study involved two groups of participants, with Group A (Phase one of the research) consisting of eleven SMEs focusing on their experiences and Group B comprising six LDs recounting theirs. The research was conducted during March 2021, to complete four interviews per week. Phase two of the research occurred in a focus group setting with five of the original interviewees.

The research was a bounded case study with SMEs that came from various backgrounds and expertise, including carpentry, business, citizenship, sciences, management, English, motor vehicle, horticulture, animal

management, employability advising, and executive coaching. Their experience included diverse settings such as FE, HE, L&D and vocational training programmes, with some working remotely due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

LDs serving as 'Educational Advisors' had backgrounds in HE, teaching GCSE and A-Levels, and experience in corporate L&D and IT teams. At the time of the interviews, and for the research analysis, interviewees were anonymised, but each type (LD or SME) was randomised, i.e., in no particular order, labelled LD1 to LD6 and SME1 to SME11.

To explore the trust dynamics between LDs and SMEs within educational settings, the selection of an appropriate research methodology was critical. This process involved a thorough assessment of various research frameworks, each offering distinct perspectives and depths of insight.

4.2 Sampling approach

I now outline the purposive sampling strategy and selection process used to ensure a diverse participant group. By intentionally focusing on individuals with varied expertise, qualifications, and experiences across multiple disciplines and locations within the research site, the study aimed to capture a broad range of perspectives. This diversity supports the study's objectives by enhancing the depth, breadth, and transferability of the findings.

4.2.1 Purposive sampling

I used purposive sampling to select participants with diverse backgrounds within FE, capturing a range of experiences that also intersect with HE and

L&D. This approach included participants with varying levels of literacy, technical expertise, qualifications, and experience across multiple disciplines and locations, ensuring a broad representation of perspectives to support the study's conclusions and enhance their transferability.

4.2.2 Selection process

To achieve purposive sampling, I provided learning design managers at Activate Learning with a list of the types of SMEs and LDs I hoped to interview. While all participants currently work within FE, many have experience that extends into HE and L&D, bringing valuable insights. The LDs, although based centrally, support all of Activate Learning's colleges—including Banbury and Bicester, Guildford, and Reading—serving diverse learner groups such as school leavers, adult learners, apprentices, and international students. I requested that the managers select SMEs and LDs across a wide range of subjects, from A-levels and vocational courses to professional certifications, to capture a comprehensive mix of experiences.

This approach allowed for a diverse sample of SMEs and LDs, reflecting varied perspectives and expertise across Activate Learning's extensive network. The final sample represented a broad range of views across the organisation's locations and educational offerings.

4.3 Methods used

I now outline the methods used to explore trust dynamics between LDs and SMEs. I explain why I chose semi-structured interviews and focus groups as my

main data collection tools and describe how I used thematic analysis to interpret the data. By combining deductive and inductive coding, I ensured a structured yet flexible approach, which ultimately led to the development of the T.I.M.E. model.

4.3.1 Interviews

In phase one of the research, semi-structured interviews were selected as a key method to gather individual perspectives from participants. This interview format allowed for flexibility, enabling me to explore specific topics in depth while also allowing participants to elaborate on their unique experiences. The interview design included open-ended questions, crafted to probe areas such as participants' experiences with trust-building, challenges in collaborative work, and their perceptions of the roles played by SMEs and LDs in TEL projects. This format encouraged participants to reflect on their experiences, providing valuable insights into the nuanced trust dynamics at play.

4.3.1.1 Interview Benefits

The semi-structured format allowed for in-depth exploration of personal perspectives and enabled participants to share rich, detailed responses. This approach provided a deeper understanding of individual experiences and revealed complex, and sometimes unspoken dynamics within collaborative work settings.

4.3.1.2 Interview Constraints

While interviews provided valuable insights, they were also limited by time and relied on participants' self-reported perspectives, which can be influenced by personal biases or selective memory. Additionally, scheduling individual interviews with busy participants posed logistical challenges.

4.3.2 Focus Group

Phase two of the research followed the completion of interviews with LDs and SMEs, and initial findings were shared in a focus group that included two LDs and three SMEs, all of whom had participated in the first phase of data collection. The primary purpose of this focus group was to validate the preliminary data and interpretations, ensuring accuracy from the participants' perspectives through a process of participant confirmation, often referred to as 'member checking' (Doyle, 2007). During the session, participants engaged with three fictitious scenarios that were written based on initial findings from the interviews in phase one, prompting them to reflect on and discuss these scenarios in relation to their own experiences. This approach facilitated a collaborative review of themes, allowing for any necessary adjustments to the interpretations based on participant feedback.

4.3.2.1 Focus Group Benefits

Increased Validity: Member checking in the focus group enhanced the accuracy of data interpretations by aligning them with participants' perspectives.

Theme Refinement: Discussing realistic scenarios helped sharpen and refine the initial themes.

Collaborative Insights: The group setting encouraged participants to share and compare perspectives, adding depth to the findings.

4.3.2.2 Focus Group Constraints

Group Dynamics: Dominant voices could have the potential to influence others, limiting full expression of individual views.

Scenario Limitations: Fictitious scenarios may not fully represent every participant's experience.

Scheduling: Coordinating multiple participants posed logistical challenges.

4.4 Data analysis

The data analysis process in this research used thematic analysis to identify and refine key themes that emerged from interviews and a focus group, and echoed important themes from the literature, that led to the development of the T.I.M.E. model (discussed in Chapter 6). This approach combined both deductive and inductive coding, allowing for a comprehensive exploration of trust dynamics between LDs and SMEs in a TEL environment.

4.4.1 Thematic analysis

To analyse interview data, thematic analysis was used to identify patterns (i.e., themes and codes) within and across interviews (King & Horrocks, 2010). This

flexible method offers a detailed overall description of interview datasets, inductive approaches, and a contextualist perspective that is not theoretically bound (Braun & Clarke, 2006; King & Horrocks, 2010). The application of thematic analysis in this context, works as a versatile instrument in qualitative data, allowing researchers to immerse themselves in their data, utilising both data-driven and theory-guided strategies to unearth the intricate, contextual experiences of their subjects that is unconstrained by predefined theoretical boundaries.

4.4.2 Deductive codes

Deductive codes were based around the CoP framework: 'Domain', 'Community', and 'Practice'. Other codes derived from the Conditional/Consequential Matrix (Martins & Baptista Nunes, 2016): 'Trust to Change', 'Trust to Integrate', and 'Trust to Institutionalise'. This structured approach provided a theoretical scaffolding to guide the analysis, reflecting Braun & Clarke's (2006) emphasis on thematic analysis's flexibility to adapt to researcher-guided codes while King & Horrocks (2010) advocate for its comprehensive descriptive potential.

4.4.3 Inductive codes

Inductive codes emerged naturally through the data as the interviews were analysed. Framing the research questions around both sets of deductive codes facilitated the emergence of themes and codes directly from participants' narratives, highlighting insights into the relational dynamics of trust development within the collaboration between SMEs and LDs. This approach

demonstrates the method's capacity for a detailed, contextually grounded exploration of data that Braun & Clarke (2006) describe as not being theoretically bound, allowing for the discovery of nuanced themes such as the evolution of trust, negotiation of roles, and overcoming mistrust.

4.4.4 Saturation

Saturation was achieved when the data no longer contributed new insights or themes, indicating that the analysis had comprehensively covered the scope of experiences and perspectives within the study. This point of saturation ensured that the research questions were fully addressed, providing a detailed exploration of the dynamics of trust and collaboration in online course development.

4.4.5 Analysing Qualitative Data

CAQDAS (Computer-Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software) using NVivo12 software was used to manage and analyse the qualitative data. All interview transcripts and relevant documents were imported into nodes representing both deductive codes such as 'Domain,' 'Community,' and 'Practice,' alongside 'Trust to Change,' 'Trust to Integrate,' and 'Trust to Institutionalise', and inductive codes that emerged during the analysis. This dual approach enabled a systematic yet flexible examination of the data, where NVivo12's query and visualisation tools identified patterns and relationships between themes, providing a rich and nuanced understanding of trust and collaboration within the context of the research.

4.4.6 Integration of themes into the T.I.M.E. model

The T.I.M.E. model (discussed in Chapter 6) was developed by integrating themes identified from interviews, the focus group, and relevant literature. Key elements included psychological safety, role clarity, mutual respect, open communication, and support. Cognition-based trust, grounded in reliability and professional competence, provided a foundation that evolved into affect-based trust, characterised by emotional bonds and mutual respect. Role clarity emerged as essential to defining responsibilities and reducing misunderstandings, while psychological safety and empathy created an environment where participants felt comfortable sharing ideas without fear of judgment.

4.5 Credibility and trustworthiness

In this section, I outline the steps taken to ensure the credibility and trustworthiness of the research. By employing triangulation methods, engaging participants for feedback, and maintaining clear documentation, I aimed to enhance the reliability of the findings. Additionally, I used reflexivity to critically examine my dual roles as an LD and researcher, ensuring transparency and mitigating potential biases in the interpretation of participants' experiences.

4.5.1 Data Triangulation

I conducted interviews at various times with participants who were in different locations to gather a diverse range of insights and experiences. Additionally, I facilitated a focus group bringing together various stakeholders, to reveal rich

data. This variety in data collection helps mitigate potential biases and allows me to cross-verify information across different contexts and from different perspectives, thereby enhancing the robustness of the findings.

4.5.2 Theoretical Triangulation

I utilise two conceptual frameworks to interpret the data: the CoP framework and the Conditional/Consequential Matrix. These frameworks provide different focus points to analyse the data, enriching the study's interpretative depth. The CoP framework explores the dynamics of group interactions and knowledge sharing among LDs and SMEs, while the Conditional/Consequential Matrix examines how specific conditions influence outcomes and processes within these communities.

4.5.3 Participant Engagement for Feedback

By actively engaging participants to provide honest and comprehensive feedback, I ensured that the interpretations and conclusions align closely with the participants' true experiences and perspectives. This engagement enhances the confirmability and credibility of the research.

4.5.4 Clear Documentation

Maintaining clear and thorough documentation of all research processes and decisions is critical. This transparency allows other researchers to understand the methodology, replicate the study if necessary, and assess the applicability of the findings.

4.5.5 Integrating Strategic Practices

Integrating these forms of triangulation and other methods ensures that the study's conclusions are well-supported and credible (Shenton, 2004). This approach not only strengthens the validity of the research by confirming that the findings are consistent across various sources and theoretical perspectives but also mitigates generalisability. Readers can trust that the insights derived from the study are based on a thorough and rigorous examination of the data.

Varela et al. (2021) provide a detailed analysis of the case study method, highlighting its role in examining systems through one or several research methods. This approach allows for a comprehensive understanding of the subject matter. Thomas (2011) similarly acknowledges the benefit of case studies in conducting systemic analyses. Varela et al. (2021) reference Cesar et al. (2010) and suggest that case studies are instrumental in delving into a specific setting to gather insight into the subject. Creswell (2013) expands on this by stating that case studies are particularly effective in investigating real-life, contemporary bounded systems or various such systems over time. This is achieved through in-depth and detailed data collection from multiple information sources.

4.5.6 Reflexivity

Reflexivity was used to reflect on the research process critically. The aim was to bring consciousness to personal biases, views or motivations and bring a sense of self-awareness to the interactions with research participants (Powell, 2006). This is because I have the dual roles of an LD—with all the experience

brought to this process, and the role of a researcher looking at the professional context, which can potentially influence the written interpretation of participants' experiences (Casanave, 2010; Duff, 2007; Xerri, 2018). Through reflexivity and engendering trust, the aim was to bring in a 'broader notion of truth value' (Ridenour & Newman, 2008) where written interpretations could be confirmed with participants in a focus group (Xerri, 2018).

4.6 Ethics

In this section, I explain the ethical considerations I followed throughout my research. I ensured full compliance with Lancaster University's ethical guidelines and obtained informed consent from all participants, making it clear that participation was voluntary, and their confidentiality and anonymity would be protected. I took personal responsibility for securely handling all data using strict protocols, including secure authentication and anonymisation, to safeguard participants' information. These steps allowed me to conduct the research with integrity while respecting and maintaining the trust of those involved.

4.6.1 Participants' Informed consent

Prior to research consent, Lancaster University's ethics form and procedures had to be satisfied, and similarly, before research at the site could begin, another ethics procedure had to be fulfilled. Once all consent was given, the managers of the research site sought interest in the research from staff. Research participants consisted of professional Learning Design team members and Faculty. The research site's managers sent open invitations to

all faculty and LDs within the organisation, and individuals chose whether to contact me or not. When a potential research participant contacted me, I provided them with a participant information sheet that explained the purpose of the research, and how I would interview them and a participant consent form that allowed them to confirm they had read and understood the information from the information I had provided. They acknowledged their understanding that it was voluntary participation, and they had the opportunity to withdraw from the study, that information would remain confidential, and that information they provided would be anonymised but usable for future research and publications. They confirmed that their names and the name of the organisation would not be used without consent, and that the interviews and data from these will be kept according to Lancaster University guidelines for a minimum of 10 years after the end of the study. Note that during participation, all interviewees gave consent to the name of the organisation being used but not individual names or locations where interviews had occurred.

At the end of the interview, I explained that the research was in two phases (phase one the interviews, and phase two a focus group) and invited participants to register interest in taking part in a focus group that was within the parameters of the agreed ethics and confidentiality, and which would take place to 'member check' the participants to confirm the results found in the interviews (Doyle, 2007). Again, this was entirely voluntary, and participants had the opportunity to withdraw.

4.6.2 Confidentiality

The Ethics Committee at Lancaster University granted approval for software application engaged in data collection and preservation. Entry to these applications required a dual-step verification process. The university hosted a secure system where all related digital files were stored in a designated research data area, with access also safeguarded by dual-step verification. In compliance with the University's protocol on research ethics, a decade after the completion of this PhD thesis, any data connected to the research will be deleted.

Leaders of the research location issued widespread invitations to every member of the faculty and LDs associated with the institution, leaving the decision to reach out to me in their hands. Upon contact from a prospective research participant, I would initiate email communication through a secure, password-protected university email service, overseeing all interactions with confidentiality.

Following the conclusion of the interviews and survey, the collected data were moved to the NVivo12 software, which is approved for managing qualitative data. Each set of data was made anonymous through the assignment of a unique participant identification code. In instances where participants took part in subsequent interviews, this identical code linked their interview transcripts with survey responses, artefacts, and any pertinent documentation or annotations. The survey results were reported in such a way that no piece of data could be traced back to an individual participant.

By allowing participants to choose their interview times, the sessions were scheduled at their convenience, outside of their instructional or professional obligations. The interviews were conducted via the Microsoft Teams platform from the privacy of my own office space, free from interruptions.

Access to the data gathered from the interviews was restricted to me and the supervising researchers, implementing measures of anonymity which are crucial in research to prevent the identification or tracing of participants, as highlighted by Cohen et al. (2018). To further safeguard privacy, the participation of educators from the same or adjacent departments was kept confidential and not disclosed to others in the study. Participants were also instructed to refrain from discussing the interview or their responses from their peers' post-interview. Anonymity was preserved in the transcription process as well.

All data were anonymised, assigned a unique identifier that connected interview transcripts with corresponding participant data. Once an interview was complete, I transferred the audio and video recordings to a secure, password-protected computer and expunged the original files from Microsoft Teams' Stream service. All data were then securely stored online at Lancaster University.

4.7 Data collection

This section looks at the data collection process, which I carried out in two phases to explore the research questions. In phase one, I conducted semi-structured interviews with SMEs and LDs to gain detailed insights into their

roles and experiences. In phase two, I facilitated a focus group to validate the findings from the interviews and provide additional perspectives, ensuring a better understanding of the data.

4.7.1 Phase one: Semi-structured interviews

Interviews went ahead with eleven SMEs and six LDs during March 2021. Four interviews per week lasted between one and one and a half hours each, and the first phase of group A was completed within the first three weeks of March. Then, the research moved to group B by the remaining week. Group A interviews were semi-structured and one-to-one. Group B was carried out by semi-structured group interview discussion. All interviews were conducted over the Microsoft Teams platform and were recorded. All recordings were transcribed via the Otter.ai platform.

4.7.2 Relating the Research Questions to the Theoretical Framework

To contextualise the semi-structured questions that I asked interviewees (which are explored in the next section), it is important to understand how they relate to the main research questions (RQ1, RQ2, RQ3). The three research questions explore the broader dynamics of trust mapped to the Conditional/Consequential Matrix (Martins & Baptista Nunes, 2016). In contrast, the questions I asked utilise both the CoP framework and the Matrix to provide a detailed understanding of the roles, interactions, and practices underpinning these trust dynamics. The interplay between the Matrix and the CoP framework offers a comprehensive focus to understand trust in online course development collaborations.

Martins and Baptista Nunes, (2016) explored the successful implementation of eLearning in an educational institution. At the heart of the process is the promotion of emergent trust as a desired state of change, integration, and institutionalisation. Participant interviews allowed for open-ended questions leading to nuanced understandings and rich narrative descriptions of perceptions from diverse perspectives (Bennett, 2016; Ezebilo & Mattsson, 2010).

RQ1: (What were the initial experiences of trust and trusting relationships between LDs and SMEs when working together in online course development?) is anchored in the 'Trust to Change' aspect of the Conditional/Consequential Matrix. This question seeks to understand the foundational dynamics of trust as LDs and SMEs begin their journey in online course development. It sets the stage for exploring how trust is initially established, and the challenges faced during the initial phase.

RQ2: (What are the shared aspects of trust that have changed or developed within successful working relationships between SMEs and LDs?) aligns with the Matrix's 'Trust to Integrate' and 'Trust to Institutionalise' facets. It looks into the evolution of trust as collaborations mature, highlighting how trust dynamics shift and solidify as working relationships become more integrated and institutionalised.

RQ3: (How did LDs and SMEs develop trusting, successful working relationships?) similar to RQ2, is framed within the Matrix's 'Trust to Integrate' and 'Trust to Institutionalise' aspects. It further explores the mechanisms and

practices through which trust is nurtured and solidified in established collaborations.

4.7.3 Semi-structured interview format

The first phase of Group A was targeted for completion within the first three weeks, followed by Group B in the remaining week. Group A and B interviews were semi-structured, one-to-one, conducted over Microsoft Teams, and transcribed using the Otter.ai platform. The CoP of the educational advisors (referred to as LDs) and SMEs (the faculty, tutors, and lecturers) were interviewed and asked semi-structured interview questions around their **domain** (educational design and development for online learning), **community** (their peers within the two roles of LDs or SMEs across the whole of the many colleges) and **practice** (their shared resources, experiences, stories, tools, and ways of addressing recurring issues). The adapted Conditional/Consequential Matrix from Martins and Baptista Nunes (2016) was used as a focus for the research (discussed in Chapter three). The original framework (that Martins and Baptista Nunes themselves adapted) focused on the interplay between institutionalism and individualism in the context of eLearning adoption in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). This Matrix identified Trust as a critical factor in adopting eLearning, a shift that can challenge traditional face-to-face teaching methodologies. The Matrix identified three aggregated areas: Trust to Change, Trust to Integrate, and Trust to Institutionalise, which played a role in guiding the research questions (RQ1, RQ2, RQ3) and the semi-structured interview questions for the study.

4.7.4 Interview Questions (questions related to the RQs)[13]

Interviewees were asked the following questions in a semi-structured interview format.

Question 1: What was each participant's role?

This question touches on the **Domain** and **Community** elements of the CoP framework. It aims to identify the specific areas of expertise of the participants and understand the community dynamics within which LDs and SMEs operate, highlighting their unique roles and contributions.

Question 2: How was information exchanged regarding design languages and expertise between LDs and SMEs, and what challenges or solutions arose?

Informed by the **Community** and **Practice** elements of CoP, this question explores the shared repertoire of resources and the ways LDs and SMEs communicate and collaborate. It seeks insights into the challenges and solutions that emerge from their interactions, exploring the importance of shared understanding and mutual learning.

Question 3: How had SMEs and LDs previously worked together and what were the levels of trust?

This question relates to RQ1 and is mapped to the Conditional/Consequential Matrix around **Trust to Change**, as well as being rooted in the **Community** and

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[13] Note that interview questions were reviewed by a panel of experts at Lancaster University prior to ethics approval for content validity.

Practice realms of CoP. It explores the historical context of collaborations between SMEs and LDs. It provides insights into their shared experiences, stories, and the trust dynamics that have shaped their past interactions.

Question 4: How had collaboration improved or changed, and what contributed to these changes?

This question relates to RQ2 and is mapped to the Conditional/Consequential Matrix around **Trust to Integrate** and **Trust to Institutionalise**. It is also based on the **Community** and **Practice** elements of CoP; this question investigates the evolution of collaborative practices and the factors driving these changes. It highlights the shared ways of addressing recurring challenges and continuously refining collaborative practices.

Question 5: What shared aspects of trust changed or developed within successful working relationships between SMEs and LDs, and how did LDs and SMEs develop trusting, successful working relationships?

This question relates to RQ3 and is mapped to the Conditional/Consequential Matrix around **Trust to Integrate** and **Trust to Institutionalise.** This question, informed by the **Community** and **Practice** facets of CoP, looks into the nuances of trust dynamics within the collaborations. It seeks to understand the shared practices, experiences, and community interactions that underpin the development and evolution of trust between SMEs and LDs.

