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Minimising Attainment Deficit:

A Grounded Theory of the Leadership Process in a Large, Public Sector Bureaucracy

PhD Thesis

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2002

Abstract

This thesis explains the concept of Minimising Attainment Deficit. This is a leadership process whereby leaders help workers fulfil their expectations of achieving their potential in their work.

The purpose of the research was to generate a theory of the leadership process within a large, slow change, public sector, engineering bureaucracy. The aims were to discover the main concern of workers and to explain the leadership processes that resolved this main concern. The substantive processual theory of minimising attainment deficit has been presented as the basic social process which resolves the main concern of workers wishing to minimise the gap between their current work reality and that level which they perceive themselves to be capable of attaining.

A qualitative approach to the collection and analysis of data was adopted through the use of orthodox grounded theory. Its aim was to generate rather than to test theory. This research has contributed knowledge relevant to practitioners in the substantive area by identifying the main concerns of participants and the process by which these concerns can be resolved. It has also identified opportunities for further research that may significantly progress the continually evolving understanding of the leadership process.

Acknowledgments

I wish to thank my supervisor, Dr Robert Jones, for his patience while I stumbled through the intricacies of Grounded Theory, and for his invaluable guidance throughout the research. The subtle difference between Glaser's orthodox Grounded Theory and Strauss and Corbin's conceptual description was not, at first, apparent to me. Dr Jones guided my learning so that I was able to choose the methodology that would allow me to generate a Grounded Theory.

Contents

1	Introduction and Context of the Study	1
1.1	Aims and Purpose of the Study	1
1.2	Significance of the Study	2
1.3	Introduction to the Study Problem	3
1.4	Background to AGRO	4
1.4.1	Organisation Size and Complexity	5
1.4.2	Public Sector Characteristics	6
1.4.3	Engineering Origin	7
1.4.4	Absence of Tumultuous Change	9
1.5	Behavioural Context of AGRO	11
1.5.1	Job Security	12
1.5.2	Task Orientation	12
1.5.3	Risk Aversion	13
1.5.4	Control and Compliance	13
1.6	Thesis Structure	14
1.7	Summary	15
2	Research Design.....	17
2.1	Nature of Social Science	17
2.1.1	Ontology	17
2.1.2	Epistemology	17
2.1.3	Human Nature	18
2.1.4	Methodology	18
2.2	Selecting a Research Design	19
2.3	Quantitative vs Qualitative Approaches in Leadership Research	22
2.3.1	Why a Qualitative Approach?	25
2.3.2	Types of Qualitative Studies	26
2.3.3	Qualitative Research in the Present Study	28
2.4	Symbolic Interactionism	31
2.4.1	Research Implication of Symbolic Interactionism	34
2.5	Why Grounded Theory?	35
2.5.1	Orthodox Grounded Theory	38
2.5.1.1	Concentration Site and Early Interviews	39

2.5.1.2 Open Coding and Initial Category Building	39
2.5.1.3 Constant Comparison Method.....	40
2.5.1.4 Theoretical Sampling	41
2.5.1.5 Core Category	42
2.5.1.6 Transition from open coding to selective coding.....	43
2.5.1.7 Saturation	44
2.5.1.8 Theoretical Coding.....	45
2.5.1.9 Memoing	45
2.5.1.10 Sorting.....	46
2.5.1.11 Emergent Framework.....	46
2.5.1.12 Writing Up.....	47
2.6 Summary	48
3 Data Collection and Analysis	49
3.1 Role of the Researcher	49
3.1.1 Researcher Bias	50
3.2 Initial Scoping Interviews	51
3.3 Emerging the Grounded Theory Model	54
3.3.1 Open Coding and Initial Category Building	54
3.3.2 Re-categorising the Data	57
3.3.3 Participants' Main Concern.....	59
3.3.4 Core Category	62
3.3.5 Selective Coding	63
3.3.6 Towards Saturation	64
3.4 Summary	66
4 Minimising Attainment Deficit - the process	67
4.1 The Leadership Process.....	67
4.2 Subordinate Actioning.....	70
4.2.1 Subordinate Perceptioning	70
4.2.2 Subordinate Emotioning.....	72
4.2.2.1 Moderating Emotions.....	74
4.2.3 Subordinate Behaviouring.....	76
4.2.3.1 Moderating Behaviours.....	81
4.2.4 Workplace Consequences	82
4.3 Leader Actioning.....	83

4.3.1	Leader Perceptioning.....	85
4.3.2	Leader Concerning	86
4.3.3	Leader Probleming.....	87
4.3.4	Leader Strategising.....	87
4.4	Summary	89
Introduction to Chapters 5, 6, and 7		91
5	Subordinate Centred Strategies.....	93
5.1	Subordinate Status.....	94
5.1.1	Perception of Subordinate	95
5.1.1.1	Expectations	96
5.1.1.2	Limitations	97
5.1.1.3	Emotions.....	97
5.1.2	Subordinate's Needs.....	98
5.1.2.1	Development	98
5.1.2.2	Support	99
5.1.3	Subordinate's Situation	99
5.1.3.1	Performance Impediments.....	100
5.1.3.2	Atmosphere	101
5.2	Develop Subordinates	101
5.2.1	Team Involvement.....	103
5.2.1.1	Ownership	103
5.2.1.2	Participation	104
5.2.1.3	Contribution	104
5.2.2	Positive Guidance.....	105
5.2.2.1	Mentoring.....	105
5.2.2.2	Feedback.....	107
5.2.2.3	Confidence	109
5.2.3	Skills Enhancement.....	110
5.2.3.1	Training	111
5.2.3.2	Work Experience.....	112
5.2.3.3	Learning Opportunities	113
5.3	Support Subordinates	114
5.3.1	Providing Help	115
5.3.1.1	Assistance.....	117

5.3.1.2 Guidance.....	120
5.3.2 Affirmation.....	121
5.3.2.1 Giving Credit.....	122
5.3.2.2 Listening.....	125
5.4 Summary	126
6 Environment Centred Strategies	128
6.1 Reduce Communication Barriers	129
6.1.1 Organisational Factors.....	130
6.1.1.1 Locational.....	131
6.1.1.2 Integration	131
6.1.1.3 Structural	132
6.1.2 Accessibility Factors	133
6.1.2.1 Leader Accessibility.....	133
6.1.2.2 Information Accessibility.....	134
6.2 Operational Planning.....	136
6.2.1 Preparation	137
6.2.1.1 Clear Direction	137
6.2.1.2 Issues Anticipated	138
6.2.1.3 Achievable Goals	139
6.2.2 Achievement.....	140
6.2.2.1 Deadlines Managed.....	141
6.2.2.2 Competitiveness	141
6.2.2.3 Job Security.....	142
6.3 Create Positive Atmosphere.....	144
6.3.1 Demeanour	145
6.3.1.1 Mature Leader Behaviour.....	145
6.3.1.2 Positive Attitude Displayed.....	147
6.3.2 Transforming.....	148
6.3.2.1 Supportive Environment	148
6.3.2.2 Environment of Honesty	150
6.3.2.3 Worker Involvement	150
6.3.2.4 Enthusiasm Encouraged.....	151
6.4 Summary	152

7	Leader Centred Strategies.....	154
7.1	Cognitive Processes.....	155
7.1.1	Enhance Perceptions	156
7.1.1.1	Incident.....	156
7.1.1.2	Role Model.....	157
7.1.1.3	Self Perception	158
7.1.2	Enhance Understanding.....	159
7.1.2.1	Capability	160
7.1.2.2	Behaviours.....	161
7.2	Accomplishment Strategies.....	162
7.2.1	Self Improvement.....	163
7.2.1.1	Performance	164
7.2.1.2	Behaviour	165
7.2.2	Image Improvement	166
7.2.2.1	Credibility.....	166
7.2.2.2	Character	167
7.2.3	Positional Improvement	168
7.2.3.1	Approach	169
7.2.3.2	Work.....	169
7.3	Summary	170
8	Literature Comparison.....	172
8.1	Situational Analysis and the Leadership Process.....	173
8.1.1	Non Grounded Theory Studies.....	176
8.1.2	Grounded Theory Studies.....	180
8.2	Linkage between leader action and subordinate behaviour	186
8.3	Linkage between subordinate behaviour and leader action	190
8.3.1	Servant Leadership.....	191
8.3.1.1	Place service before self-interest.....	193
8.3.1.2	Nourish others and help them become whole	194
8.3.1.3	Inspire trust by being trustworthy	197
8.3.1.4	Listen first to express confidence in others.....	200
8.3.2	Socialised Power	201
8.3.3	Individualised Consideration	203
8.3.4	Super Leadership.....	204

8.4 Summary	206
9 Implications and Conclusions	209
9.1 Achievement of the Purpose and Aims of the Research	209
9.2 Significance of the Thesis and Its Contribution	210
9.3 Implications for Practitioners	212
9.4 Implications for Further Research	214
9.4.1 Leads to Future Research	214
9.4.2 Comebacks	215
9.4.3 Elevation to Formal Theory	216
9.5 Criteria for Evaluating the Grounded Theory of Minimising Attainment Deficit	217
9.5.1 Fit	218
9.5.2 Relevance	219
9.5.3 Workability	220
9.5.4 Modifiability	220
9.6 Summary	222
References	224

Figures

Figure 1.1	Social Architecture and Values and Behaviours	11
Figure 2.1	Subjective-Objective Dimension in Social Science	19
Figure 2.2	Linked Elements in Research Design	21
Figure 3.1	Theoretical Model After Two Interviews	56
Figure 3.2	Leader Facilitates Work	61
Figure 3.3	Sequence of Leader-Subordinate Behaviours	62
Figure 4.1	Leadership Process: Core and Sub-Core Categories	68
Figure 4.2	Phases of Subordinate Actioning	70
Figure 4.3	Subordinate Perceptioning, Emotioning and Behaviouring	70
Figure 4.4	Subordinate Status Continuum	71
Figure 4.5	Positive Emotional Reactions	72
Figure 4.6	Negative Emotional Reactions	73
Figure 4.7	Subcategories of Subordinate Behaviours	76
Figure 4.8	Properties of Beneficial Behaviours	77
Figure 4.9	Properties of Detrimental Behaviours	78
Figure 4.10	Categories of Workplace Consequences	82
Figure 4.11	Phases of Leader Actioning	84
Figure 4.12	Leader Perceptioning, Concerning, Probleming and Strategising	85
Figure 4.13	Minimising Attainment Deficit – the Basic Social Process	90
Figure 5a	Leader Strategies and their Properties	92
Figure 5.1	Subordinate Centred Strategies	93
Figure 5.2	Properties of Subordinate Status	94
Figure 5.3	Properties of Develop Subordinates	102
Figure 5.4	Properties of Support Subordinates	114
Figure 6.1	Environment Centred Strategies	128
Figure 6.2	Properties of Reduce Communication Barriers	130
Figure 6.3	Properties of Operational Planning	136
Figure 6.4	Properties of Create Positive Atmosphere	145
Figure 7.1	Leader Centred Strategies	154
Figure 7.2	Properties of Cognitive Processes	155
Figure 7.3	Properties of Accomplishment Strategies	163
Figure 8.1	Trends in Leadership Theory and Research	177
Figure 8.2	Categories and Relationships in the Study of Leadership Effects	187
Figure 8.3	Rational-Emotive Behaviour Model and the Meaning Chain	190
Figure 9.1	Interaction of Sub-Core Variables and Their Phases	210

1 Introduction and Context of the Study

This chapter presents an analysis of the aims, purpose and significance of the study together with an examination of the background characteristics, values and behaviours inherent within the substantive setting of the research. Finally, the chapter provides an overview of the structure of the thesis.

The setting for the research occurs within an organisation labelled AGRO, an invented name given to the study organisation in order to protect its identity. This organisation is a government department which manages aspects of roads and transport in a state of Australia. The name is derived from it being A Government Roads Organisation, and for the remainder of this thesis it will be referred to as AGRO.

AGRO's operational context has been defined by four major characteristics. First, it is a large and complex organisation. Second, it operates within the public sector. Third, its dominant culture is engineering dominated. Fourth, it has operated in a less tumultuous change environment than has been experienced in most other areas of the private and public sector. These characteristics have defined the environment for the development of the organisational values and behavioural context within AGRO, and act to frame the reasons for the aims, purpose and significance of the study.

1.1 Aims and Purpose of the Study

The *purpose* of the present research is to generate a theory of the leadership process within a particular substantive setting. The substantive setting chosen is that of a government department which manages the traffic and road system in a state of Australia, in conjunction with state and local government agencies. As shown later in this chapter this organisation is noted for several significant characteristics – it is a large and complex government organisation, which displays a dominant engineering culture, but which has not been subject to tumultuous change over its lifetime. The significance of this substantive setting is examined later.

This purpose has directed the researcher towards the use of a qualitative research approach, more fully justified in chapter 2. Orthodox or Glaserian grounded theory has been selected as the methodology of choice (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Glaser, 1978,

1992, 1998, 2001). Orthodox grounded theory generates an inductive theory about a substantive area “that accounts for a pattern of behaviour which is relevant and problematic for those involved” (Glaser, 1978:93). Accordingly, the *aims* of this present research are to discover the main concern of the participants in the substantive area which leads them to adopt a particular view of leadership, and subsequently to explain the behavioural processes involved in leadership that resolve this main concern. This substantive theory of leadership is presented in chapters 4-7.

1.2 Significance of the Study

This present research claims *significance* in two main areas: research methodology and contextual sensitivity. Within the field of leadership, Conger (1998:107) has noted that “qualitative studies remain relatively rare”. Parry (1998) has argued the case for the use of grounded theory as a valid method for researching the process of leadership. This present research has taken up these challenges. As argued in chapter 2, qualitative methodologies are more suitable for researching complex situations, where the researcher wishes to be more sensitive to contextual factors which are exposed within the research process rather than imposed on the leadership process. Grounded theory is an inductive methodology aimed at generating rather than testing theory. Parry (1998:85) contends that leadership is a social influence process and that mainstream research methodologies have been partially unsuccessful in theorising about the nature of these processes. Grounded theory, if rigorously applied, can help to overcome these deficiencies. As a methodology it is particularly suitable for meeting the interpretive requirements of generating a “sensitive understanding” (Brooks, 1998:5) of the processes by which people make sense of their organisational lives.

The necessity to situate processual leadership research within specific institutional and situational contexts has recently been expounded more emphatically in the literature (Bryman et al, 1996; Biggart and Hamilton, 1987; Alvesson, 1996). The significance of this present study is that it does not attempt to “marginalise contextual issues” (Bryman et al, 1996a:850). On the contrary, contextual issues are elevated to centre stage. Previous grounded theory studies have also been undertaken in specific institutional or sectoral environments involving large and complex governmental or public sector institutions (Parry, 1997; Brooks, 1998; Irurita, 1990). In this respect, this present study

does not appear to be especially significant. However, a defining characteristic of this present study is its location within a relatively stable change environment. Previous grounded theories of large, complex governmental institutions have been performed within an environment of significant change. Hence, the core variables discovered have reflected this situation, such as “enhancing adaptability” in local government (Parry, 1997, 1999), “optimising” in nursing (Irurita, 1990, 1992, 1996), and “weighing up change” in local government (Brooks, 1998). The relatively stable change environment is compounded in this present study by its location within a dominant engineering institutional culture. The conforming and hierarchical nature of this type of work within a relatively stable change environment has placed less emphasis on the charismatic, visionary or transformational aspects of leadership, and it is within this particular configuration of contextual variables (that have been less extensively subjected to grounded theory investigations) that this present study finds much of its significance. Thus, this study follows the advice of Bryman (1992:158) that:

“...it is necessary to probe more deeply to ask whether (the) chief tenets of good leadership are appropriate to some organisations or divisions within organisations but not others. The vast majority of....writers have not addressed this issue at all”.

1.3 Introduction to the Study Problem

During the 1990s I spent several years working in the quality management and continuous improvement functions in AGRO, focussing on how to encourage people to fully participate in the organisational mission, and work goals and objectives. This enhanced my interest in the concept of leadership and in the related communication issues. I initially attempted to adapt another organisation’s leadership model to the needs of AGRO and presented awareness sessions to some of my colleagues. A team-training package was developed specifically for introducing team concepts to staff members being asked to participate in improvement teams. Aspects of team members’ participation were observed in relation to the leadership style of the team supervisor and some opportunities for change were identified.

When my responsibilities broadened to include learning and development functions along with those of continuous improvement in AGRO’s south east district, this

provided a good opportunity for me to champion the provision of specific staff development. This staff development targeted my fellow senior managers and some other staff with leadership responsibilities. It included the topics of mentoring and coaching, building self-leadership and responsibility in teams, creating action learning teams, and performance review.

To further determine the development needs of my fellow senior managers in the south east district I conducted an inventory of leadership behaviours (using the Interdependent Solutions Pty Ltd's FMI360 instrument). This effectively identified opportunities for specific skills enhancement for these managers based on eleven elements of the Australian management competencies.

I felt that a study of what subordinates in AGRO perceive as "optimum leadership styles" would be of great benefit to me, and to other managers in AGRO. This would allow the development of some leader protocols for AGRO's managers with the intention of enhancing the organisation's collective leadership abilities and the improved transfer of such abilities to new entrants in the growing complement of managers through programs such as mentoring and coaching. It is desired that managers become leaders and leaders continue to become more skilful leaders. The benefit for AGRO from an investment in such staff development is expected to be improvements in performance and so an increasing ability to compete in their sector of government services provision which is gradually opening up to competition from private sector service providers. However, I felt uneasy at importing leadership models and concepts into AGRO that had been developed for the purpose of other industrial and organisational situations. Contact was made with the Department of Management at the University of Wollongong and discussions initiated around the problem topic. This resulted in my enrolment in the PhD program and the commencement of this research under the supervision of Dr Robert Jones and Dr James Reveley.

1.4 Background to AGRO

AGRO was established in the 1980s, under a transport administration act, to manage the traffic and road system of its state, in conjunction with state and local government agencies. The organisation's purpose stems from the early 1900s when roads and bridges were first constructed and drivers and their vehicles first licensed. It evolved

during the mid 1900s as two separate state government departments, one of which managed driver and vehicle licensing, and the other managed roads. In the 1980s these functions were combined under one government organisation, AGRO.

Four major factors define the overall context within which AGRO operates: organisational size and complexity, public sector characteristics, engineering origin, and the absence of tumultuous change.

1.4.1 Organisation Size and Complexity

AGRO is an extremely complex organisation with regard to a number of factors, such as size, functions, dispersion and hierarchy. It is responsible for the development of the national and state road networks, managing traffic flow, promotion of road safety and traffic regulations, the licensing of drivers, and the registration of vehicles in its state. AGRO maintains over 20,000 kilometers of roads, over 4,000 bridges, ferries, and countless traffic lights, roundabouts, and signs. It licences over 4 million drivers and registers their vehicles. It is also responsible for promoting the safety of all road users, including pedestrians, bus passengers, cyclists, motorcyclists, motorists, and commercial and heavy vehicle drivers.

AGRO employs over 6,000 full time staff spread throughout offices in more than 200 locations in its state, 128 of which provide licence and registration services. It has a hierarchy structured according to its business functions (road safety, road network, network performance), creating very complicated channels of communication for the service delivery staff of over 4,000 employees. For example, there are 10 levels in AGRO's hierarchy from the labourer on roadwork to the chief. In turn, this labourer's customers could be another 6 levels down a different arm of the hierarchy and this, theoretically, is the formal channel of communication.

As well as being structured according to business functions, AGRO is divided into geographical districts which contain workers from both the client and service delivery functions. The complexity of AGRO is exacerbated by the utilisation of the funder/provider model to separate clients with fund allocations from the providers of their services. In each district there are further sub-structures that provide a number of service delivery depots spread throughout the district.

1.4.2 Public Sector Characteristics

AGRO is a typical government department established to provide services to the public, not to make a profit. It has, in its portfolio, a community service obligation to ensure access to its services even for members of the public living in remote areas of its state. These services include the provision of some regional roads and bridges, facilities for licensing transactions, and road safety benefits, etc.

A key responsibility for AGRO is the management of public assets. Each year there is an increase in the size of the infrastructure being managed and so the responsibility for maintaining this asset in an adequate condition. To help provide and maintain such assets, funds are budgeted for their provision, for safety enhancements, and for their repair. The actual work to provide or maintain this asset is carried out either by AGRO's own workers or under a contract with an external supplier. The provision of assets has a long history of being contracted out but it is a recent occurrence that maintenance has been contracted out. Such contracts are either for specific work on a specific asset or for a portion of the network over a fixed period of time.

During its life, AGRO has experienced structural changes due to altered political foci, and has had four different chiefs. Compared to the number of studies of CEOs in the private sector, there are very few that focus on CEOs in the public sector (Ramamurti, 1987:44). One typology of public sector leadership styles (Ramamurti, 1987) uses the two dimensions of business and political orientations to define four types of CEOs: controversy-minimiser, commercial-goals-maximiser, political-goals-maximiser, and social-welfare-maximiser. However, it is not the purpose of this thesis to replicate a similar approach in regard to AGRO leadership styles. Certainly, the approaches that these four chiefs have used for managing a large organisation such as AGRO have differed, and anecdotal evidence predictably reveals that some have been more favoured by employees than others.

AGRO operates in a strong political environment which considerably constrains CEO discretion. CEOs in this setting have limited freedom to redefine goals or strategies, or even to make operating decisions across a large variety of areas (Rainey et al, 1976). On most of these matters CEOs must share decision making authority with outside groups, not just in government but also in the broader external environment, such as the

legislature, media, special interest groups, and the general public (Aharoni, 1982). It seems unlikely that in such a setting, changing one person in the organisation, such as the CEO, would greatly impact on organisational goals or performance (Ramamurti, 1987:45).

1.4.3 Engineering Origin

A considerable portion of AGRO business relates to engineering functions associated with the construction and maintenance of the road network and associated facilities. These functions significantly pre-date AGRO itself and are founded in an engineering culture that still significantly dominates the organisational environment.

An individual's occupation in large part determines one's view of the world (Bensman and Lilienfeld, 1973). Major habits of mind and approaches to the world are extensions of habits of thought that emerge and are developed in the practice of an occupation or profession. This can occur in two ways. First, the methodology, technique or technology of an occupation creates and selects certain habits of mind that to a substantial degree govern the total way one perceives the world. Second, the world that is presented to a person in a given occupation will be different from the world presented to members of another occupation. There is a different reality to which different occupations respond with different ways of perceiving that reality (Bensman and Lilienfeld, 1973:319).

The internal dynamics and the social administrative arrangements of engineering contain cultural scripts that are integral to occupational worldview (Vaughan, 1996:204). Engineering is a bureaucratic profession (Perrucci, 1970). Engineering workplaces are organised by the principles of capitalism and bureaucratic hierarchy, and educational systems craft engineers to become units in the industrial system. Their "place" in the hierarchical system is clear. The daily existence of engineers exemplifies the separation of conception from execution. To a great extent the job is reactive and consists of providing clients (both internal and external) with designs that fit prescribed plans and information for making technical decisions (Vaughan, 1996:204).

The engineering worldview includes a preoccupation with 1) cost and efficiency, 2) conformity to rules and hierarchical authority, and 3) production goals (Vaughan,

1996:205). Both “engineering as a profession” and “bureaucracy” are guided by universal rules intended to give order, predictability and certainty (Heimer, 1984). Both cultivate respect for the chain of command and a sense of limited responsibility by virtue of functional specialisation (Merton, 1947). The employee is conditioned to accept total dependence on the bureaucracy as a whole and to act as a willing cog in the machine (Bensman and Lilienfeld, 1973: 292). Bureaucratic rules and lines of administrative authority in the complex organisations for which engineers work, are taken for granted in the engineering worldview. Discipline is fundamental to success. Conformity to prescribed actions is required in order to achieve reliable performance. By promoting career interests through the devices of salary increments, retirement funds, and promotion which reward conformity to official regulations and orders from above and the successful achievement of organisational goals, the bureaucratic organisation induces discipline in its workers. Rule following and conformity are reinforced by their centrality to both engineering as a profession and the bureaucratic setting of the occupation (Vaughan, 1996:207-208).

Specialisation amongst engineers cements ties to the interests of industry, limiting job opportunities and mobility (Perrucci, 1970:301). Additionally, engineers become further specialised through assignment to projects that typically have a long duration, adding to already limited mobility (Heimer, 1984). Hence, possible career advancement consists mainly of movement into management positions in the same organisation (Vaughan, 1996:205). Engineering loyalty, job satisfaction and identity come from the relationship with the employer, not from the profession. Engineers adopt the belief system of the organisations that employ them. Engineers do not resist the organisational goals of their employers; they use their technical skills in the interests of those goals (Vaughan, 1996:205).

Engineers are used to and expect working conditions created by the upper echelon and that include production pressure, cost cutting, limited resources, and compromises (Thomas, 1993:81). Hierarchy is endorsed both as a structure of command and a structure of opportunity. They may criticise individual supervisors but do not object to supervision in principle. Their support for the hierarchical arrangements of bureaucracy is borne out by their own aspirations toward upward mobility via the management track (Zussman, 1971:155). To succeed as an engineer is to conform both to bureaucratic

procedural mandates, chain of command, and production goals, and to the rules for technical decision-making learned while training for the engineering profession (Vaughan, 1996:208). The bureaucratic attitude determines that career advancement is aligned with one's willingness to submit and serve and to accept the rationality of the entire enterprise. Advancement through the hierarchy is on the basis of examination and merit ratings which are presumably objective and impersonal (Bensman and Lilienfeld, 1973:291). Long-term career interests tie engineers to the organisation creating a stake in the maintenance of the industrial order and in the rules of the game on which the expectation of advancement is based (Zussman, 1971:230).

It should be recognised that within any organisation there exist a variety of sub-cultures which may, at times, counter the influence of the dominant culture. It could be argued that this is also the case at AGRO. However, a significant feature of AGRO's present work context is that one organisation from which it evolved had in place a rigid chain of command with clear delegations (both formal and informal) which created the engineering culture paradigm that absolves more junior engineers (and others) from certain decisions. Many of AGRO's current senior managers underwent extensive conditioning in this pre-AGRO engineer dominated culture. A noticeable difference in behaviours and attitudes still exists for some of those senior decision makers who had extensive exposure to the 'old school'.

It should be noted that much of the research for this study has focused on the district service delivery groups whose culture originated in public sector engineering. This culture was developed in a hierarchical, bureaucratic government department managed by engineers. For reasons alluded to above, this has led to a strong engineering dominated middle and senior management in AGRO, and provides considerable context for this study.

1.4.4 Absence of Tumultuous Change

Compared with many other organisations in both the public and private sectors, AGRO has not experienced many episodes of tumultuous change. Three change incidents in AGRO's history do, however, stand out: the formation of AGRO in the 1980s from the merger of two previously separate organisations; the contracting out of maintenance contracts; and the gradual evolution of AGRO's culture during the 1990s. In contrast

with the types of transformational change experienced by employees and managers in other public organisations and in other sectors of the economy, however, AGRO has experienced relatively stable conditions for long periods of time.

Organisational change impacts in AGRO have stemmed from political and corporate initiatives. Political initiatives are those imposed by the government, and so their source is external to AGRO. Political initiatives can include whole of government initiatives which are imposed across the public sector, or they can be specific initiatives devised by the government minister within whose portfolio AGRO falls. Commercialisation, for example, is a whole of government initiative, but it does allow some flexibility in how it is implemented. On the other hand, corporate initiatives are those developed internally in AGRO, usually by the top level of management. Some programs, however, are a combination of both political and corporate initiatives. Such a mix of external and internal initiatives are generally seamless to AGRO staff as they are unable to determine their source.

Maintenance contracts, for example, were an AGRO response to the political initiative to reduce maintenance costs and improve service to the public. This initiative was extensively researched and trials were carried out. The extensive work that contributed to the final format of the first contract put to tender was totally divorced from the political process and was seen to be driven from within AGRO (Dixon and Jensen, 1995). Knowledge of the first maintenance contract awarded spread quickly, as did the rumour that all maintenance would go out to contract, especially with the knowledge of the acceptance of 50 voluntary redundancies by service delivery workers in the early 1990s.

The change management programs have been present in AGRO since the mid 1990s. For some AGRO staff these programs have provided opportunities for career advancement that would otherwise have been years in coming, if at all. For other AGRO staff these programs have provided excuses to complain about lost work and lost opportunities, and the many other negative aspects of change these workers have perceived. The conditions that result from organisational change, therefore, can be perceived differently by each worker.

1.5 Behavioural Context of AGRO

The nature of AGRO's work context described above shares numerous characteristics with organisational designs variously called "mechanistic" (Burns and Stalker, 1961), "bureaucracy" (Weber, 1947), "organisations as machines" (Morgan, 1997) and "formalistic" (Bennis and Nanus, 1985). Such styles of social architecture, in turn, give rise to several significant values and behaviours. Figure 1.1 below shows the relationship between several important values and behaviours and three separate styles of social architecture – formalistic, collegial and personalistic.

Values/Behaviour	Formalistic	Collegial	Personalistic
Basis for decision	Direction from authority	Discussion, agreement	Directions from within
Forms of control	Rules, laws, rewards, punishments	Interpersonal, group commitments	Actions aligned with self-concept
Source of power	Superior	What "we" think and feel	What "I" think and feel
Desired end	Compliance	Consensus	Self-actualisation
To be avoided	Deviation from authoritative direction; taking risks	Failure to reach consensus	Not being "true to oneself"
Position relative to others	Hierarchical	Peer	Individual
Human relationships	Structured	Group-oriented	Individually oriented
Basis for growth	Following the established order	Peer group membership	Acting on awareness of self

Figure 1.1 *Social Architecture and Values and Behaviours*
(source: Bennis and Nanus 1985:138)

Although behavioural aspects associated with both collegial and personalistic styles of architecture may exist within certain sub-cultures within AGRO, the dominant values and behaviours in the organisation are those associated with the formalistic design.

Bensman and Lilienfeld (1973:292) argue that such formalistic and bureaucratic designs breed a certain type of social character or set of attitudes. These include the habits of mind of disciplined obedience, matter-of-factness, impersonality, denial of sentiment,

objectivity, and rationality of procedures. Holland's (1985) personality-job fit theory also has relevance in this context. The theory is based on the notion of fit between a person's personality characteristics and their occupational environment. Engineering-type work falls within Holland's *conventional/realistic* job nexus in which "conforming, efficient, practical, unimaginative, inflexible, persistent, and stable" personality types display a preference for "rule-regulated, orderly, and unambiguous activities that require skill and coordination" (Holland, 1985). It is not the intention to analyse each of these behaviours in detail as most of them have either been described or alluded to in the discussion above. However, it would be worthwhile to include some extra brief discussion in relation to four important values/behaviours, namely, job security, task-orientation, risk aversion, and control and compliance.

1.5.1 Job Security

Job security for many AGRO employees and managers satisfies their need to have a lifetime job. The tendency for engineers to seek job satisfaction and identity from the relationship with their employer and to look for career advancement by moving into management positions with the same organisation has already been noted in the discussion above. These workers are generally keen to make a long term commitment to an employer in return for being treated in a way they perceive to be fair and just. In exchange for being loyal to the organisation they expect to be "looked after" by their employer.

1.5.2 Task Orientation

Values and behaviours within AGRO have evolved around a strong task orientation. Managing driver and vehicle licensing, albeit a regulatory process, is a task-oriented service provided by a government department. In the same way, managing the roads by repairing them as necessary, by replacing older sections with upgraded versions, and by forging into new territories where roads have not gone before, are task-oriented services provided by a government department. The larger portion of AGRO's activities is still the construction component of the service delivery arm, and so its culture still impacts significantly on overall organisational behavioural patterns. The gradual increase in the provision of non-construction services has altered the mix of services delivered by AGRO workers but it has not altered the task nature of these services.

1.5.3 Risk Aversion

Regulations, policies, and standard operating procedures, combined with the usual rules for interacting in society, make AGRO consistent with any risk-averse bureaucracy. AGRO's policies and guidelines are in place to ensure that employees do not overstep their limited authority or delegation. In a similar way, standard operating procedures and quality control systems are in place to avoid errors in work. Such errors could delay services, produce faulty products, or not provide the service required. Faulty products could create significant risks if these products are a structure that may then be unsafe, or even suspect. Procedures are also a mandatory component of construction documentation. Occupational health and safety legislation requires that safety procedures exist for every task of a construction project. This is imposed risk aversion and it is an important factor determining the behavioural context of AGRO.

Two sets of rules co-exist: the formal, pre-established system of rules that set forth general principles, and the informally evolved arrangements that engineers create as the technology develops in ways not covered by the general principles. These ad hoc systems assume official status by incorporation into updated statements of formal rules or by incorporation into organisational memory. Engineers habitually record and store the logic of engineering decisions (Heimer, 1984).

1.5.4 Control and Compliance

The nature of a task-oriented bureaucracy lends itself to the use of power by supervisors/managers in ways that may be perceived by some workers as controlling. Organisational values have traditionally rewarded compliance, but in ways that could be argued have stifled initiative, risk-taking behaviour, and often participation.

The balance of power and control within the AGRO hierarchy has shifted from time to time. When AGRO was established during the 1980s it was initially a fairly centralised organisation but after some years its structure altered to meet the political imperative of decentralisation. This shifted much delegated power out to districts. However, increased competition from the private sector in the delivery of some services has placed a greater emphasis on cost control. To achieve the significant savings planned, many

delegations have been withdrawn from district personnel and held in a more centralised location.

1.6 Thesis Structure

Chapter 1 of the thesis deals with the aims, purpose and significance of the study; an introduction to the study problem; the background to the organisation (AGRO); and an analysis of the values and behavioural context of AGRO.

Chapter 2 deals with the research design of the study. The problems of selecting a research design are examined together with a discussion of quantitative versus qualitative approaches in leadership research. The reasons for selecting a qualitative research design in the present study are advanced. The chapter concludes with an analysis of the symbolic interactionist origins of grounded theory and a detailed examination of the characteristics of orthodox grounded theory.

Chapter 3 describes the process of data collection, coding and analysis in the study. The emergent and iterative nature of the process is clearly presented together with the recognition of the main concern of the participants and the emergence of the core category as an explanation of the leadership behavioural processes which address the resolution of this main concern.

Chapter 4 presents the substantive leadership theory of minimising attainment deficit. This is the core category and is theoretically coded as a cyclic, context-action, basic social process. The core category is comprised of two emergent sub-core categories (or stages), labelled leader actioning and subordinate actioning. Leader actioning is comprised of the four linked phases of perceptioning, concerning, probleming and strategising; whilst subordinate actioning is comprised of the three linked phases of perceptioning, emotioning and behaviouring.

Chapter 5 presents the subordinate centred strategies utilised by leaders in the strategising phase of the leadership process. It analyses the strategies that leaders can employ to develop, and provide help to, subordinates.

Chapter 6 presents the environment centred strategies utilised by leaders in the strategising phase of the leadership process. It analyses the strategies that leaders can

employ to improve broader environmental factors such as strategies to reduce communication barriers, strategies to improve operational planning, and strategies to create a positive atmosphere in the work environment.

Chapter 7 presents the leader centred strategies utilised by leaders in the strategising phase of the leadership process. It analyses the strategies that leaders can employ to enhance their cognitive perceptions and understanding of work situations, and those strategies that enable leaders to alter their own behaviours.

Chapter 8 is the literature comparison and serves the purpose of locating the Grounded Theory of Minimising Attainment Deficit within the extant literature. In a Grounded Theory analysis the literature has to earn its way into the literature comparison by means of its relevance. The chapter is divided into three main sections: (i) situational analysis and the leadership process, (ii) linkage between leader action and subordinate behaviour, and (iii) linkage between subordinate behaviour and leader action.

Chapter 9 explores the implications and conclusions of the research. It examines the achievement of the purpose and aims of the research, the significance of the thesis and its contribution, implications for practitioners, implications for further research, and an analysis of the extent to which the emergent theory of minimising attainment deficit meets the four criteria for evaluating the ‘trustworthiness’ of a Grounded Theory.

1.7 Summary

This chapter has introduced the substantive setting of the research organisation labelled AGRO. This organisation manages aspects of roads and traffic within a state of Australia and is characterised by four major defining features – it is a large and complex organisation, which operates within the public sector, possesses a dominant engineering culture, and has not experienced a tumultuous change environment during its history.

The *purpose* of the present research is to generate a theory of the leadership process within this particular substantive setting. The *aims* of the research are to discover the main concern of the participants in the substantive area which leads them to adopt a particular view of leadership, and subsequently to explain the behavioural processes involved in leadership that resolve this main concern. The research claims *significance* in two main areas: research methodology and contextual sensitivity. A qualitative

grounded theory methodology has been adopted with the objective of generating rather than testing a substantive theory of the leadership process, within an overall objective which does not attempt to marginalise contextual issues but rather to elevate such issues to centre stage. Previous grounded theories in the leadership area have mainly been conducted within a context of rapid change and uncertainty. However, this present research emphasises the context of relative change stability within an industrial and occupational work environment usually characterised by conformity and hierarchy.

2 Research Design

This chapter justifies the choice of research design adopted in this thesis. It emphasises the importance of adopting a design that maintains the essential linkage between the ontology, epistemology, theoretical perspective, and the methodology and methods within a research study. The research design adopted in this thesis is located within a constructivist epistemology and an interpretivist theoretical perspective. This chapter justifies the selection of orthodox grounded theory as the research methodology of choice within the context of the purpose of the thesis of generating a substantive theory to explain the leadership processes inherent within a specific organisational context.

2.1 Nature of Social Science

Burrell and Morgan (1979:1) argue that it is convenient to conceptualise social science in terms of four sets of assumptions related to ontology, epistemology, human nature, and methodology.

2.1.1 Ontology

These are assumptions which concern the very essence of the phenomena under investigation. The basic ontological question concerns whether the “reality” to be investigated is objective and external to the individual, imposing itself on individual consciousness from without, or whether reality is the product of individual cognition.

The ontological debate is therefore divided between *realism* (which posits that the social world exists independently of an individual’s appreciation of it) and *nominalism* (which posits that the social world external to individual cognition is made up of nothing more than names, concepts and labels which are used to structure reality).

2.1.2 Epistemology

These are assumptions about the grounds of knowledge – about how one might begin to understand the world and communicate this as knowledge to fellow human beings.

What forms of knowledge can be obtained? How can one sort out what is to be regarded as “true” from what is to be regarded as “false”? What is the nature of knowledge? The basic epistemological question concerns whether it is possible to

identify and communicate knowledge as being hard, real and tangible (so that knowledge is capable of being acquired) or whether knowledge is of a softer, more subjective, spiritual or even transcendental kind, based on experience and insight of a unique and essentially personal nature (so that knowledge is something that has to be personally experienced).

The epistemological debate is therefore divided between *positivism* (which seeks to explain and predict what happens in the social world by searching for regularities and causal relationships between its constituent elements) and *anti-positivism* (which opposes the search for laws or underlying regularities in the world of social affairs arguing that the social world can only be understood from the point of view of the individuals directly involved in the activities which are to be studied).

2.1.3 Human Nature

These are assumptions about the relationship between human beings and their environment. The basic human nature question concerns whether human beings and their experiences are products of their environment, mechanistically/deterministically responsive to situations encountered in their external world, or whether humans can be regarded as the creators of their environment.

The human nature debate is therefore divided between *determinism* (which posits that human beings and their activities are determined by the situation or environment in which they are located) and *voluntarism* (which posits that humans are autonomous and free-willed).

2.1.4 Methodology

These are assumptions about how one attempts to investigate and obtain “knowledge” about the social world. The basic methodological question concerns whether the social world is a hard, real, objective reality, external to the individual, or a softer, personal reality, internal to the subjective experience of the individual. If the former, then the scientific endeavour concentrates on a search for universal laws which explain and govern the reality which is being observed – identifying, defining and measuring underlying themes and concepts, and the relationships and regularities between the various elements. If the latter, then scientific endeavour concentrates on a search for the

explanation and understanding of what is unique/particular to the individual rather than what is general and universal – the ways in which individuals create, modify and interpret the world in which they find themselves.

The methodological debate is therefore divided between nomothetic principles (which base research on systematic protocol and technique, using approaches and methods found in the natural sciences that focus on the process of testing hypotheses in accordance with the canons of scientific rigour) and ideographic principles (which base research on the view that one can only understand the social world by obtaining first-hand knowledge of the subject under investigation, letting one's subject unfold its nature and characteristics during the process of investigation).

The interaction of the ontological, epistemological, human nature, and methodology standpoints give rise to two broad and polarised perspectives – the subjectivist and objectivist approaches to social science. These approaches are shown in Figure 2.1 below.

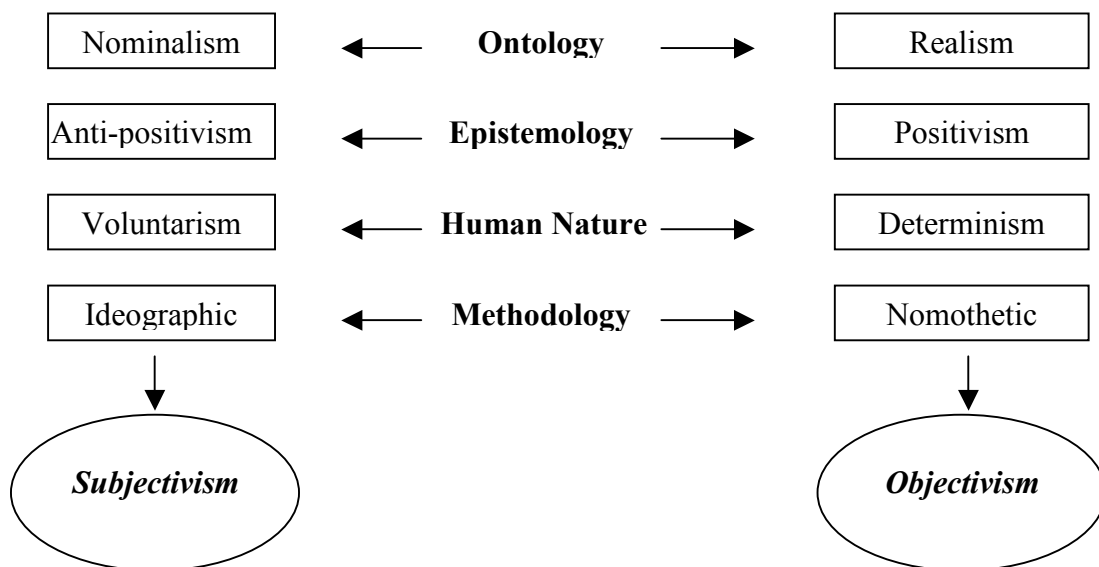


Figure 2.1: *Subjective-Objective Dimension in Social Science*

(adapted from Burrell and Morgan, 1979:2)

2.2 Selecting a Research Design

Denzin and Lincoln (1994) suggest the selection of a research design involves five sequential steps. These are:

1. locate the field of inquiry in terms of either the use of a qualitative, interpretive approach or a quantitative, verificational approach
2. select a theoretical paradigm that is capable of informing and guiding the research process
3. link the chosen theoretical paradigm to the empirical world through a methodology
4. select a method of data collection, and
5. select a method of data analysis.

Sarantakos (1998) suggests an alternative procedure for selecting a research design, initially informed by the choice of an appropriate *paradigm*. Sarantakos (1998:31) defines a paradigm as:

a set of propositions that explain how the world is perceived; it contains a world view, a way of breaking down the complexity of the real world, telling researchers and social scientists in general “what is important, what is legitimate, what is reasonable”.

Sarantakos' procedure for selecting a research design involves three steps. These are:

1. select an appropriate paradigm
2. select a methodology, and
3. select a set of methods for collecting and analysing the data.

Within this on-going debate Crotty (1998:1) notes that the terminology with regard to the construction of the social research process is far from consistent in research literature and social science texts. One frequently finds the same term used in a number of different, sometimes contradictory ways. Different process elements are often thrown together in grab-bag style as if they were all comparable terms. In order to overcome this confusion, Crotty (1998:2-3) suggests an approach to the research process that involves the posing and answering of four associated questions. These are:

1. What *methods* do we propose to use?
2. What *methodology* governs our choice and use of methods?
3. What *theoretical perspective* lies behind the methodology in question?
4. What *epistemology* informs this theoretical perspective?

Within these four questions are embedded the basic elements of the research process:

- *Methods*: the techniques or procedures used to gather and analyse data related to some research question or hypothesis.
- *Methodology*: the strategy, plan of action, process or design lying behind the choice and use of particular methods and linking the choice and use of methods to the desired outcomes.
- *Theoretical perspective*: the philosophical stance informing the methodology and thus providing a context for the process and grounding its logic and criteria.
- *Epistemology*: the theory of knowledge embedded in the theoretical perspective and thereby in the methodology.

These four elements inform one another in the research process, as shown in Figure 2.2.

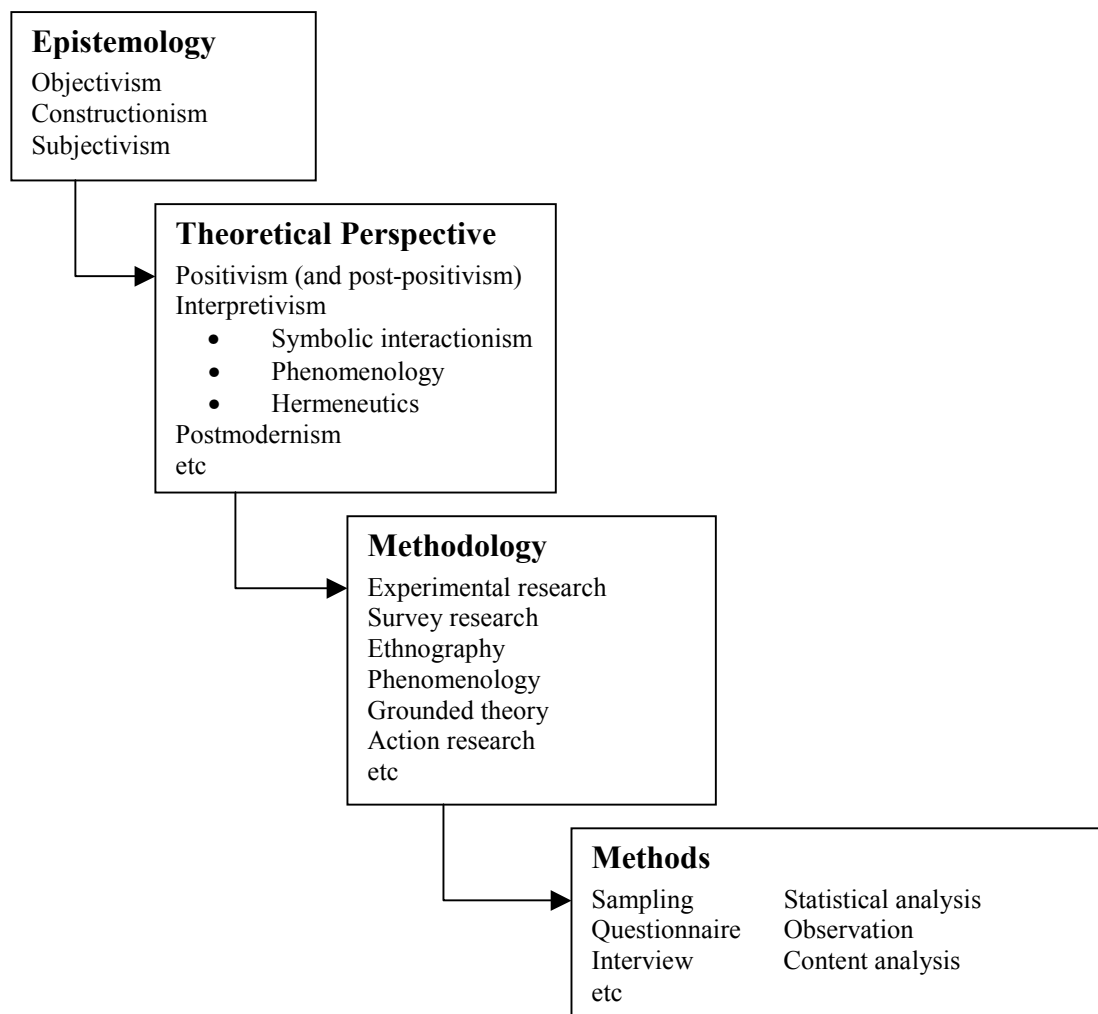
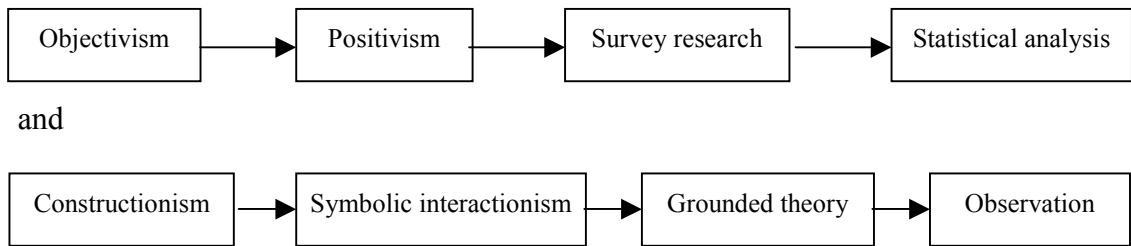


Figure 2.2: *Linked Elements in Research Design*
(adapted from Crotty 1998:5)

In the spirit of this analysis various classic linkages are often indicated in social research. Two frequent examples are (adapted from Crotty 1998:5-6):



2.3 Quantitative vs Qualitative Approaches in Leadership Research

Leadership is a process not a position (Parry, 1997:13). Essentially, leadership is a social influence process (Hunt, 1991). Burns (1978:425) saw leadership as a reciprocal process between leader and follower involving the mobilisation of organisational resources to achieve goals held mutually by leaders and followers. Resource mobilisation is for a collective purpose. Rost (1993:4) also conceived of the essential nature of leadership as a dynamic processual relationship whereby leaders and followers relate to one another to achieve a common purpose.

The central aspect of Parry's (1997:25) thesis also revolves around the contention that leadership is an interactive social and psychological process. The concern is with the changes in the perceptions and responses of followers to leadership (Parry, 1997:21). A central theme is about the changes in perceptions, attributions, beliefs and motivations of followers (Bass, 1985; Yukl, 1994). Within this interactive process Clark (1984:377) saw the need for a reflective understanding of the events and processes by which leaders anticipate and adapt to a complex array of events in organisations.

Hence, leadership research needs to investigate the nature of this social influence process. It is that process of leadership that now needs most attention from researchers (Rost, 1993:4). An appropriate methodology must reflect this need. It is within the context of this debate that an increasing number of authors have recently questioned the dominance of quantitative methodology in leadership research and have made pleas for the greater utilisation of qualitative methodologies in this field (Conger, 1998; Parry, 1998; Alvesson, 1996; Bryman et al, 1996; Bryman et al, 1988). Quantitative studies emphasise the measurement and analysis of causal relationships between variables, not processes (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994:4). Researchers in this area prefer the use of

deductive, hypothesis-testing methodologies. In contrast, qualitative studies place an emphasis on processes and meanings that are not rigorously examined, or measured (if measured at all), in terms of quantity, amount, intensity or frequency (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994:4). Researchers in this area prefer the use of inductive, hypothesis-generating methodologies. Qualitative researchers stress the socially constructed nature of reality. They seek answers to questions that stress how social experience is created and given meaning. They see their purpose as one of understanding how people make sense of their lives and how people come to understand and manage day-to-day situations (Miles and Huberman, 1994). Qualitative research emphasises the intimate relationship between researchers and those they study, as opposed to quantitative research which emphasises the ideal of maintaining objective distance between researchers and those they study.

The quantitative analysis of quantitative data by researchers within the leadership field has been described as enjoying “continuing dominance” (Conger, 1998:108) and “methodological hegemony” (Bryman et al, 1996:353). In contrast, the qualitative analysis of qualitative data by researchers within the leadership field has been described as “relatively rare” (Conger, 1998:107), “greatly underutilised” (Conger, 1998:118), “not a representative feature” (Parry, 1998:85), and “receiving far less attention” (Parry, 1998:88).

Bryman et al (1988:13) detected among leadership researchers a combination of unease and disenchantment with the fruits of decades of theoretical and empirical endeavour within their field. The sources of this disillusionment were many, but there seemed to be little doubt that a major component was a growing unease regarding the heavy reliance on questionnaire measures of leader behaviour. The use of quantitative-based surveys as the “method of choice” (Bryman et al, 1996:353) has been attributed by Parry (1998:87) to the historical domination of leadership research by the discipline of psychology, which has relied upon the quantitative analysis of quantitative data dominated by the use of questionnaires as the data gathering instrument.

However, Bryman et al (1996:353) have noted that within the field of leadership there are signs of a growing interest in the use of qualitative research. The ability of this approach to make inroads into the field is attributed by Conger (1998:108) to the extreme and enduring complexity of the leadership phenomenon itself. This complexity

is a by-product of three important characteristics of leadership – multiple levels of phenomena, dynamic character, and symbolic component. Because qualitative methods are ideally suited to dealing with such complexity they “must play a central role in leadership research” (Conger, 1998:108). By way of contrast, quantitative methods, by themselves, are insufficient to investigate thoroughly phenomena with such characteristics (Conger, 1998:109). These arguments related to the complexity of leadership can now be presented in more detail.

The first important component of leadership complexity is related to the existence of *multiple levels of phenomena*. We can conceive of leadership as embedded in “nests” of phenomena: intrapsychic, behavioural, interpersonal, organisational, and environmental (Conger, 1998:109)

However, quantitative studies of leadership (largely questionnaire and survey-based) suffer from a number of shortcomings in capturing this component of complexity (Conger, 1998:109). These include:

- inability to draw effective links across these multiple levels to explain leadership events and outcomes
- typically focus on a single level of analysis (such as behavioural dimensions)
- overlook the influential role of intrapsychic, or group, or organisational, or environmental factors
- more often measure attitudes about behaviour rather than actual observed behaviour
- are influenced by the social desirability concerns of respondents
- are poor at measuring interaction
- tend to be uni-directional, and
- employ broad and sterile item descriptors often ignoring richness of detail and also the processes behind the descriptors – the “how” and “why” leadership questions are traded off for highly abstracted concepts/descriptions only allowing generalisations across a range of contexts at relatively superficial levels.

The second important component of leadership complexity is related to the *dynamic* nature of the concept of leadership. In the leadership process the leaders’ relations with

followers and with the larger environment evolve over periods of time as events such as achievements, failures, opportunities and crises are constantly reshaping leadership experiences for both the leader and the led (Conger, 1998:110).

However, the existence of this dynamism poses serious challenges for the use of quantitative methods in leadership research (Conger, 1998:110) which by their nature:

- measure only static moments in time
- cannot easily track in any richness of detail how events unfold or how they may reshape interpretation of events
- cannot easily cope with the introduction and tracking of new factors, and
- promote investigator detachment from the research site to the point where researchers may be unaware of newly emerging factors.

The third important component of leadership complexity is related to its *symbolic* significance. The interpretive dimension plays a significant role in how leadership is defined and experienced – a subjective ever-shifting, people-shaping, reality (Conger, 1998:110). Leadership is about the reality of social influence in organisations. It integrates a complex interplay of social, political, and ideological variables. It is often not rationalist in nature (Parry, 1997:39). Symbolism is important within the processes by which people make sense of organisational realities. These assumptions are consistent with the notion that leadership relates to changes in the views, beliefs, motivations and attributions of followers (Hunt, 1991:236).

However, quantitative methods are far less effective at capturing these interpretive dimensions and seeing beyond them because they are designed largely to:

- capture a reality that is composed of concrete and objective structures (Conger, 1998:110)
- impose rather than expose meanings, since it is the investigator who sorts people out in terms of preconceived conceptual schemes (Bryman et al, 1988:16).