4.8 Phase two: Focus Group

Once all interviews were transcribed and data analysis had been completed for phase one, a cross-section of participants of five individuals engaged in a focus group. This single focus group was organised with team members to ensure that SMEs and LDs could discuss the findings and gain additional information. This method enables qualitative researchers to return data or results to participants to be checked for accuracy and resonance with the participants' experience (Birt et al. 2016, p.1). The purpose is to ensure the suggestions made in the thesis will be applicable in the field and valuable to the team. This type of 'member checking' helps to confirm the results found in phase one of the research (Doyle, 2007). This is an essential aspect to the research as a whole because this adds a level of rigour that ensures the qualitative researcher's own bias is not used as a way to influence their own agenda or knowledge but can ensure participants' perspectives and meanings are represented (Mason, 2002; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Tong et al, 2007).

Chapter 5: Findings

5.1 Introduction

This case study explores the dynamics of trust between LDs and SMEs in the development of online courses within TEL settings. The research used a two-phase approach to explore these interactions. In phase one, semi-structured interviews with eleven SMEs and six LDs were conducted to uncover initial perceptions and experiences concerning trust-building in their collaborative efforts. Many themes emerged from the interviews, including the use and adaptation of new technology, motivation and resistance to change, efficiency and time management, the learning design process, job responsibilities and roles, building relationships and trust, transitioning to online teaching, shared aspects of trust, communication, successful relationships and collaboration, face-to-face versus online meetings, and adapting to the COVID-19 pandemic. The key themes identified from these interviews are visually presented in Figure 5.1 and Figure 5.2, showing a complex and multifaceted nature of trust dynamics.

Figure 5.1. Combined themes in LD and SME interviews.

Frequency of Combined Themes in LD and SME Interviews
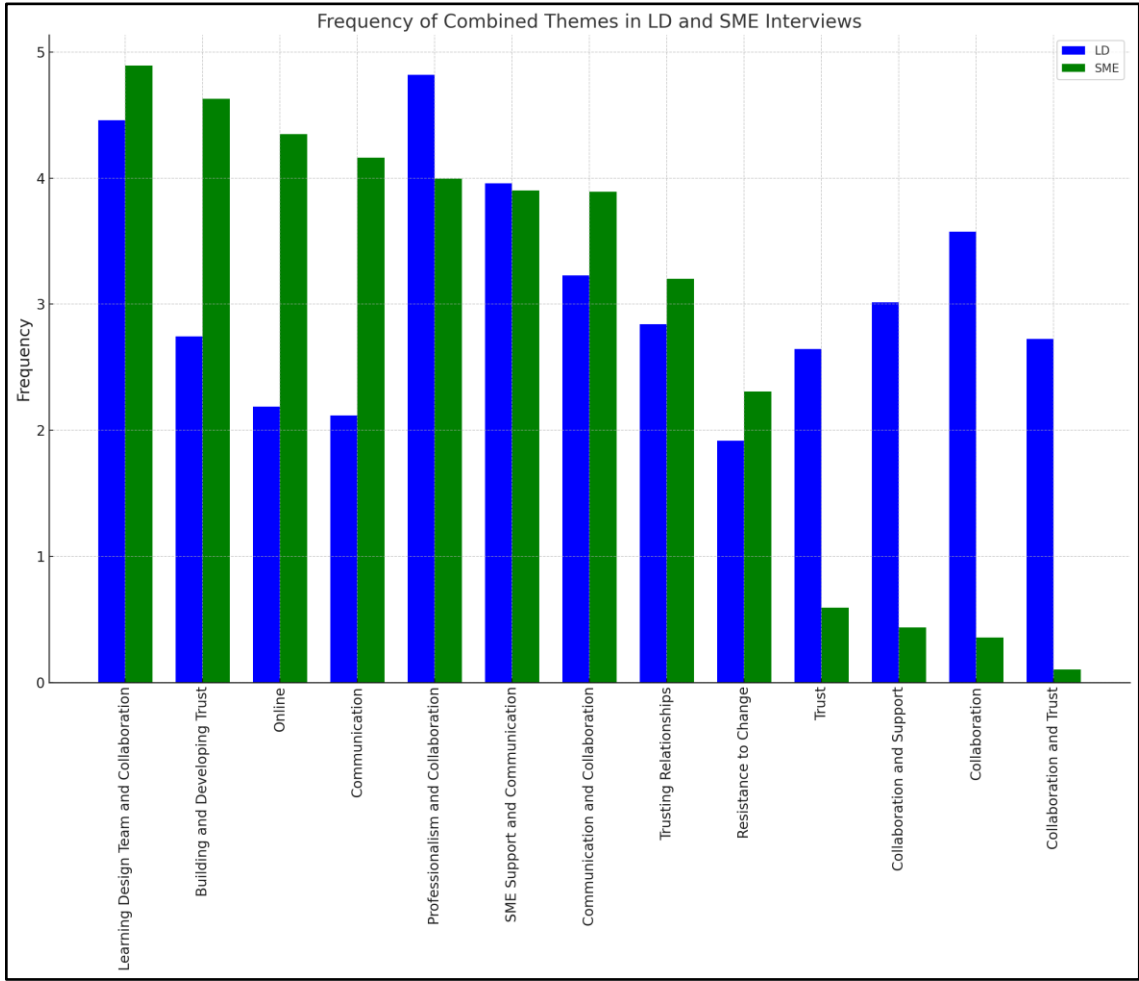
Figure 5.2. Trust-related Themes Identified by LDs and SMEs.
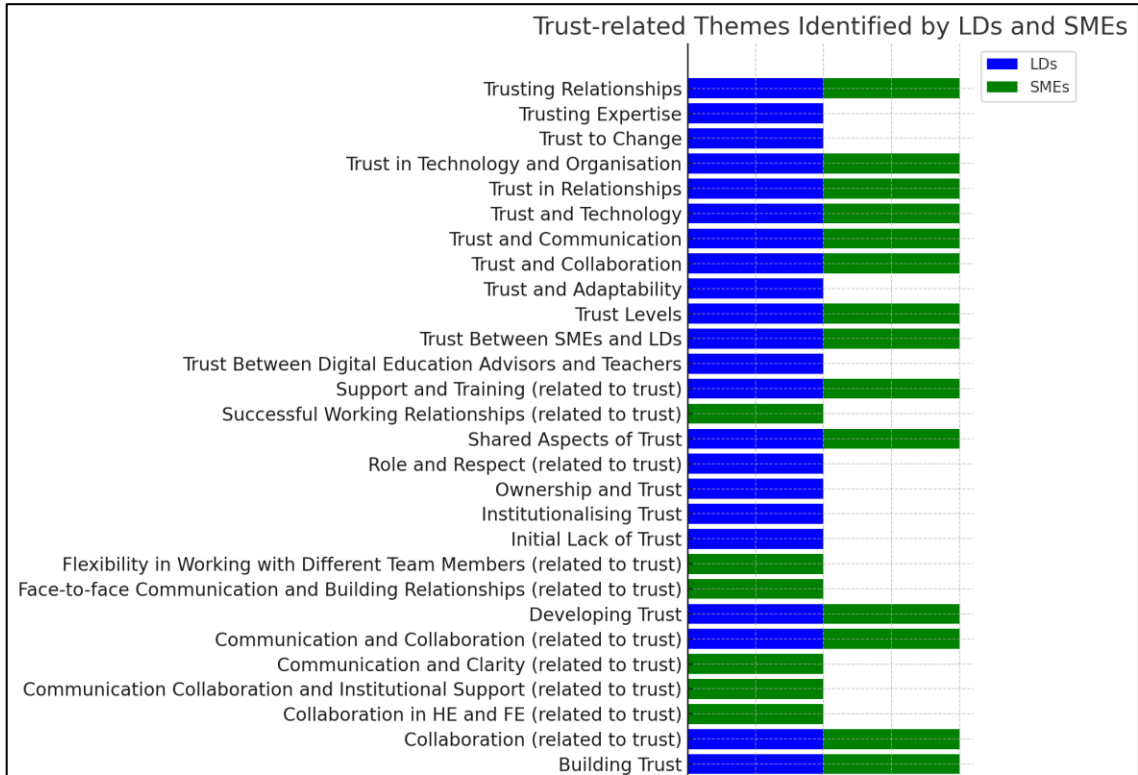
Phase two of the study engaged a focus group with five participants (two LDs and three SMEs) from phase one, facilitating a deeper exploration of the initial themes. This session was important to gain more understanding of how trust evolves over time and its critical impact on the collaboration process. The insights garnered from this discussion are shown in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1. Focus Group Themes.

Focus Group Themes	Codes
• Building relationships and trust • Transitioning to online teaching • Shared aspects of trust • Communication • LD role	• Building relationships and fostering trust • Developing trusting successful working relationships • Key aspects of successful relationships • Transitioning to online teaching • Shared aspects of trust in successful working relationships • Trust levels • Trust in successful working relationships • Communication • Misunderstandings and assumption on both sides • Lack of awareness of services offered by the learning design team • LD role • Importance of showcasing and raising awareness of available resources

The findings from both phases provide insights into the complex mechanisms of building and sustaining trust and collaboration among LDs and SMEs in TEL settings. This research not only documents the practical experiences of the participants, but also offers guidance for enhancing collaborative practices. By focusing on how trust is initiated, developed, and maintained, the study sheds light on strategies to foster a more cohesive, effective, trusting, and collaborative environment. The analysis provided here delivers guidance for enhancing educational collaborations in similar contexts, emphasising the essential role of trust in the success of TEL projects.

5.2 Phase one

5.2.1 Responses to Semi-structured Interviews

Interviewees are anonymised, but each type (LD or SME) is randomised, i.e., in no particular order, labelled LD1 to LD6 and SME1 to SME11.

5.2.2 LD responses

The six learning design interviews (LD1–LD6) highlight several shared themes, primarily focused on the concept of trust, roles and responsibilities, collaboration and communication, and the integration of technology in teaching and learning.

LD1 emphasises trust building between LDs and SMEs, focusing on standardised processes and shared aspects of trust such as mutual respect, communication, confidence, and adaptability, for example, "…you need to have confidence in each other, and you need to have confidence in the system" (LD1).

LD2 discusses job roles and responsibilities, communication, and remote work, explicitly focusing on trust levels and building trust. The discussion also highlights teacher concerns and misunderstandings, suggesting a need for support and training, for example, "I would say [there were trust issues at an early stage], I would say there were. And I think I felt like I was part of the, I felt like it was part of my role to try to reassure the teachers from that perspective as well" (LD2).

LD3 further builds on building relationships and trust with SMEs, emphasising the importance of respect, communication, and cross-departmental collaboration, for example, "… it's with the best of intentions, but sometimes I feel just by the fact that in the organisational structure we're so divergent… But just the barriers do make communication harder" (LD3).

LD4 presents the challenges of resistance to change and online teaching, discussing the transition to digital education and the use of technology. The interview also delves into the importance of building relationships and trust and the impact of organisational culture and structure on this process:

> I think that it's very much an us and them mentality in HE. In FE, I think it's much more collaborative… [our organisation] is, very management heavy. And it tends to be a lot of dictums from above. 'This is how things are going to happen.' And I have heard that in conversations with teaching staff that if there is an us and them thing it's between the coalface teaching staff, and the management, rather than between, say, for example, the digital team and teaching staff, I think they appreciate what we do (LD4).

LD5 focuses on establishing trust, changes in work dynamics, and collaboration, for example, "…But in in those faculties that I've been supporting, it's also practical that it's been very, very much a challenge for them to do it online, since the lockdown as well" (LD5).

Lastly, LD6 addresses changes in course design, the resistance to change and the use of technology, and the need for trust to integrate and institutionalise

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these changes, for example, "…about the directors, I think they're …more on board now than they ever were. …they are in the position to influence everyone else so, definitely a change… I think we have quite a close … working relationship" (LD6).

Across all six learning design interviews, trust emerges as a central theme and appears to underpin successful collaboration and communication between LDs and SMEs, be it in defining roles and responsibilities, adapting to new technologies or managing changes in course design. The interviews all emphasise the need for building and maintaining trust, laying the foundation of cognition-based trust through professionalism and reliability, with several highlighting the importance of moving towards affect-based trust, mutual respect, clear and compelling communication, and adaptability as critical factors, for example, LD1, LD2, and LD5.

The role of technology in education is a recurring theme. It includes not only the integration of digital tools in teaching and learning, but also the challenges that arise, such as resistance to change, time constraints, and the need for support and training.

Despite the commonalities, there are differences in the specific focus and approach of LDs. For example, LD2 emphasises job roles, responsibilities, and efficiency in the organisation, while LD3 focuses more on the communication aspect with SMEs. LD4 delves into the resistance to change and online teaching, while LD5 and LD6 focus more on the changes in work dynamics and course design, respectively.

These shared themes, and variations reflect the complexity of learning design, highlighting the need for a multi-faceted approach that considers different aspects of the teaching and learning process and the importance of trust as a foundational element in these interactions, which converge around specific core themes, with trust emerging as a central point of discussion.

5.2.3 SME responses

SME1 focuses on building and developing trust, particularly in technology use, collaboration, and support, for example, "…obviously, it's nice to be able to talk to somebody, but I can email any of them. And I'm confident that I'll get a response very quickly. So, you know, the support side of it has been really important" (SME1). Other highlighted themes are communication, collaboration, mentoring, and resistance to change.

SME2 emphasises communication, collaboration, and the importance of trusting relationships when working with the Learning Design team, for example, "[LD] is very good at communicating…always responds really quickly, very clearly, it's very detailed, and like, it's very detail oriented. And I do trust most people. So, I guess it depends on the personality type as well" (SME2).

SME3 focuses on the themes of trust, help from LDs, and levels of collaboration. For example, "…I could not still work out how to change something or where I was meant to be looking. [LD] was very patient…[and] sorted it" (SME3).

SME4 discusses technology and support, communication, online learning, and trust, focusing on the differences between FE and HE in online learning, for example, "So in HE…It's very clearly a collaborative process. And I think that builds trust. With the FE side, it's much more a transactional process, that this is what you're getting. If you have any questions, ask [LD]…" (SME4).

SME5 discusses successful working relationships, the importance of autonomy and independence in work, and resistance to technology, for example, when attending training sessions by the Learning Design team, there are difficulties with SMEs understanding what is being discussed and admitting this. "…there're some select few people in technology, who will understand what they're saying. So, you just sort of think, okay, I'll just wait till this is over…[and] they can explain it in idiot terms [to me]" (SME5).

SME6 emphasises collaboration, trust, support, and the challenges of transitioning to online learning, for example, "Thinking about my colleagues… there are some that will just avoid all online development sessions because they find it quite scary. And they try and stick with the ways that they know for as long as possible…" (SME6).

SME7 shares insights on support, communication, trust, technology migration issues, and the importance of understanding and clarity in LD roles. This individual finds themselves acting as an informal proxy support (or champion) that assists peers because of a disparity of communication and understanding between the Learning Design team and SMEs in their particular college. For example:

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…they assume you have a level of knowledge when it comes to IT, but my colleague with [an older style non-smart phone], for instance, she is dyslexic. Practically and in the classroom, she's amazing. But she really struggles with following lots of instructions. If you've got, like a new system we have to use, there is no point sending her an email with instructions on how to do it, because it will make no sense to her. She literally needs somebody to talk her through it and show it to her physically, then she's fine (SME7).

SME8 discusses professionalism, collaboration, flexibility, technology use, technical upskilling, and trust-building, for example, "we just all seemed to work really well together, communicate well together, you know…I just feel that [LD] was the right person. Very professional, very easy-going, very flexible" (SME8).

SME9 shares experiences related to trust, communication, support, IT difficulties, choice overload, and the importance of face-to-face communication, and issues arising from these. For example, "…it's the communications and expectations, and assumed knowledge and this non face-to-face stuff. If someone came down in person and introduced themselves and said, what would you want, they'd be my best friend for life!" (SME9).

SME10 discusses trust, communication, collaboration, developing relationships, change management, and expectations. Relationships changed from one LD to another where expectations and the project did not align, and SME10 was unaware of what their role was in this previous relationship. A more positive experience was discussed, "I fully trust that we will not have the same

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problems… I definitely feel like I can trust [LD], that, you know, they will show up, and [LD] will help us find a way around whatever might arise" (SME10).

Lastly, SME11 shares insights on resistance to change, training, support, the holistic approach to integration, the role of teachers in online learning and changes to collaboration across the colleges where 'stonewalling' occurred by teachers not responding to LD requests, or as a result of the LD not developing relationships. "So, before it wasn't happening, [the data showed] this teacher has done ten minutes this year. All these teachers haven't done anything…And so yeah, it's definitely improved" (SME11).

SME2 discusses the impact and support needed for some of the students:

> some students will go to university, a few will do a high-level apprenticeship and then the rest will go into full time work [and when I get them to do online learning] now they will, but before lock down last year, if I said to them, right I've put this on the system, look at it at home. Then the next day they wouldn't, you know, it was too difficult for them… [and whether it was perceived they are having log in issues] Sorry. It's an easy excuse. That's the truth… is that it's an easy excuse. Oh, no, my log-in didn't work, these students —a lot of them just want to leave school. They hated school. They want to leave education, but they can't. So, IT issues is an easy excuse (SME2).

This view is echoed by SME11 who also discusses the managerial approach taken to support some of the manual expertise faculty:

…also, literacy, I think, has a massive impact. So, we see it in our learners, but also, my staff team…and a lot of them are quite open about the fact…their literacy is not, you know, they struggled. So, you know, one of my…team finds it really hard to process written language, and you know, that that is a requirement of digital, you know, any platform that you're dealing with, you've got to quite quickly scan a page... It's not even digital literacy. It's, and I see it in my students as well, you know, they pull up the login page. And whereas, you know, if, if you're highly literate, you can scan the page instantly and know what to ignore and what you actually need to read. They see a page of words that they are going to have to read through to work out which is the relevant bit. And I think that that is a barrier. I've got really an experienced team, who are older than me, experts in things that I know nothing about. So, I had to position myself as I know about teaching and learning, I know about digital stuff. So that helped at the beginning of lockdown. This is what I bring to the party. But we're also really clear about where your expertise is. And then they start telling me about, you know, their concerns about literacy. And that side of it. But, I mean, again, I think some of it is more their anxiety than anything else. I don't see it holding any of them back. You know, it will take some of them slightly longer to do stuff. But I think the biggest barrier is the confidence rather than the actual ability (SME11).

Across all SME narratives, trust emerges as a critical theme. Trust is discussed in various contexts, such as building trust, trust levels, trust in relationships,

trust in technology, and the shared aspects of trust. This indicates that trust is a central component in successfully implementing learning design. Notably, the discussions highlighted cognition-based trust i.e. competence and reliability, was important at the outset and that more availability and readiness to be flexible, communicate, interact, understand, and respond to SMEs' needs were needed that would lead to affect-based trust as indicated by, for example, SME2, SME3, SME8, and SME9.

Communication and collaboration are other recurring themes, often interlinked with both cognition-based and affect-based trust. Communication is seen as a crucial aspect in building trust and fostering effective collaboration between SMEs and LDs. Several SMEs also discuss the challenges of transitioning to online learning, resistance to technology, and the need for support and training, indicating a need for ongoing assistance and guidance in adapting to new teaching and learning technologies.

While there are shared themes across the SME narratives, each narrative also offers unique insights and perspectives. For instance, SME5 highlights autonomy and independence, SME6 discusses strategic thinking and planning, SME7 focuses on technology migration issues, SME8 talks about flexibility and technical upskilling, SME9 discusses choice overload, SME10 brings up change management, and SME11 talks about the holistic approach to integration.

These shared themes and unique insights reflect the multifaceted nature of the SME experiences and emphasise the importance of trust, communication, and

collaboration that are represented in Figure 5.1. It is difficult to say whether the COVID-19 pandemic fully affected the research, but it did impact some aspects, such as the push to online learning, while leaving others unchanged. This was a bounded moment in time, and different results might emerge under other circumstances.

5.2.4 LD and SME shared perspectives and insights

Overview and common ground

The data analysis provided a picture of the perspectives and themes prevalent among LDs and SMEs, with both groups consistently emphasising the importance of communication, collaboration, and trust, indicating a mutual understanding of these themes' critical role in the educational design process.

Divergent Themes and Approaches

While both LDs and SMEs talk about support and resistance to change, their emphasis varies. SMEs discuss support in the context of mentoring, while LDs associate support with training. Regarding change, SMEs express a general resistance, whereas LDs expressly highlight challenges related to technology and digital tools.

Support and Training versus Mentoring

SMEs primarily view support in the context of receiving training, guidance, one-to-one support, and mentorship, which can be more personalised and tailored

to individual needs. They emphasise the importance of having someone experienced to guide them through the learning design process. For example:

> I want someone to come and sit next to me and talk me through it and not go through the processes like this. I'm a handholding person I need someone to hold my hand through things. So, delivering the data is fine. A lot of my stuff is big as well as in quantity size. So, if I'm doing pictures, downloads, if I'm trying to do video clips and things like this, if I want those included in the in everything else, and they say, well the file is too big, can you make it smaller? And I go, I don't know how to do that. Or can you do this? There's that assumed knowledge which they have, which I struggle with more than anything else. It may be my fault, but it's that, as you say, that trust or communication build up between the two. So, in the end, they do it and you get what you're given because you don't know any better (SME9).

On the other hand, LDs talk about support in terms of providing training and resources, highlighting a more structured and systematic approach to building capabilities. For example,

> …generally, what I offer to do is I offer to do training sessions, one to one training sessions, but again, you know, there is the issue of time with many of the teaching staff… So, they've been very open and receptive to one-to-one training, which has been good from my point of view, because I can help explain things to people. I don't get that quite so much with my faculty, teaching staff, who often don't have the time, or in

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some cases, the inclination to learn a new system, they'd rather just not

use it (LD4).

Resistance to Change versus Adaptation to New Tools

SMEs showcase a broad resistance to change, indicating a preference for

stability and known methods. They may feel overwhelmed by the fast pace of

change in educational technology and methodologies. LDs, however, express

specific concerns about adapting to new digital tools and software, highlighting

a need for technical proficiency and fluency in the digital landscape. This

distinction emphasises the different challenges each group faces in the context

of change.

Insights from SMEs

The data also highlights unique themes brought up by SMEs, such as the

challenges of online teaching, IT difficulties, and the lack of face-to-face

communication. These themes reflect SMEs' practical challenges in their roles,

providing valuable insights into their specific needs and areas requiring

additional support. However, some SMEs have found that they have adapted to

change well, for example:

You see, before COVID, if you'd asked me, would it be better to meet

somebody face-to-face rather than over Teams, I actually really never

like doing meetings over Teams, I would make the effort to go to the

other college and meet with a person face-to-face. But because of the

pandemic, I'm quite comfortable doing the Teams meetings now. And I

can see the benefit, you know, of me being sat here…And [LD] has been

wherever [LD] is, you know, I can see a huge benefit there. And don't

see it as a barrier anymore. I've worked with two people from the

[Learning Design] team, and the person that I've met only remotely, or

virtually which, or whatever you want to say, is the one that I've got a

better working relationship with which is interesting (SME8).

Practical Challenges in Online Learning

SMEs bring attention to the tangible challenges they face in transitioning to and

conducting online classes, such as ensuring student engagement and

managing the online platform effectively. These concerns reflect their direct

interaction with students and the learning environment. For example:

We put on normal timetables during lockdown. I would set up a lesson

and students would join it, but I couldn't see them. They didn't have

webcams on. And they didn't have microphones on either. So, all I had

was group chat, and private chat, actually, which is quite useful. And

they would just type things in the group chat. But they're quite reluctant

to do that. So, it was quite painful… Nothing. Someone just tells you

something. I can't see. I can't see you. I can't see if you understand and

across from what I can see, you're looking a bit confused. I can't see you

need to tell me that understand something. It wasn't, it was a bad

time…It was a deliberate tactic. But the problem was a lot of them

maybe didn't have that functionality. And it gets to the point of, we can't

force everyone to do it, therefore, no one does it. So no, no webcams, no

microphones, I think around webcams as well, I think there's some

safeguarding issue. I know it was raised with other schools (SME2).

Need for Face-to-Face Interaction

SMEs uniquely highlight the value and irreplaceability of face-to-face

communication, underlining how specific nuances and aspects of teaching and

interaction are lost in virtual environments. This point reflects a concern for

maintaining the quality and effectiveness of communication in the shift to online

learning. For example:

> I hate everything about online learning, whatever is on there, whether it's
>
> videos, whether it's quizzes, whatever was on there, I just want to be in a
>
> room with other people, I don't want to be on my own looking at a
>
> screen, it's my least favourite thing to do. I love things with other people.
>
> I want to be in a class with other people or even just in the staff room
>
> with my colleagues. I just want people around me and actually my
>
> favourite method of teaching and learning, which is quite often the same
>
> is through debate. So, my lessons are we have lots of class discussions.
>
> That's my favourite thing (SME2).

LDs' Focus on Teamwork and Professionalism

Emphasis on Collaborative Dynamics:

LDs strongly emphasise the functioning and dynamics of their teams,

highlighting the importance of collaboration, mutual understanding, and shared

goals. They understand that a cohesive team is crucial for successful learning

design, as it enables smoother communication, greater alignment on objectives, and a more unified approach to tackling challenges in TEL.

Maintaining Professional Standards:

LDs uniquely address the theme of upholding professional standards in their work, indicating a commitment to excellence and a high output quality in the learning design process. This focus reflects their role in ensuring that educational materials and experiences meet specific standards.

Partial Relations and Theme Overlap

The data also reveal partial relations between the themes of SMEs and LDs, indicating areas of overlap but also differences.

Autonomy versus Collaborative Approach:

An SME discussing the need for autonomy and independence in their role might partially align with an LD's emphasis on a collaborative and inclusive approach. While the SMEs seek space and freedom in their work, the LD highlights the benefits and necessity of working together as a unit, demonstrating a partial overlap in work processes and environment themes.

5.2.5 LD and SME Common Themes

Communication and Collaboration: This theme stands out prominently in the responses of both LDs and SMEs, highlighting a shared recognition of its critical role in the educational design process. Many individuals from both

groups highlighted the need for clear, transparent dialogue and collaborative, solid working relationships.

Trust: Identified as a key element by both LDs and SMEs, this theme highlights the importance of building and maintaining trust to facilitate effective collaboration. Trust is often intertwined with communication, suggesting that transparent communication is crucial for fostering trust.

5.2.6 Similar or Related Themes

Support and Mentoring vs. Training and Support: SMEs emphasised the importance of receiving support and mentoring. On the other hand, LDs tended to focus on providing training and support. This difference indicates that while both groups acknowledge the need for a supportive environment, their perceptions of how that support should occur may differ.

Resistance to Change vs. Resistance to Technology and Digital Literacy: Although not exclusively, SMEs expressed a general resistance to change, while LDs specifically pointed out resistance to technology and digital tools. This subtle distinction implies that, although change is a broad area of concern, adapting to digital tools and enhancing digital literacy present particular challenges.

5.2.7 Themes Unique to SMEs

Online Teaching: SMEs specifically highlighted this theme, reflecting their direct engagement with the challenges and nuances associated with transitioning to online teaching environments.

Face-to-face communication and IT Difficulties: SMEs uniquely brought up these challenges, potentially indicating a significant shift from traditional teaching methods to more technologically reliant approaches.

5.2.8 Themes Unique to LDs

Learning Design team and Collaboration: LDs emphasised the importance of internal team collaboration, highlighting the role of cohesive team dynamics in the learning design process.

Professionalism and Collaboration: LDs uniquely addressed this theme, suggesting a focus on maintaining high standards of conduct and expertise in collaborative endeavours.

5.2.9 Overlapping Yet Distinct Themes

Autonomy and Independence vs. Holistic Approach: SMEs talked about autonomy and independence in their work, reflecting a desire for control and agency. In contrast, LDs emphasised a holistic approach, favouring a more inclusive and collaborative working style.

Change Management vs. Expectations and Assumptions: SMEs discussed the challenges of managing change. LDs focused on managing expectations and assumptions, which suggested that LDs were proactive to prevent potential misunderstandings or misalignments in the collaborative process.

5.2.10 Roles and Relationships

Role of Teachers: Highlighted by SMEs, this theme reflects their perspective on the evolving role of educators in digital learning environments.

Relationships: This theme was raised by SMEs, highlighting the significance of establishing and maintaining solid relationships in the educational context, which is closely linked to themes of trust and communication. For example:

> all of a sudden, something that we all thought could only be done face-to-face had to be done digitally—we just had to get on with it. So, because of that, I've had a good relationship with the digital team (SME6)

> [The relationship with the LD is more trusting than the previous one we had] I just think [previous] was a different character…quite quiet. You know, very methodical. So, I just think it's a different character, different person. We've just we built up this great relationship with [new LD]. That was quite important for us (SME8).

5.2.11 SME Themes Partially Related to LD Themes

Several themes identified by SMEs were found to have a partial relation to themes identified by LDs. This 'partial relation' denotes a connection that is not as direct or comprehensive as others might be. Reasons for partial relations include the overlap of some themes but not others, differences in the breadth or specificity of themes, and the existence of related or sub-themes.

For example, SME1 and LD5 share 'Building and Developing Trust' and 'Communication and Collaboration' themes, but they do not entirely align in all themes, resulting in a partial relation. Similarly, SME2 and LD5 share the 'Communication and Collaboration' theme but do not entirely overlap, leading to a partial connection. SME4 partially relates to LD2, LD3, and LD6, sharing some themes but not others. SME6 shares themes with LD3 and LD4, resulting in a partial relation.

Note: If a theme is present in both the SME and LD, they are considered to be related. A theme is indicated as a partial relation if it is partially present, for example it is partially mentioned, is implicit or can be inferred.

5.2.12 LD and SME related and partially related themes from the data

The data and themes from LD1 to LD6 and SME1 to SME11 reveal many insights, experiences, and perspectives related to trust, communication, collaboration, technology, and the dynamics of change within the context of learning design and SME expertise.

Trust surfaces as a recurrent theme across all interviews. LD1–LD6, SME1– SME4, and SME9 emphasise the importance of building and developing trust, with common codes such as 'building trust', 'developing trust', 'trust levels', and 'trusting relationships'.

LD1, LD2, and LD3 highlight the initial lack of trust and the subsequent trust-building process, "…it's got a lot to do with the realisation that if you work as a

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team, you will achieve much more" (LD1), "… it was a stress bonding situation with that where we had to trust each other a lot more (LD3).

> I would say [there were trust issues at an early stage], I would say they were…. because they don't understand what I'm trying to do, that then becomes really difficult. And so yeah, you need that kind of trust, you need them to trust you, in your abilities as a LD (LD2).

While LD5 and LD6 focus on establishing and institutionalising trust:

> . … once you solve a problem for them, they come back… they have you as a trusted source of information or a trusted person to go back to. And I think that's in, in my experience really helped my relationship with them (LD5).

Similarly, SME1–SME4 discuss the development of trust, underlining the importance of shared aspects of trust and trusting relationships. The commonality here is the mutual understanding that trust is essential for successful collaboration and effective communication, "…the collaborative conversations have become…less transactional and more collaborative…" (SME4).

Communication and Collaboration are also central themes. LD1, LD3, and SME1, SME2, SME3, SME7, SME10, and SME11 all discuss the significance of communication and collaboration, with codes such as 'communication and collaboration', 'cross-department collaboration', 'collaboration with peers', and

'collaboration levels'. The discussions suggest that effective communication facilitates collaboration, fostering trust:

> …you can't make empty promises, because that's just going to build that barrier even higher, to promise things and only to disappoint. So, not to create any space for disappointment, and that you can only do by communicating by being honest (LD1).

> I had teachers who were really uncertain [for example] I don't want to put all my resources online, because then the organisation will steal them. Kind of like, you know, like, once I put them there, they're not mine anymore. So, there was a lot of work done to try and like, you know, promote things like collaboration and see it more as an opportunity, than, as something that was being taken away from them (LD2).

Differing experiences from SMEs range from no collaborative experiences to high levels of collaboration. For example, "…when we hit a problem, then we will tend to refer that back to the Learning Design team… the collaboration between staff members has been really important too" (SME1). "…my experience in terms of working with [the LD], and the team was all positive. We didn't have any issues. We worked together really nicely" (SME2).

However, some did not experience collaboration and felt isolated:

> [Lack of collaboration] Nobody ever actually asked us what we needed, or what we wanted our courses to look like. And certainly, with the assignments, that the lessons, all of these kinds of things, we are the

ones that create those online, we are the ones who upload our learning

materials who link it to different things and whatever. The Learning

Design team don't play a role in that (SME7).

The Use of Technology and Adaptation to Change are other prevalent themes.
LD1, LD4, LD6, SME1, SME2, SME4, SME5, SME6, SME7, SME8, and SME9
discuss resistance to change, adaptation to new technology, and the
challenges of transitioning to online learning. They share concerns about using
digital tools, technology frustration, and the learning curve associated with new
systems. These narratives illuminate the complexities and challenges inherent
in technology integration and change management in the educational context.
For example, "[they] are much less technologically savvy, as well. They don't
use technology in the day-to-day basis and … they tend to be less comfortable
with the online learning and things" (LD4). However, other experiences include:

Some say that teachers of an older generation struggle more with the

technology, but anecdotally, I've not found that at all, it's been those

teachers who have been most open minded to change and not been

scared of it, who have really excelled, and age has had absolutely

nothing to do with it. It's been a real mixed bag of experience (LD2).

SMEs have various experiences from full engagement to lack of interest, and
also a concern over how students engage with them:

The other big issue we have is that our students…just don't engage very

well with it…they need practical activities. They're much happier if you

get them to design a poster with, you know, a pen sort of thing... they're

just they're not going to log on to the system. It just didn't fit well with our students or with my style of teaching. That's not really why I came into teaching to teach online. I wanted to be in a classroom of students and being able to do a lot of activities (SME2).

…a lot of my colleagues have struggled with actually setting up their lessons online. I tend to be the IT champion for the department. So whenever one of my colleagues has trouble, that they will often come to me and say how do I set up an assignment online? How do I set up a lesson online? It's the confidence, right, so what they will almost need is somebody saying okay right, so I've done this, what do I do now? Oh, that hasn't worked. Why hasn't that worked? And having somebody to actually go, oh, no, no, instead of doing that, you need to do this…(SME7).

Job Responsibilities and Roles, Support and Training, Efficiency and Perception, and Organisational Structure and Culture are themes specific to certain narratives. LD2 discusses the job responsibilities and roles of LDs and SMEs,

[Comparing the role to what it was pre-pandemic]…before the first lockdown… the role and I expect what the job sort of has become…isn't maybe what it was typically before… in quite a good way—because our workload has increased a lot, but also our presence and our place in the organisation has been elevated as well…Each of the digital education advisors, has a faculty they look after. So, I suppose that was a decision

made by the organisation to not have it by site, because we look after

lots of different sites all around the Southeast area, and to do it by

faculty…And having [the] technology to connect us has been really good.

But I think before that each person was sort of assigned a site as their

sort of base. Part of our role as well because we're a bit of a I feel like we

wear many hats and we sort of do a lot of miscellaneous other when it

comes to digital, and but we also have to look after the library for an hour

a day. [Also]…we've had to audit their courses as part of our

role…(LD2).

LD1 refers to the perceptions of roles between LDs and SMEs:

I think the most important thing to remember is that it's respect. It's to

respect my role as expert to design, but also for me to respect them as

the expert in the subject. I guess communication would be key, frequent

updates and catch ups. What we usually do is we create a channel on

Teams, and then we can communicate to each other in that channel,

upload all the resources. And I would say, for me to work through those

resources and ask questions, to just make sure that everybody is on the

same page, and to involve them in the planning process. Because they

are part of that process as much as I am (LD1).

SME1 and SME11 highlight the importance of support, mentoring, and training,

"… being mentored by experienced staff members is important" (SME1).

So, they've just been grateful to have people that will help and support

them. With the digital side of stuff... some of the people [in my team] that

were more confident about going off and doing this official training [and] were coming back and setting up their own drop-in session to pass the information on to other people in the team (SME11).

LD4 and SME1 consider organisational culture and structure, discussing issues such as hierarchy, external tutors, and the perception of other groups within the organisation. LD4 discusses how in HE there is a clear division of roles and a perception that faculty do not want to take advice from LDs whereas in FE there is more acceptance, but there are many in the organisation that also try to avoid getting involved in digital learning, connecting, or collaborating with LDs and try to 'stay below the radar:'

I could probably name half a dozen individuals who are going, I don't want, I don't want to use the tools you give me. And, certainly, in one case, I can think of it's almost like he deliberately does that. I'm not going to engage with the thing you're giving me, so... (blows raspberry). Yeah, he's a bit of a rebel. So, it doesn't help. And then he does engage with me, and I get on with him really well. But he's one of these sorts of people we'll will offer him all these tools to use and offer all these services and help him to develop things. He just sort of goes, no, no, thanks…I think in HE it would have been slightly more uncomfortable, I think, actually trying to advise SMEs in very particular subject areas, when they are acknowledged experts in their field, whereas I think in FE, I think teachers and tutors possibly appreciate the help more, than in HE. So, when we are able to provide them with support and help, I think it is much more appreciated in the FE sector…I'm not entirely sure I would

have wanted to do the job, this role that I'm in now in HE, I think I would

have found that slightly more uncomfortable trying to advise SMEs in

HE. Whereas in FE, I think the help and support is appreciated because

they're much more like teachers working at the coalface as it were,

rather than HE where there's a little bit more of a liberalism…(LD4).

SME4 discusses the way peers are engaging with LDs and their experience to

the move to online learning in their view and the difference between HE and

FE:

Within HE actually the going online wasn't a big thing at all because we

did have all our stuff online already it was all available it's more a

question of just remembering to update the work, so everything was

there. FE is more of a challenge, I think. Some of my colleagues still

don't have the, are still just using it as a depository assignment (SME4).

However, there is reluctance to engage with LDs because, for example, SME4

experiences advice from LDs around operating or managing resources when

they need assistance instead (note that the LD team are referred to as the IT

team):

Although, the IT team have made a great effort to put films on how to do

this, how to do that. You know, you there's lots of online, work about how

do you upload an assignment. How do you set this; how do you engage

in that? [etc.] … but they can be quite frustrating sometimes when you

go, oh, I could show you how to do that… I don't want to know how to do

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I just want it done like by like five minutes, because I've got a lesson (SME4).

LD2 and SME1 consider efficiency, time management, and organisational perception due to the changes in the organisation following the COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown:

But then the other side is the organisation, so if that particular subject, the organisation's seen it as an opportunity to sell this kind of online only version of the course. I think there is a fear from teachers [who] did actually say at the beginning, like they felt fearful that they were doing themselves out of a job…I think there was a misunderstanding of what good online learning looks like. Because obviously, you need that facilitation and that oversight and that direction, still with online courses, but I think a lot of teachers did think, or some teachers I spoke to did say to me, I'm worried that you know, they'll steal my resources and I'm out of a job after that. So, there's a lot to contend with contextually…(LD2).

Conversely, many SMEs embraced changes:

I mean, now, it's just got to the point where I think because of lockdown, it's been a bit of a lever. Whereas before it was, it was a voluntary expectation. The digital side of it was CPD. It was development. It was 'have you tried this? Let's do you know, let's develop this and go with it'.. But you know, I was actively using it because it was, I was finding I was teaching in lots of different classrooms. And I was walking about with a huge, great big trolley, and, you know, with loads of stuff in it, and I just

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thought this is ridiculous. So, so yeah, so I was already on and off and running (SME1).

Every interview revealed unique perspectives and insights, but there is a shared emphasis on the importance of trust, communication, and collaboration in the context of learning design and subject matter expertise. There is also a common understanding of the challenges and opportunities associated with using technology and adaptation to change. These shared themes emphasise these areas' interconnectedness and significance in building trust between SMEs and LDs to enhance online teaching and learning experiences.

Based on these discussions, there were some overarching themes that were partially shared between LDs and SMEs which I look into in the next section.

5.2.13 Overarching Themes

Adapting to New Technology: Both LDs and SMEs recognise the importance of adapting to new technology, suggesting that embracing technological advancements is crucial for improving learning design and content expertise.

Efficiency and Time Management: Highlighted by LDs, this theme emphasises the need for effective time management strategies to enhance the efficiency of the learning design process.

Learning Design Process: Both LDs and SMEs contribute to this theme, indicating a shared understanding of the learning design process's complexity and the need for collaborative efforts to optimise it.

Job Responsibilities and Roles of LDs and SMEs: This theme, identified by LDs, points to the need for clear delineation and understanding of the distinct roles and responsibilities of LDs and SMEs in the learning design process.

Resistance to Change: Both groups acknowledge resistance to change as a significant challenge, underlining the importance of addressing this resistance to facilitate successful adoption of new technologies and methodologies.

Use of Technology in Education: Recognised by both LDs and SMEs, this theme highlights the pivotal role of technology in enhancing educational experiences and outcomes.

Resistance to Technology: Like the theme of adapting to new technology, this was identified by both groups and suggests a recognition of the challenges associated with integrating technology into learning environments.

Learning Design (specifically from SMEs): This theme suggests SMEs' unique insights into the learning design process, potentially offering a complementary perspective to that of LDs.

Role of Teachers in Online Learning (from SMEs): This theme reflects SMEs' views on the critical role teachers play in the success of online learning, emphasising the need for support and adaptation in digital environments.

Relation to Trust Themes

From LD Perspective: Trust themes from the LD perspective often focus on the foundational aspects of trust in relationships, technology, and collaboration.

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LDs highlight the importance of building, developing, and institutionalising trust within the learning design process and between different stakeholders.

From SME Perspective: SMEs contribute to trust themes primarily by emphasising the role of trust in adapting to and effectively using technology, as well as in collaboration and communication. SME perspectives enrich the dialogue on trust by focusing on the importance of trusting relationships, expertise, and the institutional support necessary for fostering trust in digital education environments.

Themes related explicitly to trust that were highlighted by SMEs and/or LDs can be seen in Figure 5.1.

5.3 Phase two

5.3.1 Focus Group Themes and Codes

After completing the interviews between LDs and SMEs, the initial findings were presented to a focus group of a mixture of two LDs and three SMEs that had taken part in phase one. The purpose of the focus group was to demonstrate the validity that the data and interpretations were accurate from the participants' perspective through participant confirmation or 'member checking' (Doyle, 2007). The focus group discussed three fictitious scenarios based on the initial findings from Phase one. The themes and codes that emerged from discussing the scenarios are shown in Table 5.1.

The focus group data, with its aggregated themes and codes, provides a collective perspective that intersects with many of the themes previously

outlined in the individual narratives of LD1–LD6 and SME1–SME11. The

shared elements highlight the universality of these themes.

Building Relationships and Trust: This theme is common across the focus

group data and individual narratives. In phase one, LD1–LD4, LD6, and SME1–

SME4 all discuss building trust, with codes like 'building trust,' 'developing

trust,' and 'trusting relationships.' The focus group data adds the layer of

'successful working relationships' to the discussion, indicating that trust is a

crucial component of these relationships. For example, "it's important to assign

someone that you can build a relationship with and the foundation with that you,

you know, that's willing to answer the odd questions" (SME10). Also:

> it's very much building up that trust and respect. And the relationship
>
> between us we get the same person every time, which is brilliant for us.
>
> And it's a really, really good relationship that we've got, and I don't feel
>
> uncomfortable asking silly questions (SME8).