2.3.1 Why a Qualitative Approach?

These three dimensions – multiple levels, dynamism, and social construction – make for a very complex research topic (Conger, 1998:111). Qualitative methodologies are

ideally suited to such a situation, providing rich insights, often illuminating in radically new ways phenomena as complex as leadership (Conger, 1998:107). Qualitative research takes greater notice of variety in social life and the different forms that the objects which underlie concepts may assume (Blumer, 1955). Qualitative research strategies are committed to interpretivist accounts (Bryman et al, 1988:15), a commitment to seeing the world from the point of view of the actor (Bryman, 1984:77). The basic thrust then of a qualitative approach is that of the interpretation of action, events and perspectives through the eyes of those being investigated. By taking the actor's viewpoint as the central focus, such an approach brings to the surface issues and topics which are important yet which are omitted by relying on the researcher as the source of what is relevant (Bryman et al, 1988:16).

Quantitative methods, in and of themselves, are insufficient to investigate thoroughly phenomena with such complex characteristics on the grounds discussed above. On the other hand, qualitative methods, when properly employed, offer the leadership field several distinct advantages over quantitative methods (Conger, 1998:111). These include:

- more opportunities to explore leadership phenomena in significant depth and to do so longitudinally
- flexibility to discern and detect unexpected phenomena during the research
- ability to expose rather than impose meanings, emphasising the variety of situations and milieux rather than overriding them (Bryman et al, 1988:16)
- ability to investigate processes more effectively
- greater chances to explore and be sensitive to contextual factors, and
- more effective means to investigate symbolic dimensions.

2.3.2 Types of Qualitative Studies

Bryman et al (1996:354-5) argue that there are four different kinds of qualitative research design that can be discerned in the literature within leadership studies. These are:

- the detailed case study of a single organisation and leader

- the multiple-case-study design in which there are detailed examinations of leaders in a small number of organisations
- the design that concentrates on what a fairly large number of leaders say about their leadership practices and orientations, and
- the design that invites people to describe in detail specific leaders, or leadership practices in general.

However, for the purpose of this thesis it has been found to be more convenient to demarcate qualitative leadership studies into seven different categories dependent on the application of three different criteria:

- the nature of the work context (single organisation, multiple case study, or a large number of different organisations)
- the types of respondents who are subject to interview questions (leaders only or people in general), and
- the manner in which data is generated (interviews only or a more detailed ethnographic-type investigation, involving interviews, observation and document analysis).

First, there are those studies which *ask leaders* about their own leadership actions, approaches and orientations within the context of a *single organisation* or sector. Examples include: a hospital (Lewis, 1990); nursing (Irurita, 1992); higher education (Tierney, 1989).

Second, there are those studies which *ask leaders* about their own leadership actions, approaches and orientations within the context of a *multiple case study* design. Examples include: three construction sites (Bryman et al, 1988); three transportation organisations (Bryman et al, 1996a).

Third, there are those studies which *ask leaders* about their own leadership actions, approaches and orientations across a *large number of different sectors* and work contexts. Examples include: Bennis and Nanus (1985); Farkas and Wetlaufer (1996); Sarros (1992); Sarros and Woodman (1993); Sarros and Santora (2001).

Fourth, there are those studies which *ask people* to describe specific leaders or leadership in general within the context of a *single organisation* or sector. Examples

include: police (Bryman et al, 1996); education (Kirby et al, 1992); education (Harcher and Hyle, 1996); nursing (Katzin, 1989); nursing (Nespoli, 1991).

Fifth, there are those studies which *ask people* to describe specific leaders or leadership in general within the context of a *multiple case study* design. Examples include: three local councils (Parry, 1999).

Sixth, there are those studies which adopt an in-depth *ethnographic*-type investigation (including wide-ranging interviews, participation and document analysis) within the context of a *single organisation* or leader. Examples include: a local council (Jones and Gross, 1996); Catholic college (Tierney, 1987); politics (Sooklal, 1991); computer consultancy (Alvesson, 1992); university (Gioia and Chittipeddi, 1991); school district (Roberts, 1985); co-operative restaurant (Vanderslice, 1988); insurance company (Smircich and Morgan, 1982); chemical company (Greiner and Bhambri, 1989); environmental organisation (Kaczmariski and Cooperrider, 1997).

Seventh, there are those studies which adopt an in-depth *ethnographic*-type investigation (including wide-ranging interviews, participation and document analysis) within the context of a *multiple case study* design. Examples include: four local councils (Jones, 2002); two local councils (Jones, 1999).

2.3.3 Qualitative Research in the Present Study

Research suggests that both leader practices and subordinate perceptions of leadership are critically affected by the impact of organisational context (Bryman et al, 1996; Leavy and Wilson, 1994; Stace and Dunphy, 1994; Jones and McLean, 1998). Much research on leadership has been carried out within the context of change. This context often stresses the necessity for visionary, transformational or inspiration leadership within a rapidly changing environment characterised by high uncertainty and enhanced competition. However, less research on leadership has been carried out in a context where change is *not* an overriding issue. Such contexts are often characterised by more stability in the operating environment, lower levels of uncertainty, and less necessity for transformational or inspirational leadership. The aim of this thesis is to study the process of leadership within an organisation with the following characteristics:

- complex organisation (large size, hierarchical structure, multiple sites)

- public sector organisation, and
- organisational change is present, but not regarded as an overriding issue.

Hence, the purpose of the present research is to understand leadership as a social influence process within a particular substantive setting. The substantive setting chosen is that of a government department which manages the traffic and road system in a state of Australia, in conjunction with state and local government agencies. This purpose has directed the researcher toward a particular methodological process. A qualitative research approach has been chosen in preference to a quantitative approach for a number of reasons. Firstly, the desire to explore and be sensitive to contextual factors within a complex organisational environment which has been less systematically analysed within the literature. Secondly, the desire to investigate the *process* of leadership more effectively within such an organisational context. Thirdly, the desire to expose rather than impose meanings on the leadership process. Fourthly, the desire to investigate the symbolic dimensions of the leadership process.

Within this overall qualitative approach, this study has adopted the design described above in the fourth category of qualitative research studies, namely *asking people* to describe specific leaders or leadership in general within the context of a *single organisation* or sector, following the approach of such researchers as Bryman et al (1996), Kirby et al (1992), and Nespoli (1991). The choice of this design has been determined by three main reasons.

First, the research design has concentrated on obtaining data from *people* rather than managers only because of the desire to examine the process of leadership from the point of view of those who are subject to leadership rather than those who purport to practice leadership in formal power-holding positions. When data gathering is restricted to managers only the interactive social process of leadership is not being investigated because only one perspective is gained (Parry, 1997:36). It is important not to restrict leadership processes to organisational managers and leaders but to understand the leadership processes buried within the whole organisation. There is often a gap between what leaders say they do and what they actually do, or are perceived to do, by the recipients of leadership (Zaleznik, 1990). Leadership is a social influence process, and in this regard is best studied from the point of view of the perceptions of those who receive leadership, rather than those who practice it. The study was designed with a

commitment to seeing the world of leadership from the recipients' point of view. The objective was to create an opportunity to study their opinions, emotions and feelings, to understand how they made sense of leadership within the context of their particular work environment, how they reacted to and managed the impact of leadership on them, and how leaders, in turn, reacted to the behaviours, emotions and attitudes of organisational subordinates. In other words, the emphasis is on process.

Second, the research design has concentrated on collecting data by *asking* rather than observing because the processual nature of leadership makes it difficult to observe. A constant question guiding leadership research has been – what is the nature of the process by which one person may get others to follow? Hence, the data collected needs to address this issue (Parry, 1997:25). The interview is a valid method with which to source these data (Silverman, 1993). The data from interviews consist of direct quotations from people about their experiences, opinions, feelings, attitudes, motivations and knowledge. These data are the basis of the social influence process that is leadership. Hence, the in-depth open-ended interview is the more appropriate source of data for qualitative research into the leadership process. Observation is important but the interview is the more important source of data (Parry, 1997:27). In addition, a reliance on interviewing rather than observation helps researchers to “remove their intellectual baggage” and reduce their preconceived ideas about what the research might find (Parry, 1997:41). This is particularly useful where a researcher might be close to the organisation or data source studied.

Third, the research design has concentrated on obtaining data from a *single organisation* in order to meet the emergent need for building leadership theories that can make a distinctive contribution to the elucidation of context (Bryman et al, 1996:355). The emphasis is less on comparative research versus a single case study, but on building a leadership process theory within a specific and familiar context. Such an approach enables the understanding and accommodation of the complexity of a certain situation (Johnson, 1987:68). Leavy and Wilson (1994) have noted that business leaders are tenants of time and context, and that leadership should therefore be examined within its situational context and organisational history. Pettigrew and Whipp (1991) also suggest that leadership is acutely context sensitive. Because leadership is regarded as a relationship among persons in a given social setting at a given historic moment, Biggart

and Hamilton (1987:439) believe that any theory of leadership must consider the legitimating principles, dominant structures of authority, and the norms of the social structure in which leadership occurs. Hence by adopting a research design that allows the significance of the specific circumstances of organisational types to be outlined in detail, any findings acquire their relevance within a certain kind of context (Bryman et al, 1996:355). This context can then be contrasted with other contexts in which such a set of organisational arrangements does not pertain.

Accordingly, this study is located within a nominalist ontology and an anti-positivist epistemology (Burrell and Morgan, 1979). However, Crotty (1998) would prefer to employ the terminology of a constructivist epistemology and an interpretive theoretical perspective. Following the logic of Crotty, the analysis in this chapter now turns to an examination of the symbolic interactionist approach within the interpretivist theoretical perspective, and how this in turn has informed the grounded theory methodology which has been adopted in this thesis.

2.4 *Symbolic Interactionism*

American pragmatism and in particular sociology's symbolic interactionist school of thought constitute the disciplinary traditions that helped to inform grounded theory. Symbolic interactionism can best be understood as a working through of the pragmatist world view. The set of ideas associated with symbolic interactionism developed from the work of the early 20th century American pragmatist philosophers William James, George H Mead, Charles Pierce, Charles Horton Cooley and John Dewey. These philosophers wanted to develop a way of thinking about and conceptualising human behaviour that focused attention on people's practices and their lived realities; they shared the objective of understanding social life "in the making" as it was created (Locke, 2001:20).

Pragmatism conceives of knowledge as an experiential process rather than a mirror of some independent reality. Composed reality shifts as it is built up in transaction with the world and with others in it. Thus knowledge generated by social researchers can never be complete or confident, but when grounded in particular experiences it can possess a limited authenticity. Pragmatism recognises a knowledge or understanding of events is possible by focusing attention on them and rendering them problematic. This

knowledge derives from intimate acquaintance with the events studied and from close experiential connections with them (Locke, 2001:21).

George Herbert Mead (1863-1931) is generally viewed as the primary originator of the ideas that underlie the symbolic interactionist perspective. However, Burrell and Morgan (1979:77-78) argue that the symbolic interactionist movement has not developed in anything like a consistent manner and has no single integrated body of theory which defines its position. They distinguish between two parallel but conflicting strains of interactionist thought: behavioural interactionists (who interpret Mead within the context of the functionalist paradigm) and phenomenological interactionists (who interpret Mead within the context of the interpretive paradigm). Rose's (1962) interpretation of Mead, for example, shows a predilection for a positivist epistemology. However, Blumer (1969) presents Mead as advocating a distinctly nominalist ontology, thus adopting an essentially phenomenological standpoint (Burrell and Morgan, 1979:81).

Mead was concerned with acknowledging and articulating the role that subjective experience played in social interaction. The proposition that human beings have a sense of self that we develop through interaction with others is at the core of Mead's theoretical framework. It is through the sense of self that as humans we are able to construct the actions that we will take towards the objects in our world (Mead, 1934). This concern with subjective experience, while consistent with the phenomenological school of philosophy, was at odds with prevailing behaviourist notions that human behaviour could be explained through the observation and operation of observable external stimuli alone (Locke, 2001:21). For Mead it was necessary to understand the meaning those external stimuli held for people in order to understand their behaviour. Mead saw individuals as acting in a social context in which we ascribe meaning to objects and actions, and base our own actions on those constructed meanings. Mead believed constructed meaning systems provided the key to understanding the link between individuals and society.

The notion of meaning and its influence on social behaviour is the central and critical idea in the symbolic interactionist position. Humans' interaction with the world is mediated through our processes of meaning making and interpretation. With meaning

and interpretation as its core concern, symbolic interactionism has clear affinities with the interpretive paradigm (Locke, 2001:21).

This understanding of the role of meaning and interpretation was further articulated by Herbert Blumer, one of Mead's pupils at the University of Chicago. Blumer's development of Mead's ideas formulated a research methodology for the tradition he named "symbolic interactionism". Blumer (1969:2) argued that there are three premises on which this tradition rests, and in each of them you see clearly the relationship between meaning and action that the term symbolic interactionism captures. These are:

1. *People interpret the meaning of objects in the world and then act upon those interpretations* (that is, meanings inform and guide action).
2. *Meaning arises from social interaction and not from the object* (that is, meaning arises from the social interactions people have with others in their world – communication between and among individuals).
3. *Meaning is handled in and modified through an ongoing interpretive process* (that is, meaning is not fixed or stable; it is always in process. Actors can select, suspend, and even transform the meanings they hold in light of changing situations and circumstances).

As with Mead, Blumer too focused on the concept of self – our ideas of who we are and our inner experiences. It is our ability to hold a concept of who we are and to take action in light of our view of ourselves that forms the basis for the formulation of meaning and experience. Social and physical objects are defined by a person's interaction with them and in light of their view of who they are. Once these objects are defined they can be imbued with meaning and with value. Consequently, according to Blumer, people's actions towards the objects in their world are sensible in light of the meanings and values these objects hold for them. These meanings and values lead to self-directed behaviour. Further, because the self is always subject to reinterpretation, one's definition of self can change. New experience changes the sense of self, changes the meaning of objects, and thereby leads to changes in behaviour. Thus, with the creation of meaning at the core of human behaviour, symbolic interactionists view behaviour as the result of meaning making or interpretive processes. Social behaviour is inherently processual and it tends towards instability as behaviour shifts in the context of revised or different interpretations (Locke, 2001:23).

2.4.1 Research Implication of Symbolic Interactionism

Communication and a common language provide the means for achieving shared meaning, which allows collective action to take place. Social organisation therefore is made up of patterns and intertwined lines of action that express common meanings attached to various social objects. These structures of everyday commonsense meaning that are disclosed in observable regular styles and patterns of acting towards social objects, then, are regarded by symbolic interactionists as the only reality that sociologists can describe (Locke, 2001:23-24).

Symbolic interactionism's most important methodological premise is that all social inquiry must be grounded in the particular empirical world studied. Symbolic interactionism is regarded as a research tradition whose particular contribution is the empirical knowledge generated by its first-hand empirical field research as much as by its theoretical framework. Within this tradition participant observation is the research ideal. Consistent with a concern with meaning and action, behaviour is studied at two levels: the interactional level and the symbolic level. This includes detailed observations of behaviour in a specific situation, as well as requiring the researcher to understand behaviour as a setting's participants understand it. Researchers must enter the social worlds of the people they study in order to understand the situation from the subject's point of view and to observe first hand what the subjects find meaningful and how they make meaning. This detail becomes the foundation from which researchers can formulate an interpretation of the subject's behaviour. These interpretations, or "theories", constitute researcher translations of what they have observed into the language of their research discipline. Nevertheless, their grounding in and closeness to the data remain (Locke, 2001:24).

As a set of research practices, and often as a research product, grounded theory reflects symbolic interactionism's theoretical and methodological presuppositions about the nature of the social world and the way it can be studied (Locke, 2001:25).

In terms of *theoretical suppositions*, grounded theorists informed by this school of thought enter any research setting and any research topic oriented towards behaviour at the symbolic and interactional levels. This means observing and understanding behaviour from the participants' point of view, learning about participants worlds,

learning about their interpretation of self in the context of given interactions, and learning about the dynamic properties of interaction.

In terms of *methodological assumptions*, the grounded theory approach underscores the symbolic interactionist belief of keeping faith with the empirical world. It is echoed in the following beliefs:

- The kinds of issues appropriate for study are those that are relevant and problematic in the social situation studied.
- The researcher should enter the research process with as few advance assumptions as possible.
- The conceptual categories and the broad interpretive frameworks developed should result from the researcher's interaction with and closely conform to the situation studied.

2.5 Why Grounded Theory?

Symbolic interactionism informs a number of other research methodologies in addition to grounded theory, such as ethnography, phenomenology and case study analysis. Why was grounded theory chosen as the methodology of choice in this thesis in favour of these alternative methodologies? A brief definition and elaboration of these alternative methodologies will be advanced before specific reasons are given.

Ethnography is the art and science of describing a group or culture (Fetterman, 1989:11). Often this involves the “interpretation” of a cultural or social group or system (Creswell, 1998:58), sometimes as a “form of story-telling” (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983:1). The objective of ethnography is to obtain a comprehensive understanding of some human group (Agar, 1980:1). This understanding of others is achieved through fieldwork which usually means living with and living like those who are studied (van Maanen, 1988:2). Ethnography draws on a wide range of sources of information. The ethnographer participates, overtly or covertly, in people's daily lives for an extended period of time, watching what happens, listening to what is said, asking questions; in fact collecting whatever data are available to throw light on the issues with which he or she is concerned (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983:2)

Phenomenology describes the meaning of the lived experiences for several individuals about a concept or phenomenon (Creswell, 1998:51). Boland (1985:193-194) sees phenomenology as the “intuition of essences”, essentially interested in the methodological study of consciousness in order to understand the essence of experience. For the phenomenologist the main objective is to examine and describe phenomena as they are consciously experienced (Beck, 1992:167). This involves asking questions about the essence of the experience of a phenomenon for the people involved. The researcher uses interviews to find out how people experience and interpret the phenomenon concerned (Parry, 1997:60).

A *case study* is an exploration of a “bounded system” or a case (or multiple cases) through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information rich in context (Creswell, 1998:61). A case study is expected to catch the complexity of a single case. It attempts to achieve this through the study of the particularity and complexity of a single case, coming to understand its activity within important circumstances (Stake, 1995:xi).

The binding feature of all three of these methodologies is the emphasis on comprehensive in-depth description. Such description is aimed either at the cultural behaviour of a group, or at capturing the essence of an experience, or at understanding the complexity of a bounded case. However, the objective of this thesis is not the capturing of a comprehensive description but rather the building of a theory to conceptualise the leadership process inherent within a certain contextual environment. It is this difference between comprehensive description and conceptual theorising which demarcates grounded theory from other qualitative approaches, such as ethnography, phenomenology and case study.

Within the leadership literature Parry (1997:27) observes that many qualitative studies are largely descriptive of people and have not theorised on the process of leadership throughout an organisation. Descriptive leadership research answers the “whom, when, and where” questions, but it does not answer the “how” and “why” questions. Answering the how and why questions is an integral part of theory generation (Parry, 1997:37). However, the literature is still sparse regarding the determination of theory from these studies to explain the leadership processes at work. Leadership in the context of these studies still has not progressed past the descriptive stage nor onto the

theoretical stage. Theories of management have been generated but not theories of leadership (Parry, 1997:36).

In contrast, grounded theory is a research method in which theory emerges from and is grounded in the data (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). Hence of the qualitative methodologies outlined above, grounded theory is the most concerned with moving past the description of phenomena and onto theory generation.

Two versions of grounded theory are now established in the literature, the orthodox or Glaserian version (Glaser, 1978, 1992, 1998, 2001) and the Strauss/Corbin rendition (Strauss, 1987; Strauss and Corbin, 1990, 1998). According to Wilson and Hutchinson (1996:122) researchers are now obliged to specify the grounded theory version they are employing. The Glaserian version represents the original version of grounded theory, with an emphasis on the symbolic interactionist approach based on looking for the main concern or problem for the people in the setting (Glaser, 1978:94). The objective is to generate a theory that accounts for a pattern of behaviour which is relevant and problematic for those involved. Discovering the problem or focus through its “emergence” from the data helps to ensure that a relevant focus is discovered (Becker, 1993:257). On the other hand, the Strauss/Corbin rendition is a more densely codified structured operation (Stern, 1993:220). According to Glaser (1992) their emphasis is more on “forcing” data into a predetermined paradigm, thus resulting in a product which he calls “full conceptual description”.

Following Wilson and Hutchinson’s (1996) call, this thesis employs the Glaserian, orthodox version of grounded theory. The primary reason for this, as already intimated above, is to meet the main objective of this thesis of generating a theory of the leadership process that accounts for a pattern of behaviour which meets the main concern of the participants which is relevant and problematic for those involved. The aim is not one of full conceptual description, but rather of building a substantive theory to explain a pattern of behaviour.

In addition, three other reasons can be advanced for the adoption of the orthodox grounded theory version in this thesis. Firstly, this version is well suited to the study of complex entities because of its ability to produce a multifaceted account of organisational action in context (Locke, 2001:95). We have already noted and analysed

above the fact that leadership is a complex phenomenon and hence requires a suitable methodology to capture this complexity. Secondly, orthodox grounded theory links well to practice in that it produces theory which is relevant to the context and concerns of practitioners in the area. As a result, it is more likely to be intelligible to, and useable by, those in the situations observed (Locke, 2001:95). Thirdly, the grounded theory approach can be used to bring a new perspective and new theorising to mature established theoretical areas, thus enlivening and modifying existing theoretical frameworks (Locke, 2001:97). Leadership is a heavily theorised area in management and organisation studies. Parry (1998) has argued that leadership needs to be studied as a social influence process. By conceiving of leadership as a basic social process, orthodox grounded theory can bring a fresh perspective to existing theorising associated with leadership.

2.5.1 Orthodox Grounded Theory

Grounded theory is an inductive, theory-discovery method that allows the researcher to develop a theoretical account of the general features of a topic while simultaneously grounding the account in empirical observations or data (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). More succinctly, it is the “discovery of theory from data” (Glaser and Strauss, 1967:1). The method involves the simultaneous collection, coding and analysis of data, adopting an overall framework which is systematic, emergent, non-linear and without researcher preconceptions, in order to generate a theory about a substantive area.

The purpose of generating explanatory theory is to further our understanding of social and psychological phenomena (Chenitz and Swanson, 1986:3). The objective of researchers in developing such theory is to explore the social processes that present within human interactions (Streubert and Carpenter, 1995:145), described by Chenitz and Swanson (1986:3) as “the basic patterns common in social life”. Grounded theorists base their research on the assumption that each group shares a specific social psychological problem that is not necessarily articulated (Hutchinson, 1993:185). The central issue in a grounded theory study is to know what our informants’ problem (or main concern) is and how they seek to resolve it (Glaser, 1992:177). The research product itself constitutes a theoretical formulation or integrated set of conceptual hypotheses about the substantive area under study. Testing or verificational work on or

with the theory is left to others interested in these types of research endeavour (Glaser, 1992:16).

The main elements, concepts and procedures of orthodox grounded theory can now be examined.

2.5.1.1 Concentration Site and Early Interviews

Data collection starts most often in a concentration site, a unit where the area of interest goes on in concentration (Glaser, 2001:179). Early participants in a grounded theory study are selected because they are judged to have some knowledge of the domain being studied (Glaser, 2001:181). These early respondents will “tell a lot” to start giving the researcher a feeling for the main concern, and in view of this Glaser urges researchers to adopt “big ear” listening at the start of the study (Glaser, 2001:175). This is defined as “listening in a kind of open-ended conversational interview” where there is no questioning, just listening, or very broad questions in order to get participants to tell their stories (Glaser, 2001:177).

2.5.1.2 Open Coding and Initial Category Building

In a grounded theory investigation data collection, coding and analysis occur simultaneously. Initially, the aim is to generate the basic categories from which to build the emergent theory. In order to do this the researcher first minimises the differences between comparative groups (Glaser, 2001:180).

Coding of data begins as soon as it is collected whether this be through observation, field notes or interviews. The goal of *open coding* is to generate an emergent set of categories and their properties which fit, work, and are relevant for integrating into a theory. In open coding the analyst “runs the data open” by fracturing the data into analytic pieces. Open coding gets the analyst “out of” the data. Incidents are raised to a conceptual level and coded into as many categories as possible. “One-upping” is the process of coding conceptually by raising the empirical level of the data to a conceptual level suitable for theory generation. As the process continues, new categories emerge, and new incidents fit existing categories (Glaser, 1978:56).

As categories are generated the next incidents are compared to the category. This constant comparison of incidents very soon starts to generate theoretical properties of

the category. (Glaser, 1998:140). As a result, the analyst soon starts thinking in terms of the full range of types or continua of the category, its dimensions, the conditions under which it is pronounced or minimised, its major consequences, its relation to other categories, and its other properties (Glaser and Strauss, 1967:106).

Open coding is governed by four basic rules (Glaser, 1978:57-58). Researchers must always analyse the data line by line, do their own coding, interrupt coding to memo ideas, and continually ask a set of three questions of the data which must be kept in mind from the start. These questions are:

- What is this data a study of?
- What category, or property of a category, does this incident indicate?
- What is actually happening in the data?

These questions keep the substantive directions in tractable focus as they force the generation of a core category.

Open coding possesses a number of conceptual advantages for the process of theory building (adapted from Glaser, 1978:56-61). It:

- forces analysts to transcend their involved empirical view of their field if they are too intimate with their data from collecting it by rising conceptually above fascinating experiences
- keeps analysts theoretically sensitive when analysing, collecting and coding data
- forces analyst to focus on patterns among incidents which yield codes, and
- allows analysts to see the direction in which to take their study by theoretical sampling before they become selective and focused on a particular problem. Thus, when they do focus they are sure of relevance.

2.5.1.3 Constant Comparison Method

The process of data analysis in grounded theory relies on the constant comparison method. By this method, incidents are compared with incidents, incident with category, and category with category or construct (Glaser, 2001:197).

The purpose of constant comparison is to generate concepts (Glaser, 2001:186), not to summarise incidents or compare differences and negatives for description (Glaser, 2001:192). By means of constant comparison categories are generated, the basic properties of each category are defined, conditions, causes, contexts and consequences are made explicit, the relationships between the categories are identified, and the identification of patterns is facilitated (Glaser, 2001:197).

2.5.1.4 Theoretical Sampling

Once the concentration site yields the initial categories, the researcher searches for comparisons induced from the emergent theory (Glaser, 2001:181). *Theoretical sampling* extends the power of the emergent theory by determining where to sample next. Its objective is to search for any incidents that, upon comparison, give new properties of a category (Glaser, 2001:169). The goal of theoretical sampling is concept generation, not searching for differences, similarities, and accuracy for the purpose of description (Glaser, 2001:181).

Theoretical sampling requires and encompasses two associated processes: site spreading and varied interviewing (Glaser, 2001:166). *Site spreading* is the process whereby induction of grounded theory generations yields to deduction in the service of further inductions for comparison (Glaser, 2001:169). For example, where can we find more data on “pseudo friending for client control that is seen as less than genuine?” (Glaser, 2001:175). As one site spreads, the researcher goes to similar units in other contexts (e.g. renal dialysis wards in other hospitals). Later respondents are chosen because they are sources of information that may illuminate emerging hypotheses or theoretical questions (Glaser, 2001:181).

The shape of where one seeks data is not predetermined. The sources emerge developmentally (Glaser, 2001:180). No one knows in advance who the participants will be nor where they are, after the initial unit is left. Thus, site spreading is emergent and cannot be preconceived. It routes based on the emergent theory taking it places for comparisons (Glaser, 2001:179).

Many studies can be described as *unit bound* in that they occur and remain within a concentration site. Several reasons can justify this. The grounded theory researcher quite often wants a theory explaining a main concern in one site. Or for reasons of

resources and tidiness the research may remain unit bound. Additionally, some sites are large enough, such as a hospital, school or large corporation to not have to leave the supra-unit to site spread. Theoretical sampling can go on within the larger site (intra-site spreading), such as looking at different wards, classes, or departments for comparative incidents (Glaser, 2001:179).

Varied interviewing refers to the practice of constantly refining questions and interview techniques during theoretical sampling (Glaser, 2001:176). *Questions* are content guided based on the emergent theory's categories as the research generates properties of those categories. Researchers are free to vary questioning as they follow the emergent problem and the emerging codes. After the analysis of a few interviews the subsequent questions will usually change as the researcher samples for data in different aspects or directions (Glaser, 2001:175). As the analysis goes on categories emerge, along with memos. Questioning becomes more targeted to start verifying and saturating categories, and filling in conceptual gaps in the memos. Thus, questioning of successive participants becomes easier and relevant because of clearer emergent questions (Glaser, 2001:177).

In similar vein, grounded theory requires the freedom to *interview* in whatever style works at the moment or time in sampling for incidents to compare, wherever the site is. It is momentarily varied with the emergence of the sampling situation and participant. In this pursuit, interview pacing and phrasing are adapted to fit the current situation, tailoring questions and phrases, listening, questioning and observing. Later respondents get a full range of interviewing techniques. Some will be sacrificed to a few questions. Others may have a long in-depth interview as a new dimension of the study opens up and data is needed to start induction of categories and deducting new questions for theoretical sampling (Glaser, 2001:176).

2.5.1.5 Core Category

A grounded theory is a theory about the continual resolving of a main concern. This continual resolving is designated by a category called the core category. Grounded theory is therefore a theory about a core category (e.g. covering, cultivating, credentialising, infracontrolling, cutting back, keeping clients in line). It is a theory about a concept, not about a full conceptual description of a substantive area (Glaser, 2001:199).

Core variable analysis is a latent structural pattern analysis. It is related to most variation in the data and the substantive area, and therefore organises and explains most of the variation in how the main concern is continually resolved (Glaser, 2001:199). It is imperative that the core category must “core-out” by constant comparison. This refers to the integration of the other categories and their properties around the core’s resolving of the main concern (Glaser, 2001:204).

In many studies the identification of the core can come quickly. In others, however, delays can occur. In such situations the researcher is advised to remain patient and tolerate the confusion, doubts and unknowing in open coding in the service of grounded discovery.

The core will emerge. There is no need to force one out of desperation or drift into description capture. Sometimes the core can emerge later in the study as an underlying pattern that connects and transcends a few subcore categories which up to this point were being selectively coded for (Glaser, 2001:205).

2.5.1.6 Transition from open coding to selective coding

When the core category emerges, *selective coding* replaces open coding (Glaser, 2001:199). Selective coding occurs when the analyst delimits the theory to one core variable (Glaser, 1978:61). Selective coding is a major change in a grounded theory from open coding. It is a change from coding everything in the data to focusing on just coding for a core variable and its related categories and properties (Glaser, 2001:199).

To selectively code for a core variable means *delimiting* coding to only those variables that relate to the core variable in sufficiently significant ways to be used in a parsimonious theory. The core variable becomes a guide to further data collection and theoretical sampling. Once discovered, the core suddenly provides conceptual vision and enables the analyst to see a focus within the total context developed during open coding (Glaser, 1978:61). The study gets delimited, memos become more focused, and the integration of categories and their properties begins a substantive theory (Glaser, 2001:199).

Choosing the core category and commencing selective sampling is absolutely necessary in doing grounded theory. The alternative is description capture (Glaser, 2001:199).

Fear of choosing the core category confuses the transition, thereby making the research go on too long. With no transition to selective coding the drudgery of open coding continues with no core latent pattern, no delimiting, and much confusion with large amounts of data. It is best to test out a core category and then another if the first does not work than to drift too long in open coding (Glaser, 2001:201).

2.5.1.7 Saturation

The intense property development of a category eventually yields conceptual density and a generated grounded theory with theoretical completeness. Theoretical *saturation* of a category means that through constant comparison the conceptualisation of each comparison yields properties of the category “until no new properties emerge”.

Saturation is *not* descriptive repetitiveness. It is not the descriptive capture of seeing the same pattern over and over again in different incidents (Glaser, 2001:191).

Glaser strongly counsels against “one-incident categories” on the grounds that they do not lead to categories naming underlying patterns about what is going on – “one incident or one impression does not make a pattern” (Glaser, 2001:189). Categories must be verified by constant comparison showing a pattern (Glaser, 2001:194).

Allied to the concept of saturation is the debate over *sample size*. Stern’s (1993) opinion is that the well-schooled grounded theorist never, ever makes excuses for the size of the sample. Guthrie (2000:21) offers the following analysis of the nature of the problem.

“during the course of the research I simply chat with people to discover their thoughts. I do not document a quantifiable number of interviews with respondents. Indeed, who is to make the distinction between a chat, a discussion, and a legitimate interview? As far as I am concerned such distinctions are academic. The important element is not the label attributed but the relevance of the information generated”

Glaser concurs with these sentiments. The grounded theory researcher is sampling for incidents not people. Small numbers of participants in a small study does not matter. Each person can go on at length and be re-interviewed (Glaser, 2001:188).

Accordingly, a grounded theory is good as far as it goes irrespective of sample size. More data will simply modify it. However, Glaser’s view is that it is preferable to do

some site spreading once the core and sub-core categories are discovered (Glaser, 2001:170).

2.5.1.8 Theoretical Coding

Theoretical coding weaves the fractured story back together again. Such codes conceptualise how the emergent codes may relate to each other as hypotheses to be integrated into a theory (Glaser, 1978:72). Glaser identifies 18 families of theoretical codes. No one of these codes is designed to be forced onto data. Such codes are emergent, not preconceived (Glaser, 1978:73-82).

The two types of coding (open/selective and theoretical coding) go on simultaneously and this should be brought out in memos. But the analyst focuses relatively more on open/selective codes when discovering codes within the data, and more on theoretical coding when sorting and integrating memos (Glaser, 2001).

2.5.1.9 Memoing

Memos are the theorising write-up of ideas about codes and their relationships as they strike the analyst whilst coding (Glaser, 1978:83). Writing memos is the vehicle by which concepts and ideas pour out, are saved and grow. Through this process memos provide the lead to theoretical sampling (Glaser, 1998:178)

Memoing is a constant process that begins when first coding data and continues through sorting and writing to the very end (Glaser, 1978:83). A memo can be a sentence, a paragraph, or a few pages. It does not matter as long as it exhausts the analyst's momentary ideation based on data, with perhaps a little conceptual elaboration (but certainly no logical elaboration) (Glaser, 1978:84). Memos are totally free and emergent. There is no formalisation to them, they just flow out with total freedom. There are no rules (Glaser, 1998:180).

The ideational development in memos accomplishes at least five important aspects of generating theory (Glaser, 1978:84):

- it raises the data to a conceptual level
- it develops the properties of each category which begins to define it operationally

- it presents hypotheses about connections between categories and/or their properties
- it begins to integrate these connections with clusters of other categories to generate the theory, and
- it begins to locate the emerging theory with other theories with potentially more or less relevance.

2.5.1.10 Sorting

Sorting is the act of arranging a huge pile of memos into an integrated theory. It is the epitome of the theory generation process (Glaser, 1998:187). It consists of setting up the memos in a theoretical outline in preparation for the writing stage. Since the sorting is of ideas, not data, it is *conceptual sorting*, not data sorting (Glaser, 1978:116).

Sorting begins to put the fractured data back together. This theoretical integration centres on sorting memos based on theoretical codes (Glaser, 1978:118). The outline is emergent not preconceived (Glaser, 1998:188). Analysts start with no idea of an outline. They do not have a ready-made outline to sort into. They should simply start sorting the categories and properties in their memos by similarities, connections and conceptual orderings. This forces patterns which become the outline (Glaser, 1978:117). In effect, the analyst lets the concepts outline themselves through emergence. Sorting is the final emergent step in generating theory (Glaser, 1992:110).

2.5.1.11 Emergent Framework

Very little of a grounded theory can be planned before the study (Glaser, 2001:175). The framework of inquiry is based on an emergent framework not a preconceived one (Glaser, 2001:178).

“In a grounded theory study our questions are constantly changing, our sample is unpredictable, and our analysis is constant throughout. We do not know what we are looking for when we start. Everything emerges. We do not preconceive anything. The research problem emerges, our sample emerges, concepts emerge, the relevant literature emerges, and finally the theory emerges. We simply cannot say prior to the collection and analysis of data what our study will look like” (Glaser, 2001:176).

2.5.1.12 Writing Up

In this final stage of grounded theory methodology, *writing* is a write-up of piles of ideas from theoretical sorting (Glaser, 1978:128). The write-up is a theory of a core variable (Glaser, 1978:129) and is designed around a “funnelling down” process to the core relevance to ensure that the organisation of the theory does not wander in workability (Glaser, 1998:195). Funnelling down encompasses the logic implicit in the theory: how to account for the continued resolving of a main concern which is stated substantively. The writer brings out the broad problem (the main concern of the participants) and delimits it to a core variable which explains a large amount of the variation in a behaviour or set of behaviours for resolving the problem. The implication is that the write-up will be written this way as its purpose (Glaser, 1978:129).

Grounded theory does not produce findings or facts, it produces conceptual hypotheses (Glaser, 2001:160). Concepts are grounded but they are not proven; they are only suggested. The theory is an integrated set of hypotheses, not of findings. Proofs are not the point (Glaser, 1978:134).

Grounded theory researchers are in the business of the conceptual construction of induction. Having fractured a story descriptively they are now putting it back together conceptually (Glaser, 1998:194). Conceptualisation is abstract of time, place and people (Glaser, 2001:214). The dictum is to write conceptually by making theoretical statements about the relationships between concepts, rather than writing descriptive statements about people (Glaser, 1978:133). During the write-up Glaser urges analysts to always try to relate concept to concept instead of concept to people. Writing in a concept-to-people manner has three drawbacks: it lowers the conceptual level, it encourages reintroduction of unitarising boundaries instead of unit busting, and it tends to allow “incident tripping” with no constant comparative analysis instead of simple illustrating (Glaser, 1998:197).

The credibility of the theory should be won by its integration, relevance and workability, not by using illustrations as if they were proof. Illustrations are only used to establish imagery and understanding as vividly as possible when needed. They support the concept, they are not the story itself. The power of the theory resides in concepts, not description (Glaser, 1978:134)

2.6 Summary

This chapter has stressed the importance of adopting a research design that emphasises the linkage between the ontology, epistemology, theoretical perspective, and the methodology and methods within a research study. The research design within this thesis is located within a constructivist epistemology and an interpretivist theoretical perspective. Leadership is a social influence process and requires an appropriate research methodology to reflect this need. Within this context an increasing number of authors have recently questioned the dominance of quantitative methodology in leadership research and have made pleas for the greater utilisation of qualitative methods in this field. Three dimensions of leadership – multiple levels, dynamism, and social construction – ensure that the phenomenon of leadership remains a very complex research topic. Qualitative methods offer several distinct advantages over quantitative methods in capturing the essence of this complexity.

The leadership literature contains a variety of qualitative studies that have been adopted for researching the process of leadership. For a number of reasons that are presented in this chapter, this thesis has adopted the design of *asking people* to describe specific leaders or leadership in general within the context of a *single organisation*.

The chapter also examines the relevance of symbolic interactionism as an important informing theme for the adoption of grounded theory in this thesis. A number of reasons are advanced for the selection of orthodox grounded theory as the methodology of choice in this thesis in favour of either as ethnographic, phenomenological, or a case study methodology. The chapter ends with a detailed examination of the defining characteristics of the orthodox, or Glaserian, version of grounded theory. This sets up the analysis for the following chapter, which deals with the details of how grounded theory has actually been used in this thesis for the collection, coding and analysis of data.

3 Data Collection and Analysis

This chapter is designed to take the reader through the process of the collection, coding and analysis of data in order to understand how the core variable and the leadership process model emerged. It commences with a discussion of the role of the researcher, the effect of potential researcher bias, and a listing of my prior experiences and beliefs. It takes the reader through the theoretical sampling process, showing the iterative nature of grounded theory research, as the emergent theory gradually took shape. The uncertainties, ambiguities and frustrations of grounded theory research are alluded to at several points during this chapter. The dead-ends, disappointments, re-starts and breakthroughs of this type of research as experienced during my study are also recounted. Feelings of personal inadequacy as a grounded theory researcher were also never far from the surface.

3.1 *Role of the Researcher*

In qualitative research the researcher is the primary instrument for data gathering and analysis. Because data are mediated through the human instrument there may exist the tendency for qualitative research to be dismissed as unscientific, subjective and biased. Chapter 2 of this thesis has examined the advantages of qualitative research for studying a complex topic such as leadership and will not be re-visited again. However, the issue of researcher bias needs further comment.

As I progressed through this research I came to realise that my own participation in the study organisation was valuable for theoretical sensitivity, and so for my ability to conceptualise from the data. Spradley (1980) finds it valid for a researcher to actively participate in social situations and to observe the people, their activities, and the context of the situation.

Having worked in AGRO for nearly ten years I had a good understanding of the culture and some of the sub-cultures of the organisation. I understood the terminology and language used by AGRO workers as it related to the execution of their responsibilities. It is this understanding that provided me with a context within which conceptualisation could take place. This is not an unusual situation in grounded theory studies. Both

Irurita (1990) and Brooks (1998) have researched grounded theory doctoral theses in organisations or industry sectors in which they had worked or were still currently working.

3.1.1 Researcher Bias

Grounded theory involves the subjective interpretation of participants' views and actions in order to generate theory. Human interpretation relies on an experiential and values framework that defines the meaning assigned to their observations. For a researcher this includes the interpretation of any data whether observed, heard, or read. To clarify, this relates to interviews I conducted, behaviours I observed, and documents I read.

Because this thesis reflects my interpretation of complex interactions I must guard against the possible effects of my potential bias during the entire research process. Locke et al (1987) stress the importance of the researcher being sensitive to his/her own biases, values, experiences and judgment. One way to deal with these biases is for researchers to elevate them to centre stage through conscious recognition and explicit statement in their research reports (Guba and Lincoln, 1981:148). According to Brooks (1998:34) the identification and recording of researcher biases serves two purposes. First, the explicit acknowledgement of bias ameliorates the potential effect of that bias. Second, recording biases in the research write-up makes it easier for those evaluating the research to assess its objectivity.

I had an intense interest in the topic of leadership combined with prior knowledge and pre-conceived views about leadership. If I did not have, I would not be conducting this research. When the research started I was employed in a managerial capacity at AGRO but left the organisation approximately one year after the research commenced. Therefore, whilst the data was being collected I was not perceived by respondents as a current AGRO manager. I believe this scenario made respondents less guarded in their discussions with me and more likely to impart true beliefs and opinions rather than "properline" data (Glaser, 1998:138). My knowledge of the organisation, I believe, increased my theoretical sensitivity. I was aware of the culture of AGRO and could place into perspective many of the issues and arguments made to me. Nevertheless, I was intensely aware at all stages of the effect of paradigm thinking (Kuhn, 1970) and

how cultural webs (Johnson, 1992) can distort and homogenise external stimuli. Below I list some key experiences and prior views and beliefs in an attempt to lay open the issue of potential bias.

1. I have thirty years of work experience with all but the first six in supervisory roles. I have therefore developed values and practices for such roles.
2. In those years I have perceived a variety of levels of leadership ability in my supervisors/managers. On this basis I have clearly formed my own opinion of what desirable leadership behaviours are.
3. It is part of my personal value system that I naturally assist people and treat them as I wish to be treated. This sometimes created a disparity between some supervisors/leaders whom I observed and my own views.
4. In my supervisory experience I have had to deal with various levels of difficult people – both to supervise and to provide services to. I have always attempted to learn from situations and not to remain rigid in my thoughts and actions.
5. I think for some supervisors organisational change is an excuse to allow poor behaviour and/or to condone over-intervention and control.
6. I believe that reflective people are more likely to acknowledge other people's needs, more likely to empathise with others, and more likely to value continuous learning.
7. I worked for nearly ten years at AGRO and got to know many supervisors/managers referred to by participants and I often saw aspects of them that interviewees appeared to be oblivious to. Nevertheless, I have taken care to represent these people as described by participants.
8. Seven of my years at AGRO were in roles that promoted leadership behaviours and long term rather than short-term performance measures.

Having remained conscious throughout the research process of the effect of potential bias I believe that I have adequately protected this work from any unwanted bias.

3.2 Initial Scoping Interviews

It was noted in chapter 1 that the inspiration for this research came from the desire to study what AGRO subordinates perceived as “optimum leadership styles”. Under the guidance of my lead supervisor I conducted three initial scoping interviews during

October and November of 1998 with the objective of helping me define the topic area in more detail and to generate some thoughts around the key leadership issues for AGRO workers. These interviews were not transcribed and coded at this stage. Instead they were analysed, by listening, for their key ideas and the general mood and overview presented in these perceptions of leadership in AGRO.

Essentially I was looking for themes that might guide future interviews. I wanted to acquire some insight into workers' thinking at the blue collar, general office, and lower management levels. Conveniently, workers at these three levels were all available in a regional AGRO depot that provided a good cross section of hierarchical subordinates. This, I believed, would provide good initial data. Of the workers approached, an office worker, a unit leader, and a ganger agreed to participate. The office worker provided office administration support and provided the interface with the general public. The unit leader was an engineer in a lower level management position and therefore had both a subordinate role and a leader role. The ganger occupied a first level supervisory position on road construction and maintenance works.

Pseudonyms were assigned to all AGRO employees who were interviewed or mentioned in interviews so that I could refer to them consistently and still protect their identity. The interviews were conducted in their workplace so that participants were not inconvenienced too much by my intrusion. In order to acquire the type of information I required interviews were unstructured and focused around two broad questions. Participants were asked to *"tell me what leadership means to you"* and *"how do you feel about your job?"* At times I prompted for further explanation.

Whilst analysing the information provided during these three interviews I was surprised at the overall mood of the responses. It was predominantly negative. The common themes in all three interviews were trust, communication and motivation. The office worker's main concerns were at the immediate supervisor level. These concerns were primarily those of skill development, gaining experience, being challenged, and being trusted. The unit leader's main concerns included the inability to work to capacity or be creative, being criticised but not praised, and superiors not being approachable. The ganger's main concerns included a lack of planning, poor role modelling by supervisors, technical competence of supervisors, and job security. The ganger observed that many

supervisors were just “*bosses*”, not leaders, and that dissatisfaction with your leader can affect work effort.

At this stage, in consultation with my supervisors, I was able to bed down the research design and methodology necessary to advance the study. It was decided to adopt an inductive theory-building approach with the aims of discovering the main concern of the participants in the substantive area which leads them to adopt a particular view of leadership, and subsequently to explain the behavioural processes involved in leadership that resolve this main concern. Grounded theory was adopted as the methodology of choice for reasons explained in chapter 2. As a result, the next nineteen months were spent in familiarising myself with this methodology. Although I considered myself to be reasonably competent in qualitative research methods, the grounded theory approach was new to me. Luckily, my lead supervisor was well acquainted with this methodology and thus I did not have to endure the isolation and uncertainty of “minus mentoring” (Glaser, 1998:216). Nevertheless, it took me nineteen months of reading (theses, books, and journal articles), seminars, mentoring and consultation before I considered myself sufficiently aware of the intricacies of the methodology to re-commence the field component of the research study.

Field research re-commenced in July 2000. The analysis of the themes and moods in interviews 1-3 led to a number of decisions about how to conduct subsequent interviews, what type of data to seek, and what questions to ask.

1. In order to counteract the tendency of respondents during interviews to slip into negative moods and offer examples of “non leadership”, it was decided to adopt the critical incident method of questioning (Flanagan, 1954; Chell, 1998). Respondents were contacted at least one day in advance of the interview and asked to describe the context, properties and attributes of a critical incident (or several incidents) that they regarded as a relevant example of *good* leadership that they had experienced within their AGRO work environment.
2. Because respondents during interviews 1-3 placed emphasis on their emotional reactions stemming from leadership experiences, it was decided that the next few interviews should explore further the topic of subordinate emotional reactions to leadership incidents.

3. Although respondents 1-3 had been forthcoming on emotional reactions they had not explained in any detail the actions they took stemming from these emotional states. It was therefore decided that the next few interviews should explore this linkage between subordinate emotions and actions stemming from leadership experiences.
4. Respondents 1-3 had also alluded to expectations of how they felt they *should* be led. It was therefore decided that the next few interviews would further explore these expectations.
5. Finally, it was observed that of the three initial respondents, those who held dual subordinate and supervisor/manager roles were able to make observations in one role and apply them in the other. I wanted to explore this dual role situation during subsequent interviews.

3.3 Emerging the Grounded Theory Model

During the next four interviews (4-7) a standardised approach was adopted in order to meet the requirements of the five issues above. Because respondent 2 had provided rich data due to the participant's practice of reflecting over difficulties experienced in work interactions, I decided to re-interview this person (interview 4) adopting the format outlined above. As noted earlier, this person was an engineer at the lower management level. In turn, this unit leader was supervised by another engineer operating at a conventional middle management level who agreed to participate as interview 5. For interview 6 I was able to recruit a person from the lower end of the hierarchy, a ganger who was also a union representative, and so saw himself as a leader in that role whilst being a conventional lower-level subordinate in other respects. Interview 7 was conducted with a person conventionally regarded as occupying a low senior management role within AGRO, at a level one step higher than middle management.

3.3.1 Open Coding and Initial Category Building

Although interviews 4-7 were slightly more structured than interviews 1-3, I still adopted Glaser's (2001) overall approach of *big ear* listening. In order to encourage the respondents to tell their own stories it was necessary to allow them maximum freedom

in framing their responses. However, as the interview process progressed it became clearer that this approach made it difficult to confine the remarks of interviewees within the strict demarcation of a specific incident (or incidents) or even to confine their remarks to *good* leadership. This occurred because of the tendency of interviewees to import extraneous depictions into the conversation in order to embellish certain issues of what they perceived to be good leadership. In particular, four types of extraneous depictions were introduced into interviews by respondents:

1. Importing descriptions of general perceptions of leadership as a concept (for example, *“I like to think of good leadership as trusting the workers, and by actually helping people”*).
2. Importing descriptions of positive leadership traits of third parties (for example, *“one bloke who springs to mind is [Garry] ... I know that he is a bloke who would not lie to you”*).
3. Importing descriptions of their own personal approach to leadership (for example, *“my major thing about presenting pictures to the troops is to always tell them the truth”*).
4. Importing descriptions of poor leadership (for example, *“[Will] was just hopeless ... he didn’t lead people at all; he pushed them around”*).

Although these imported descriptions did not specifically apply to the actual critical incident of good leadership being described by an interviewee, I still coded such depictions as if they were part of the incident whenever they were introduced into the dialogue. This inclusive process could be justified on the grounds that interviewees imported such depictions in order to embellish and exemplify their own individual perceptions of good leadership. As such, these imports are not illegitimate. On the contrary, they could be regarded as relevant exemplars that the interviewee read into the incident and freely drew upon to communicate his/her message.

Interviews 4 and 5 were conducted in one day during July 2000. Transcribing and coding of these interviews occurred immediately afterwards. Turner’s (1981) and Martin and Turner’s (1986) method of concept cards was used to code, categorise and record the data. Coding of the interviews was performed line by line and concepts were placed onto 15 cm by 10 cm cards. Movement from data to concept is viewed as a

movement across levels of abstraction (Martin and Turner, 1986:147). The researcher seeks to identify a slightly higher level of abstraction from the data themselves that allows the application of a name to the action/object observed. Incidents accumulated under a label are used later to develop a statement of the concept's nominal definition, theoretical meaning or substantive content. When an incident is recorded on a concept card it is assumed it has something in common with others on the card – all referring to the same concept. If a label is insufficiently abstract, too few observations will fall into that category, but if the label is too abstract too much information will fall under that category. When entering incidents onto cards the aim is to describe them fully enough to avoid backtracking to the notes to recall substantive detail.

Memos were written simultaneously with the coding process. Martin and Turner (1986:151) recommend that the researcher should try to perceive themes and then write a theoretical memo in a free-flowing manner. The goal is to represent conceptually what the data reflect empirically.

These two interviews generated 36 concept cards which I *sorted* into nine categories and extensively memoed. Glaser (1978:20) points out that “categories emerge before a few interviews are over” and in my exuberance at this stage of the research I thought I was able to detect a core category and associated sub-core categories. Figure 3.1 shows this early model which was developed in August 2000, depicting the core category (Subordinate Conduct) and the two sub-core categories (Leader Influence and Subordinate Attributes).

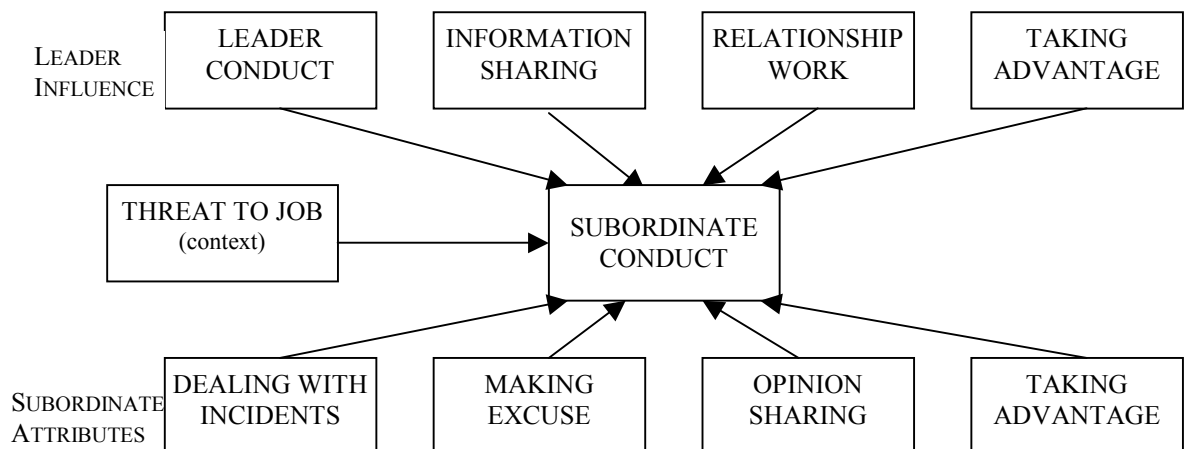


Figure 3.1 *Theoretical Model After Two Interviews*

Interviews 6 and 7 were conducted two days apart during mid August 2000 and the same process as previously was followed of coding, categorising, recording and memoing through the vehicle of concept cards. These two interviews expanded the number of concept cards to 51. By this time I was mindful of Martin and Turner's (1986:149) comment that by the time three or four sets of data have been analysed, the majority of useful concepts will have been discovered. Glaser (1978) also observes that the core concepts emerge fairly quickly.

However, the deficiencies of the embryonic model depicted in Figure 3.1 were now becoming clearer to me. In particular, the use of the category of Subordinate Conduct as the core category failed to recognise the importance of behavioural feedbacks and ignored the growing realisation through the analysis of the data that significant processual issues were involved. Additionally, my inadequacies in the art of writing conceptual memos became more pronounced. Essentially I came to realise that I had been involved in a form of "conceptual ordering" (Strauss and Corbin, 1998:19) and that my inability to progress to a higher stage of theorising emanated from inadequate theoretical sensitivity and conceptual memo writing. The model in Figure 3.1 was merely a simplistic representation of concept relationships and shed no light on "what was really happening in the data" in a theoretical or dynamic manner. Disappointed, I put the model aside and went back to the data. For the next three months I returned to the methodology textbooks and tried to perfect my ability in three areas: conceptual memo writing, theoretical sensitivity, and theorising. Long periods of mentoring with my supervisors ensued.

3.3.2 Re-categorising the Data

I was reminded at this point of Glaser's (1978) question "what is going on here?" The interaction between leader actions and subordinate actions was a common theme throughout the data but was not being adequately captured by my theorising. My initial focus on Subordinate Conduct as the main theme had failed to capture the complexity of the interactive process. Subordinates' behaviour is a reaction to, and a measure of, the effectiveness of leader actions. In turn, leaders react to their perception of subordinate behaviours. This realisation focused my conceptualisation on the social process of leader-subordinate interactions as perceived from the subordinate point of view.

I went back to the data and started to re-categorise codes around the main categories of Leader Actions and Subordinate Conduct. The subcategories for Subordinate Conduct emerged as:

Emotional reaction
 Work as team
 Contrary behaviour
 Cooperative behaviour
 Induced behaviour change
 Self perception
 Accept the inevitable
 Trust
 Tactical behaviour.