From the perspective of LDs:

> I think that when you're trying to form these relationships, that it's quite
>
> difficult when you can't meet someone face to face to have that personal
>
> connection with someone. And also, some people don't feel that they
>
> want to reach out on applications like Teams, not everyone's as
>
> comfortable using applications such as Teams and remote
>
> communication. So that does make it challenging to build relationships, I
>
> think, but we do need to have those relationships in order for there to be
>
> trust (LD4).

Transitioning to Online Teaching: This theme appears in the focus group data and aligns with the narratives in phase one of LD1, LD4, LD6, SME4, SME6, and SME9. The codes under this theme, such as 'transitioning to online teaching', resonate with the experiences shared about adapting to new technologies and managing change.

Shared Aspects of Trust: The focus group data emphasises this theme, which is also central to the narratives in phase one of LD1, LD2, LD5, SME1, SME4, and SME8. The codes such as 'shared aspects of trust' and 'trust levels' reflect the mutual understanding that trust is a critical factor in collaboration and effective communication. For example:

> I would like it if staff, to work, to come to me—I don't think it's any particular secret—the faculty I look after are not the most communicative, faculty, general faculty that I look after. I would much prefer if they came to me and said, I've got a bunch of PowerPoints—in fact, I do actually have one, one of my tutors just now, just came to me recently and said, I've got this page on [Canvas], I think it looks really dull. And it's potentially quite an exciting subject. How can we make it more exciting for learners? That would be the ideal scenario for me, as a designer to go, yay, I can get my teeth into something and let's Okay, let's add some tools in here. Let's change the way we're thinking about, let's change the way it's presented. But yeah, no, I appreciate that there's a burden on workload as well (LD4).

Communication: This theme is present in the focus group data and the individual narratives in Phase one. LD1, LD3, SME1, SME2, SME3, SME7, SME10, and SME11 all discuss aspects of communication and collaboration. The focus group data, however, adds an extra layer with the code 'misunderstandings and assumptions on both sides', indicating potential areas of conflict and miscommunication, although conflict could be seen as a discussion point for better collaboration. For example:

> I have a few colleagues in my team who very often I would be their first port of call if they need to know how to do something, because I can stand over their shoulder and click them through it, rather than going to the team who are obviously experts, and it's not because they don't like these people or don't trust them. It's simply that their way of working is very physical and in person and trying to do these things remotely just doesn't work for them (SME7).

LDs discuss their viewpoints:

> From an advisor point of view, I would much rather the teaching staff came to us because they trusted us and said, as you say, you know, this isn't going to work for me, this set up, because we can change the way things are set up. I certainly find that sometimes my faculty don't feel that they can approach me in that way. Where the reality is, I would actually much prefer the teaching staff approached me and said, I have a problem, or this doesn't work for me, or this setup isn't going to work (LD4).

LD Role: The focus group data sheds light on the 'LD role' and the 'lack of awareness of services offered by the Learning Design team'. This theme aligns with insights from Phase one, where LD2, LD3, SME7, and SME11 discuss job responsibilities, roles, clarity of LD roles, and the importance of organisational support. This highlights the need for a more transparent, clearly communicated understanding of the role of the Learning Design team.

> I think also sometimes what helps is having the staff members aware of what we can do for them. So, for example, what I found is if I show a teacher, something that I've done for somebody else, and it's something they've not seen done on [the VLE or LMS] before, they're like, oh, that looks really nice. Can I use that in mine? I Can you make that for me? And that's kind of where the conversations about introducing something new into their course, kind of starts taking place, I think. So once people know what's out there available, and they like it, and they want to make something like that for their own course…I think for us as a team, most I mean, I can speak for myself, I don't know if that's the same for my colleagues. But for me, someone to come and ask me a question. I don't feel like that's, you know, I don't feel like they should feel that as a burden. Because I personally feel like, oh, actually, I today I helped answer this query, however simple that may be. I feel like that's my satisfaction from something that I've done to help somebody else. So yeah, I don't think that tutors should feel they're a burden to our team, because if your advisor isn't available, at a certain point in time, there's always other members of the team who could help (LD5).

The focus group data aligns with and deepens the insights from the individual narratives. Trust, the transition to online teaching, communication, and the role of learning design emerges as common, interconnected themes. These shared themes emphasise the importance of building trust, effective communication, understanding roles, and managing change in the transition to online teaching.

5.3.2 Key 'Take-aways' from the Focus Group Discussion

The focus group discussion and individual narratives from Phase one share themes around trust, collaboration, adaptation to online environments, the role of LDs, and resistance to change. The focus group provided more specific insight into how these themes play out in practice, such as the importance of approachability in successful collaborations, the nuances of preferences for communication modes, and the practicalities of the LDs' role in course creation. The main take-aways are as follows:

Successful Relationships and Collaboration: Participants valued approachable, attentive colleagues sensitive to their needs and ideas, which aligns with the themes from the individual narratives where trust, communication, and collaboration are often mentioned. Both LD and SME narratives echo this sentiment, emphasising the importance of mutual respect, adaptability, clear communication, and shared understanding for successful collaboration.

Face-to-face vs Online Meetings: Participants expressed mixed preferences for face-to-face and online meetings. While some favoured the convenience of online meetings, others preferred the interpersonal connection of face-to-face

meetings. This reflects the themes of adaptation to new technology and online collaboration in the individual narratives. The transition to online teaching and online collaboration mentioned in LD1, LD6, SME4, and SME6's narratives align with this discussion.

Teachers' Motivation to Build [Canvas] Courses: The discussion highlighted that some teachers might resist asking for help due to the perceived time investment of building courses. This aligns with the concerns raised in LD2 and SME1 narratives about resistance to change and emphasises the importance of offering targeted support for course creation.

LD's Role in Building Courses: The LDs shared examples of their hands-on role in course building, reflecting the theme of LD roles in the individual narratives. This aligns with the themes from LD2, LD3, SME7, and SME11 who discuss the importance of understanding and showcasing the Learning Design team's role.

Adapting to the COVID-19 Pandemic: The participants agreed that online learning and collaboration have become more prominent since the pandemic. This reflects the transition to online teaching and learning discussed in LD1, LD4, LD6, SME4, SME6, and SME9's narratives.

5.4 Summary of all themes and codes

Several key themes and codes have emerged from the data, each noted by different interviewees. These themes encompass building relationships and trust, communication and collaboration, trust levels, resistance to change,

online teaching and technology, support, and training, learning design roles, shared aspects of trust, and institutional support.

Building relationships and trust was a paramount theme highlighted by LD1, LD3, SME1-SME4, and the focus group, with LD2, LD4, LD5, LD6, and SME5-SME11 also indirectly touching upon this theme. This centralised the significance of trust in developing successful working relationships, facilitating smooth communication, and overcoming potential barriers in online course development.

Trust was a significant aspect of **effective communication and collaboration** between LDs and SMEs. For example, LD1 highlighted the importance of establishing trust early in the relationship, stating that it allows for more open and honest communication. SME1 echoed this sentiment, explaining that trust enabled them to work more effectively with LDs and to share their expertise without fearing judgment or criticism.

Several participants discussed the role of **empathy and understanding in building trust**. LD3 emphasised the need to validate and respect the expertise of SMEs, while SME2 shared an experience where an LD's willingness to understand their perspective helped build trust. SME3 also mentioned the importance of being approachable and supportive, noting that LDs who exhibited these qualities successfully established trust.

Communication and collaboration emerged as vital components for the successful implementation of online learning. This theme was mentioned by LD1–LD4, SME1, SME2, SME4–SME11, and the focus group. The participants

highlighted the need for continuous dialogue and feedback among all stakeholders to ensure a seamless transition to online learning and integrating new technologies.

Levels of trust, which vary based on the relationship and individual personalities, was another theme touched upon by LD1, LD2, LD4, SME2, SME4, SME9, SME10, and the focus group. This referred to trust in colleagues, the institution, and the technology itself, fostering a transparent, supportive, and clear expectation-setting environment.

Resistance to change was identified by SME1, SME4, SME11, and the focus group, with LD1, LD2, LD4, LD6, SME2, SME3, SME5–SME10 indirectly supporting this view. Fear of the unknown, lack of confidence in technology, and concerns about the impact on academic values contributed to resistance.

The **role of online teaching and technology** was shown to be important by LD2, LD4, SME4, SME5, SME6, and SME9. They discussed the necessity of selecting suitable technology tools, ensuring their reliability and ease of use, and offering adequate training and support to help faculty members feel comfortable transitioning to online teaching.

Support and training were seen as crucial for faculty members in online learning adoption by LD1, LD2, SME1, SME4, and SME9, a view that LD3–LD6, SME2, SME3, SME5–SME8, SME10, and SME11 indirectly supported. Continuous training and professional development opportunities were highlighted to enhance faculty's confidence and knowledge of online learning best practices.

The **role of learning design** was recognised as a critical aspect of online learning adoption by SME1 and the focus group, with LD1–LD6, SME2–SME11 also indirectly touching upon this theme. The involvement of LDs and online learning experts in the planning and implementation process was vital to ensuring the effective design of online courses.

LD1, SME1, SME4, SME5, and the focus group mentioned **shared aspects of trust**, including all the aspects of trust that enable mutual communication, collaboration, and respect between the two parties as essential factors in online learning adoption. These shared aspects of trust are essential in fostering a culture of trust and shared responsibility among all stakeholders, including faculty members, administrators, and support staff.

Institutional support was a theme discussed by LD3, LD4, SME1, and SME9, with LD1, LD2, LD5, LD6, SME2–SME8, SME10, and SME11 indirectly supporting this viewpoint. This refers to the structural and systemic backing that the institution provides to its faculty members in the transition to online learning. Transparent decision-making, clear guidelines, adequate resources, and ongoing professional development opportunities were key indicators of strong institutional support.

Despite some themes and codes only being mentioned by a few interviewees, it is essential to note that many others indirectly touched upon these themes across various data sets. This reinforces the interconnectedness of these themes in the broader context of online learning adoption and the inherent complexity of this process in educational institutions.

These themes highlight the multifaceted nature of online learning adoption, encompassing trust-building, effective communication, institutional support, and technology use. They emphasise the importance of a holistic and collaborative approach in fostering a conducive environment for the successful implementation of online learning.

Figure 5.3. Key themes discussed by all interviewees.
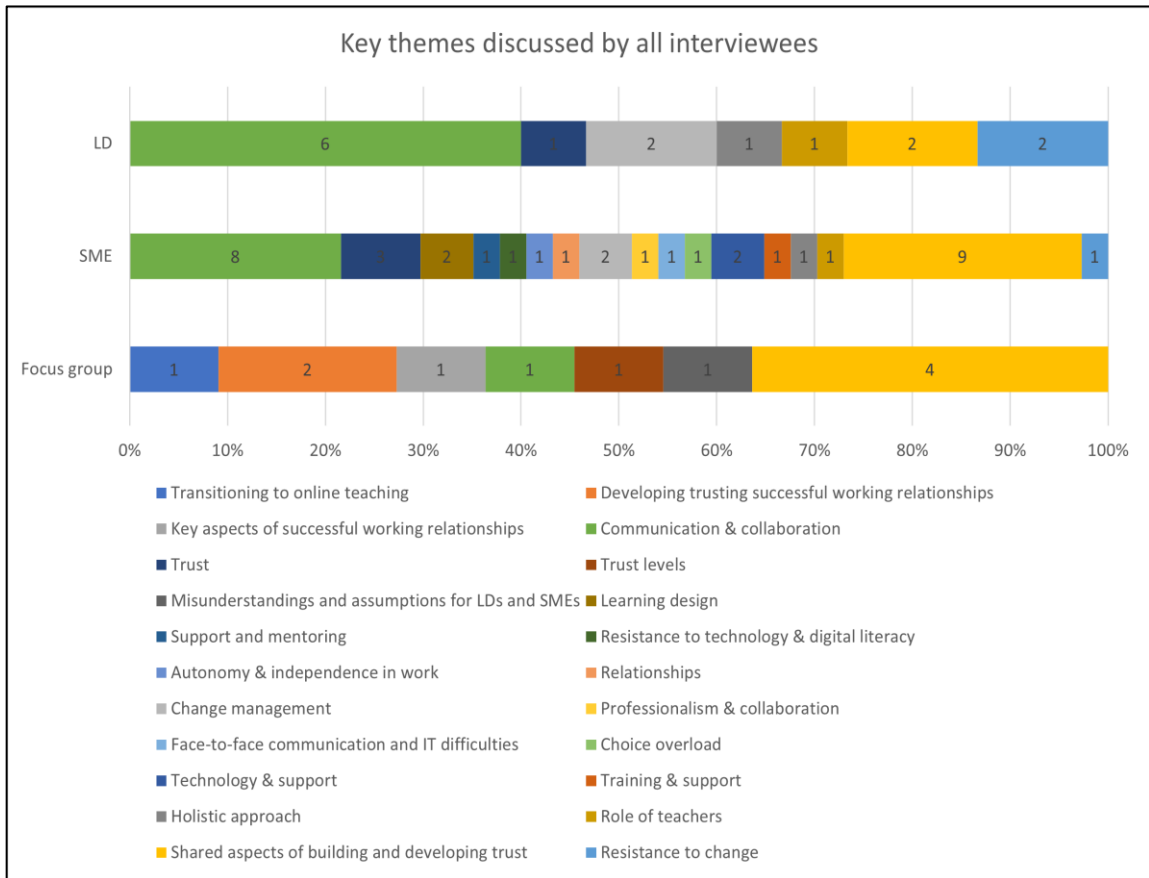
5.5 Answering the Research Questions

5.5.1 Phase one

The findings suggest that trust between SMEs and LDs is built and developed through open communication, mutual understanding, and shared problem-solving. This aligns with the CoP framework, where open communication and mutual understanding are essential for a thriving community. Shared problem-solving is a practice that the community engages in to address challenges. Resistance to change is a common challenge, but it can be overcome through supportive mentoring, clear expectations, and the development of shared goals and methods of working. Resistance to change can be seen as a conditional factor in the Conditional/Consequential Matrix. The strategies to overcome it (supportive mentoring, clear expectations, shared goals) are the consequential actions taken in response to this condition. However, it is also clear that the shift to online course development has introduced new challenges that require ongoing adaptation and support. The shift to online course development can be viewed as an external condition that impacts the community's practices. The need for adaptation and support highlights the evolving nature of the community's practices in response to changing conditions.

5.5.1.1 Research Question 1: Trust to Change

RQ1 asks about the initial experiences of trust between LDs and SMEs during online course development. This research question delves into the initial stages of trust-building, crucial for establishing a strong community in the CoP framework. The data shows that SME1 and LD4 have provided the most insight

into this question. SME1 highlights aspects of building and developing trust and resistance to change, while LD4 also mentions resistance to change. The mention of 'building and developing trust' aligns with the practice element of the CoP framework, where community members engage in shared activities and experiences to foster trust. This suggests that initial experiences might have been fraught with uncertainty and resistance. However, successful collaboration was achieved through building and developing trust, which highlights the dynamic nature of the community's practices, where challenges (conditions) are addressed through collaborative efforts, leading to positive outcomes (consequences).

5.5.1.2 Research Questions 2 and 3: Trust to Integrate and Institutionalise

RQ2 and RQ3 are concerned with how trust changed or developed within successful working relationships and how LDs and SMEs developed these trusting relationships. The evolution of trust can be mapped using the Conditional/Consequential Matrix, where initial conditions (early stages of collaboration) lead to specific outcomes (deepened trust and collaboration). These questions delve deeper into the evolution of trust and collaboration within the community, aligning with the ongoing development and deepening of practices in the CoP framework. These questions have been answered more broadly across SME1–SME11 and LD1–LD6.

The Building and Developing Trust theme was addressed by SME1–SME4, SME6–SME9, LD1, LD4, LD5, and LD6, which shows a broad consensus on the importance and process of building trust in these collaborations. This

widespread consensus emphasises the centrality of trust-building as a shared practice within the community.

Communication and Collaboration also emerged as a critical theme in both SME (SME1, SME2, SME4, SME5, SME7, SME8, SME10, SME11) and LD narratives (LD1, LD2, LD3, LD6), emphasising the importance of **clear, open communication in fostering trust and successful working relationships.** Communication and collaboration are foundational practices in the CoP framework, facilitating knowledge sharing and mutual understanding within the community.

Resistance to change was mentioned by SME1 and LD4, indicating that adapting to new ways of working was a challenge that needed to be overcome. Resistance to change can be viewed as a conditional factor that impacts the community's practices. The strategies and practices developed to address this resistance can be seen as consequential actions.

Trust was directly mentioned by SME4, SME9, and SME10, indicating its central role in their experiences. The direct mention of trust reinforces its significance as a core element of the community's practices in the CoP framework.

Themes of Learning Design, Support and Mentoring, Resistance to Technology and Digital Literacy, Autonomy and Independence in Work, and Relationships provided further insights into how trust was built and developed.

These themes represent the shared practices and experiences of the community. In the CoP framework, these shared practices are essential for the community's cohesion and growth. For instance:

'Learning Design' relates to the shared domain of expertise and the tools/methodologies employed by both LDs and SMEs.

'Support and Mentoring' reinforces the collaborative nature of the community, where experienced members guide and assist newer or less experienced members. This aligns with the CoP principle of mutual engagement and shared learning.

'Resistance to Technology and Digital Literacy' can be viewed as a conditional challenge in the Conditional/Consequential Matrix. The community's response to this challenge, through training or other means, represents the consequential actions taken to address it.

'Autonomy and Independence in Work' suggests a respect for individual expertise within the community, allowing members to bring their unique perspectives and solutions to shared challenges.

'Relationships' underlines the interpersonal dynamics within the community, which are foundational for trust-building and effective collaboration.

An overview of Phase one is shown in Table 5.2. below.

Table 5.2. Overview of Phase one.

Research Questions	Themes/codes and respondents
RQ1. What were the initial experiences of Trust and trusting relationships between LDs and SMEs when working together in online course development?	• Building and Developing Trust: SME1 • Resistance to Change: SME1, LD4
RQ2. What are the shared aspects of Trust that have changed or developed within successful working relationships between SMEs and LDs? And RQ3. How did LDs and SMEs develop trusting successful working relationships?	• Building and Developing Trust: SME1, SME2, SME3, SME4, SME6, SME7, SME8, SME9 • Communication and Collaboration: SME1, SME2, SME4, SME5, SME7, SME8, SME10, SME11, LD1, LD2, LD3, LD6 • Trust: SME4, SME9, SME10 • Learning Design: SME4, SME10 • Support and Mentoring: SME1 • Resistance to Technology and Digital Literacy: SME5 • Resistance to change: SME1, LD4 • Autonomy and Independence in Work: SME5 • Relationships: SME10 • Change Management: SME10, SME11 • Expectations and Assumptions: SME10 • Professionalism and Collaboration: SME8 • Face-to-Face Communication and IT Difficulties: SME9 • Choice Overload: SME9 • Technology and support: SME4, SME7 • Training and Support: SME11 • Holistic Approach: SME11 • Role of Teachers: SME11

5.5.2 Phase two

RQ1: The focus group findings did not extensively look into the initial stages of trust and collaborative relationship-building between LDs and SMEs in the context of online course development. This suggests that the initial stages of trust-building, a crucial phase in the formation of a CoP, might be an area that requires further exploration or research. The initial stages of trust-building correspond to the 'Trust to Change' phase in the Conditional/Consequential Matrix. This phase represents the initial challenges and conditions that influence the early stages of collaboration between LDs and SMEs. From the discussion, it appeared that the initial level of trust was not high, primarily due to a lack of mutual understanding between the SMEs and the digital education team. A lack of mutual understanding can be seen as a conditional factor that initially hindered trust-building. Addressing this lack of understanding is crucial for fostering a thriving community in the CoP framework.

The SMEs commonly referred to the digital education team as the 'IT people', limiting their interactions to addressing technical issues. Such a narrow perception reduced the creation of interesting online content or the potential for creating engaging blended learning experiences. This highlights a potential barrier in the community's practices, where a limited perception of roles can hinder effective collaboration and knowledge sharing.

However, the focus group highlighted instances of successful collaboration between LDs and SMEs. In these successful cases, ideas were exchanged freely and developed into engaging online content. This success hinged on an

in-depth understanding and strong relationship between the two teams, which fostered efficient collaboration and enabled the teams to understand and respond intuitively to each other's needs. The key to this success is a deep understanding and relationship between the two teams, allowing for easy collaboration and anticipating each other's needs. This underlines the importance of mutual understanding and strong relationships in the CoP framework. When community members share a deep understanding of each other's roles and expertise, they can collaborate more effectively and achieve better outcomes.

RQ2: The focus group considered trust in successful working relationships where the discussion highlighted the importance of trust between SMEs and LDs. The emphasis on trust in successful working relationships aligns with the 'Trust to Integrate' phase of the Conditional/Consequential Matrix. This phase signifies the evolution of trust and the consequential outcomes of the collaborative efforts between LDs and SMEs. Trust is a foundational element in the CoP framework, enabling community members to share knowledge, collaborate on challenges, and support each other's growth. The participants agreed that having approachable and friendly colleagues who listen to their needs and ideas makes for good relationships. This aligns with the CoP principle of mutual respect and engagement, where community members value and support each other's contributions. They considered communication and mentioned that working over Teams is better for them as they are located in different areas. However, LD 4 preferred face-to-face meetings as it allows them to gauge more about the person and what they want. The preference for

different communication modes highlights the community's diverse practices. Adapting to these preferences can enhance collaboration and knowledge sharing. The participants also discussed the role of the LDs in building online courses, with LD5 suggesting that they could help teachers build courses if the content required extensive development. This suggests a potential practice within the community where LDs offer specialised support to teachers in developing online courses. LD4 shared an example of how they built a module template for a member of staff who had a schema of learning but was not sure how to fill it in, highlighting how LDs can assist teachers who are unsure how to build courses in the online learning environment.