The category of Leader Actions emerged as a far more extensive category and was comprised of three major subcategories as shown below:

- observed leader actions
- leader's stated attitude/beliefs/behaviour
- leader attributes/attitudes assumed by subordinate.

OBSERVED LEADER ACTIONS	LEADER'S STATED ATTITUDE/ BELIEFS/BEHAVIOUR	LEADER ATTRIBUTES/ATTITUDES ASSUMED BY SUBORDINATE
How things handled	Behaviour endeavours	Motivate workers
Make vision a reality	Perception of subordinate	Supporting behaviour
Produce the promised result	Relationship maintenance	Be observant
Involve in team	Reflect on self	Ignore an issue
Present united front	Recognise interaction deficit	Show dislike
Spread good news	Develop own abilities	Gain improved understanding
Encourage information sharing	Consider subordinate's needs	Be honest
Specify the message	Manage work performance	Plan ahead.
	Seeking opportunities	
	Motivating acts	
	Forward planning	
	Be credible	

All the remaining codes/concepts in my data set were now re-categorised into two categories – Communication and Organisation Environment. The subcategories for these are as shown on the next page.

COMMUNICATION

Word filters down
Let things out
Communication improvement

ORGANISATION ENVIRONMENT

Negative atmosphere
Positive atmosphere
Cross charging for services
Open competition
Reduced uncertainty
Need to downsize

The linking together of these major categories now emerged as my main objective. Two key ideas coming from the data were that leaders are judged by their subordinates for “how things are handled” and also subordinates are influenced in their own behaviour, when in a leader role, by the view they have of their leader(s).

A number of key issues had emerged in my memoing, such as respect, trust, and credibility, which were classified more as leader traits. It was recognised that leader behaviours caused subordinates to perceive such traits, so I required better understanding of aspects of this interaction to enable me to further develop this category.

I was now ready to conduct further theoretical sampling in order to obtain relevant information with regard to these issues and ideas. The time was now apposite to indulge in *site spreading* and the incorporation of *varied interviewing*.

3.3.3 Participants' Main Concern

Several focused, emotion-based questions were planned to tease out these aspects of the leader behaviour, and at the same time the category of Subordinate Conduct was closely examined for properties, conditions and dimensions and to identify any gaps in the data. The analysis at this time was continually interspersed with re-reading of key methodology literature and reading additional books, articles and theses on grounded theory studies.

The next interview, conducted in November 2000, focused on the concepts of respect, trust, credibility, motivation, reflection, support, honesty, cooperation, and feeling part of a team. The subject of interview 8 had to be carefully chosen. I looked for an articulate, considerate, thoughtful and reflective person who would be able to provide the type of information I required. I found such a person at the main office in the

district. This person occupied a middle management role and reported to a senior manager. They supervised a number of workers. The transcribed and coded data from this 8th interview provided me with a new perspective for my memoing - people want to be liberated from organisational “constraints” so that they can use their creativity and full abilities in their work, and so aspire to their full potential.

I went back through my memos and to the data to find and further memo about the organisational obstacles people face when doing their work. These obstacles were grouped in seven broad types:

- work load
- interactions
- leader characteristics
- subordinate/worker emotions
- work environment
- resources
- subordinate/worker ability.

I was surprised at the pervasiveness of this issue which was reflected right through the data but which I had not previously recognised or memoed with sufficient clarity or focus. I now felt sufficiently confident to state the main concern of the study participants in the following manner.

People feel constrained below the level of their natural ability and potential. Subordinates perceive a leader as somebody who is able to interact with them in order to liberate, unleash, and facilitate their movement towards achievement of their goals and full potential.

Within a large, bureaucratic and hierarchical organisation such as AGRO it was easy for workers to feel abandoned and unappreciated. Through their own efforts they could only achieve so much in their quest for “liberation from constraints”. There was a high expectation that a leader was somebody who was able to intervene positively in this situation and who would interact with them in order to facilitate the movement towards the achievement of their full potential. As so often occurs in grounded theory studies, a simple diagram enabled me to visualise this process. In November 2000 I represented this idea as the diagram shown in Figure 3.2 below.

This was a simple idea but one which provided me with a conceptual breakthrough. My memoing now reflected that a new category of Facilitative Behaviour had emerged. This category had components of developing and supporting subordinates, and encompassed the concepts of nurturing people (or their talents) as well as nurturing the wider work environment.

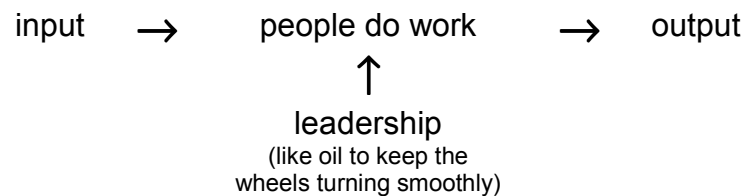


Figure 3.2 *Leader Facilitates Work*

I was continually conscious of my need to improve my theoretical sensitivity and with this objective in mind I read widely, including frequent re-reading of key methodology texts. I kept asking myself the question "*what is going on here?*" Although I was employing the Glaserian version of grounded theory in my research it is important to recognise that breakthroughs can come from many sources. The Straussian version of grounded theory was re-read on several occasions (Strauss, 1987, Strauss and Corbin, 1990, 1998), not with the objective of "forcing" the data but rather in an attempt to increase my insight and theoretical sensitivity.

With interview 8 coded, and concepts incorporated into subcategories (or at least higher level groupings of concepts), the resulting 57 items were *sorted* on large sheets of paper (butcher's paper). Concepts were now radically re-arranged, triggered by the emergence of new key ideas. Two categories emerged - Unleashing Full Attainability and Limiting Attainability. These categories and their associated subcategories are shown below.

UNLEASHING

Developing subordinates
Supportive behaviour
Create conducive environment
Leader self-improvement

LIMITING

Leader intervention
Lack of support
Constraining environment

By pursuing the themes in Glaser's 6 C's model (Glaser 1978:74) and Strauss and Corbin's Paradigm model (Strauss and Corbin 1990:99) the categories of unleashing and limiting subordinates were expanded in terms of causes, conditions, context,

strategies and consequences. Much of the data was suggesting a number of strategies that could be formulated by leaders which would lead to either unleashing or limiting of subordinates. Further memoing and sorting allowed the formulation of three higher level categories of leader strategies/behaviour to emerge, namely:

- subordinate centred behaviour
- environment centred behaviour
- leader centred behaviour.

3.3.4 Core Category

Further memoing allowed the conceptual emergence of the idea that the purpose of a leader's Facilitative Behaviour is to minimise the attainment deficit of subordinates. Attainment deficit refers to the difference between a subordinate's present attainment reality and that level which they believe themselves to be capable of attaining. A minimised attainment deficit provides conducive conditions for beneficial subordinate conduct. In contrast, if an attainment deficit is not minimised, and the subordinate perceives organisational constraints limiting their capabilities, the subordinate will develop strategies for behaviour which are not organisationally desirable. This, therefore, has consequences for those occupying leader roles in the organisation. Leaders, in reacting to these consequences, will develop additional strategies aimed at minimising attainment deficit and creating altered conditions for the subordinate.

This sequence of behaviours represents a cyclic context-action process represented in Figure 3.3:

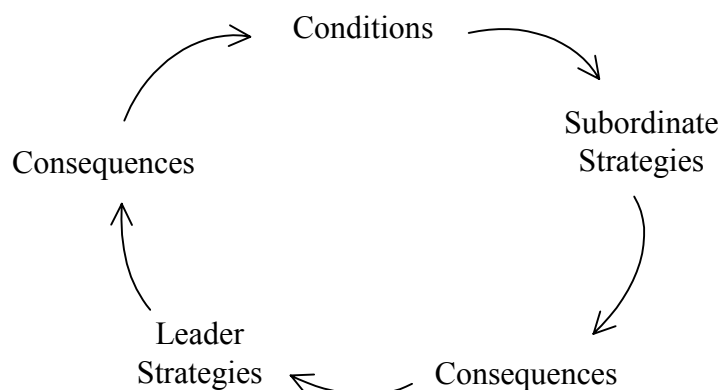


Figure 3.3 *Sequence of Leader-Subordinate Behaviours*

This emergent framework now provided the context within which to (again) revisit all the data. The cyclic process above was initially named Facilitative Behaviour. Later, however, it was re-named Minimising Attainment Deficit in order to capture the concept that the leadership process is aimed at facilitating the attainment of subordinates' full potential. Minimising Attainment Deficit is the core category and basic social process. It represents the process by means of which the participants' main concern is resolved.

Strauss and Corbin's concept of a "story line" (1990:119) was found to be particularly useful at this stage. It was necessary to identify the story line to ensure that the *emergent framework* within which the story develops is relevant. The story line becomes the boundary that contains the description of the theory to keep it sufficiently focussed and specific to be of use.

The two key components of the leadership process that resolves the main concern of the participants are the Leader Strategies and the Subordinate Strategies. These two types of strategies "chase" each other in a cyclic process through intervening conditional and consequential variables. The story line (as of January 2001) was memoed as a process within which leaders, through their behaviours and strategies, can set up conditions that enable subordinates to attain their full potential. This in turn can induce subordinates to develop positive strategies (Subordinate Conduct) that result in Beneficial Behaviour. In consequence, leaders react to this behaviour by re-formulating or re-inforcing their own strategic behaviour, which in turn creates further scenarios to which subordinates respond.

Concepts were *re-sorted* to reflect this emergent story line framework. Gaps in the theory were noted and memoed. Further questions were devised for additional interviews.

3.3.5 Selective Coding

Now that the core variable had been identified it was possible to delimit the theory. Further theoretical sampling focused around additional conceptualisation of the process of Minimising Attainment Deficit. From this point onwards, selective coding was pursued. Memos became more focused to the point where many were ultimately cut and pasted into the final thesis with only minimal amendment.

Interview 9 was conducted in February 2001. Questions in this interview focused on the respondent's perceptions of leader-subordinate interactions from the point of view of both their role as a subordinate and their role as a leader. It was necessary to emerge additional conceptualisation around the themes of improving abilities, providing support, improving the work environment and leader self-improvement, all from the subordinate point of view. Questions in interview 9 also focused on the cognitive and behavioural reactions of leaders to what was perceived as both negative and positive subordinate behaviour. This interview again utilised *site spreading*. I sought to interview a person occupying both a subordinate and a leader role in a different chain of command in the main office of the district. This interview provided rich, detailed, focused data. This was coded into the emerging model for Minimising Attainment Deficit, allowing several new subcategories to be identified and providing rich development of properties in existing categories. Extensive memos were written, further developing the conceptualisation of the emerging theory.

3.3.6 Towards Saturation

With the theory now well emerged it was decided not to waste the information provided in the first three scoping interviews. These interviews were transcribed and coded at this stage and incorporated into the developing model. It was comforting to find that this new data could be incorporated into the model very easily and good progress was made with further property development.

The three sets of leader strategies (subordinate centred, environment centred, and self centred) were the subject of extensive memoing, and it was increasingly emerging that the bulk of the conceptualisation and theorising within the leadership process was concentrated around these strategies. Extensive property development of these three strategies had already occurred by this stage. My memoing revealed a gap in the analysis around the articulation of the consequences flowing from a perception of appropriate and inappropriate leader strategies. This established the need for further theoretical sampling. Interview 10 was conducted in September 2001 with a person who provides services across the district and who had experienced extensive interactions with and between supervisors and their subordinates.

Further deficiencies in the completeness of the leadership process model continued to emerge. A key aspect of the process is the closing of the perceived gap between a worker's potential and their present reality, yet I had not gained a sufficient conceptualisation of the degree to which such potential was reached, or the consequences of not reaching it to the subordinate's expectation. Interview 11 was conducted in November 2001. Questions focused on the respondent's perception of their potential at work, whether this potential had been met, and the impact of met (and unmet) expectations on cognitive and behavioural variables. I chose a person who I believed would be experiencing constraints in meeting their potential at work. This person was a unit leader in a lower management position, located in the main office of the district but in a location not yet sampled – further *site spreading*.

By this stage, the core variable of Minimising Attainment Deficit had been divided into the two sub-core categories (or stages) of Leader Actioning and Subordinate Actioning and the phases of each of the sub-core categories had been identified and memoed. However, further theoretical sampling was planned with the goal of densifying the process by identifying more moderating variables and hastening the progress towards property saturation. Four further focused interviews (12-15) were conducted during February 2002. Further site spreading was employed for these interviews. Several new locations were sampled. Two interviews were conducted with subordinates without a supervisory role. Another interview was conducted with a person whom I knew had suffered periods of constraint and frustration in his work, as well as periods of well supported freedom and successful achievement. He had extensive experience in simultaneous subordinate and leader roles in AGRO.

These interviews provided very little conceptual development of the model. No new categories were identified and property development was minimal. There was however a considerable enhancement of the number of illustrations provided by respondents of existing categories and properties. In view of the fact that conceptual development of the model had substantially slowed down it was decided that the process was sufficiently saturated to provide a model that displayed both parsimony and scope.

3.4 Summary

This chapter has described the collection, coding and analysis of data using the grounded theory methodology. It has examined the role of the researcher in the study as well as recording the prior beliefs and values held by the researcher in an attempt to minimise through awareness the impact of potential bias. It shows how I approached the processes of open coding, building categories, theoretical sampling, identifying the participants' main concern, formulating the core category, selective coding, and saturation.

Interviews 1-3 allowed me to scope the topic area and formulate the initial questions. Interviews 4-7 provided initial concepts and categories and an early attempt at building a model. Interview 8 led to a breakthrough and the identification of the participants' main concern and the formulation of the core category. Selective coding occurred from interview 9 onwards. Interviews 9-11 allowed a progression of theoretical sampling, site spreading, varied interviewing, sorting, and extensive memoing in order to further develop categories and properties in the model. The two sub-core categories had emerged by the end of interview 11. Four final interviews (12-15) hastened the movement towards saturation. Some moderating variables were identified and extensive illustrations provided by respondents. However, no new categories emerged and property development was minimal. The model was considered saturated at this stage.

Having considered the collection, coding and analysis of data in this chapter, the following chapter will present the leadership process model in the form of the core variable and basic social process of Minimising Attainment Deficit.

4 Minimising Attainment Deficit - the process

This chapter presents the emergent grounded theory Minimising Attainment Deficit. This is a leadership process model consisting of the core variable Minimising Attainment Deficit, and the two sub-core variables Leader Actioning and Subordinate Actioning. Subordinate Actioning consists of the phases perceptioning, emotioning and behaviouring and Leader Actioning consists of the phases perceptioning, concerning, probleming and strategising.

This chapter also presents two sets of moderating variables. One set moderates emotions of workers through the cognitive blocking strategies of satisfactioning, circumventing and withdrawing. Another set moderates behaviours of workers through the behavioural blocking strategies of task achievement, rework avoidance and professionalism.

Workplace consequences identified in the study include impacts on productivity, profitability, worker retention, worker attendance and product or service quality.

4.1 *The Leadership Process*

In this study the main concern of the (subordinate) participants emerged as the desire to perform at, or near, their full potential. Subordinates expect their main concern to be resolved by leaders and subordinates acting together to minimise their attainment deficit. Thus, Minimising Attainment Deficit emerged as the core category and basic social process (BSP) of the study.

The process of Minimising Attainment Deficit is composed of two major stages (or sub-core categories) of Leader Actioning and Subordinate Actioning. These two stages create a cyclic, context-action, process in which the actions of leaders and subordinates impact one another in a continuous cycle of actions and consequences.

The core category and two sub-core categories are shown in Figure 4.1 below.

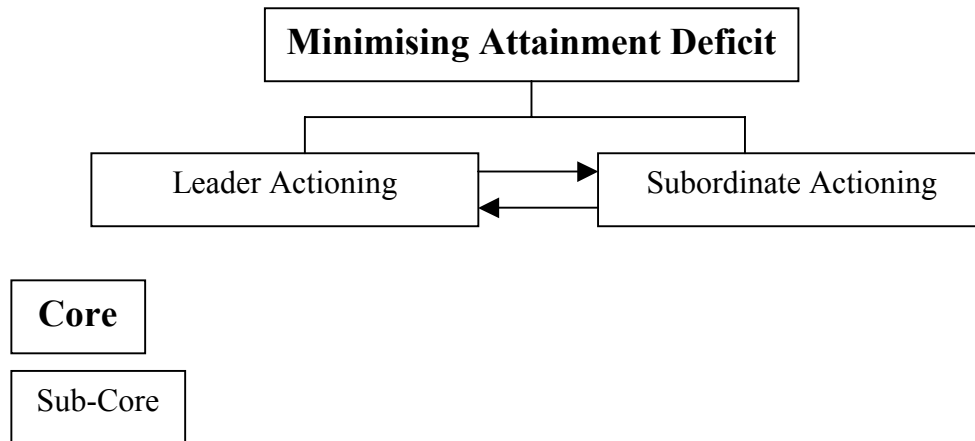


Figure 4.1: *Leadership Process: Core and Sub-Core Categories*

The logical place to start the exposition of the leadership process is with the emergent observation that organisational subordinates desire to attain their full potential within the work environment. There exists a range of actions and strategies that subordinates, as individuals, can take in order to progress towards such an objective. However, they mainly look to their leaders to create an individual and overall work context that maximises the possibility for subordinates to reach their potential. Subordinates perceive leaders to be effective if they are able to minimise their attainment deficit, that is, minimise the gap between the level at which subordinates perceive that they are currently achieving, and that level which they perceive to be their potential.

Subordinates are *unleashed* when they perceive that they are achieving at or near their full potential (minimal attainment deficit). On the other hand, subordinates are *limited* when they perceive that they are achieving well below their full potential (significant attainment deficit). Perceptions of unleashing or limiting trigger emotional reactions in subordinates which, in turn, are translated into subordinate behaviours. These behaviours combine to create a set of workplace consequences which impact substantially on the organisation's efficiency and effectiveness.

It is the existence of (and changes in) these workplace consequences which usually create the imperative for leaders to adopt and modify new and existing organisational strategies, although astute leaders usually monitor and react to changes in subordinate behaviours well before these impact on workplace circumstances. Leaders monitor the state of subordinates' unleashing or limiting according to the process of *Subordinate Status*, and adapt their strategies accordingly.

Leader strategies are of three broad types, those that focus either on the subordinate, on the wider environment, or on the leaders themselves. Subordinate Centred Strategies focus on the subordinates themselves to satisfy their needs and expectations and so facilitate optimal work performance. Environment Centred Strategies focus on the work environment to ensure it remains conducive to subordinates performing at their best. Leader Centred Strategies focus on the leaders themselves to enhance the work situation through their own self-improvement.

These leader actions, in turn, create consequences which result in subordinates altering their perception of their potential and/or present reality (unleashing or limiting) and so their perception of their attainment deficit. The cyclical leadership process continues in this way.

One of the major triggers in this overall process revolves around the emergent observation that when subordinates feel constrained to a level of achievement well below that level which they believe themselves capable, they expect their leaders to unleash them from this constraint. They look to organisational leaders to devise and institute appropriate strategies that will facilitate the achievement of their goals and needs and unrestrain the subordinate so that there is no impediment to them attaining their full potential.

Leaders who successfully take up this challenge create the conditions for an improving cycling (*virtuous circle*) of the leader actioning-subordinate actioning leadership process. On the other hand, leaders who fail or omit to institute appropriate strategies for reducing subordinate attainment deficit leave those subordinates trapped within their existing limited status. This creates the conditions for a worsening cycling (*vicious circle*) of the leader actioning-subordinate actioning leadership process, as continuing negative emotions of frustration, cynicism and disillusionment are translated into further detrimental behaviour. Only the intervention of a more enlightened leader actioning process can slow down or reverse this downward spiral.

The analysis now concentrates in a more detailed exposition of the two sub-core categories of subordinate actioning and leader actioning.

4.2 Subordinate Actioning

Subordinates act within an organisational environment which they perceive as largely created by the actions and strategies of organisational leaders. Within this context subordinates seek to maximise their potential. Subordinate actioning is composed of three linked phases – perceptioning, emotioning and behaving – as shown in Figure 4.2 below.

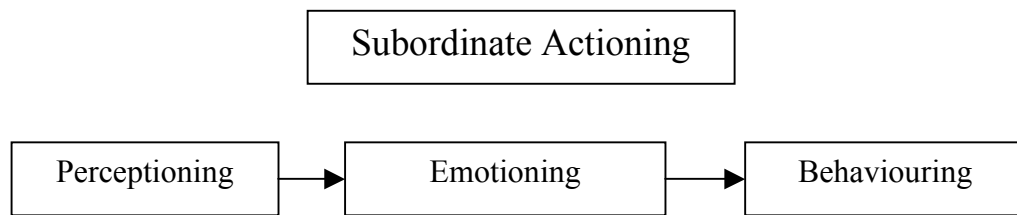


Figure 4.2: *Phases of Subordinate Actioning*

The linkage between subordinate perceptions, emotions and behaviours, and the resultant workplace consequences is shown in Figure 4.3 below.

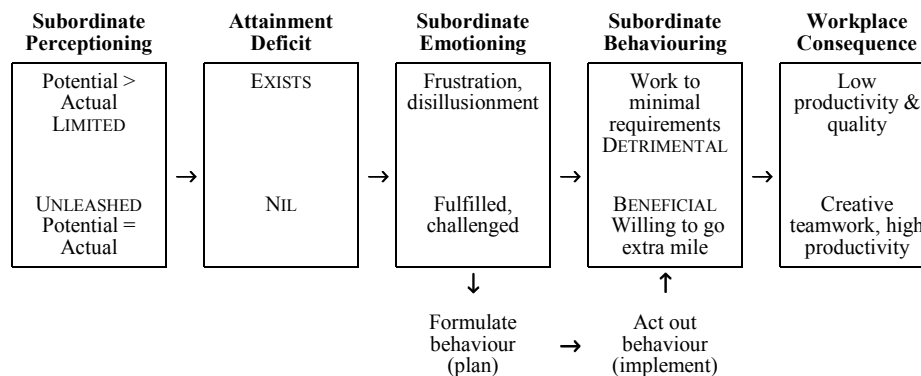


Figure 4.3: *Subordinate Perceptioning, Emotioning and Behavouring*

4.2.1 Subordinate Perceptioning

Attainment Deficit is the condition resulting from a perceived gap between what a worker believes they are capable of achieving in the work environment, and what that worker perceives to be actually achieving. This definition focuses attention on two broad categories of variable:

- Potential: a person's estimation of what they are capable of achieving
- Present Reality: a person's estimation of what they are currently achieving.

A worker's *potential* includes their knowledge, skills, experience, expectations from the job, and their desire to perform to their maximum developmental capability. A worker's *present reality* includes how they perceive they are being treated, whether their full capabilities are being used, and if they have adequate skills for their current job. When there is a shortfall between the potential perceived by a subordinate and their present reality in their work, that subordinate is *limited*. When there is little or no shortfall between the potential perceived by a subordinate and the present reality in their work, that subordinate is *unleashed*.

When the gap between potential and present reality is small this condition can lead to a positive attitude, but when this gap is large it usually leads to a negative attitude. This attitude which results from the perceived discrepancy (gap) between these two variables manifests itself in emotional reactions on the part of organisational subordinates.

The existence of a large attainment deficit induces such emotions as frustration, disillusionment, cynicism, and workers feeling unfulfilled. If workers are unable to achieve a reduction in their attainment deficit, this, in turn, may lead them to adopt behavioural patterns that are detrimental to organisational outcomes.

Subordinate Status has emerged as a vital component of the process of Minimising Attainment Deficit. Subordinate status is actually how the leader can measure the attainment deficit of a subordinate, and also determine what their full potential might be. Subordinate status is referred to as a continuum with its extremes being the *limiting* or *unleashing* of workers, as depicted in Figure 4.4 below. For a limited worker an attainment deficit exists but for an unleashed worker very little or no attainment deficit exists. Subordinate status is fully defined and discussed as part of the category of Subordinate Centred Strategies in Chapter 5.



Figure 4.4: *Subordinate Status Continuum*

Vera, for example, has a large attainment deficit. She says “*in the whole time I’ve worked for [AGRO] I’ve felt a bit stifled and in that respect I haven’t ever worked to my capacity ...*”. She wants her attainment deficit to be reduced but her supervisors have

missed significant opportunities to do so. Vera implies that this failure by her supervisors has facilitated poor performance on her part. Vera also observes about other people's attainment deficit that *"what I found out just reflects that a lot of people don't use half of what they could or what they're capable of ..."*. Her frustration at her own and others' attainment deficit causes her to *"think [AGRO] is not the place to stay"*.

Sue also has a large attainment deficit. She says about her work:

"I think its not challenging enough. It's the same thing every day practically, and you do the same things over. It doesn't fulfil me, its not challenging. I want something that's going to be different and keep me going and let me learn more".

When conditions are perceived as being more positive by a worker it usually involves a reduction in attainment deficit. This is the case for Vera when team meetings begin to break down the *"barriers"* and cooperation levels increase. She thought the results very positive and that performance had improved, an indication that attainment deficit may have significantly reduced.

4.2.2 Subordinate Emotioning

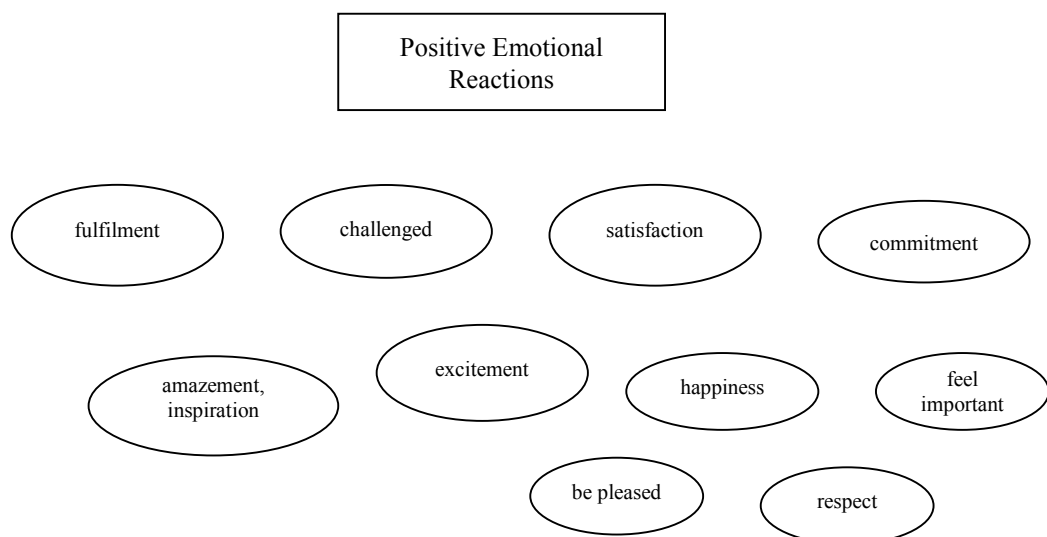


Figure 4.5: *Positive Emotional Reactions*

Emotions are an integral part of the behaviour formulation process, linking subordinate perceptions with subordinate behaviours. Positive emotional reactions are more likely to be the consequence of a subordinate perceptioning process which results in a small

attainment deficit. These include those depicted in Figure 4.5 above. Examples and illustrations for several of these positive emotional reactions follow.

Amazement and *inspiration* resulted from a display of enthusiasm by two senior managers. Steve was amazed by their positive approach and astounded that this approach was so consistent and sustained by both leaders. Many other managers were in despair over the introduction of competition. Inspiration was also experienced by Phil with the encouragement to use his intellect. In the past he had been discouraged. Sue, while generally disappointed by her supervisor's behaviour, can be inspired when he gives her a special task. In these circumstances "... *it just makes me feel really good*".

Excitement, experienced by Steve, resulted from the prospect of being able to reduce some of his performance problems when he felt he could get rid of troublesome workers. *Being pleased* due to senior management's preparedness to support changes was another emotion Steve experienced.

Happiness was a result of the reduced threat to workers from the introduction of commercialisation. It was also what Phil experienced when he gained alternate work to that which had caused his back injury and when he enjoyed this new work. According to Vera, problems can be reduced if leaders make her "*feel important and be happy*".

Respect for a leader can be experienced by workers who feel that this leader has looked after their interests. It was also experienced by Phil when he witnessed other workers receiving unexpected help from their supervisor to assist them to apply for better jobs.

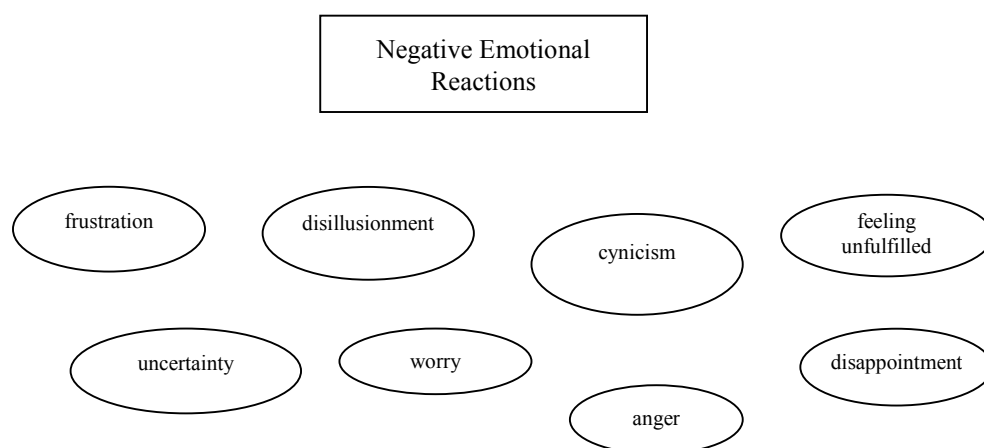


Figure 4.6: *Negative Emotional Reactions*

On the other hand, negative emotional reactions are more likely to be the consequence of a subordinate perceptioning process which results in a large attainment deficit. These include those depicted in Figure 4.6. Examples and illustrations for several of these negative emotional reactions follow.

Sue becomes *angry* and *frustrated* when she learns that her supervisor has not trusted her judgement. When Max checked up on a security issue, Sue says “... *he got somebody else to check it to make sure I was telling the truth, which frustrated me and I just got really angry ...*”. Sue feels that Max checks on her too frequently and she continues to experience negative emotional reactions.

Disillusionment can result from lack of assistance from supervisors to fix perceived problems. These managers are perceived as choosing not to use their skills. In a similar way the relocation of an entire work section triggers the emotion *worry*.

Uncertainty, results from the threat of work being contracted out. Such enormous changes in the work environment can also result in trepidation.

Disappointment was experienced by Garry at the choice of a new chief. Steve was very disappointed at not being able to rationalise his workforce to improve performance. This may reduce his commitment to the organisation.

4.2.2.1 Moderating Emotions

Two major moderating variables emerged from the study, affecting the relationship between subordinate perceptioning and subordinate emotioning. These have been labeled *deficit reduction* and *cognitive blocking*. These variables may explain why some workers appear to be avoiding negative emotional reactions even though they perceive themselves to be experiencing a large attainment deficit, or they hold negative perceptions about leader actions.

Deficit reduction relates to a subordinate's perception of the rate of progress being made in the direction of reducing their attainment deficit, rather than an emphasis on the absolute size of attainment deficit. Thus, if a subordinate perceives that the rate of progress being made in reducing their attainment deficit is adequate, this can act as a significant emotional moderator, even though the absolute gap in their attainment deficit is perceived to be large.

Cognitive blocking is a distancing strategy employed by subordinates to protect their emotions from the hurt of negative perceptions. Such blocking strategies are often related to a learning process resulting from previous experience. Katy learned to protect her emotions by acknowledging that “*I’ve stressed about it too much in the past*”.

Three cognitive blocking strategies emerged from the study, as analysed below:

- Satisfactioning: “*I’m looking elsewhere, I don’t get much satisfaction at work*”
- Circumventing: “*I take steps to avoid being blocked*”
- Withdrawing: “*I just don’t find it worth expending energy on*”.

Satisfactioning is the strategy of using involvements or interests outside of work to provide satisfaction. Involvements could include membership of a public sector committee as a community representative, or being an office bearer for a sporting association or club. Interests could include competitive sports or challenging levels of higher education.

Circumventing is the strategy of getting around the obstacle that is causing the negative perception. For Katy this obstacle was often her leader. She found ways of providing services her clients required and failed to inform that leader when she instituted changed working arrangements or procedures. Learning plays an important part in being able to predict when obstacles will occur, and what actions can be instituted to circumvent them.

Withdrawing is the strategy of rendering negative perceptions as unimportant to protect emotions. Withdrawing relies on subordinates learning that certain perceptions stir up their emotions and make them agitated. When they wish to avoid this agitation they develop the ability to withdraw emotionally from the impact of such occurrences. Withdrawing may be a method to deal with an unmet expectation. Katy will protect her emotions “*until they get rid of the problem*” whereas Maggy will remain frustrated waiting for her leader to “*be freeing up a lot of time to do more analysing*” so that she can be proactive in her work rather than always reactive. Katy uses the withdrawing strategy but Maggy does not.

4.2.3 Subordinate Behaviouring

Subordinate behaviouring is the process by means of which subordinates act out the consequences of the previous emotioning process. Subordinate behaviours possess a number of properties which emerged from the study. Behaviours can be *overt* or *covert*. They can also be *spontaneous* (such as an outburst of anger) or *deliberate* (such as an act of sabotage). Deliberate behaviours involve the conscious formulation of a response act (a plan) followed by the implementation, or acting out, of this plan. Behaviours can also be *transient* or *stable*. Transient behaviour is of a temporary nature, existing for only a limited time, generally whilst some unstable emotion prevails. Such changes can either be in a more negative or a more positive behavioural direction. Most transient behaviours settle down after a time, resulting in subordinates exhibiting more stable behaviour as primarily influenced by their perception of their overall attainment deficit.

Two broad subcategories of subordinate behaviours emerged from the study – beneficial and detrimental behaviours – as shown in Figure 4.7 below.

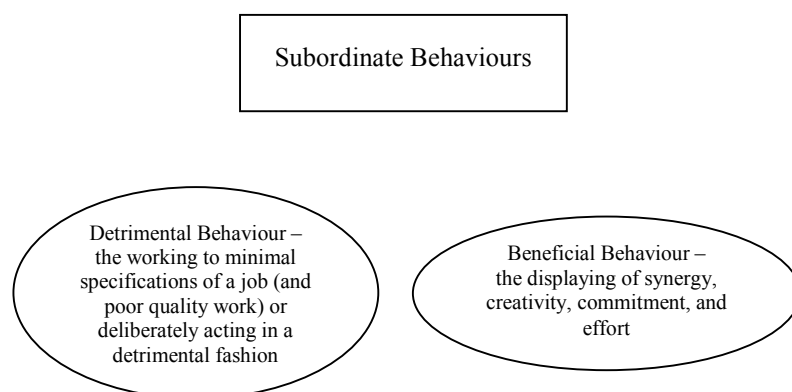


Figure 4.7: *Subcategories of Subordinate Behaviours*

Beneficial behaviour is defined as a pattern of behaviour that is most conducive to the achievement of the organisation's desired outcomes. A subordinate who exhibits beneficial behaviour usually has a desire to be helpful to their leader's efforts and displays a *willingness to go the extra mile*. Such behaviour is invariably the result of positive emotions displayed by unleashed subordinates with a small or zero perception of their attainment deficit. A number of properties of beneficial behaviour emerged from the study, including those depicted in Figure 4.8 below.

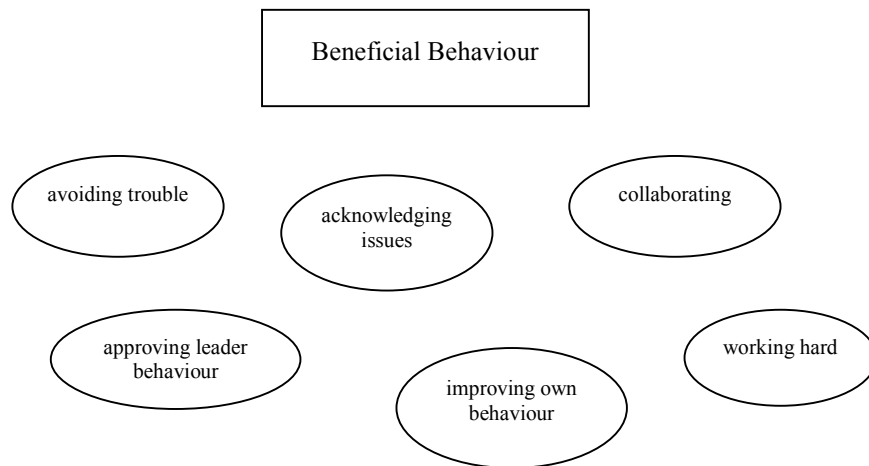


Figure 4.8: *Properties of Beneficial Behaviour*

Avoiding trouble is the process whereby subordinates envision the consequences of their actions and reconsider their intended strategies whenever detrimental outcomes are foreseen. Lewis avoids trouble by choosing to “*do the job and provide the best advice*” and providing leaders with the respect their positions deserve.

Acknowledging issues is the process of recognising the complexity of work situations and how behaviours are often compromised. Megan understands the impact an organisational system can have on her supervisors and that this may affect their trustworthiness. She can accept this and so make allowances for their behaviours.

Collaborating is the process of cooperating and working with a supervisor to achieve a common goal. For collaboration to occur, some level of commitment must exist. Phil is motivated by the services delivery group management’s desire for their organisation to survive. He judges them to be genuine and so is prepared to commit his full effort to help achieve the desired outcomes. Vera saw Mark’s improved attitude through his willingness to finally collaborate with other team members to achieve desired outcomes.

Approving leader behaviour is the process whereby subordinates give positive feedback to their supervisors. When Phil reports that “*ninety percent of the blokes want to continue and fight*” he is approving the stance taken by senior managers in the services delivery group. Phil also shows approval of Clay’s actions to provide help to his workers in winning jobs. Additionally, he so approves of Harry’s behaviour that it “*makes me go back to the men and tell them positive things about our management*”.

For Vera in her leader role there was clear approval of her behaviour when her workers came to her to forewarn her of impending problems with the work.

Improving own behaviour is the process whereby subordinates improve their own behaviour in response to a perceived positive change in conditions. Mark responded with an improvement in his behaviour when Vera and Len (in their leader roles) improved conditions through changes in their own behaviour. Some behavioural improvements clearly stand out, such as when a subordinate previously labeled a trouble-maker makes conscious efforts to reverse that image. Phil previously had a poor reputation but now sets himself up as a role model.

Working hard is the process whereby subordinates put in extra effort as a method of displaying their satisfaction with their work environment. Vera believes that she can influence workers to be energised through creating opportunities, such as overtime, which depend on them working hard.

Detrimental behaviour, on the other hand, is defined as a pattern of behaviour that frustrates the achievement of the organisation's desired outcomes. A subordinate who exhibits detrimental behaviour usually avoids being helpful to their leaders (and often also to co-workers and customers) and displays a foot-dragging attitude of *only working to minimal requirements*. Such behaviour invariably results from negative emotions displayed by *limited* subordinates with a perception of significant attainment deficit. A number of properties of detrimental behaviour emerged from the study, including those depicted in Figure 4.9 below.

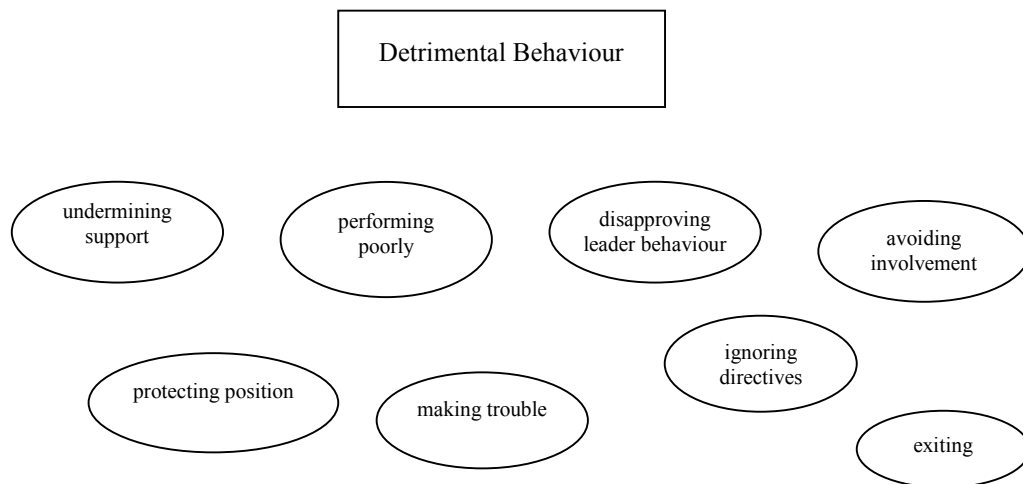


Figure 4.9: *Properties of Detrimental Behaviour*

Undermining support is the process of deliberately disadvantaging another worker by undermining support through interference in work or a situation that is not their responsibility. Lewis's experience of a co-worker undermining support from his supervisor caused him to leave his job in the country.

Performing poorly is the process of subordinates working below an adequate standard. Craig reported the severe demotivation of an engineer beaten in the re-application for his own job. The resentment engendered by the situation resulted in his poor performance. Lewis perceived that ineffective supervision resulted in a worker performing so poorly that the whole team looked bad. Vera related the example of a funder section exerting power by withholding information that impeded her team making maintenance decisions. The resultant poor people dynamics demotivated the team to the point of poor performance. Sue's expectations of her supervisor are far from being met and she admits that the situation causes her to be rude to telephone callers.

Disapproving leader behaviour is the process by means of which subordinates can express negative feedback to their supervisors. When a manager threatens to bypass his newly appointed manager if he makes any disagreeable decisions, this is a clear expression of disapproval of that manager's behaviour. This manager would never have made such a threat to his previous manager due to the high level of respect that existed between them. When Craig gets no support from his supervisor in his fill-in job he considers going back to his old job to show his disapproval. Sue's expectations for treatment by her supervisor are far from being met. She openly admits to performing below standard to show her disapproval.

Avoiding involvement is the process of subordinates indulging in isolationist behaviour to frustrate the development of team objectives or other co-operative endeavours. Mark avoids involvement when he sits at meetings but never joins in. His unwillingness to participate is revealed by only completing tasks given to him and never volunteering that he is finished. Megan acknowledges that some of her subordinates avoid ownership in some projects. Vera reports the reluctance of workers to become involved in after-hours activities or social occasions, such as virtually no staff participating in AGRO cycle rides around the city.

Protecting position is the process of subordinates defending their own turf if they perceive some threat to their security. Phil uses union members through “*safety in numbers*” by making strategic arguments directly to politicians to convince them of the merit of their case. Such behaviour is detrimental as it avoids negotiating with internal management but it does succeed in protecting their position. Such behaviour sometimes implies that subordinates may not trust a supervisor or coworker. Due to a lower level of trust between Megan and her supervisor, this makes Megan adopt a guarded attitude when her supervisor uses information she considers incomplete and not ready for use. Some workers feel so insecure in their jobs that Sue reports a case of a worker returning back to work early from vacation to protect their position. Such behaviour prevents other people from learning about this job because they feel threatened if others know everything they do. Workers “*hanging onto old business*” is another form of protecting positions, caused by feelings of insecurity in a new competitive paradigm.

Making trouble is the process of acting deliberately to disrupt the achievement of work outcomes. An example of such behaviour is the stirring which two of Clay’s workers are known to engage in. Vera also encountered such blatant behaviour with Mark when he was “*deliberately trying to provoke problems*” by letting out inappropriate information at a team briefing session.

Ignoring directives is the process of disregarding legitimate orders or expectations to carry out work. Mark ignored Vera’s repeated requests to carry out work and then exacerbated the situation by denying that he had been directed to do the work.

Exiting is the process when subordinates harbour such negative emotions about their situation that they leave the job or organisation. This might be considered to be the ultimate detrimental behaviour because it terminates any further leadership process taking place in that environment. Vera is considering an exit strategy because of the problems in managing Mark without adequate support from her supervisor. Craig is also fed up with getting no support from his supervisor and is considering returning to an old position. About the quality work, he says “*why should I be doing what I’m doing if no-one else is interested*”.

4.2.3.1 Moderating Behaviours

The use of *behavioural blocking* by subordinates emerged from the study as a major moderating variable affecting the relationship between subordinate emotioning and subordinate behaviour. Behavioural blocking is a strategy employed by subordinates to insulate their behaviour from the adverse influence of negative emotions. The presence of behavioural blocking may explain why some workers exhibit desirable behaviour even though they experience negative emotions resulting from the perception of a large attainment deficit. For instance, even though Nadine feels trapped in her employment situation she still treats her customers with the utmost respect and courtesy.

Three behavioural blocking strategies emerged from the study, as analysed below:

- Task achievement: *“you’ve achieved something if it works successfully”*
- Rework avoidance: *“otherwise you only have to do it again”*
- Professionalism: *“of course I won’t perform below standard”; “I care for my clients”*.

Task achievement is the strategy of focusing on those tasks or activities that subordinates are able to complete successfully and regularly in order to combat the frustration often experienced in their wider work environment. By focusing on small achievements workers can create a re-imaged perspective by means of which they do not allow their overall negative emotions to manifest as undesirable behaviours. For example, the overall negativity experienced by Nadine caused by the lack of challenge in her work can be re-framed by taking pleasure from ensuring that all her work is completed and her desk cleared every evening, and that she never makes typographical errors when word-processing letters.

Rework avoidance is the strategy of ensuring that detrimental behaviour does not occur in those circumstances when the adverse consequences of such behaviour would impact more on the worker him/herself, rather than on the organisation. When errors cause work to be returned for correction directly back to the originator of that work, then the worker may consider that they are punishing themselves more than the organisation, and will take steps to ensure that the work is performed correctly the first time. Even their overall negative emotions will not induce such workers to indulge in sub-standard work in these circumstances.

Professionalism is the strategy of providing the same high standard of service to customers/clients regardless of the emotions experienced by a worker due to their work circumstances. Some workers naturally have a higher sense of professional ethics than others. Katy distinguishes between the service she provides to her supervisor and that which she provides to her local clients. Katy is professional in satisfying her clients' needs but not in satisfying her supervisor's requirements. As her supervisor is the perceived source of much of Katy's frustration she does not perceive a need to act in the same professional manner towards her supervisor. She chooses to give her local clients preference. She perceives these clients to be her real customers and is always professional in providing for their needs, refusing to allow her negative emotions towards her supervisor to be manifested in unprofessional client service.

4.2.4 Workplace Consequences

Workplace consequences are those measurable occurrences that result from the subordinate behaviour process. They occur at a strategic and aggregate level and significantly impact on overall organisational performance. Five categories of workplace consequences emerged from the data and are depicted in Figure 4.10 below.

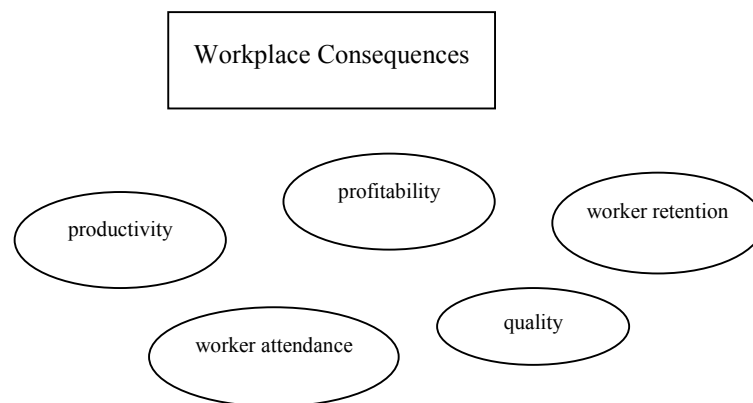


Figure 4.10: *Categories of Workplace Consequences*

Productivity refers to the organisation's ability to achieve the highest possible yield from available resources.

Profitability refers to the organisation's ability to provide its services at a competitive cost. In particular, AGRO's service delivery group must avoid becoming uncompetitive in order to remain the preferred service provider for road maintenance.

Worker retention refers to the organisation's ability to avoid excessive staff turnover.

Worker attendance refers to the organisation's ability to maximise the day-to-day organisational attendance of workers.

Quality refers to the organisation's ability to ensure the degree or standard of excellence of products and services required to meet customer needs.

Positive workplace consequences, therefore, incorporate operational efficiencies for the organisation. By way of contrast, negative workplace consequences have severe implications for the operational and strategic performance of the organisation. The link between subordinate behaviour and workplace consequences has been recognised through a wide range of respondent comments, revolving around themes such as *"remaining commercially competitive"*, *"become more efficient"*, *"let's stick together"*, *"we want to stay as an organisation"*, *"we are going to get better out of it"*, *"let's just be productive"*, *"a commercial opportunity for us"*, and so on. Workers themselves realise the crucial role they play in achieving strategic workplace consequences. Phil transformed his behaviour from *"taking ten sickies a year"* to one of achieving awards for good attendance, and in that way aimed to prove to the organisation that *"I'm fair dinkum"*. Likewise, Craig follows a rigorous quality regime of checking, communication, and testing in order to ensure that on-site materials are fit for the job because *"that's where a lot of the problems were"*.

Leaders play a crucial role in this process through their behaviours and strategies. The process of leader actioning encompasses the process of responding to subordinate behaviour and reacting to this by devising and implementing subsequent leader strategies. It is to this concept of leader actioning that the analysis now turns.

4.3 Leader Actioning

From a supervisor's point of view the purpose of leading workers is to ensure that they achieve the desired outcomes of the organisation. Some supervisors may have self-serving motives in mind for what they attempt to achieve whereas other leaders have the needs of the organisation and workers foremost in their minds.

Leader Actioning is a sequence of cognitive processes which takes place as a result of a leader's perception of subordinate behaviours and it links these to the adoption of a certain set of leader strategies. Leader Actioning is composed of four linked phases – perceptioning, concerning, probleming and strategising – as shown in Figure 4.11 below.

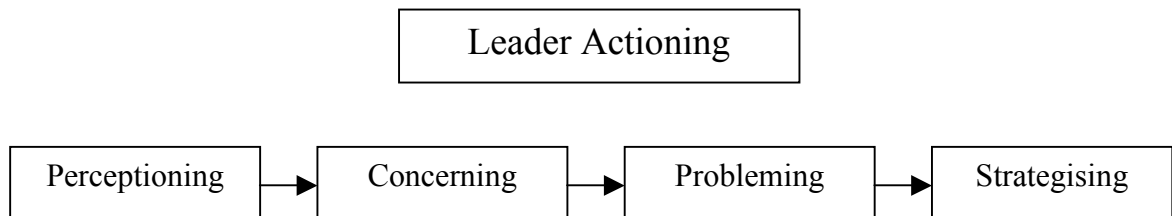


Figure 4.11: *Phases of Leader Actioning*

The closer the source of impact to a subordinate, the greater the impact on their behaviour. When leaders closely monitor the work environment and subordinate behaviour, they can quickly respond to issues which arise for an individual or in a team. Without monitoring the subordinate's situation the leader will not get important clues to a subordinate's dissatisfaction and possible detrimental behaviour, and will not know how to remedy difficult situations.

Leaders who monitor or observe subordinate behaviours are usually able to intervene at an earlier and more appropriate stage, rather than unexpectedly finding an undesired workplace consequence at a later stage. Sometimes the leader actioning sequence is triggered only by a perception of workplace consequences rather than subordinate behaviours, because even the leaders who do not monitor subordinate status cannot fail to notice the workplace consequences.

Leaders have varying degrees of perception, concern for others, problem internalisation and strategy adoption, as shown in Figure 4.12 below. Although these variables are depicted in dichotomous terms for convenience in the diagram, it is more appropriate to envisage them as continuums. For example, different leaders have varying degrees of perception of subordinate behaviour, varying degrees of concern for others, and so on.

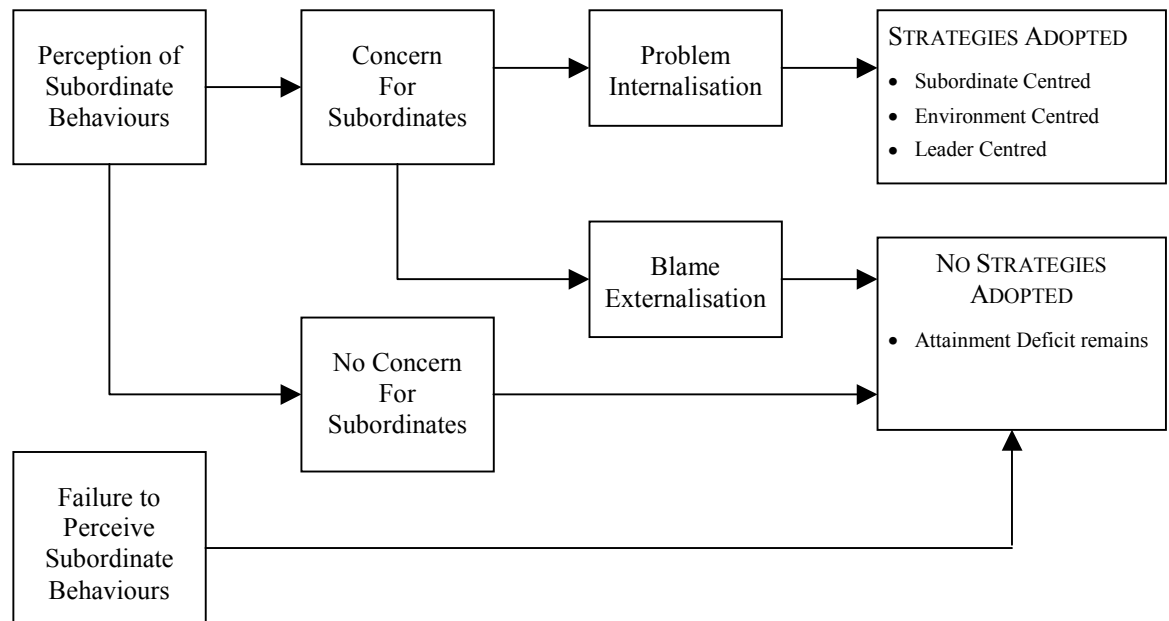


Figure 4.12: *Leader Perceptioning, Concerning, Probleming and Strategising*

4.3.1 Leader Perceptioning

Leader perceptioning refers to the extent that leaders are aware of the actions and behaviours of their subordinates. Leaders either fail to perceive subordinate behaviours, and so have a greater tendency not to adopt appropriate strategies, or else do perceive subordinate behaviours and then proceed to process what they perceive. Perception of subordinate behaviours is the awareness of their existence and some cognition of whether these are desirable or undesirable behaviours. It is apparent from the data that it is rare for no leader perception of subordinate behaviours to occur but rather it is more usual that varying degrees of perception occur for different leaders. Subordinate status greatly contributes to this perception by providing much context and improved understanding of the meaning of such subordinate behaviours.

Some supervisors, quite simply, are poor people-managers, and are less tuned in to the nuances of their subordinates' behaviours. Such supervisors tend to look for structural and technological solutions within the workplace and tend to hold more stereotypical and less favourable attitudes towards subordinate behaviours. They may even blame subordinates for causing or exacerbating problems. When leaders view the workplace in this way, they are less likely to perceive subordinate behaviours.

Most leaders have dual roles. This means that they are leaders in one role but are other leaders' subordinates in their other role. This allows them to see many issues and behaviours from two sides. Some leaders are less aware of their dual role than others. Those leaders who display most awareness of the dual role of leadership are more likely to perceive subordinate behaviours, simply because their perception of their leader is more likely to influence their own behaviour when in a leader role.

For example, Phil refers to his leader, Garry, as one who “*would not lie to you*”. In turn, Phil says of his subordinates “*they know I'll never lie to them*”. Phil expects, and highly regards, this behaviour from his leader and so thinks such behaviour worthy of emulation. He knows that if this is what he wants, his own subordinates will want this also. “*Helping*” is a similar example. He appreciates help from his superiors and this generates respect for such a supportive leader. In turn, he is keen to provide much support to his subordinates to earn himself the same respect.