RQ3: The focus group discussed how LDs and SMEs develop trusting, successful working relationships. The discussion around the evolution of working relationships and the importance of adaptability corresponds to the 'Trust to Institutionalise' phase of the Conditional/Consequential Matrix. This phase represents the institutionalisation of trust and the establishment of long-term, successful collaborations between LDs and SMEs. This is because it is not just about the initial building of trust or its integration into the working relationship but about how that trust becomes a foundational and institutionalised part of the collaboration. The participants discussed how their working relationships have developed over time, with the importance of being approachable and friendly emphasised as a key aspect of successful relationships. The evolution of working relationships over time aligns with the CoP framework, where community members engage in shared practices and experiences, deepening their bonds and trust over time. Participants also

discussed the importance of adapting to changing circumstances, such as the shift towards online learning and collaboration due to the pandemic; the participants' willingness to adapt and work collaboratively to find solutions demonstrated how trust can be developed in successful working relationships between SMEs and LDs. Adaptability is a critical practice in the CoP framework, allowing the community to respond effectively to external challenges and changes. The community's ability to adapt and collaborate in the face of challenges emphasises the strength of their current shared practices and trust.

5.6 Summary

The research findings suggest that trust between SMEs and LDs is fostered and enhanced through open communication, mutual understanding, and joint problem-solving. This aligns with the **Community** element of the CoP framework, emphasising the significance of mutual respect, open communication, and shared goals in the community of LDs and SMEs. Within the Conditional/Consequential Matrix, this initial establishment of trust can be seen as a foundational element. It represents the conditions necessary for the 'Trust to Change' phase, where the initial experiences and challenges of transitioning to online course development are addressed.

Resistance to change is prevalent but can be mitigated with supportive mentoring, clearly defined expectations, and establishing shared objectives and work processes. This resonates with the **Practice** element of the CoP framework, where shared experiences, tools, and methodologies reflect a

collective drive for continuous improvement. In the Conditional/Consequential Matrix context, overcoming resistance is pivotal for the progression from the conditional 'Trust to Change' phase to the consequential 'Trust to Integrate' phase.

The **transition to online course development** presented challenges, necessitating ongoing adaptation and support. When viewed through the Conditional/Consequential Matrix, this transition signifies the evolution from the 'Trust to Change' phase, addressing initial challenges, to the 'Trust to Integrate and Institutionalise' phase, where trust is deepened and solidified. This is central to the **Domain** of the CoP framework, emphasising the evolving nature of online education and the shared commitment to enhancing the online learning experience.

RQ1: The focus group discussion suggested that the initial trust levels were not high due to a misunderstanding between SMEs and LDs. As represented in the Conditional/Consequential Matrix, this initial phase of trust-building aligns with the 'Trust to Change' phase, highlighting the conditions and challenges that influence the early stages of collaboration. The SMEs often referred to the digital education team as the 'IT people', limiting their interactions to technical issues, which stymied the creation of engaging online content. However, there were instances of successful collaboration, with the key to success being a deep understanding and relationship between the two teams. This aligns with the **Practice** element of the CoP, emphasising the importance of trust in shaping the community's practices and the secondary focus of 'Trust to change'.

RQ 2 and 3: Themes of 'Building and Developing Trust' and 'Communication and Collaboration' emerged across multiple SMEs and LDs narratives, emphasising the importance of trust-building and clear, open communication in successful collaborations. When mapped onto the Conditional/Consequential Matrix, these themes resonate with the 'Trust to Integrate and Trust to Institutionalise' phases. They represent the consequential outcomes of the collaborative efforts between LDs and SMEs, building upon the foundational trust established in the 'Trust to Change' phase. This is reflected in the **Community** element of the CoP, where LDs and SMEs, with their combined expertise, create a dynamic environment where challenges are addressed collectively. The focus group emphasised the importance of trust, open communication, and adaptability in successful working relationships. LDs were identified as crucial in building online courses, especially when extensive development is required. The focus group emphasised the importance of interpersonal skills of approachability, friendliness, and adaptability in fostering trusting relationships, and the group's willingness to adapt and collaborate to find solutions illustrated how trust can be developed in successful working relationships. These insights align with the Conditional/Consequential Matrix areas of 'Trust to Integrate and Trust to Institutionalise'.

Theoretical frameworks: Integrating the Conditional/Consequential Matrix with the CoP framework provides a foundation for understanding community dynamics, especially in educational organisations like the FE institution. It emphasises the interplay between conditional factors that set the stage for community formation and consequential factors that emerge from the

interactions within the community. This integrated approach offers valuable insights into the role of trust, communication, and collaboration in shaping such institutions' domain, community, and practice. The Conditional/Consequential Matrix, when integrated with the CoP framework, offers a comprehensive focus to understand the dynamics of learning and practice within communities. The Conditional/Consequential Matrix, which focuses on the interplay between conditional and consequential factors, can be mapped onto the three core components of the CoP framework: Domain, Community, and Practice.

Domain: The domain, in the context of the CoP, refers to the shared area of interest or the collective identity that binds the members together. In the Conditional/Consequential Matrix, the domain can be associated with the conditional factors that set the stage for the community's existence. These factors, which might include shared challenges, goals, or passions, define the boundaries of the community, and give it a sense of purpose. For the FE institution, the domain revolves around the shared interest in educational design and development for online learning. The Matrix can help identify the conditional factors that influence the domain, such as the need for TEL adoption, the challenges of transitioning from traditional teaching methodologies, and the shared goal of enhancing online educational experiences.

Community: The community component of the CoP framework refers to the relationships, networks, and interactions that members engage in. It is the community's social fabric, where members build relationships, help each other, and share information. In the Conditional/Consequential Matrix, the community

can be linked to the consequential factors that emerge due to the interactions within the domain. These factors can include the development of trust, the establishment of norms, and the creation of shared meanings. For the FE institution, the community encompasses the peers within the two roles of LDs or SMEs across the many colleges. The Matrix provides insights into how trust is pivotal in the community. Initial experiences of trust between LDs and SMEs during online course development at the FE institution were marked by uncertainty and resistance. However, as the community evolved, trust became a cornerstone for successful collaboration, with open communication and mutual understanding being key drivers.

Practice: The third component of the CoP framework involves the shared resources, tools, experiences, stories, and methods that members use in their shared domain. It is the practical manifestation of the community's knowledge and expertise. The Conditional/Consequential Matrix can shed light on the practices by highlighting the conditional factors that influence them and the consequential outcomes that they lead to. For the FE institution, the practice involves the shared resources, experiences, tools, and methods used by LDs and SMEs. The Matrix emphasises the importance of trust in shaping these practices. For instance, the successful integration and institutionalisation of online learning at the FE institution required a balance between institutional support and individual adaptability, all underpinned by trust.

The limitations to the study are explored in chapter seven. The next chapter makes recommendations by integrating the findings and utilises them within a

new framework that can be used by education and training professionals in a

variety of organisational settings.

Chapter 6: Recommendations

Trust between LDs and SMEs is fundamental for successful online course development as demonstrated in the findings of this research. Trust is established and nurtured through open communication, mutual understanding, shared problem-solving, and supportive mentoring. By drawing from the CoP theoretical framework, these interactions can be seen as essential components of a thriving community where members collaborate, share knowledge, and learn from each other. While initial experiences may be marked by uncertainty and resistance, these can be transformed into productive collaborations given the proper support and approach. The recommendations aim to address the identified challenges and create an environment conducive to trust-building, successful online course development, and a strong CoP.

The research concurs with Martin & Baptista Nunes's (2016) proposition that a strategic organisational approach and integration can enhance trust in organisations. It goes further by suggesting that a supportive environment, underpinned by the principles of the CoP, by learning through social interactions within work contexts (Lave & Wenger, 1991) where LDs and SMEs can operate within a distinct CoP as part of an organic and evolving community of collaboration and interactions within their work of designing online courses (Agrifoglio, 2015; Lave & Wenger, 1991).

There are many interpersonal aspects to enabling trust within the relationship-building and maintaining processes. I propose the following T.I.M.E. framework (Trust Integration Model for Educators) to address the findings and create a strategic approach using an applied framework for developing trust between

LDs and SMEs coherently. This framework is designed for education

institutions and can be used by corporate L&D departments to develop, build,

nurture, and foster trust between SMEs and LDs, all within an institutionally

backed supportive community.

A non-exhaustive list of recommendations is shown in Table 6.1.

Table 6.1. Non-exhaustive set of recommendations.

A non-exhaustive set of recommendations based on the research findings	
• Encourage open communication and joint problem-solving between SMEs and LDs.	**Trust to Change:** Open communication can address initial uncertainties and resistance, laying the foundation for trust during the early stages of collaboration. **CoP Framework:** Joint problem-solving is a hallmark of a functioning Communities of Practice, where members collaborate to address shared challenges.
• Provide supportive mentoring to SMEs and LDs, with clearly defined expectations and shared objectives.	**Trust to Integrate**: Mentoring can help navigate the challenges and uncertainties of transitioning to new methods, fostering deeper integration. **CoP Framework:** Mentoring strengthens the community by transferring knowledge and best practices among its members.
• Address resistance to change through education and training, highlighting the benefits and necessity of online course development.	**Trust to Change:** Addressing resistance directly impacts the success of transitioning to new methods, establishing initial trust. **CoP Framework**: Continuous learning and adaptation are key components of a Communities of Practice.
• Foster a deep understanding and strong relationships between SMEs and LDs to enhance collaboration.	**Trust to Institutionalise:** Strong relationships ensure sustained trust and collaboration over time, leading to institutionalisation. **CoP Framework:** Building relationships is foundational for a thriving community where members trust and learn from each other.
• Provide necessary support and resources for ongoing adaptation in the face of challenges presented by online course development.	**Trust to Integrate**: Providing support can ease the challenges and consequences of adapting to new online methods, fostering deeper integration. **CoP Framework**: A supportive environment ensures the community remains resilient and adaptive to changes.
• Cultivate a culture of mutual respect and understanding between the LDs and SMEs to dispel stereotypes.	**Trust to Change**: Mutual respect can address potential challenges and uncertainties in the learning process, establishing initial trust. **CoP Framework**: Respect and understanding are pillars of a healthy Communities of Practice, ensuring every member feels valued.
• Invest in regular training sessions and workshops for SMEs and LDs.	**Trust to Integrate**: Training can address the challenges of transitioning to new methods, fostering deeper integration.

	CoP Framework: Continuous professional development is a key aspect of a Communities of Practice.
• Promote face-to-face meetings or video conferences for better communication and understanding.	**Trust to Change**: Direct communication can mitigate uncertainties and challenges in the learning process, establishing initial trust. **CoP Framework**: Regular interactions strengthen the bonds within the community and facilitate knowledge sharing.
• Encourage the sharing of successful collaboration examples.	**Trust to Institutionalise**: Sharing success stories can guide navigating challenges, leading to sustained trust and collaboration. **CoP Framework**: Sharing experiences and stories is a way to transfer knowledge and best practices within the community.
• Implement regular feedback and evaluation processes.	**Trust to Integrate**: Feedback can identify and address potential challenges in the learning process, fostering deeper integration. **CoP Framework:** Feedback mechanisms ensure the community remains adaptive and responsive to its members' needs.
• Ensure that LDs have a proactive role in online course development.	**Trust to Change**: A proactive approach can address potential challenges before they escalate, establishing initial trust. **CoP Framework**: Active participation by all members ensures a vibrant and functional community.
• Foster a culture of adaptability and resilience in the face of changing circumstances.	**Trust to Integrate**: Adaptability can mitigate the challenges of transitioning to new methods, fostering deeper integration. **CoP Framework**: Resilience ensures the community can withstand challenges and evolve.
• Invest in peer mentorship programs.	**Trust to Institutionalise**: Mentorship can guide individuals through the challenges of the learning process, leading to sustained trust and collaboration. **CoP Framework**: Mentorship strengthens the community by fostering relationships and transferring knowledge.
• Encourage autonomy and independence in work while ensuring sufficient support.	**Trust to Integrate**: Balancing autonomy with support can address potential challenges in the learning process, fostering deeper integration. **CoP Framework**: Autonomy allows members to

	innovate, while support ensures they remain connected to the community.
• Prioritise clear, open, and regular communication.	**Trust to Change**: Clear communication can mitigate uncertainties in the learning process, establishing initial trust. **CoP Framework**: Regular communication is vital for knowledge-sharing and relationship-building within the community.
• Foster a mindset of shared goals and shared success.	**Trust to Institutionalise**: Shared goals can provide direction and mitigate challenges in the learning process, leading to sustained trust and collaboration. **CoP Framework**: A shared sense of purpose binds the community together and ensures collaborative efforts.
• Establish a system to evaluate and update the methods and tools being used regularly.	**Trust to Integrate**: Regular evaluations can address potential challenges and ensure effective transitions, fostering deeper integration. **CoP Framework**: Continuous improvement ensures the community remains at the forefront of its domain.

6.1 Introduction to the T.I.M.E. model: A New Framework

Borne out of the findings and recommendations of this research, I have developed a new framework: the Trust Integration Model for Educators (T.I.M.E) is a non-linear process aimed at facilitating trust-building between LDs and SMEs during online course development. My model emphasises the importance of collaboration, communication, and relationship-building between LDs and SMEs to develop online courses successfully. A descriptive overview of the key points is shown in Fig 6.1 and a high-level diagram of how it operates in Figure 6.2.

Figure 6.1. Description of TIME model.

T Trust to change

There is a need for building trust to enable change in the working relationships between LDs and SMEs. SMEs may have preconceived notions about the role of LDs and may only collaborate on technical issues. However, by building trust, SMEs can collaborate more effectively with LDs to create engaging online content and blended learning experiences.

I Integration of expertise and roles

Integration of expertise and roles between LDs and SMEs can be achieved through open communication, sharing of resources, and understanding each other's needs. LDs should showcase their available resources and services to increase awareness among SMEs, while SMEs share their needs and ideas to help LDs create engaging content. By integrating their expertise and roles, LDs and SMEs can create online courses that are effective and engaging for learners.

T.I.M.E.

M Maintaining trusting relationships

Maintaining trusting relationships between LDs and SMEs is essential for successful collaboration. This can be achieved by regular communication, feedback, and supporting each other's work. These relationships are fragile and can be disrupted if key members of the team leave, resulting in a loss of knowledge and understanding. As such, SMEs and LDs should maintain communication and collaboration even after the course development is complete.

E Embracing technology

It is important to embrace technology, such as the use of a VLE/LMS to ensure successful online course development. learning and sharing resources. However, not all teaching staff may be comfortable with using online technology. Therefore, LDs and SMEs must adapt to the needs and preferences of teaching staff.

Trust to Change

Building trust between LDs and SMEs is crucial for effective collaboration and change in working relationships. SMEs often have preconceived notions about LDs, seeing them only as technical support. Establishing trust allows SMEs to collaborate more effectively, creating engaging online content and blended learning experiences. If SMEs distrust LDs' expertise, they may resist collaboration or changes to their course content. LDs can mitigate this by highlighting the value of SMEs' knowledge and showcasing their own expertise.

Establish Trust

- **Clarify Roles and Responsibilities:** Ensure there is clear understanding of roles and open communication about expertise build trust.

- **Foster a Positive Environment:** Create a culture of open communication and mutual respect to enhance trust.

- **Address Preconceptions:** Tackle SMEs' preconceived notions about LDs to build a relationship based on respect and understanding.

Integration of Expertise and Roles

- **Define Roles:** Clearly define LDs' and SMEs' responsibilities to ensure everyone understands their roles.

- **Collaborate on Content:** Collaboration should extend beyond technical issues, integrating SMEs' insights to create engaging content.

- **Share Resources:** LDs should showcase their resources, and SMEs should share their needs to facilitate content creation.

Maintain Communication

- **Regular Meetings and Feedback:** Regular communication through meetings and feedback is essential for maintaining trust.

- **Plan for Succession:** Prepare for team changes to ensure continuity and preserve knowledge.

Embracing Technology

- **Adapt to Needs:** Address teaching staff's varying comfort levels with technology for successful online course development.

- **Provide Clear Instructions:** LDs should give clear guidelines on using VLE/LMS and other TEL tools.

- **Offer Training:** Institutions should provide resources and training for effective technology use.

- **Recognise and Reward:** Institutions should acknowledge and reward successful collaborations to promote ongoing teamwork and knowledge sharing.

T.I.M.E. model in detail:

The T.I.M.E. model is now explored in greater detail with specific information related to the institution, LDs and SMEs and the considerations required within the framework as a CoP and related to the Conditional/Consequential Matrix (Martins & Baptista Nunes, 2016) and an overview is represented in Figure 6.2. below.

Figure 6.2. Trust Integration Model for Educators. (T.I.M.E.)
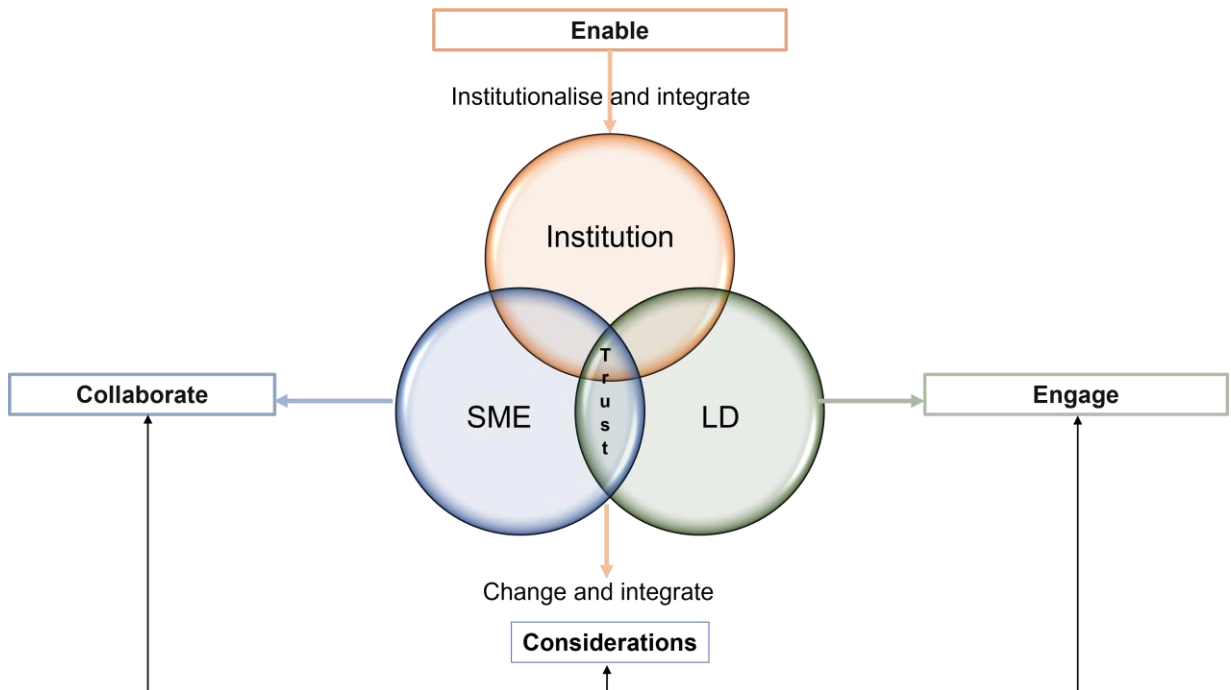
The T.I.M.E. framework strategies, actions and tasks are explored further by focusing on the ways Institutions, LDs and SMEs can integrate trust into their community and the considerations they need to factor into this by utilising cognition-based trust as an essential preliminary stage that traditionally paves the way for affect-based trust in the workplace (McAllister, 1995).

6.1.1 From Themes to Framework: Mapping Data into the T.I.M.E. Model

The T.I.M.E. model's structure of Enable, Engage, Collaborate, and Considerations, was developed by integrating themes identified in the research findings found in Chapter 5. These themes reflect important trust-building elements that support effective collaboration between LDs and SMEs. An overview of how these themes informed the model's components is as follows:

Enable (Institution's Role)

The Enable component focuses on the institution's role of nurturing an environment of trust and supportive collaboration. Themes mapped to this component include:

Role Clarity: Institutions should ensure that roles are clearly defined to prevent conflicts and align responsibilities. This theme informed recommendations for role delineation and institutional support.

Psychological Safety: Institutions play a critical role in creating an environment of safety so that team members feel confident sharing ideas and engaging in collaborative problem-solving.

Feedback and Recognition: Themes highlighting the importance of feedback and rewarding successful collaborations informed this component, to show the importance of the institution's role of acknowledgement to engender trust.

How These Themes Shaped the Enable aspect:

These themes established the need for institutional initiatives such as resource provision, role definition, and mechanisms for feedback and recognition. The focus is on building a foundation of cognition-based trust by providing resources and psychological safety and affect-based trust as feedback can be perceived as an emotional interest and investment in individuals' opinions.