4.3.2 Leader Concerning

Leader concerning refers to the extent that leaders show concern for the welfare of their subordinates. Leaders either display no concern for their subordinates, and so have a greater tendency not to adopt appropriate strategies, or else do have concern for their subordinates and then proceed to act on that concern. Some leaders are more emotionally predisposed than others to consider the effects that work circumstances may have on subordinates. A leader with concern for their subordinates may experience empathy for those subordinates, the desire to handle things well and to motivate workers. They tend to reflect more on the nature of their interactions. Such leaders are more likely to be seen by subordinates as having desirable traits, which include being caring, honest, helpful, observant, credible, and trustworthy.

A leader with a lack of concern appears to be seen by subordinates as uncaring, scheming, deceitful, and more concerned with achieving their own interest. The following quote reveals the extent to which lack of concern by a supervisor is recognised and resented by one of his subordinates.

“There'd be something tricky going on, I'd say listen Alistair, ... what should we do here. And he says I'll get back to you and I know for a fact

that because it's a tricky situation he won't get back for a couple of days; you just have to go ahead and do it. But if something goes wrong he'll say 'what did you go and do it that way for'."

4.3.3 Leader Probleming

Leader probleming refers to the extent that leaders adopt a tendency to internalise subordinate and workplace problems. Leaders either have a tendency to blame external circumstances for problems, and so display a greater tendency not to adopt appropriate strategies, or else tend to internalise problems as issues over which they can exert some influence or control, and then proceed to act on that internalisation.

Problem internalisation results in leaders taking responsibility for troublesome situations, making them more likely to adopt appropriate strategies. Blame externalisation occurs when a supervisor does not acknowledge that they can mitigate the impacts of work related problems or issues for their subordinates. They tend to blame external developments or issues for the situation, and claim that these are outside their control. Subordinates may perceive that they are being fobbed off and that their work problems are being ignored.

4.3.4 Leader Strategising

Leader strategising refers to the extent that leaders devise and implement appropriate strategies in response to subordinate and workplace problems. The type of leaders most likely to adopt relevant strategies are those who display high levels of perception of subordinate behaviours, high levels of concern for subordinates, and high levels of problem internalisation. Such leaders are those who are most likely to recognise the existence of attainment deficits in their subordinates, and who are most likely, in turn, to employ the leader strategising process with the objective of minimising such attainment deficits.

Leaders can utilise any of three broad types of strategies.

Subordinate Centred Strategies encompass the active monitoring of subordinate status, instigating some form of development of the subordinate, and/or providing support to the subordinate in an attempt to reduce their attainment deficit.

Environment Centred Strategies are intended to alter the broader work environment in an attempt to create a more favourable set of work structures, systems, and procedures for the reduction in subordinate attainment deficit.

Leader Centred Strategies focus on the leaders themselves and are intended to reduce subordinate attainment deficits by concentrating on bringing about changes in leaders themselves. When leaders address subordinates' needs through Leader Centred Strategies because they have recognised, for example through an interaction deficit, that some issues are better resolved by a change in the leaders' behaviours, the results of which are positive and generally long term. It is clear that the most successful consideration of subordinates' needs includes the leaders' consideration of their own behaviours and their contribution to the subordinates' behaviours. Understanding subordinates' needs necessitates leaders accepting that they contribute to the creation of those needs.

This acceptance by leaders is an acknowledgment of a need for their own development and self-improvement. For example, because she has monitored Mark's subordinate status, Vera has realised she cannot change other people but she can change her own behaviour.

"I'm trying to ... look at it in a more positive light in that, ... I'm not going to be able to change people. I might be able to change myself to understand how I'm interacting, if I can do it better somewhere else".

Having realised and accepted this much, Vera now thinks more deeply about the situation and realises her own contribution to sustaining Mark's behaviour has been considerable. She is now actively monitoring Mark's subordinate status.

"his attitude has gradually been changing but I don't know if its directly as a result of the meetings or as a result of ... that Len and I have become more aware in the meeting that we're doing all the stuff for the external work and he's just doing the filing ..., he hasn't really been put in a position where he uses his initiative, or he can use his initiative or he's encouraged to greatly ..."

4.4 Summary

This chapter has presented the core category and basic social process (BSP) of Minimising Attainment Deficit. This is the process by means of which organisational subordinates expect leaders to resolve their main concern of performing at, or near, their full potential. Minimising Attainment Deficit is composed of two major stages (or sub-core categories) of leader actioning and subordinate actioning. These two stages impact on one another in a continuous cycle of actions and consequences.

Subordinate actioning refers to a sequence of three linked phases – perceptioning, emotioning and behaviouring – as subordinates seek to maximise their potential within an organisational environment which they perceive as largely created by the actions and strategies of organisational leaders. Subordinates are conscious of the size of their attainment deficit – the gap between their perception of their potential and their perception of what they are currently achieving within the workplace. Large gaps create the subordinate status of *limited* subordinate; whereas small gaps create the subordinate status of *unleashed* subordinate. Unleashed subordinates generally exhibit positive emotional reactions and beneficial behavioural patterns, whilst limited subordinates generally exhibit negative emotional reactions and detrimental behavioural patterns. (However, a number of moderating variables emerged from the study which impacted on these general relationships). Beneficial behaviour, therefore, usually results in positive workplace circumstances, whereas detrimental behaviour usually results in negative workplace consequences.

Leader actioning refers to a sequence of four linked phases – perceptioning, concerning, probleming and strategising – as leaders react to subordinate behaviours (or workplace circumstances) in an attempt to devise and implement strategies which will facilitate the attainment of the full potential of their subordinates. Three broad types of leader strategies emerged from the study: subordinate centred, environment centred and leader centred. The type of leaders most likely to adopt relevant strategies are those who display high levels of perception of subordinate behaviours, high levels of concern for subordinates, and high levels of problem internalisation. Such leaders are those who are most likely to recognise the existence of attainment deficit in their subordinates and who are most likely, in turn, to employ the leader strategising process with the objective of minimising those attainment deficits.

The leadership process continues indefinitely with actions and consequences compounding in either a *virtuous* or a *vicious* manner, depending upon the style of leader actioning. The relationship between the stages and phases of the Minimising Attainment Deficit process is shown in Figure 4.13 below.

Having discovered and explicated the BSP of Minimising Attainment Deficit, it is not the intention of this thesis to explore each of these processual phases in any further depth. Space (and resources) have not allowed this luxury. However, considerable data emerged from the study in connection with the phase of leader strategising, and it is to this exposition that this thesis now turns in the ensuing chapters 5, 6 and 7.

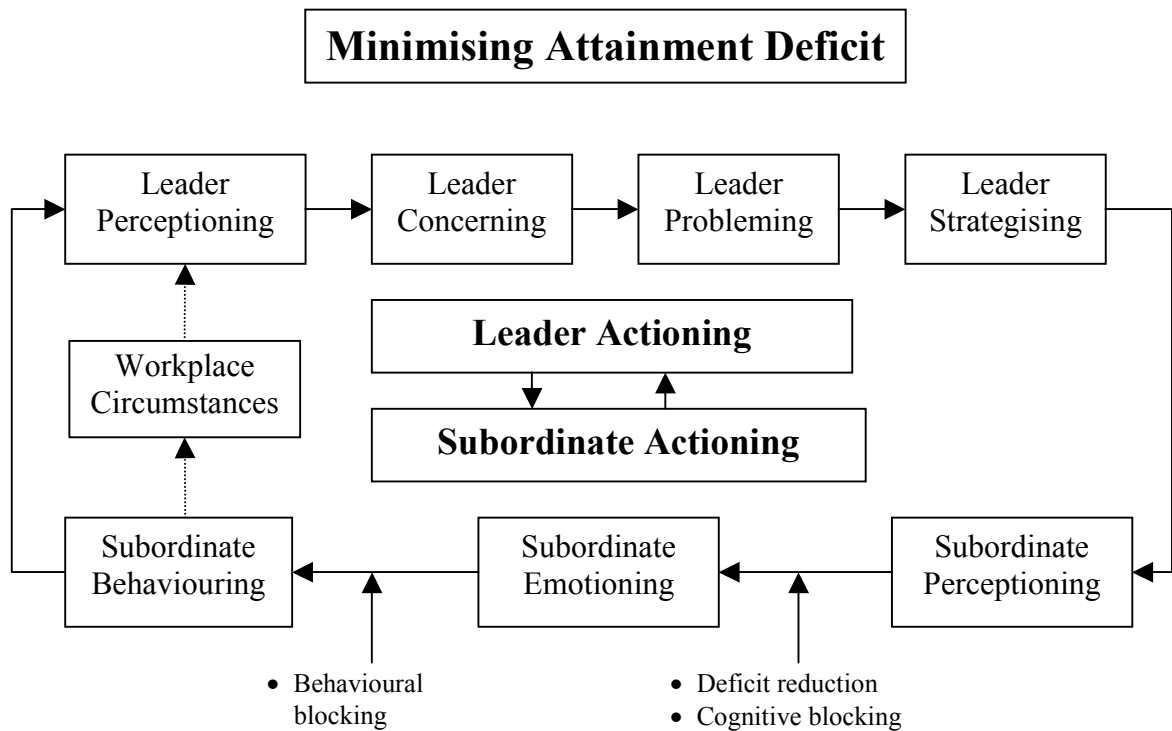


Figure 4.13: *Minimising Attainment Deficit – the Basic Social Process*

Introduction to Chapters 5, 6, and 7

Chapter 4 presented the leadership process of minimising attainment deficit that emerged from this study. This core variable and basic social process consists of two sub-core categories (or stages) of leader actioning and subordinate actioning. One of the phases of the stage of leader actioning is that of leader strategising, and it is this phase which forms the focus of the following three chapters.

As analysed in chapter 4, the phase of leader strategising comprises three types of leader strategies: subordinate centred strategies, environment centred strategies, and leader centred strategies.

Subordinate centred strategies (chapter 5) are leader strategies that focus directly on subordinates, and endeavour to minimise attainment deficits that are influencing their behaviours. The overall category of subordinate centred strategies is comprised of three separate sub-strategies – subordinate status, develop subordinates, and support subordinates.

Environment centred strategies (chapter 6) are leader strategies that focus on the work environment and endeavour to minimise workers' attainment deficits by making this environment more conducive to their performance. The overall category of environment centred strategies is comprised of three separate sub-strategies – reduce communication barriers, operational planning, and create positive atmosphere.

Leader centred strategies (chapter 7) are leader strategies that focus directly on leaders and endeavour to minimise workers' attainment deficits by improving any leader behaviours that may be adversely influencing the behaviours of their subordinates. The overall category of leader centred strategies is comprised of two separate sub-strategies – cognitive processes and accomplishment strategies.

Figure 5a below depicts all the categories and properties that constitute these three types of leader strategies. It is presented at this stage in order to provide a road map for the reader to follow as an aid to comprehending the organisation of the following three chapters.

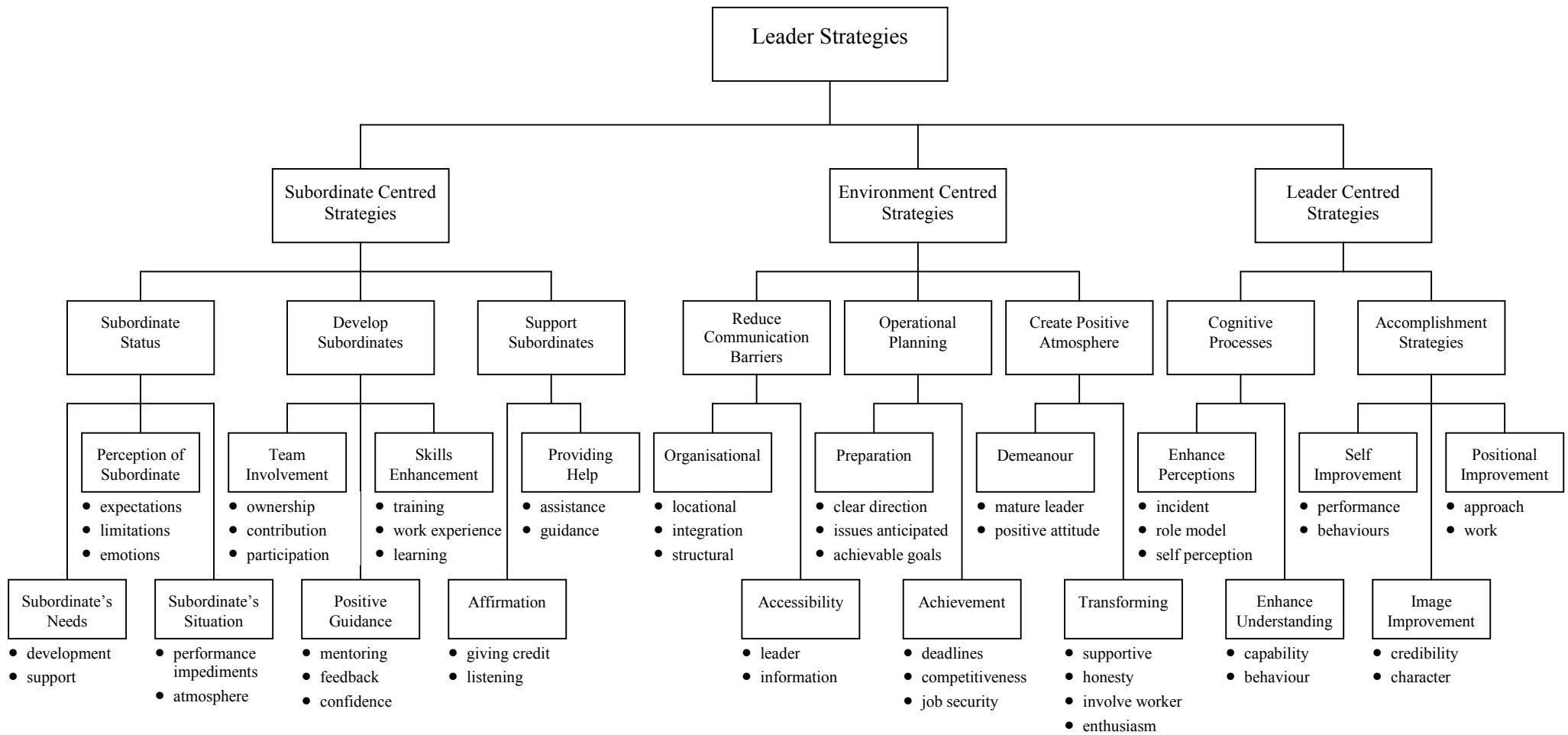


Figure 5a: *Leader Strategies and their Properties*

5 Subordinate Centred Strategies

Subordinate Centred Strategies constitute one of the three types of leader strategies that comprise the phase of leader strategising within the overall basic social process of minimising attainment deficit as presented in chapter 4. Subordinate centred strategies are leader strategies that focus directly on subordinates, and endeavour to minimise the attainment deficits that are influencing their behaviours.

The overall category of subordinate centred strategies is comprised of three separate sub-strategies – subordinate status, develop subordinates, and support subordinates.

Subordinate Status refers to a leader's attempt to monitor the state of being of a subordinate as determined by the subordinate's perception of the extent to which their current work reality matches the potential of which they consider themselves capable.

Develop Subordinates refers to a leader's attempts to devise strategies that are intended to develop the knowledge, abilities, skills, and attitudes of subordinates. *Support*

Subordinates refers to a leader's attempts to devise strategies that are only intended to provide help and affirmation to subordinates in order to assist them to complete the job.

These strategies are depicted in Figure 5.1 below.

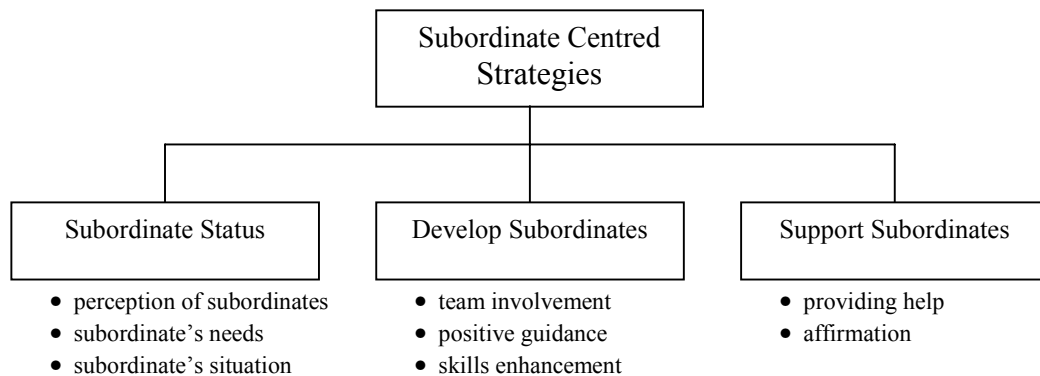


Figure 5.1: *Subordinate Centred Strategies*

The monitoring of subordinate status can be considered to be the entry-level strategy that precedes the devising and implementing of subsequent strategies aimed either at developing or supporting subordinates. It is less likely that any leader would contemplate implementing either developmental or support strategies for their subordinates if they had not previously monitored the status of those subordinates.

5.1 Subordinate Status

Subordinate Status refers to the state of being of a subordinate as determined by their perception of the extent to which their current work reality matches the potential of which they consider themselves capable. Workers consider themselves to possess a *limited* status when their perception of the current reality of what they are achieving falls short of what they believe their potential to be. In contrast, workers consider themselves to possess an *unleashed* status when their perception of the current reality of what they are achieving matches what they believe their potential to be. As discussed in chapter 4, however, it is not merely the perception of their absolute status at any point in time that is the primary pre-occupation of the subordinate, but also the extent to which progress is being made towards the modification of this status. For example, subordinates who consider themselves to possess a limited status may have this perception substantially moderated if they feel that progress is being made towards the eradication of this limited status.

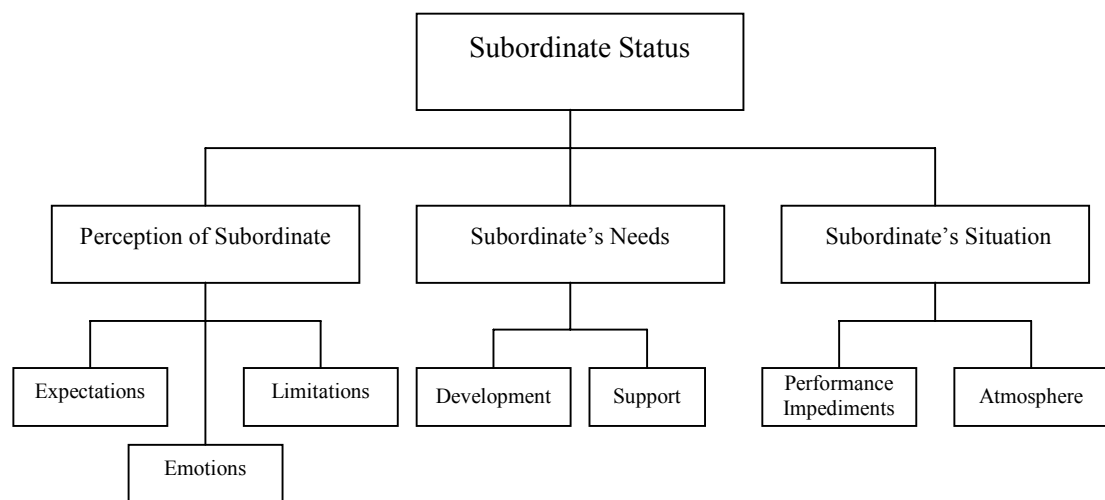


Figure 5.2: *Properties of Subordinate Status*

When leaders possess an awareness of the status of their subordinates they can act upon this awareness to implement effective leader strategies. Awareness can be achieved by means of three separate monitoring activities – perception of subordinate, subordinate needs, and subordinate situation. *Perception of subordinate* refers to a leader's attempt to measure a subordinate's perception of the magnitude of their attainment deficit.

Subordinate needs refer to a leader's attempt to monitor the developmental and support needs that subordinates have for themselves to be better equipped to do their work.

Subordinate situation refers to a leader's attempt to monitor the extent to which

subordinates believe that they are working within an environment that is conducive to their requirements. Subordinate status has the distinguishing properties depicted in Figure 5.2 above.

5.1.1 Perception of Subordinate

Perception of Subordinate refers to a leader's attempt to measure a subordinate's perception of the magnitude of their attainment deficit. As analysed in chapter 4, attainment deficit is the condition resulting from the perceived gap between what a worker believes they are capable of achieving in the work environment (potential), and what that worker perceives to be currently achieving (present reality). A worker's perception of the size of their attainment deficit can significantly impact on the nature of their work behaviour. A limited perception is more likely to be associated with detrimental behaviour, whilst an unleashed perception is more likely to be associated with beneficial behaviour.

When leaders realise and acknowledge the link between subordinate perceptions of their attainment deficit and subsequent patterns of work behaviour, they are more likely to want to intervene in a positive way to modify a subordinate's perception of their attainment deficit. Because of this, a leader's understanding of their subordinates' perception of the magnitude of their respective attainment deficits, can be regarded as a necessary initial strategy for successfully employing other strategies to close that gap. In other words, first measure the gap and then close it! When leaders are oblivious to the concept of an attainment deficit, or are unaware of the magnitude of this deficit for individual subordinates, they are more likely to be unable to successfully employ other leader strategies.

By understanding a subordinate's perception of their attainment deficit, the leader has options for minimising that attainment deficit. Measuring this perception provides the leader with valuable feedback on any strategic options attempted for minimising this deficit. Three important properties emerged as significant aspects of this measuring process – expectations, limitations and emotions. *Expectations* refer to subordinates' anticipation of events or outcomes that they want or believe should happen. *Limitations* refer to the inability of certain subordinates to undertake certain activities, understand particular knowledge or concepts, or progress beyond a defined level. *Emotions* refer to

those mental sensations or states that can either elevate subordinates to higher achievement levels, or consolidate them in their current role, or can act as barriers to effective performance of work. When leaders monitor these three properties for any change that might result from their strategies, this can provide important feedback about the effectiveness of the leader's strategies.

5.1.1.1 Expectations

Expectations refer to subordinates' anticipation of events or outcomes that they want or believe should happen. When leaders fail to acknowledge their subordinates' expectations, these subordinates may become frustrated and are more likely to feel limited in their performance. However, when leaders acknowledge that they are aware of a subordinate's expectations, this is likely to contribute towards that subordinate perceiving that progress is being made towards a reduction in their attainment deficit. Megan accepts the importance of acknowledging the subordinate's despair.

"I see that as one of the biggest demotivators, and I think my most important role is making sure that people never feel that overwhelming sense of despair about just being lost in the system."

The fact that Megan recognises the despair of subordinates who feel lost in the system, and acknowledges that they expect this situation not to continue, acts as a pivotal first step for a positive leader intervention. In addition, Lewis expected his supervisor to prevent a peer from interfering in his work. This peer intervention was preventing Lewis from achieving anticipated outcomes. However, his supervisor refused to act, and as a result Lewis decided to find a new job. In a similar way Garry expected a new chief to have a plan to strengthen the organisation against competition. He was disappointed when he perceived that this was not the case.

Sometimes the expectations of subordinates can be stated in a general rather than a specific manner. For example, workers "*on the lower rungs of the organisational structure*" seem to have broader expectations that their managers treat them appropriately, act as organisational role models, and display trustworthy characteristics.

5.1.1.2 Limitations

Limitations refer to the inability of certain subordinates to undertake certain activities, understand particular knowledge or concepts, or progress beyond a defined level. When a subordinate's limitations are recognised it is more likely that a leader can facilitate appropriate development for that subordinate. By acknowledging limitations, leaders are better placed to determine how the potential of that subordinate can best be achieved. For example, Megan is aware of the limitations of her subordinates and so manages their workloads carefully in order to ensure that their capabilities are not exceeded and they do not get into difficulties. Similarly, when Phil's supervisor realised that he was being limited by a lack of experience and confidence in his new work role he arranged for Phil to receive appropriate assistance in this role.

In contrast, when leaders fail to recognise their subordinates' limitations these subordinates can be left underachieving and they may become despondent due to the lack of performance. For example, had Lewis recognised his subordinate's limitations earlier, he could have avoided the situation "*that made us all look bad*". He realises now that "*I'd taken my eye off the ball ...*".

5.1.1.3 Emotions

Emotions refer to those mental sensations or states that can either elevate subordinates to higher achievement levels, or consolidate them in their current role, or can act as barriers to effective performance of work. When leaders understand the emotions of their subordinates they are more likely to work within that context to minimise a subordinate's attainment deficit. Leaders can harness a person's emotions to achieve favourable results. Guiding a subordinate through their emotions and enabling them to accept future outcomes without "*getting sensitive about issues*" can help maintain their motivation and allow them to attain their potential. Vera, when considering the concept of leadership, has realised that people come with their emotions and she must make the best use of them as such. Phil's positive emotions, when doors opened for him after his injury, provided favourable feedback to his supervisor. Phil found the new situation so inspirational that it '*drove him all the more*'. In addition, Garry reports that when the process of commercialisation was being introduced, the chief was able to harness the

positive emotions of managers through his “*infectious*” attitude. Instead of a collective depression falling over the managers, the chief was able to ‘*lift their spirits*’.

In contrast, when leaders are oblivious to, or fail to acknowledge, subordinates’ emotions they can often limit those subordinates in their efforts, and this can result in detrimental behaviour patterns. For example, Mike was extremely disappointed that a major report he had put extensive effort into was not read by his supervisor. His emotions so affected him that he left the position he was seconded to and returned to his substantive position within another office.

5.1.2 Subordinate’s Needs

The type and extent of a *subordinate’s needs* affect that subordinate’s perception of the magnitude of their attainment deficit. For example, if a subordinate has unmet needs this can result in a perception of a large attainment deficit. When leaders are aware of the nature of their subordinates’ needs they place themselves in a better position to be able to address those needs. For leaders to successfully consider the needs of their subordinates they are required to firstly identify the needs, then attempt to address them, and finally review these needs as feedback for the level of success the leader has had in satisfying them. Vera, for example, took some time to realise that Mark “*hasn’t really been put in a position where he uses his initiative*”. Having identified a need, she could then move to address it.

When leaders detect unmet subordinate needs they can attempt to close this gap through an understanding of which type of requirement the subordinate is most in need of – developmental or support. *Development* needs are those that require growth and learning on the part of the subordinate before they can be achieved, whereas *support* needs are those that are achieved when the subordinate is enabled to complete the job on hand.

5.1.2.1 Development

When a subordinate’s needs are *developmental* in nature, leaders can attempt to meet them by providing team involvement, positive guidance and skills enhancement. Vera identifies that Mark has a lack of confidence with unfamiliar work and so is able to devise a strategy to help him develop that confidence. Megan has identified a need for Minimising Attainment Deficit

her subordinates to learn new skills due to the changing nature of work brought about by the advent of commercialisation. These new skills facilitate them “*letting go*” of redundant skills and simultaneously reduce the threat they feel.

Sue is fortunate that another leader has identified her development need. Katy has been able to send her on training courses to help with basic skills. Her own supervisor failed to identify this need, which left her feeling frustrated. Similarly, Megan felt annoyed when her supervisor failed to identify her developmental needs and instead became an overly interventionist person.

5.1.2.2 Support

When a subordinate’s needs are more for *support* rather than development, leaders can attempt to meet them by providing help and offering affirmation. Lewis learnt the hard way that his subordinate had a need to be regularly refocused in his work. This subordinate was prone to going off at a tangent and performing poorly. After identifying the subordinate’s need for support, Lewis was able to devise a suitable strategy.

Megan also considers it important to ensure that her subordinates are given guidance on their performance with their work in order to satisfy their support need that they are heading in the right direction. Sue also possesses support needs, but for her such support seems not to come from her own supervisor. He continually fails to provide such support, and Sue has to rely on an engineer at her depot to provide the affirmation she needs.