Engage (LDs' Role)

The Engage component addresses the actions LDs take to actively build trust and establish effective collaboration. Themes mapped here include:

Understanding SME Knowledge: LDs need to be curious and seek an understanding of SME expertise to align course design effectively. This theme highlighted the importance of building cognition-based trust through respect for domain knowledge.

Open Communication: Transparent and regular communication was identified as a key factor in fostering mutual understanding and trust.

Adaptability: The need for LDs to be flexible in their approach and responsive to feedback emerged as an important theme.

Empathy: LDs should demonstrate empathy to understand SMEs' challenges and maintain strong collaborative relationships.

How These Themes Shaped Engage:

These themes informed recommendations for LD behaviours, such as regular meetings, resource sharing and feedback, promoting trust-building through understanding, adaptability, and emotional connection.

Collaborate (SMEs' Role)

The Collaborate component reflects the responsibilities of SMEs in developing trust and contributing to effective course design. Themes mapped here include:

Openness to Collaboration: SMEs' willingness to engage with LDs was critical for trust-building and successful outcomes.

Adoption of Technology: SMEs need to embrace new technologies to integrate effectively into online learning environments to augment rather than hinder their role.

Sharing Knowledge: Themes highlighting the importance of SMEs sharing expertise and insights to align with course objectives informed this component.

Continuous Learning: SMEs' commitment to learning was mapped as essential for maintaining adaptability and fostering mutual respect.

How These Themes Shaped Collaborate:

These themes highlighted the need for SMEs to adopt open communication, share expertise, and embrace technology, ensuring trust is built through active participation and mutual respect.

Considerations (Shared Challenges)

The Considerations component addresses broader challenges and strategies shared across roles. Themes mapped here include:

Power Dynamics: Recognising and managing power imbalances was critical for fostering an equitable collaboration environment.

Patience: Building trust takes time, and patience was identified as a recurring theme in sustaining relationships.

Confidence and Risk Management: Institutions, LDs, and SMEs need to recognise and support varying confidence levels to promote active participation.

Empathy and Mutual Respect: Across all roles, empathy and respect were central to addressing challenges and sustaining collaboration.

How These Themes Shaped Considerations:

These themes guided the development of overarching strategies to manage interpersonal and structural challenges, ensuring a balanced and inclusive approach to collaboration.

6.1.2 The components of the T.I.M.E. model

I now look at the structure of the T.I.M.E. model in more detail, focusing on the four core components: Enable, Engage, Collaborate, and Considerations. This framework was developed to address the key findings of this research, focusing on trust-building and collaboration between LDs and SMEs supported by institutions. Each component reflects interconnected roles and responsibilities of institutions, LDs and SMEs, offering a strategic approach to building and sustaining trusting relationships, to achieve successful outcomes in online course development.

6.1.3 Institution: Enable

Providing Resources

The organisation 'enables' and is responsible for providing the necessary resources for effective online course development leading to cognition-based

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trust. This means ensuring that both LDs and SMEs have access to what they need. By doing so, the organisation demonstrates its investment in the success of its staff, which in turn strengthens their trust in its commitment. RQ2 mentioned that this is crucial for fostering successful integration.

Encouraging Feedback

The institution needs to establish clear channels for feedback to drive continuous improvement. When the institution values the expertise of SMEs and LDs by listening to and acting upon their feedback, it reinforces their trust. This links to cognition-based trust regarding performance and reliability but also affect-based trust as feedback can be perceived about an emotional interest and investment in individuals' opinions. A culture of psychological safety can improve this process, aligning with the development of trust as described in RQ3.

Fostering a Culture of Collaboration

The institution's role in the CoP is to lead by example in fostering a collaborative culture leading to affect and cognition-based trust. This involves actively promoting teamwork and ensuring that SMEs and LDs engage effectively. The trust essential for this collaboration is built when the institution clearly values and understands the contributions of SMEs and LDs. This can also be supported by fostering an environment of psychological safety where individuals feel comfortable sharing ideas and opinions to further the joint venture during the collaborative process. This approach corresponds to the trust-building efforts outlined in RQ1.

Recognising and Rewarding Collaboration

When collaborative efforts lead to success, the organisation should acknowledge and celebrate this. By rewarding teamwork, the organisation motivates SMEs and LDs and strengthens their trust in the appreciation of their joint efforts which relates to both cognition and affect-based trust based on performance and recognising the individual contributions of others. This recognition aligns with the trust-building needed to foster change, as highlighted in RQ1.

Supporting Relationship Building

For LDs and SMEs to work well together, they must build strong relationships (affect-based trust). The institution can help by organising team-building activities and networking events. This kind of support helps to build a strong, interconnected community where trust is solidified, aligning with the integration focus of RQ2.

Leading with Empathy

Understanding and addressing the unique challenges LDs and SMEs face is crucial. When the organisation demonstrates empathy (affect-based trust) and ensures that everyone is heard and their perspectives are valued, it deepens trust within the CoP. This approach is key to establishing a lasting community and is central to the institutionalisation of trust, as indicated in RQ3.

Table 6.2. below condenses institutions' pivotal role in fostering a collaborative culture within a CoP. It outlines how institutions can facilitate this by promoting

collaborative behaviour, providing necessary resources, and encouraging open feedback mechanisms. The significance of recognising and rewarding collaborative efforts is also emphasised, as is the necessity of supporting relationship-building and leading with empathy. These actions are intricately linked to building and maintaining trust among SMEs and LDs, as denoted in the Trust Building and Conditional/Consequential Matrix column. This Matrix ties each action to a specific RQ related to trust, illustrating the direct impact of institutional support on cultivating trust within the CoP.

Table 6.2. Institution: Foster a Culture of Collaboration.

Institution: Foster a Culture of Collaboration		
Aspect	Description	Trust Building and Conditional/Consequential Matrix
Institution's Role in CoP	Actively promote and model collaborative behaviours, setting a tone for mutual engagement and shared understanding among SMEs and LDs.	Initiates trust (RQ1), ensuring that LDs and SMEs feel valued, understood, and psychologically safe.
Provide Resources	Organisations should proactively identify and allocate resources, ensuring that LDs and SMEs have the necessary tools and support.	Demonstrates commitment to LDs and SMEs, reinforcing trust and setting the stage for integration (RQ2).
Encourage Feedback	Establish open channels for feedback, emphasising its importance in the continuous improvement process.	Fosters an environment of psychological safety where insights and experiences of LDs and SMEs are recognised, further institutionalising trust (RQ3).
Recognise and Reward Collaboration	Celebrate and reward collaborative achievements, highlighting the importance of teamwork and shared success.	Motivates SMEs and LDs, reinforce trust in the organisation's appreciation of their efforts, and aligns with trust to change (RQ1).
Support for Relationship-Building	Facilitate opportunities for LDs and SMEs to connect, fostering strong relationships among members.	Strengthens bonds of trust, aligning with the focus on trust to integrate (RQ2).
Empathy	Lead empathetically, ensuring that LDs and SMEs' unique challenges and perspectives are understood and valued.	It fosters a deeper sense of loyalty and commitment, furthering the emphasis on trust to institutionalise (RQ3).

6.1.4 LDs: Engage

LDs operate within complex environments, balancing pedagogical goals with technological capabilities, all while engaging with SMEs and fostering trust and collaboration. They play a crucial role in course design and development, supporting faculty in evolving their teaching methodologies, and ensure the incorporation of best practices related to technology use, pedagogical

approaches, ethical considerations, accessibility, and a focus on learner-centred design (Pollard & Kumar, 2020). These roles often involve acting as advisors to guide faculty through the digital landscape, thereby highlighting the necessity for warm, interpersonal relationships to ensure effective course development (Richardson et al., 2019). Trust is a fundamental component in these interactions, as it enables smoother collaborations and successful outcomes in instructional design projects (Hung, 2002). Effective collaboration and shared cognition are crucial for the success of educational projects, making trust an essential element (Cannon-Bowers & Salas, 2001). Moreover, shared work values and the development of trustfulness and trustworthiness further enhance team member effectiveness (Chou et al., 2008).

Understanding the SME's Domain of Knowledge

Relating to cognition-based trust, the subject knowledge and content of the domain come from the SME, and although LDs may have expertise in their domain, they cannot be so in every area. Working with SMEs means they bring expertise in learning design, but understanding the SME's domain before the design phase is crucial to aid the process. LDs need to grasp the knowledge (not as an expert but as a curious LD) along with the educational aims of the SMEs. This understanding aligns with the concept of shared mental models, particularly task-related knowledge and knowledge of attitudes or beliefs, which are essential for optimising team performance (Cannon-Bowers & Salas, 2001). It also aligns with the 'Domain' element of the CoP framework, highlighting the importance of a shared area of interest and expertise (Wenger & Snyder, 2000). In the context of RQ1 (Trust to Change), this understanding lays the

groundwork for trust between LDs and SMEs, and without it, there is a risk of misaligned objectives that could derail the course development early in the process (Bawa & Watson, 2017). Additionally, clear role delineation helps avoid conflicts and build trust, which is crucial for collaborative course development (Halupa, 2019). Shared work values and trustfulness further enhance team effectiveness, emphasising the need for LDs to understand SME perspectives (Chou et al., 2008). Mutual respect and clear communication between LDs and SMEs are essential to overcome challenges and ensure successful course design (Pollard & Kumar, 2022).

Resource Sharing and Clear Directions

LDs are also responsible for sharing resources and services (cognition-based trust), an action aligned with the 'Practice' component of the CoP framework, which highlights shared practices and tools as a foundation for collective success, explored in RQ2 (Trust to Integrate). Clear, precise instructions by LDs set the stage for effective integration. Ambiguity in this regard could lead to confusion and undermine the development process.

Adaptability in Practice

Adaptability (cognition-based trust) is essential for LDs to operate effectively in the CoP faculty (Richardson et al., 2019; Schwier & Wilson, 2010). Adaptability ensures the community remains responsive and relevant. RQ1 (Trust to Change) highlights that adaptability is critical for establishing trust at the early stages and in all aspects of the CoP.

Promoting Open Communication

Open communication is fundamental (part of the CHAMELEON acronym described by Bawa and Watson (2017)) within the 'Community' element of the CoP. Through this, LDs and SMEs nurture mutual understanding and shared knowledge. This is critical for establishing initial trust, as explored in RQ1. A lack of open dialogue can result in misunderstandings that jeopardise the collaboration's foundation.

Encouraging and Valuing Feedback

Feedback is a crucial part of the iterative process within a CoP and a practice that LDs must accept. Soliciting feedback is imperative for continuous improvement (fostering cognition-based trust), as identified in RQ2 and RQ3. Ignoring this aspect could result in educational offerings that fail to meet learner expectations (Bawa & Watson, 2017; Blick & Waters, 2021).

Responsive Adaptation to Feedback

LDs must seek feedback and be responsive to it (Blick & Waters, 2021). This responsiveness (based on cognition-based trust) ensures that the CoP remains adaptable and evolves based on community input, which is central to RQ2 (Trust to Integrate). Not responding to feedback can lead to courses that are out of touch with learners' needs.

Consistency in Communication

Relating to cognition-based trust around the consistent exchange of information and affect-based trust through ongoing personal connection, the role of LDs in maintaining effective communication is a vital activity (Blick & Waters, 2021; Campbell et al., 2007; Daniel, 2003) that underpins the 'Community' element of the CoP, ensuring all members are consistently in harmony. RQ2 and RQ3 (Trust to Integrate and Institutionalise) show that sustaining communication is crucial for ongoing collaboration. Failure in this can lead to a deterioration of trust and collaborative efforts.

Nurturing Relationships for Longevity

Maintaining strong and enduring relationships (affect-based trust) within the CoP is evidence of a healthy and sustainable community. This ongoing effort supports the collaboration and knowledge sharing crucial in the later stages of integration and institutionalisation, as explored in RQ2 and RQ3. Neglect in this area could result in a significant loss of community engagement and valuable expertise (Bawa & Watson, 2017; Blick & Waters, 2021).

Building and Developing Trust and Relationships

The development of trust and nurturing relationships are foundational for LDs with empathy as a key characteristic affecting a collaborative environment and used to build rapport and trusting relationships, understanding the other group members' needs, and being transparent about the process, role distribution and associated responsibilities and boundaries (Bawa & Watson, 2017).

Interpersonal trust is essential for efficient cooperation, especially when team

members are interdependent. Trusting relationships within teams ensure that

members acquire necessary information and assistance, leading to improved

performance and satisfaction with cooperation. LDs must foster an environment

conducive to trust and understanding, acknowledging the importance of shared

work values and trust in relationships (Halupa, 2019; McAllister, 1995).

Empathy in Community Engagement

Empathy relates to affect-based trust because of emotional connections and is

essential for LDs to foster within the CoP (Bawa & Watson, 2017). It contributes

significantly to the sense of belonging and mutual comprehension among

community members, strengthening the group's trust and bonds. As explored in

RQ1's focus on the early stages of trust, a lack of empathy can cause strained

relationships and hinder the initial building of trust.

Empathy is vital to identity-driven learning within communities of practice. LDs

must engage with SMEs empathetically, ensuring each party feels valued and

understood (Bawa & Watson, 2017). This empathetic approach is in line with

understanding teammates' strengths, weaknesses, and preferences—elements

of shared mental models crucial for team dynamics (Cannon-Bowers et al.,

1993; Chou et al., 2008).

Social Change Agency and Instructional Design

The role of LDs is complex, nuanced, and multifaceted and should be

integrated with the foundational principles of trust critical to their collaboration

with SMEs. LDs are tasked with engaging with SMEs, a relationship that hinges on mutual respect and understanding, to ensure that the SMEs' vast expertise and pedagogical objectives are intricately and accurately interlaced within the course design (Chen & Carliner, 2020; Richardson et al., 2018).

LDs are positioned as change agents in HE (Tracey et al., 2014). Note that this may not always be the case. From experience and my pilot study, some identify as LDs but focus entirely on technology and development, relying on other LDs for pedagogical expertise. They may be given an LD role when they would be better suited to an LT role — part of the 'pickle' we are in. Through the instructional design process, LDs facilitate learning experiences reflecting shared attitudes and beliefs, reinforcing that shared mental models are pivotal for effective team performance and cohesion (Cannon-Bowers & Salas, 2001). Conflicts may arise when LDs and faculty do not share these values, highlighting the importance of aligned work values and clear role delineation (Halupa, 2019).

Table 6.3. shows the responsibilities of LDs within the CoP framework and how these align with building trust according to different conditional and consequential matrices. The table details various aspects, such as understanding the expertise of SMEs, maintaining clear and open channels of communication, displaying empathy, and the need for adaptability. It further highlights the importance of shared resources, soliciting and being responsive to feedback, and the critical nature of maintaining relationships within the CoP. Each aspect is cross-referenced with relevant RQs to indicate how these

responsibilities influence trust dynamics across different stages of change, integration, and institutionalisation.

Table 6.3. LDs' Responsibilities and Alignment.

Learning Designers' Responsibilities and Alignment			
Aspect	CoP Relevance	Conditional/Consequential Matrix Relevance	Trust Building and Conditional/Consequential Matrix
Understand SME's Expertise	Aligns with the 'Domain' element.	RQ1 - Trust to Change	Initiates trust. Misalignment in course objectives if not understood.
Clear Instructions	Ensures shared understanding of practices and tools.	RQ2 - Trust to Integrate	Effective integration. Confusion if instructions are unclear.
Shared Resources	Aligns with 'Practice.'	RQ2 - Trust to Integrate	Mutual understanding and collaboration. Underutilised resources if not shared.
Adaptability	Crucial for CoP evolution and growth.	RQ1 - Trust to Change	Builds trust. Resistance if not adaptable.
Open Communication	The core activity in 'Community.'	RQ1 - Trust to Change	Establishes initial trust. Misunderstandings if not practiced.
Solicit Feedback	Part of iterative learning in CoP.	RQ2 and RQ3 - Trust to Integrate and Institutionalise	Continuous improvement. Courses may not meet needs if feedback is not solicited.
Responsive to Feedback	Ensures CoP adaptiveness and evolution.	RQ2 - Trust to Integrate	Mutual understanding, misaligned objectives if unresponsive.
Maintain Communication	Strengthens 'Community.'	RQ2 and RQ3 - Trust to Integrate and Institutionalise	Continuous collaboration. Loss of trust if not maintained.
Maintain Relationships	Crucial for CoP longevity and health.	RQ2 and RQ3 - Trust to Integrate and Institutionalise	Ongoing collaboration. Loss of insights if relationships are not maintained.
Empathy	Strengthens 'Community.'	RQ1 - Trust to Change	Initiates trust. Strained relationships if absent.

6.1.5 SMEs: Collaborate

The collaborative and trusting relationship between SMEs and LDs is pivotal within the CoP to effectively design and deliver online learning. SMEs play a vital role as repositories of knowledge and as active participants in a collaborative process that demands openness, technological flexibility or agility, and a commitment to continuous learning. Their willingness to share expertise, communicate effectively, and maintain relationships with LDs is central to developing trust.

Openness to Collaboration

SMEs are essential in fostering a collaborative environment with LDs. An openness to collaboration (cognition-based trust) is integral to the Community element of the CoP. Concerning RQ1— 'Trust to Change', an SME's willingness to collaborate establishes trust. Resistance to collaboration, on the other hand, may create barriers from the outset of online course development.

Adoption of Technology

SMEs must also embrace technology, which is a shared resource within the Practice element of the CoP framework. Embracing technology is a condition for the successful integration of online courses (cognition-based trust), as explored in RQ2 and RQ3, 'Trust to Integrate and Institutionalise.' A failure to engage with technology can hinder the institutionalisation of online learning.

Continuous Learning

Continuous learning is a core principle of the CoP, and for SMEs, being open to new knowledge ensures that they remain current and relevant. This commitment is crucial in setting the conditions for adaptability and growth, particularly in the initial stages of collaboration, as outlined in RQ1. A reluctance to learn may lead to issues around trust and challenges to effective collaboration.

Sharing Expertise and Insights

Sharing knowledge, needs and ideas is a fundamental activity within the Community element of the CoP. SMEs and LDs achieve a mutual understanding and align course objectives with pedagogical delivery through this exchange which straddles affect and cognition-based trust— sharing ideas (cognition) and collaboration to build emotional connections (affect-based). Without such sharing, there is a risk of misalignment and ineffective course outcomes.

Engaging in Feedback

Feedback is an integral part of the learning process within a CoP. Providing and responding to feedback is crucial during the integration phase of course development (cognition-based). It sets a condition for continuous improvement and responsiveness to learner needs, as explored by RQ2 and RQ3 'Trust to Integrate and Trust to Institutionalise.' Neglecting this process can result in courses that do not meet learners' needs.

Consistency in Communication

Regular communication (cognition and affect-based trust) supports the Community aspect of the CoP, ensuring that all members, including SMEs and LDs, are aligned and informed. Consistent communication is foundational for establishing initial trust and understanding, as RQ1 'Trust to Change' indicates. Inconsistent communication can lead to misunderstandings and misaligned course objectives.

Building and Maintaining Relationships

For SMEs, maintaining strong relationships is vital for the longevity and health of the CoP (affect-based trust). These relationships are necessary for ongoing collaboration and knowledge sharing, especially in the later stages of integrating and institutionalising online learning, as indicated in RQ2 and RQ3 (Trust to Integrate and Trust to Institutionalise). A lack of attention to relationship maintenance can result in losing valuable expertise and insight.

Empathy

For SMEs, showing empathy (affect-based trust) is crucial in the early stages of forming trust, as indicated by RQ1 (Trust to Change). A lack of empathy can lead to relationship difficulties and impede trust-building efforts, which are essential for effective collaboration with LDs.

Table 6.4. below shows the role of SMEs in the CoP, focusing on their engagement and contribution to trust-building. It identifies key behaviours and attitudes, such as being open to collaboration, embracing technology, and the

willingness to learn and share knowledge. It highlights how these factors

contribute to a thriving community, drawing connections to the trust related

RQs. It shows that SMEs' regular communication and the nurturing of

relationships are fundamental for the long-term health of the CoP.

Table 6.4. SME Engagement and Trust Building.

Subject Matter Expert Engagement and Trust Building			
Aspect	CoP Relevance	Conditional/Consequential Matrix Relevance	Trust Building and Conditional/Consequential Matrix
Open to Collaboration	Aligns with 'Community.'	RQ1 - Trust to Change	Initiates trust. Resistance if not open to collaboration.
Embrace Technology	Shared tool/resource in 'Practice.'	RQ2 and RQ3 - Trust to Integrate and Institutionalise	Successful integration. Hindered institutionalisation if technology is not embraced.
Open to Learning	Fundamental for continuous learning in CoP.	RQ1 - Trust to Change	Adaptability and growth. Resistance if not open to learning.
Share Needs and Ideas	Core activity in 'Community.'	RQ2 and RQ3 - Trust to Integrate and Institutionalise	Mutual understanding, misalignment if not sharing.
Provide Feedback	Part of iterative learning in CoP.	RQ2 and RQ3 - Trust to Integrate and Institutionalise	Continuous improvement and unmet learners' needs if feedback is not provided.
Communicate Regularly	Strengthens 'Community.'	RQ1 - Trust to Change	Establishes initial trust. Misunderstandings if communication is irregular.
Maintain Relationships	Crucial for CoP longevity and health.	RQ2 and RQ3 - Trust to Integrate and Institutionalise	Ongoing collaboration. Loss of valuable insights if relationships are not maintained.
Empathy	Strengthens bonds and trust within 'Community.'	RQ1 - Trust to Change	Initiates trust, challenges in building trust if empathy is lacking.

6.1.6 Considerations

Recognising power dynamics, exercising patience, and managing confidence and risk are crucial in online learning collaborations. Integrating these with the roles of LDs and SMEs and the institution's support can lead to a thriving and effective CoP.

Recognising and Addressing Power Dynamics

Power dynamics within a CoP can significantly impact interactions and knowledge sharing. Acknowledging these dynamics and encouraging psychological safety is essential to cultivate an environment where every member feels their contributions are respected and valuable.

The Conditional/Consequential Matrix emphasises the importance of trust in initiating change (RQ1). Initial interactions should be grounded in mutual respect, crucial for establishing foundational trust.

Institutions play a critical role by offering support, training, and resources to LDs to help them recognise and manage power dynamics, ensuring the CoP is a supportive and equitable environment for all participants.

The Importance of Patience

Patience is a vital element of a CoP. Building trust and fostering collaboration are continuous efforts that require time and understanding from all community members.

Patience relates to the concept of trust to integrate (RQ2) within the Conditional/Consequential Matrix. As LDs and SMEs collaborate over time, trust naturally strengthens, enhancing shared practices and expertise integration.

Confidence and Risk Management

A member's confidence influences their willingness to share knowledge and engage in the community actively. Recognising varying confidence levels among SMEs is imperative to ensure their active and valued participation within the CoP.

The Conditional/Consequential Matrix associates the development of trust to institutionalise (RQ3) with the need to address confidence. LDs who are attentive to the SMEs' past experiences and expectations can provide better support, fostering a well-established culture of trust within the community.

Institutions can create avenues for SMEs to express their concerns and share their experiences. Such platforms can enable LDs to gain the necessary understanding to support SMEs effectively, contributing to a stronger foundation of trust in the CoP.

Collaborative Environment

The LD's understanding of SME domain knowledge is fundamental for aligning educational goals with learning outcomes. This understanding becomes particularly relevant when addressing power dynamics and building trust.

Institutions must support LDs in creating a collaborative space that acknowledges SME expertise and promotes equality.

Communication and Empathy

Open and empathetic communication, as maintained by LDs with SMEs, is essential in reinforcing the CoP's shared practices and dealing with power dynamics patiently. LDs can act as dialogue facilitators, ensuring members' confidence grows over time, leading to risk-taking and innovative sharing within the CoP.

Resource Management and Adaptability

LDs need to be resourceful and adaptable, valuable qualities when managing the complexities of power dynamics and confidence levels within the CoP. The distribution of resources and clear guidelines provided by LDs help maintain an inclusive and supportive learning environment.

SME Engagement

SMEs can help bring content to life through their knowledge and active participation in online learning design and delivery. Continuous engagement from SMEs, supported by the institution, enriches the CoP, ensuring that members can confidently share and take risks in a trusted space.

Table 6.5. overviews an integrated approach designed to enhance collaboration and trust within a CoP. It integrates strategies applicable to both LDs and SMEs aimed at strengthening the collaborative fabric of the community. This

integrated approach highlights the significance of clear communication, mutual understanding, shared objectives, and empathy. It shows the importance of providing and utilising shared resources, consistent and constructive feedback, and recognising and celebrating collaborative achievements. The integrated approach addresses and enhances trust in the CoP.

Table 6.5. Considerations for Trust Building and Collaboration.

Considerations for Trust Building and Collaboration			
Aspect	CoP Framework Description	Conditional/Consequential Matrix and Trust Building	Institution's Role
Recognise Power Dynamics	Power dynamics influence interactions and knowledge sharing.	Relates to trust to change (RQ1), as power imbalances can hinder trust-building.	Institutions should ensure equitable participation and minimise power imbalances to foster trust—and psychological safety.
Value Diversity	A diverse CoP brings a wealth of perspectives and experiences.	Diversity enriches trust to integrate (RQ2) and institutionalise (RQ3) by bringing new insights.	Institutions should actively support and value diversity within the CoP.
Sustainable Practices	CoPs should engage in practices that are sustainable in the long term.	Sustainability is key to trust to institutionalise (RQ3).	Institutions should support practices that can be maintained over time to build lasting trust.
Regular Review	Regular review of CoP activities ensures relevance and effectiveness.	Reviews support trust to integrate (RQ2) and institutionalise (RQ3).	Institutions should facilitate regular reviews to adapt and improve CoP activities.
Strategic Alignment	CoP goals should align with institutional strategy.	Strategic alignment enhances all aspects of trust (RQ1, RQ2, RQ3).	Institutions should ensure that CoP activities are aligned with broader strategic goals.
Leadership and Governance	Effective leadership and clear governance structures are vital for CoP success.	Good governance builds trust to change (RQ1) and to institutionalise (RQ3).	Institutions should provide clear leadership and governance to guide CoP activities.

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Chapter 7: Discussion

This discussion compares the research findings with the existing literature. I explore the complex landscape of LDs in HE, examine the barriers SMEs face in implementing TEL, address the role of trust, analyse the research questions and how they are answered based on the data, and finally, address the limitations that need to be considered. Trust plays a pivotal role in successful collaborative environments in HE, FE, and L&D. The T.I.M.E. model's purpose of integrating trust into these educational teams is also considered.

By examining the impact of trust on team dynamics and their interactions with institutional structures, we gain a clearer understanding of the barriers and facilitators to effective collaboration and the integration of digital technologies in learning environments. Institutional or organisational support is highlighted as a crucial element in fostering an environment where trust can flourish. Using the T.I.M.E. model framework, strategic changes that could enhance trust and, by extension, the effectiveness and innovation of TEL practices are explored. Aligning the research findings with broader themes from the literature offers insights into how trust can be more effectively integrated into TEL teams, supporting the goals of HE, FE, and L&D sectors in adapting to the evolving educational landscape.

7.1 The Complex Landscape of LDs in Higher Education

As explored earlier in this thesis, within the dynamic world of TEL, titles such as 'Educational Technologist,' 'Learning Experience Designer,' and 'Instructional Designer' create confusion among faculty and stakeholders. Bird (2004) notes

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that this 'diversity' complicates recognition and institutional functioning. Richardson et al. (2019) add that ambiguity can hinder clear communication and collaboration essential for learning initiatives. Schwier et al. (2004) argue that unclear roles can undermine the credibility and value of LDs in educational development. Supporting this, my interviews in this research highlight the importance of defining roles and responsibilities to foster trust and enhance collaboration with LDs and SMEs.

The observations by Bird (2004) find echoes in real-world practice, where LDs stressed the necessity of clear communication to mitigate initial trust issues. They emphasised that cross-departmental collaboration and mutual respect are key to building productive relationships (Dykstra, 2020). This is complemented by Kenny et al. (2005), who highlight the importance of mutual respect and understanding in collaborative environments.

Focus group discussions reinforced these findings, identifying misunderstandings and assumptions as barriers, highlighting the need for clear communication to resolve conflicts and align expectations. Deutsch (1958) argues that trust and suspicion are shaped by the clarity and frequency of communication within groups, and Hoy and Tschannen-Moran (1999) discuss its impact on educational leadership.

My findings align with the literature, emphasising the critical role of clear communication in overcoming the challenges posed by role ambiguity. For instance, LDs discussed the necessity of reassurance and clarification in their roles to foster trust with SMEs, suggesting that understanding and

acknowledging each other's expertise is key to a productive relationship (Dykstra, 2020). Richardson et al. (2019) similarly highlight the necessity for LDs to communicate their capabilities clearly to establish trust and facilitate collaboration.

The T.I.M.E. model aims to enhance collaboration and trust between LDs and SMEs by fostering a culture of open communication and clearly defining roles. This model integrates psychological safety to encourage idea-sharing, which is vital for effective collaboration in learning design. Schwier et al. (2004) emphasise clear role definitions and a psychologically safe environment as foundational for a collaborative culture. Chen and Carliner (2020) focus on how these relationships can enhance collaborative efforts among academic staff. The T.I.M.E. model also advocates for continuous support and resource allocation, highlighting institutional commitment to staff success as critical for maintaining trust (Bird, 2004; Richardson et al., 2019).

Contrasting with TEL environments that may have structured workflows that can establish clear trust pathways, Xiao and Tong (2023) demonstrate that trust paths in digital networks often rely on incomplete information, complicating trust assessments. Further, Wang et al. (2024) caution against 'overtrust' in robotic systems, noting that excessive reliance can result in misuse or rejection of technology. This perspective contrasts with a possible assumption of TEL's tools as inherently reliable and trustworthy.

Collaboration Complexities

'Pulling tigers' teeth' as a metaphor (Pan et al., 2003) indicates the nuanced challenges in LD and SME collaborations, highlighting the delicate nature of these interactions. Chen and Carliner (2020) argue that collaboration often involves power dynamics and communication barriers, which can obstruct effective collaboration. These challenges include unclear roles, workload pressures, and concerns over content ownership, which hinder development and contribute to frustration among team members. Richardson et al. (2019) highlight the need for clear communication and well-defined roles to foster a conducive collaborative environment.

Interviews reveal variability in experiences, with some SMEs feeling isolated due to a perceived lack of engagement from LDs, while others report successful collaborations characterised by clear communication and mutual respect. These observations suggest that effective collaboration relies heavily on establishing and maintaining clear communication channels and mutual respect.

The T.I.M.E. model promotes empathy, clear communication, and mutual respect to mitigate conflicts and enhance collaboration. This approach addresses immediate challenges and fosters sustainable partnerships conducive to effective online course development.

Social Capital in Learning Design Collaborations

Schwier et al. (2004) argue that social capital—comprising trust, mutual understanding, respect, and shared values—is crucial for successful learning design initiatives. Cohen and Prusak (2001) note that organisations operate more effectively when social interactions are rich and founded on trust. Daniel et al. (2002) and Erickson and Kellogg (2002) discuss how trust and mutual understanding are built through shared narratives, enhancing collaboration and productivity.

Interviews with LDs and SMEs highlight trust-building as integral to their work, emphasising the role of social capital in LD and SME collaborations. The T.I.M.E. model's approach to cultivating social capital focuses on fostering trust, mutual respect, and shared understanding, enhancing collaborative outcomes and promoting cohesion and innovation within the LD and SME learning design community.

Building Trust in Diverse Educational Contexts

Trust is foundational in HE, impacting operational dynamics and pedagogical innovation and Jameson et al. (2023) highlight how trust facilitates collaborative relationships essential for organisational success. Bormann et al. (2021) discuss trust's influence on organisational culture and its role in executing change initiatives. Schwier et al. (2004) and Cohen and Prusak (2001) emphasise the role of trust and social capital in sustaining educational communities. The findings align with Hamilton et al.'s (2023) exploration of trust precursors such as communication and mutual respect, which serve as

foundational elements in professional settings. Additionally, Baratella et al. (2023) focus on a nuanced understanding of how trust dynamics evolve and influence collaboration in educational contexts.

LDs and SMEs report varied experiences with trust dynamics, influenced by organisational culture and communication practices. The T.I.M.E. model's focus on collaboration, communication, and relationship-building offers strategies to enhance trust dynamics tailored to the cultural and operational nuances of educational institutions.

Integrating Trust Dynamics with Digital and Automated Systems

The shift to online learning necessitates reevaluating trust dynamics, particularly with digital platforms and automated systems. Luhmann (1979) discusses the role of trust in reducing social complexities, crucial for digital environments. Marsh et al. (2012) argue that computational trust models aim to enhance decision-making but often overshadow practical utility.

Wylde (2023b) describes how trust is key to achieving the UN's vision of a free, secure, and open internet (that would positively impact TEL). Yet mistrust fuelled by surveillance, election interference, and conflicting cyber norms prevent cooperation across the world. Ability, benevolence, and integrity are seen as ways to build such trust to prevent fragmentation and polarisation. In contrast, TEL discussions tend to focus on interpersonal trust-building at the team level, often overlooking broader systemic challenges like policy fragmentation and conflicting norms. Wylde's (2023b) emphasis on macro-level trust challenges highlights the importance of aligning trust-building practices

across institutional and policy domains. Wylde (2023a) suggests that managing trust in AI systems requires implementing zero trust protocols to address implicit biases and assumptions often associated with technology. Wylde (2024) further argues that promoting transparency, accountability, and inclusion is essential for developing trust in AI governance, particularly when aligning policies across diverse stakeholders. This focus on interoperability resonates with the challenges faced in TEL environments, where integrating digital tools and ensuring seamless collaboration requires not just technological compatibility but also trust-building across diverse educational and institutional stakeholders. These insights resonate with the challenges faced in TEL environments, where digital tools must build user confidence through reliable, explainable designs. In contrast to TEL environments that might assume inherent trust in technologies, Wylde (2023a) advocates for adopting zero trust protocols as a mechanism for addressing implicit biases and promoting accountability. This approach challenges the prevalent reliance on trust in TEL tools, suggesting a more rigorous framework for mitigating risks in digital collaborations.

Feedback from LDs and SMEs indicates a need for personal connections within digital platforms to develop genuine trust. Kumar et al. (2024) emphasise that integrating technologies like GenAI requires careful attention to ethical concerns and transparency, contrasting TEL's often optimistic narratives. Addressing these concerns can enhance trust by ensuring responsible implementation. The T.I.M.E. model addresses digital trust dynamics by emphasising trust in online education while maintaining personal elements, and

with the awareness of new developments, for example, in the form of AI in education.

Navigating Trust Dynamics between LDs and Faculty

The interplay of trust between LDs and faculty involves managing collaboration risks. Sheppard and Sherman (1998) note that trust serves as a foundation for partnerships and a tool for mitigating risks. Mueller et al. (2022) and Bawa and Watson (2017) emphasise the need for clear communication and well-defined roles to manage these relationships effectively. As previously noted in the literature, unclear role definitions can hinder collaboration between LDs and faculty. Even though LDs can be "change agents in their institutions", for example by integrating new technologies such as GenAI into TEL environments (Kumar et al., 2024, p.226), Richardson et al. (2019) emphasised the need for transparent communication, which aligns with the observations from Mueller (2022), highlighting the ongoing challenges LDs face in establishing their professional roles and credibility within educational settings.

Interviews revealed that effective collaboration often hinges on clear communication and shared understanding. Mueller (2022) highlights that despite the importance of trust, conflicts between LDs and faculty often arise due to misaligned goals and unclear communication. This observation demonstrates the need for explicit trust-building practices to mitigate such challenges and encourage more harmonious collaboration. The T.I.M.E. model's emphasis on empathy, open communication, and shared goals aims to improve trust dynamics by addressing core challenges.

Embracing Collaboration and Constructive Conflict

Collaboration and constructive conflict further innovation within educational environments. Caddell and Nilchiani (2023) highlight that trust-building is path-dependent, with early interactions shaping long-term trust trajectories. Similarly, Khan et al. (2023) stress the importance of integrity and clear communication in developing trust, findings that reinforce the need for deliberate strategies to enhance collaborative efforts in TEL settings. Donohue (1992) asserts that managing conflict enhances interdependence among team members. Hocker and Wilmot (2017) and Tjosvold (2008) highlight conflict's potential to create creative solutions. Rahim (2010) suggests trust is crucial for managing conflicts constructively.

Interviews reveal a spectrum of collaboration experiences, with effective partnerships characterised by trust and open communication. The T.I.M.E. model promotes these elements to transform conflicts into opportunities, enhancing collaborative dynamics.

Educational Cultural Challenges

New technologies and pedagogical methods present cultural challenges within institutions. Salmon and Wright (2014) and Bawa and Watson (2017) discuss cultural barriers to TEL implementation, emphasising trust in supporting innovation. Schwier and Wilson (2010) highlight the impact of educational culture on trust dynamics between LDs and SMEs. Xiao and Tong (2023) highlight the dynamic nature of trust in digital environments, shaped by trust paths and the quality of interactions. In contrast to structured workflows in TEL

environments, they argue that trust paths in social networks are often fragmented and rely on incomplete information. This perspective highlights the need for TEL teams to address information gaps proactively when fostering trust. Giorgi et al. (2024) look at the broader societal implications of trust, highlighting its importance in promoting cohesion and resilience.

Narratives from SMEs reveal adaptation challenges to online learning and hesitancy to embrace technological changes. The T.I.M.E. model promotes a culture of trust and continuous learning to mitigate resistance and support technology integration.

Operational Challenges

Operational challenges significantly impact collaboration in educational settings. Moskal (2012) outlines issues like resource allocation and time management as barriers to collaboration. Dykstra (2020) discusses workload and resource constraints affecting trust-building. Edmondson and Bransby (2023) highlight the critical role of psychological safety in building trust and surmounting organisational barriers. Similarly, Duenas-Cid and Calzati (2023) note that trust and distrust often coexist in digital contexts, acting as mechanisms for maintaining balance and oversight. These insights suggest that creating safe, transparent environments is essential for mitigating operational challenges in TEL.

Edmondson and Bransby (2023) further discuss psychological safety as a critical factor in overcoming operational challenges. By encouraging an environment where team members feel safe to express ideas and concerns

without fear of judgment, organisations can build trust and improve resilience. This is particularly important during crises, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, where effective collaboration relies heavily on transparent communication and mutual support.

Interviews during critical periods like the COVID-19 pandemic highlight the need for effective communication and collaborative planning to address these challenges. The T.I.M.E. model emphasises adaptability and continuous improvement to enhance collaborative efforts.

Skills, Trust Building, and Institutional Support

Skills, trust building, and institutional support are pivotal in educational collaborations. IBSTPI (2012; 2021) identifies essential instructional design competencies. Sugar (2014) and Wakefield et al. (2012) highlight effective communication and teamwork as crucial for trust and collaboration.

Interviews reinforce the importance of skill development and institutional support in trust-building. The T.I.M.E. model advocates for continuous learning and institutional support to enhance trust and manage educational collaboration complexities, particularly in digital learning environments.

7.2 SME barriers to implementing TEL

Conole (2013) discusses the barriers that SMEs often have to TEL adoption, such as resistance to change and varying levels of digital competence among educators, advocating for institutional strategies that address these barriers through targeted support and training. Further, Armstrong (2019) identifies

similar challenges, noting that despite high levels of digital competence, institutional and attitudinal barriers can significantly impede the effective implementation of TEL and emphasises the need for an institutional framework that supports educators in overcoming these challenges.

Interviews with SMEs echo the literature, revealing difficulties with some individuals in TEL adoption itself, training, or support, and engaging students with online resources and broader literacy challenges, highlighting the critical role of trust and institutional support in navigating the complexities of TEL. These insights illustrate the impact of institutional backing in facilitating the adoption of TEL, with educators expressing a need for more comprehensive training and resources to improve their efficacy in online settings.

The T.I.M.E. model aims to foster a supportive environment conducive to innovation and risk-taking, facilitating the seamless integration of new technologies into teaching practices and helping overcome initial resistance encountered by SMEs. By fostering a culture that values continuous improvement and adaptive learning, the model helps to mitigate the impact of barriers to TEL adoption. Enhancing skills and providing institutional support are crucial for building trust and improving collaboration in educational settings.

7.3 Trust

Trust Dynamics in TEL Settings

The literature shows that trust dynamics within TEL settings are complex, comprising cognitive and affective dimensions and is echoed in the

interviewees' discussions. Cognition-based trust is based on confidence in another's competence, reliability, and integrity, crucial for enabling risk-taking behaviours and fostering effective collaborations within organisational settings (Legood et al., 2023; Mayer et al., 1995). On the other hand, affect-based trust arises from emotional bonds and personal care, significantly influencing organisational change and enhancing relationships across the broader institutional context (Rousseau et al., 1998). Hamilton et al. (2023) identify communication and mutual respect as key precursors to trust in professional environments. Their findings highlight how clear, open communication builds understanding, while mutual respect promotes collaborative efforts.

Impact of Trust on Collaboration Dynamics

Interviewees in the research indicated that trust critically affects collaboration dynamics. Issues such as an 'us versus them' mentality can strain relationships and hinder effective teamwork, illustrating the complexities of trust in adopting new educational technologies. This feedback highlights how the presence or absence of trust directly impacts collaborative practices across various departments and educational levels. Giorgi et al. (2024) relate that language reflecting inclusion and connection promotes higher levels of trust, while language that conveys hostility or division reduces trust. However, Giorgi et al. (2024) also note that generalised trust correlates weakly with social words, suggesting that developing deeper interpersonal relationships may be more critical for establishing trust in TEL contexts.

Trust's Role in Navigating Higher Education Challenges

The literature reveals that in HE, trust transcends mere transactional relationships, becoming fundamental to managing the complexities of educational design and implementing innovative pedagogical strategies. This was evidenced by interviewees who discussed how the presence or absence of trust influenced the success of their relationships. Jameson et al. (2023) emphasise the role of trust in HE and how it facilitates staff adaptability while Bormann et al. (2021) discuss how trust in educational settings underpins successful interactions, and they argue that trust is crucial for developing and maintaining social cohesion, which is essential in educational reforms and transitions such as those to online platforms.

Enhancing Pedagogical Innovations through Trust

The role of trust in both HE and FE is critical for creating supportive environments for innovation and collaborative exploration. The T.I.M.E. model emphasises the importance of nurturing trust to overcome departmental and interdisciplinary challenges, enhancing pedagogical innovations. By effectively addressing trust dynamics, institutions can facilitate a smoother integration of new technologies and pedagogical methods, promoting a culture of continuous learning and adaptability.

Overcoming Barriers to Trust

Integrating trust dynamics with TEL involves addressing both technical barriers and trust issues. Trust acts as a catalyst for educators and institutions to

navigate resistance to change and engage collaboratively in innovative practices. The T.I.M.E. model aims to overcome these challenges by fostering essential trust dynamics in HE, focusing on empathy, open communication, and shared goals.

Multidimensional Aspects of Trust

The literature indicates that trust encompasses both cognition-based aspects, which focus on an individual's skills and dependability, and affect-based aspects, which arise from emotional connections and can include 'small talk' and other non-formal subtleties of relationship building (Mislin et al., 2011). Interviewees described how both these elements are crucial in fostering trusting working relationships. Nooteboom (1996) discusses how repeated interactions within specific settings can build a historical track record that shapes future trust dynamics, emphasising the need to understand these multifaceted aspects of trust across different settings. Hirvi et al. (2020) highlight the importance of understanding the multidimensional aspects of trust, pointing out that these nuances significantly affect how collaborative efforts are managed and perceived. The T.I.M.E. model addresses these aspects of building and maintaining trusting relationships.

Cultural Variance and Trust

Cultural differences significantly impact how trust is established, as seen in the reliance on personal relationships or 'guanxi' in Chinese business contexts, often substituting formal trust mechanisms (Xin & Pearce, 1996). Such insights

underline the importance of nurturing cognitive and affective trust to enhance collaboration effectiveness, especially in culturally diverse environments.

Focusing on cognitive and affective trust can make educational collaborations more effective and harmonious. This dual approach ensures that partnerships and educational environments conducive to productive and innovative collaborations are nurtured.

The Quality of Trust and Its Impact

The quality of trust significantly influences collaboration outcomes, as illustrated by LD narratives emphasising mutual respect and adaptability and the organisational culture's impact on trust dynamics. Schwier et al. (2004) and Chen and Carliner (2020) have highlighted that trust significantly influences collaborative project outcomes and learning communities' success by shaping organisational culture. They highlight how this crucial aspect facilitates innovation and enhances knowledge sharing within educational settings. Baratella et al. (2023) discuss the evolving nature of trust dynamics and their profound impact on collaboration in educational settings. They emphasise that trust is not static but adapts over time, shaped by ongoing interactions and experiences. Understanding this evolution allows educational teams to better anticipate and respond to trust-related challenges, ultimately enhancing collaboration and innovation.

Trust shapes the adaptability of LDs and SMEs, as a firm trust environment promotes innovative teaching strategies and nurtures a culture open to new ideas.

Further insights from LD and SME narratives reveal the complex nature of trust dynamics essential for effective collaboration. These interactions highlight that successful partnerships are marked by mutual respect and open communication, which are necessary for managing the complexities of working together in education. This reflects the literature's emphasis on robust frameworks that support productive and dynamic interactions.

Additionally, the impact of organisational culture on trust dynamics is apparent. A divisive 'us versus them' mentality can greatly hinder effective teamwork and trust building. Feedback from SMEs also emphasises the importance of clear roles and mutual understanding facilitated by the LD team, which affects their trust in the processes and technologies used.

Given the critical role of trust, there is a clear need for strategic initiatives to enhance its quality. The T.I.M.E. model advocates for clear and open communication and to ensure that all participants feel valued and understood by promoting regular interaction and genuine engagement among team members. The emphasis on mutual respect fosters an inclusive culture where diverse ideas and perspectives are welcomed and considered. Furthermore, the focus on empathy allows educators to understand better and address their colleagues' emotional and professional needs, strengthening collaborative ties and enhancing the community's overall trust. These principles align with the need for robust support systems and effective interpersonal dynamics, contributing to a more innovative and responsive educational setting in TEL environments.

Historical Context and Present Challenges

The working relationship between LDs and SMEs has historically seen specific, separate responsibilities that are often siloed and rarely overlap. This separation can lead to each group working in isolation, limiting opportunities for collaboration and communication. Jameson et al. (2023) discuss how these segmented roles traditionally limited collaborative potential, while Bormann et al. (2021) highlight how such compartmentalisation can impede the evolution of organisational culture, particularly in educational settings.

As digital technologies and collaborative course design have become more prevalent, the dynamics of trust have had to evolve to address the ambiguities in roles, resistance to change, and the increasing necessity for clear communication and mutual support. This shift is highlighted by Moskal (2012), who notes that emerging digital platforms necessitate new trust dynamics; and Dykstra (2020) emphasises the need for adaptive trust strategies in the face of rapid technological changes; while Conole (2013) argues that new educational media require shifts in how learning interventions are designed, and trust is established.

The importance of trust in these evolving dynamics is further highlighted by Mayer et al. (1995), who articulate that trust is essential for the effective functioning of organisational collaborations. Rousseau et al. (1998) complement this by describing trust as a multidimensional construct that influences and is influenced by organisational changes, requiring an approach encompassing various levels of interaction within and between organisations.

Insights from interviews with LDs and SMEs reinforce the necessity for trust-building strategies that are flexible and dynamic enough to accommodate the integration of digital tools and collaborative course design. These narratives suggest that the successful adaptation to technological and pedagogical shifts heavily relies on establishing solid trust foundations capable of supporting the intricate dynamics of modern educational environments.

The T.I.M.E. model emphasises clear and open communication as essential for building trust ensuring that all team members feel valued and understood. By fostering regular interaction and genuine engagement, the T.I.M.E. model helps create an inclusive culture where diverse ideas are welcomed. The focus on empathy allows educators to understand better and address their colleagues' emotional and professional needs, strengthening collaborative ties and enhancing overall trust within the community. This model aligns with the empirical findings and offers actionable strategies that can significantly enhance the quality of trust and collaboration in educational settings.

Trust, Interdependence, and Its Role as a Tool

The literature depicts trust as a crucial mechanism for managing the inherent interdependence between LDs and SMEs. Sheppard and Sherman (1998) suggest that trust can strategically navigate and overcome early collaboration challenges. Kelley et al. (2003) explores how trust dynamics function within interpersonal relationships, emphasising that trust is essential for cooperative behaviour and effective team functioning. Martins and Baptista Nunes (2016) discuss the role of trust in managing uncertainties and risks in eLearning

environments, highlighting that strategic trust is crucial for successfully implementing innovative pedagogical strategies.

The findings indicate that trust is vital for LDs and SMEs to manage their interdependence, especially when navigating new technological landscapes and pedagogical challenges. The 'us versus them' mentality often observed in some educational contexts reveals the challenges in overcoming departmental and disciplinary silos, which can be effectively addressed by fostering a culture of trust.

Understanding the multifaceted nature of trust—encompassing cognitive, affective, and strategic dimensions—can significantly enhance the capacity of educational institutions to manage the complexities associated with digital and pedagogical innovations. This comprehensive approach to trust can facilitate smoother transitions and integrations of new methodologies but also foster a collaborative environment that can be more resilient to the inevitable challenges of innovation.

The Transition to Online Teaching: Challenges and Trust Implications

Jameson et al. (2023) discuss the pivotal role of trust in HE settings, emphasising its importance for effective organisational performance and voluntary cooperation among staff. Trust is highlighted as crucial for leadership effectiveness, knowledge sharing, and managing the increasing demands of online and remote working environments brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic. Bormann et al. (2021) focus on how a trust-rich environment is essential for fostering cooperation among stakeholders. This would be critical

for the effective integration of innovative pedagogical strategies. This is particularly important in online settings where physical cues and traditional forms of communication are absent.

The discussions from the focus group also highlighted the essential role of trust in navigating these challenges, with successful adaptation often predicated on the established trust between LDs and SMEs. This feedback emphasises the complexities of trust in adopting new educational technologies and illustrates how trust, or its absence, directly impacts the effectiveness of collaborative practices across different departments and educational levels.

Conformity and Trust in Automated Systems

Integrating automated systems into education necessitates a nuanced approach to maintaining trust amidst the transition to digital norms. However, Wang et al. (2024) caution that 'overtrust' in automation can lead to misuse or disuse of technology, as users either rely too heavily on flawed systems or reject their use entirely. This finding challenges TEL's assumption of automation as inherently reliable and suggests the need for critical evaluation and user training. The literature highlights the need to balance automation's benefits with preserving the human-centric essence of teaching and learning, a crucial aspect of trust retention in technology-mediated educational interactions (Marsh et al., 2012). SMEs' reflections on the impersonality of automated feedback versus the value of personalised instruction demonstrate the need for managing automated systems in ways that bolster trust, suggesting that while automation can streamline efficiency and consistency, its integration must be

mindful, enhancing rather than undermining the personalised learning experiences valued by students and educators.

Wylde (2023a) advocates for the use of zero trust protocols in AI governance, which is an educational technology currently being adopted by some and still discussed with concern by others. The view by Wylde highlights the importance of accountability and transparency to mitigate the risks of over-reliance on unverified systems. This contrasts with TEL environments, which often assume an inherent trust in technology. Wylde (2023b) highlights macro-level challenges such as policy fragmentation and misaligned jurisdictions, encouraging TEL to consider systemic factors that influence trust rather than focusing solely on micro-level dynamics. Similarly, Wylde (2024) stresses the significance of interoperability as a trust-building mechanism in AI governance, contrasting with TEL's narrower focus on direct user-technology relationships and promoting the need for aligned systems and policies to create a seamless and trustworthy experience.

The T.I.M.E. model proposes strategies to navigate the complexities of digital and automated trust dynamics effectively, promoting digital literacy and cultivating a sense of community in physical and virtual settings. It advocates blending automated processes with personal interaction and feedback opportunities, thereby preserving the human element alongside technological advancements. This balanced approach, reflective of LDs, SMEs, and relevant literature insights, suggests that addressing digital and automated trust dynamics successfully centres on harmonising technological innovations with core values of trust, collaboration, and personal connection.

Psychological Safety and Trust

Psychological safety is critical in creating an environment where team members feel secure to take interpersonal risks (Edmondson & Bransby, 2023), essential in the collaborative dynamics between LDs and SMEs in TEL contexts. This concept of feeling secure and valued within a team directly correlates with trust, defined as the belief in collaboration partners' reliability, integrity, and competence (Mayer et al., 1995). The literature shows the link between psychological safety, trust, and team performance (Schaubroeck et al., 2011), highlighting their collective impact on successful educational collaborations. Narratives from LDs and SMEs echo this sentiment, indicating that establishing trust and psychological safety fosters an environment conducive to open communication, innovation, and problem-solving, which is crucial for navigating TEL challenges.

Addressing these aspects, the T.I.M.E. model integrates psychological safety and trust principles to cultivate a supportive and inclusive atmosphere within educational teams. By prioritising creating an environment where LDs and SMEs feel supported and appreciated, the T.I.M.E. model endeavours to enhance psychological safety and trust levels. This approach facilitates a culture of collaboration that is open to new ideas, pedagogical strategies, and technological advancements, reinforcing trust as a foundational pillar in TEL initiatives.

I shall revisit the RQs in the next section and how these have been answered throughout the research.

7.4 Research Questions

RQ1: Initial Experiences of Trust and Trusting Relationships

A mixture of optimism and caution characterises the initial trust experiences between LDs and SMEs. Interviews and focus group discussions reveal that trust initially tends to be cognition-based, focusing on assessing the other's skills, reliability, and professional competencies. This assessment sets the groundwork for developing deeper, affect-based trust, which includes emotional bonds and mutual respect. Interestingly, some SMEs initially prioritise affect-based trust, assuming all skills and characteristics to achieve cognition-based trust pre-exist, and the success of collaborative interactions rely on interpersonal aspects. Morrow et al. (2004) explore affect-based trust, where the dual approach of the navigations and integrations of rational assessments and emotional bonds are important and are precursors to the development and impact of trust in organisations. However, role ambiguity and communication barriers can hinder initial trust formation. The literature emphasises the necessity of clear roles and open communication to address these challenges. Bird (2004) notes that understanding evolving roles within educational settings is crucial for trust and effective collaboration. Richardson et al. (2019) stress that open communication is essential for building trust. Dykstra (2020) points out that clear definitions of roles and responsibilities help facilitate smoother interactions and trust building. Likewise, Kenny et al. (2005) argue the importance of aligning expectations and clarifying responsibilities early in collaboration to foster trust and overcome potential communication barriers.

Together, these studies highlight the critical role of clarity and communication in establishing and maintaining trust between LDs and SMEs.

RQ2: Shared Aspects of Trust in Successful Working Relationships

As collaborations between LDs and SMEs mature, shared aspects of trust evolve and become more nuanced. The focus group and interviews highlighted that successful working relationships are underpinned by cognition-based and affect-based trust, leading to a more dynamic and integrated form of trust. Key elements contributing to this evolution include consistent communication, mutual respect, and a shared commitment to goals. The T.I.M.E. model's emphasis on open communication, empathy, and institutional support aligns with these findings, providing a framework for enhancing trust dynamics in educational collaborations. This evolution is supported by literature that discusses the importance of nurturing both rational and emotional components of trust for effective collaboration, for example, McAllister (1995) and Nooteboom (1996).

RQ3: Developing Trusting, Successful Working Relationships

The development of trusting, successful working relationships is facilitated through a combination of strategic practices and personal interactions. The findings indicate that trust is developed and solidified through continuous engagement, shared successes, and the collaborative resolution of challenges. Practices that promote psychological safety, allowing team members to express ideas, concerns, and mistakes without fear of retribution, play a crucial role in deepening trust. The focus group's discussion on the importance of

approachability and LDs' and SMEs' emphasis on adaptability and support highlight the mechanisms through which trust is nurtured over time. The literature echoes these insights, underlining the significance of psychological safety and the iterative nature of trust-building in achieving successful collaborations, for example, Edmondson (1999) and Schaubroeck et al. (2011).

Key Takeaways

The findings reveal distinct trust-related themes from the perspectives of LDs and SMEs:

LD Perspective:

- Trust-building stages: initial lack of trust, developing trust, institutionalising trust.

- Importance of trust in adaptability, communication, technology, collaboration, and relationships with SMEs.

- Trust seen as a dynamic, ongoing process integral to various aspects of work.

SME Perspective:

- Trust essential for collaboration, support and training, communication, role respect, and effective working relationships.

- Trust viewed as crucial for their effectiveness in online course design.

Unique Challenges:

- LDs face initial resistance or lack of trust from SMEs.

- SMEs encounter challenges with new technologies, understanding their roles, and managing changes in teaching methods.

Shared Themes:

- Trust is fundamental for technology, communication, role clarity, support, and training.

- Different priorities based on unique experiences of LDs and SMEs.

Research Emphasis:

- Trust is vital for professional relationships and navigating online education transitions.

- Clear communication prevents misunderstandings and clarifies roles and expectations.

- Institutional support and mutual respect are crucial for adopting online learning and digital transformation.

Integration with the T.I.M.E. Model:

- The T.I.M.E. model offers a framework to enhance trust-based collaborations.

- Focuses on trust dynamics, communication strategies, and institutional support.

- Positions institutions to tackle digital transformation challenges, fostering innovation, engagement, and achievement.

The next section looks at the limitations to the research, including the methodology.

7.5 Limitations

The exploration of trust dynamics between LDs and SMEs in online course development, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic, has provided significant insights. However, several limitations must be acknowledged:

Sample Size and Diversity: While the sample included various geographical sites and both SMEs and LDs, it may not fully represent the breadth of experiences and perspectives, including, but not limited to, the experiences of neurodiverse individuals and how they operate within a CoP.

Focus on FE: The study primarily focused on FE, which may limit its applicability to HE and L&D sectors. The unique trust-building dynamics in these sectors were not comprehensively explored, suggesting a need for further investigation.

Pandemic Context: The abrupt shift to online learning due to COVID-19 likely introduced unique trust-building challenges and opportunities. These pandemic-induced circumstances might present a different picture of trust dynamics

compared to a more traditional, stable TEL environment, raising questions about the longevity and sustainability of trust under normal conditions that could be part of a longitudinal study.

CoP Framework: Insights and Limitations

The CoP framework highlights the evolving nature of learning within groups with a common purpose (Wenger & Snyder, 2000; Wenger & Wenger, 2015). It captures spontaneous interactions and informal learning beyond structured environments. However, it may occlude structural and systemic challenges, such as power dynamics and conflicting organisational agendas, which can affect CoP functioning (Shenton, 2004).

Case Study Methodology: Insights and Limitations

Case study methodology allows for deep examination of specific instances, providing rich insights into CoPs (Yazan, 2015; Yin, 2015). Ensuring methodological rigour and trustworthiness through strategies like triangulation and member checking is essential (Shenton, 2004). However, it often struggles with generalisability and representing diverse viewpoints. Achieving external validity and addressing broader systemic issues can be challenging (Tight, 2017; Yin, 2015).

While the CoP framework and case study methodology offer valuable insights into micro-level interactions, they may overlook broader institutional dynamics and structural barriers. A critical perspective can enhance their effectiveness and provide a more holistic understanding of educational landscapes.

Chapter 8: Conclusion

As I conclude this research, I reflect on the core objectives and outcomes, exploring trust dynamics between LDs and SMEs in TEL settings.

8.1 Initial Experiences of Trust

Findings show initial trust between LDs and SMEs is cognition-based, focusing on professional competencies and reliability. Clear roles and open communication are crucial for trust formation (see Bird, 2004; Dykstra, 2020; Kenny et al., 2005; Richardson et al., 2019). Cognition-based trust fosters effective collaboration but needs relational elements for long-term success (Mayer et al., 1995). Role ambiguity and communication barriers can hinder initial trust, highlighting the need for clearly defined responsibilities and open dialogue (Dykstra, 2020; Richardson et al., 2019).

8.2 Shared Aspects of Trust

As relationships develop, affect-based trust, rooted in emotional bonds and mutual respect, becomes significant. This deepens trust beyond professional competencies, facilitating smoother communication and cohesive working relationships. The T.I.M.E. model supports this, advocating for trust to manage educational complexities and implement innovative strategies (Bormann et al., 2021; Jameson et al., 2023). Both cognition-based and affect-based trust are essential for effective collaboration (McAllister, 1995; Nooteboom, 1996).

8.3 Developing Trusting Relationships

Key mechanisms for developing and sustaining trust include consistent communication, mutual respect, and regular collaboration. These factors support the transition from cognition-based to affect-based trust. Regular interactions and joint problem-solving reinforce trust, highlighting continuous engagement's importance. Psychological safety, where team members feel secure to express ideas and concerns, is also critical (Edmondson, 1999; Schaubroeck et al., 2011).

8.4 Cultural and Multidimensional Trust

Cultural differences impact trust establishment. For example, personal relationships in Chinese contexts can substitute formal mechanisms (Xin & Pearce, 1996). The T.I.M.E. model promotes a dual approach to trust, enhancing collaboration effectiveness in diverse environments. Trust encompasses both cognitive aspects, focusing on skills and dependability, and affective aspects, arising from emotional connections (Hirvi et al., 2020; Mislin et al., 2011).

8.5 Quality and Impact of Trust

Trust quality influences collaboration outcomes and project success. Mutual respect and open communication are vital, fostering a culture open to new ideas. The T.I.M.E. model ensures participants feel valued and understood (see Chen & Carliner, 2020; Schwier et al., 2004). Trust shapes the adaptability of

LDs and SMEs, promoting innovative teaching strategies and nurturing a culture open to new ideas (Chen & Carliner, 2020; Schwier et al., 2004).

8.6 Historical Context and Evolution

Historically, LDs and SMEs had siloed roles, limiting collaboration. Digital technologies necessitate trust evolution to address role ambiguities (see Conole, 2013; Dykstra, 2020; Moskal, 2012). Trust manages interdependence between LDs and SMEs, enhancing collaboration (Mayer et al., 1995; Rousseau et al., 1998). The T.I.M.E. model emphasises clear communication and empathy to build trust and manage modern educational complexities.

8.7 Integration and Automation

Integrating automated systems requires balancing automation benefits with preserving teaching's human-centric essence (Marsh et al., 2012). SMEs highlight the need for mindful automation to enhance trust, balancing efficiency with personalised instruction. The T.I.M.E. model promotes blending automated processes with personal interaction to maintain trust and enhance the learning experience.

8.8 Contributions and Future Research

This research highlights the importance of psychological safety and the dynamic nature of trust through cognition-based to affect-based trust. The T.I.M.E. model provides a framework for improving trust dynamics and offers a pathway for more effective trust-based collaborations in TEL settings.

Several promising areas for further exploration arise from this study. One key area is understanding the initial stages of trust-building in stable teams, where membership remains consistent. Examining trust-building across more diverse sample groups, including neurodiverse individuals, is also valuable, as these groups may offer unique perspectives on trust dynamics.

Another important avenue for future research involves publishing a book centred on the T.I.M.E. model to encourage organisations to implement this as a framework. Longitudinal studies can track how the model is applied in practice, examining the results and emerging behavioural changes. This iterative process would allow for refinements based on real-world findings, further validating and enhancing the model as a framework for building, developing, and sustaining trust. Trust dynamics in specific educational sectors, such as HE, FE, and workplace L&D, present unique challenges and opportunities for research. Exploring the integration of AI in education also presents an essential area for investigation, focusing on how trust is influenced and impacted holistically among LDs, SMEs, and students. This research could examine effects within institutions and across the broader educational and TEL community, providing valuable insights into the evolving dynamics of trust in these environments.

The long-term impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on trust-building practices also warrant further study. The shift to online learning created unique conditions for trust development, and examining these dynamics post-pandemic could provide valuable insights. Comparative studies between institutions with pre-existing trust and those developing trust after the pandemic could highlight

effective strategies and potential pitfalls. By addressing these further research

opportunities, we can continue to improve trust and collaboration in TEL

environments.

In conclusion, I examined trust dynamics between LDs and SMEs in TEL

environments through interviews and a focus group. The T.I.M.E. model was

introduced to cultivate trust among SMEs, LDs, and institutions. My findings

confirm that trust is essential for effective collaboration in TEL settings and offer

practical insights for educational communities. This research provides new

knowledge and a structured approach to enhance trust in these environments.

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