5.1.3 Subordinate’s Situation

The nature of a *subordinate’s situation* affects that subordinate’s perception of the magnitude of their attainment deficit. When subordinates perceive that their work situation is conducive to their requirements, this is likely to contribute to a perception of a smaller attainment deficit. However, when subordinates perceive that their work situation is detrimental to their requirements, this is likely to contribute to a perception of a larger attainment deficit. This latter situation is more likely to occur when subordinates perceive that various aspects in their work situation are causing them discomfort, dissatisfaction or frustration.

Workers expect their supervisors to be aware of any situations in their work environment that are impacting on their ability to perform in their job. In order for leaders to either maintain good work performance, or to rectify a detrimental situation consisting of a negative influence in the work environment, they can actively monitor the subordinate's situation.

A subordinate's situation is impacted by two major variables - performance impediments and work atmosphere. *Performance impediments* refer to those workplace obstructions or hindrances that prevent workers from achieving their desired outcomes. Communication barriers and work planning issues comprise two important examples of performance impediments. *Work atmosphere* refers to the general feeling or mood that exists within the workplace and can range from negative to positive. A combination of minimal impediments with a positive atmosphere, is more likely result in a subordinate possessing a perception of a small attainment deficit. However, a combination of substantial impediments with a negative atmosphere, is more likely to result in a subordinate possessing a perception of a large attainment deficit.

5.1.3.1 Performance Impediments

Leaders are better able to mitigate *performance impediments* if they are aware of them. When leaders are unaware of such impediments, or purposefully ignore such influences that impede performance, this is likely to increase a subordinate's perception of the magnitude of their attainment deficit. Communication barriers constitute an important illustration of performance impediments, as shown in the following example.

"... there was a lot of negativity around the office and around the crews at that stage, and even though Harry and Reg may not have spoken directly to the blokes word did filter down, that you know, all is not lost and whether or not the blokes chose to believe that, that was up to them; only time was going to tell."

Here Steve, in his leader role, did not act to reduce the negativity by heeding those barriers to information coming from his leaders. By letting "*word filter down*" he was actually hampering the mitigation of these situational obstructions and adding to the general demotivation prevalent within the office.

Planning issues can also impede work performance. Craig was infuriated by the actions of his supervisor who failed to finish his own work and dumped it on Craig so that he could attend his regular golf afternoon. Craig's perception was that if his supervisor had planned his work as well as he planned his golfing activities, there would have been no need to impact on Craig in this inconvenient and stressful manner.

5.1.3.2 Atmosphere

Leaders (sometimes unknowingly) can affect the work *atmosphere* through their behaviours and attitudes. Such leaders can have a significant impact on the work atmosphere through their visibility and role modelling. Phil's perception of a manager has changed from negative to positive as a result of this manager changing his conduct in this area.

"I think [Harry] has improved 100% from the opinion I had 4 years ago, 5 years ago, he seems to be more hands on now, he attends meetings, he tells the delegates, at a level anyway, he won't tell the whole workforce; maybe he should in the future, tell them what he's actually doing, but he's telling us that he wants to fight, that he wants us to be competitive whereas in the past we never seen him, once every blue moon or it might have been a death or something like that, here comes this; you know, is there a [Harry]? Is he just a figment of our imagination? But he's actually coming out on job sites now, there is a face to this man, and he's doing a lot of things to help us remain competitive."

This senior manager may have been unaware of how negatively his previous leadership style was impacting on the work atmosphere. When such negative perceptions remain unnoticed by the leader, subordinates' attainment deficit can remain high. However, when leaders actively monitor the situation of their subordinates they are more likely to become aware of, and attempt to modify, the major influences impacting on negative work atmosphere.

5.2 Develop Subordinates

Leaders can adopt strategies to *Develop Subordinates* and so minimise their attainment deficit. Such strategies are intended to develop the knowledge, abilities, skills, and

attitudes of subordinates. By effecting worker growth and development in this manner the longer-term capabilities of workers in their current and future work roles can be enhanced. This can result in long-term attitudinal and behavioural improvements and also lead to enhanced individual, team and organisational performance.

The difference between *Develop Subordinates* and *Support Subordinates* (see section 5.3) lies in the primary intent of what it is that the leader is attempting to achieve. When leaders *develop* their subordinates, the primary intent is to foster a developmental change in those subordinates and so contribute to their growth. In contrast, when leaders *support* their subordinates the primary intent is to secure the successful completion of the job or work (although in some circumstances the act of supporting a subordinate may also result in a secondary developmental effect). For the sake of the exposition these two categories are discussed separately.

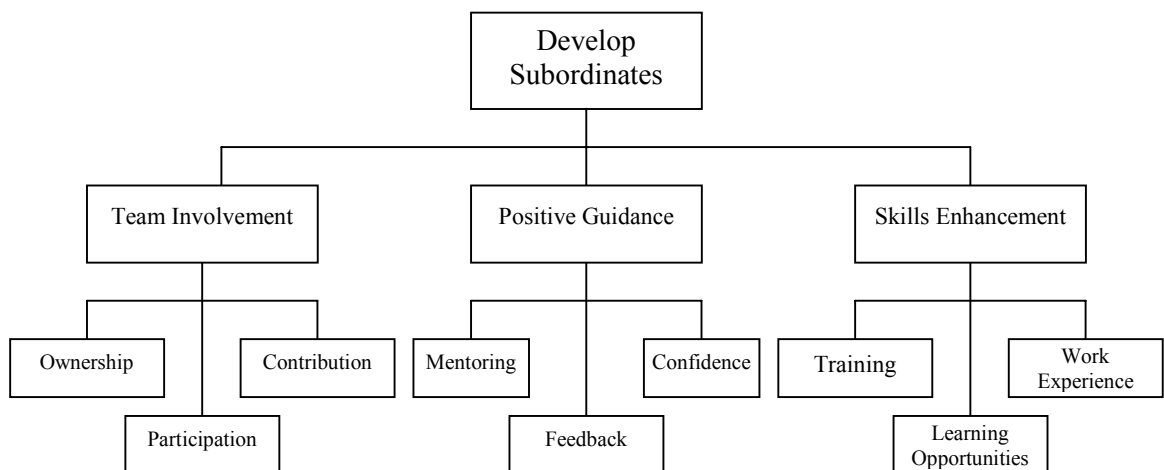


Figure 5.3: *Properties of Develop Subordinates*

To achieve such development of their subordinates, leaders can adopt the strategies of team involvement (ownership, participation, and contribution), positive guidance (mentoring, feedback, and confidence), and skills enhancement (training, work experience, and learning opportunities). *Team involvement* can allow workers to learn how to achieve certain outcomes by working with people who are experienced in such activities. *Positive guidance* refers to those leader strategies that are aimed at providing instruction, advice or guidance to subordinates with the primary aim of developing their abilities. *Skills enhancement* refers to the strategy of leaders making provision to improve the skills of their subordinates when they perceive that those subordinates do

not possess sufficient skills to enable developmental growth to occur. These strategies are depicted in Figure 5.3 above.

5.2.1 Team Involvement

Leaders can provide workers with developmental opportunities by facilitating greater *team involvement*. This can allow workers to learn how to achieve certain outcomes by working with people who are experienced in such activities. It can allow less experienced workers to take on responsibility on a shared basis and enjoy the benefit of synergistic achievement. In this way, workers can gain a sense of *ownership* of team activities and outcomes, they can increase their *participation* as desired, and they can more easily make a worthwhile *contribution* to a team.

When workers are able to achieve ownership and participation, and so contribute significant effort to a team, that team's performance may be enhanced and the attainment deficit of individual team members can be reduced.

5.2.1.1 Ownership

Ownership of the activities or achievements of a team refers to that process by means of which a subordinate acknowledges that the whole or part of an outcome belongs to them (or that they have a preparedness to associate themselves with the outcome, even if they have not directly contributed to it). The process of ownership for a subordinate can be a public acknowledgement of this sense of belonging, or it can be an acknowledgement among only fellow team members, or it can be a personal and private recognition. Regardless of the level at which it is acknowledged, ownership is a subordinate's cognitive process for attributing some value to such an outcome through a sense of belonging, whether it has been achieved or is some distant possibility.

When leaders are perceived by team members to be excessively intervening in the activities and outcomes of the team, this can act as an inhibiting factor in the creation of a sense of ownership. In contrast, facilitating a high level of ownership increases the likelihood of creating an effective team. Leaders can facilitate ownership in two major ways. Firstly, they can create conducive conditions that are more likely to foster a sense of ownership. Such conditions include displaying confidence in a subordinate's abilities (for example through the use of affirmation), and by encouraging participation

through the joint setting of shared goals/objectives in an environment where success and credit are shared. Secondly, leaders can facilitate ownership by giving subordinates the freedom to make decisions independently. For instance, they can ensure that each member has a clear role in the team and that their role is meaningful to each team member. Megan shows confidence in her team members' abilities and sees it as important to "*show that every team player has a place*". With such a role there are clear responsibilities, but without such responsibilities there may be little or no choices or decisions for team members to make. This was the case with Mark during the period when he was perceived to be avoiding his responsibilities. When Vera asked him to explain to the team the safety procedures he wrote, a noticeable change occurred in Mark's attitude and behaviour. The clear responsibility made him feel part of the team.

5.2.1.2 Participation

Participation in a team occurs when subordinates display acquiescent involvement in team activities. This often demonstrates that a commitment has been made to share the achievement of some desired outcomes. A leader can facilitate such participation by gaining commitment to these common objectives. Such commitment can more easily be gained if a subordinate feels that their team role is meaningful and has clear responsibilities and accountabilities. Thus, Clay attempts to achieve such participation by providing a high level of assistance and commitment to the success of his crews' projects.

By way of contrast, a subordinate is more likely to decline participation in a team when he/she perceives that they do not have a meaningful role to play. However, this may be moderated when the subordinate is in a learning role which primarily involves observation with little or no team involvement.

5.2.1.3 Contribution

Contribution refers to the act of providing input into a team process. When a subordinate contributes willingly they do so in a more complete way. A willing contribution constitutes more than the act of simply going through the motions. It is generally a value-adding contribution, in which the subordinate gives consideration to the issues involved, and conclusions or interpretations are provided as part of the input. This implies appropriate use of the subordinate's technical and cognitive abilities.

When a subordinate's abilities are utilised in an appropriate and technical manner, this is more likely to result in subordinate satisfaction, the provision of willing contributions, and the achievement of effective team performance.

When a subordinate contributes unwillingly, that contribution is more likely to be limited to the provision of the basic input required. Such subordinates generally offer non value-adding contributions. This can occur because of the conditions prevailing within the team setting. Contributions can be inhibited when the supervisor of a team insists on stating their own position first. Such was the case for Megan when her supervisor did not listen to his team members. As a result, team members were backed into a situation of providing unwilling contributions. This situation is more likely to erode the supervisor's credibility and minimise the possibility of achieving effective team performance. In addition, when supervisors reject the suggestions of their team members without adequate explanation, this is likely to result in a similar situation of eroded credibility and reduced team effectiveness. Craig had a similar experience when his attempt to arrange a solution to a team problem was rejected by his supervisor. Consequently, Craig's willingness to make contributions thereafter was affected.

5.2.2 Positive Guidance

Positive guidance refers to those leader strategies that are aimed at providing instruction, advice or guidance to subordinates with the primary aim of developing their abilities. Leaders can provide positive guidance by *mentoring* these workers, by providing *feedback* about their performance or behaviour at work, and by building their *confidence* with their work. Such guidance and direction by a leader can enable their subordinates to consolidate and strengthen their overall capabilities. Positive guidance can also change their attitude to their work to one that can produce more beneficial work outcomes. When leaders provide effective positive guidance, their subordinates are more likely to perceive that satisfactory movement is being made towards a closure of their attainment deficit.

5.2.2.1 Mentoring

Leaders provide *mentoring* to their subordinates by focusing on those subordinates as individuals in order to guide their learning, encourage their development, improve their

self-image, and provide emotional support. Such activities as coaching, tutoring, guiding, supporting and encouraging are all part of the mentor's role. When subordinates find themselves under the tutelage of an effective mentor they are more likely to perceive that movement is being made towards the closure of any attainment deficit.

Effective mentors are more able to provide opportunities for subordinates to develop skills and knowledge from involvement in activities both within and outside the organisation, and to take advantage of training and education opportunities provided by colleges, universities, and consultancies. When subordinates encounter systemic difficulties in their work, they often look to mentors to provide or suggest solutions. Without such support and guidance from mentors, subordinates are likely to feel increasingly limited in their work environment as they succumb to emotions such as frustration and a sense of "*feeling lost*". When leaders continually monitor subordinate status they are more likely to detect when subordinates are feeling overwhelmed by the system, or if they require to learn new skills, or if they need to use skills they already possess that are not being adequately utilised by the requirements of their present work role. When a leader does not provide such support and thus prevents subordinates from expanding their skills or using their knowledge and thus gaining experience through that use, subordinates may become "*annoyed*". This was the case for both Megan and Sue.

Through the mentoring process a leader can guide a subordinate's learning. Such learning often occurs in relation to work experience, specifically about the work itself or about interactions with other people in the course of completing the work. Since mentoring is provided with the intention of encouraging the development and growth of subordinates it incorporates a substantial component of advice to the subordinate with regard to the best method of furthering their skills or performance. Some people who are already performing well in their work, for example, can be offered encouragement "*to think beyond the job*" and to consider other opportunities for career advancement. Encouragement to perform another person's job during their absence constitutes a common form of mentoring. Advice is generally offered about the needs of such a job and the focus which could provide the most effective learning opportunities. Guidance for learning can also apply when a subordinate feels overwhelmed by the organisation's systems. A leader can facilitate better understanding of such systems or nurture a

change in attitude or approach to dealing with such systems, as Megan has done with her subordinates.

A leader providing mentoring can also help a subordinate improve their self-image. When workers possess a restricted self-image of themselves this can limit the development of those workers through a self-imposed parochial perception of their “place” within the organisation. Before their self-image can be enhanced they need to be encouraged to modify their perception of their own place within the organisation. For example, when road workers would not apply for vacant office positions because they perceived themselves too “*different*” from office workers, the situation was remedied by their leader, Clay, who provided a full context and understanding of the nature of the vacant office positions. Such enhanced understanding of the vacant positions led to a change in the perception of the men who subsequently applied for, and won, several of the new positions. Additionally, Sue was guided by two separate leaders to apply for temporary vacancies in order to gain extra experience. They helped to change her self-image by making her feel that she no longer had to pursue these opportunities on her own, without support.

5.2.2.2 Feedback

Feedback constitutes verbal, written or behavioural communication from a supervisor to a subordinate as a response to that subordinate’s performance, attitude or behaviour at work. The intent of the feedback is to contribute to the subordinate’s development. In order to contribute to a subordinate’s development, feedback must guide the subordinate in how to continue or enhance their performance or behaviour. Such feedback can be positive, as a reinforcement of current performance or behaviours, or it can be negative, as a means to modify current performance or behaviours. Useful negative feedback comes in the form of constructive criticism where it provides clear options for how the subordinate can improve.

When subordinates perceive that the feedback they are receiving is critical but constructive they are more likely to act on this feedback as a method of reducing attainment deficit. Negative feedback must clearly show workers their options that will produce expected outcomes and must provide guidance on how these workers can modify current performance or behaviours to achieve such outcomes. When leaders

find negative feedback difficult or awkward to give (or omit to give any feedback at all), they can be perceived as being “*dishonest*” by subordinates through withholding information or advice that could improve their performance. Vera prefers people to be up front with her, as long as she is told what is going wrong and given some indication of how she can improve. However, one supervisor provides very little feedback. Consequently, she is left to assume that whenever he ‘*appears*’ this is an indication that something is going wrong with the work of her crew.

When supervisors find negative feedback difficult to give in either an oral or written format, they can sometimes resort to behavioural feedback as an acceptable alternative. Lewis’s subordinate’s performance was poor. This person failed to meet a deadline and the work he had completed was considered to be sub-standard. As a form of behavioural feedback, Lewis decided that he needed to work with this subordinate until the work was completed. This required both of them working together until late into the evening to produce the desired result. The successful conclusion was followed by praise and mutual congratulations.

“It was frustration and it was late at night and we were under a lot of pressure to get an answer out. It was frustration that, I guess, I’d taken my eye off the ball in terms of this person’s performance and I’d got back these results which weren’t correct in some way and that made us all look bad. So I guess I’m blaming myself for it ...”

“I became angry at the piece of paper that was sitting there in front of me with this person there who was looking at me in astonishment and we then sat down and struggled on and finished it. We got the job out and we were all happy at the end, shook hands etcetera. A good job well done.”

Another form of behavioural feedback that can be employed by a supervisor as a form of constructive criticism is that of acting as a role model within the workplace. By adopting the response mechanism of changing her own behaviour as a reaction to deliberate detrimental behaviour on the part of one of her subordinates, Vera succeeded in reducing the antagonism of that subordinate and subsequently generating an increased level of cooperation.

When subordinates perceive that the feedback they are receiving is purely critical, and lacks a constructive element of guiding them towards more effective work performance, this can act as a significant demotivator that can manifest itself in detrimental behaviour. Vera was often demotivated by “*being always told I’m wrong*”. She was not given the required feedback to help her perform more effectively and eventually she decided to look for a different position within the organisation.

The monitoring of subordinate status plays a major part in the feedback loop between subordinate and supervisor. When Vera experienced difficulties with the behaviour of a subordinate, she perceived that her supervisor, in telling her that it was her problem, was not providing the appropriate feedback she felt she was entitled to. She knew she had a problem but not how to fix it. She had to attempt her own solution and rely on monitoring the status of her subordinate in order to determine whether her actions had been successful. The failure of her supervisor to monitor her subordinate status left Vera feeling increasingly disgruntled that her own developmental needs were being ignored.

5.2.2.3 Confidence

Confidence refers to a worker’s belief in his/her own ability and aptitude to successfully tackle unfamiliar or challenging work. It is an essential ingredient for a worker to effectively attempt and complete such types of work. If a worker has little or no confidence in their ability to perform a new or developmental task they are more likely to attempt it haltingly, hesitantly, and with some trepidation. Leaders who adopt confidence-building strategies often assist their subordinates in adopting the perception that movement is being accomplished towards a closure of their attainment deficit. Creating confidence is an integral part of facilitating subordinate development to help make them more competent workers and increase their performance.

Leaders can increase self confidence in their subordinates by providing all the information they need to do their work, by helping them through difficult learning, by ensuring they can approach the leaders, by giving them new or different work only with adequate support, by expressing their own confidence in the ability of the subordinate to do the work, and by ensuring that their own intervention in the work is of the requisite type and frequency.

Leaders who closely monitor the subordinate status of their workers are more likely to detect lack of confidence in those workers, but this seems to have eluded Vera for a while. She remarks, “... *I think Len probably cottoned on to it a bit more earlier than me and then I cottoned onto it that Mark does want to do other things; he doesn't have the confidence.*” If a leader does not “cotton on” in this manner, this often makes it difficult for subordinates to undertake developmental growth. Confidence can be created in a subordinate by easing them into unfamiliar work with good support. In this example, Mark was eased into such work as part of a team where he could follow the example of others to carry out his new role.

“... both of us are trying to give him outside work which he likes doing and making him take responsibility in these meetings as well, ... there were 31 [safety procedures] to read out ... so Len and Mark and I sat at the front because he'd written a lot of them so I just said right the three of us are reading these out to you all, and the guys read a couple.”

When a worker's self confidence is undermined by the actions of leaders, this often exacerbates that worker's perception of the magnitude of their attainment deficit. This can occur, for example, through the manner in which work is allocated. This is the case for Sue who believes that her supervisor demonstrates no confidence in her potential by continually giving certain types of work to Joan.

5.2.3 Skills Enhancement

Leaders can adopt the strategy of *skills enhancement* when they perceive that their subordinates do not possess sufficient skills to enable developmental growth to occur. In other words, skills enhancement is adopted as a strategy for ensuring movement towards the closure of subordinates' attainment deficit. Leaders can do this by providing *training* opportunities to their subordinates, offering *work experience* in jobs or tasks that are new to them, and creating *learning opportunities* by developing skills beyond that which can occur in their own jobs.

The strategy of skills enhancement is designed primarily to create a general learning environment and provide opportunities for workers to attempt more challenging work. When workers perceive the existence of a significant attainment deficit, the opportunity

to attempt more challenging work is more likely to be perceived by them as constituting movement towards the closure of that attainment deficit.

5.2.3.1 Training

Training is the most obvious skills enhancement technique for many workers. It can either be instituted in isolation or else in combination with work experience and/or other learning opportunities. When workers identify a lack of skills or knowledge that prevents them from performing at their optimum level they often blame these difficulties on a lack of training. When workers receive appropriate training they are more likely to feel confident about taking on a wider range of work roles. This enhances their perception that movement is being made towards closure of their attainment deficit. However, when training is denied, or is otherwise unavailable to them, such workers are more likely to perceive that no movement is being made towards closure of their attainment deficit.

There are several types of training that can be used for a variety of purposes. Training courses can be conducted within the organization, either by internally-based personnel or by external contractors. Alternatively, employees can be sent on external training courses (e.g. computer training) to develop specific workers' skills. Technical training can be provided to subordinates by their leader in order to increase specific technical capabilities needed for the performance of their job. For Lewis, this was a three-month traffic management course which then further inspired him to attend university. Some training, both internal and external, can be chosen by supervisors either to provide their subordinates with leadership skills or else to enhance latent leadership abilities which already exist. Some types of training are widely available and regarded as routine (such as occupational health and safety training). Other types of training are less widely available and regarded as specific to individual workers' circumstances (such as Sue's requirement for basic skills training to enable her to apply and compete for learning opportunities in temporary organisational vacancies).

When workers are required to operate in a changed work context they invariably require training in order to successfully operate within this new environment. Thus, for example, training would be required to enable workers to manage their contracts under

the restructured commercialisation approach. Without such training the services delivery group would be unable to successfully compete for work.

5.2.3.2 Work Experience

When workers have been in a job for a long time and very little skills enhancement is occurring, their leaders may devise other strategies to ensure that their development is ongoing. Such a strategy may involve *work experience*, which occurs when a worker begins a job or task that is new to them. Such jobs or tasks can occur either within the confines of their current job description, or else can occur in domains removed from their current responsibilities. The types of skills enhancement associated with work experience include learning processes, gaining knowledge, enhancing abilities, and altering attitudes.

Organisational change often changes contextual conditions and causes workers to experience different work practices. An example is the change due to commercialisation which requires the services delivery group workers to perform work under altered circumstances. Working within this changed context provides a form of work experience that contributes to skills enhancement. Additionally, work experience can occur for a worker, even though they have been in a position for some time, when a leader chooses to give them new or different work as an increased challenge. For example, Vera ponders over the work experience she feels Mark needs to develop in his job. *“I think he felt more like just a clerk where a work support officer is meant to be more involved ...”*. When a leader fails to allow their subordinates the type of work experience they require for developmental growth, such workers may develop a lack of confidence to attempt anything new and consequently resort to some form of detrimental behaviour.

“...he’s good at what he does ... nobody knows the system as well as he does ... but he [Steve] is not doing anything to challenge him ... I just started asking him to do outdoors things ...” shows the realisation that occurred with Vera that made her aware Mark was very limited in his work experience, even though he was extremely good at what he did. This supervisor was eventually able to extend Mark’s work experience and achieve a significant change in his behaviour.

5.2.3.3 Learning Opportunities

Learning opportunities are provided so that a worker can advance his/her career by developing skills beyond that which can occur in their own jobs. This generally requires time in a different job or opportunities to participate in activities outside of the job or the organisation. The outcomes from such opportunities are generally the gaining of additional knowledge for such subordinates that enhances their understanding both of their own abilities and their appreciation of big-picture AGRO business. One example includes participation in a regional planning committee where the worker can gain technical experience and improve his leadership capabilities with the full encouragement of his supervisor. Being seconded to a head office section for a special development project provides a further example of a learning opportunity being provided to a worker, again with the full encouragement of the supervisor.

Learning opportunities can also occur through a combination of training and coaching. Phil was trained and coached to deliver training programmes to his fellow workers. This was an important opportunity for him as an injury made it very difficult for him to perform his usual work. When such developmental opportunities are provided they can bring about significant attitudinal and behavioural changes in the workers concerned. Thus, Phil admits to having changed from a recalcitrant to a “*role model*” due to the impact of this development opportunity.

When workers feel stifled in their current jobs they often seek opportunities to gain experience in different employment roles. Such workers are often dependent on their leader to intervene in this situation and provide them with the opportunity to be challenged and learn. This is the situation facing Sue.

“I feel I can do more. I feel I’m capable of doing more than what this job is, it’s like just typing and answering the phone and I want to get more experience in other jobs. That’s one reason why I’m going for all the expressions of interest in [the district] for different jobs. I like to get the experience of different jobs.”

However, Sue lacks the experience and entry-level skills that would enable her to qualify to take advantage of these other opportunities. Sue’s supervisor has omitted to

monitor her subordinate status and consequently has failed to identify her need for some basic training that would provide her with these necessary entry-level skills. As a result Sue feels frustrated and unfulfilled.

5.3 Support Subordinates

Leaders can adopt strategies to *Support Subordinates* and so minimise their attainment deficit. Leaders support their subordinates with the primary intent of ‘getting the work done’. They attempt to achieve this through the two main variables of *providing help* and giving *affirmation*. Help is provided by means of *assistance* and *guidance* to subordinates, whilst affirmation is given by means of *giving credit* and *listening*. These strategies are depicted in Figure 5.4 below.

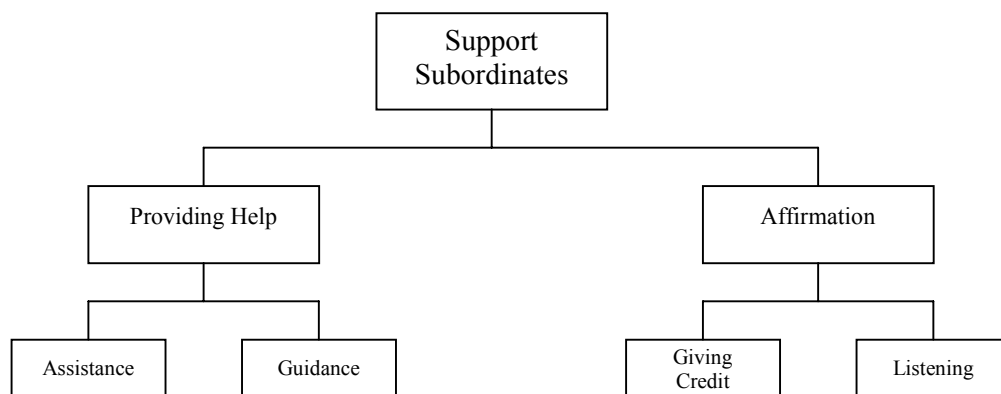


Figure 5.4: *Properties of Support Subordinates*

The difference between the categories of *Support Subordinates* and *Develop Subordinates* lies in what it is that the leader is primarily attempting to achieve. When leaders *support* their subordinates they do so with the primary intent of ensuring that the work is completed to acceptable standards. By way of contrast, when leaders *develop* their subordinates they do so with the primary intent of achieving developmental growth in those subordinates. In practice, however, support for subordinates could also incorporate an element of developmental growth, and developing subordinates could also incorporate an element of getting the work done. Despite this overlap, however, the distinction between the two concepts lies in what it is that the leader has in mind as the primary intent behind the strategy.

When supervisors fail to support their subordinates in their work, those workers may complete the work incorrectly or not meet required deadlines. Such subordinates may then become demotivated, frustrated and resentful. When perceived inadequate supervisor support results in subordinates making errors, or failing to complete work, or missing important deadlines, then those subordinates often feel that the current reality of what they are achieving is below that level of which they consider themselves capable. This adds to the worker perception of the magnitude of their attainment deficit.

5.3.1 Providing Help

Leaders *provide help* to workers by giving *assistance* with their work (fixing problems, managing workflow, and pitching-in with work tasks) and by offering *guidance* in the form of instructions about aspects of that work (in order to avoid stress, achieve safety standards, achieve desired work outcomes, and avoid frustration). The primary objective of providing help is to '*get the work done*'. The primary intent is not to bring about a developmental growth or change in a worker (although this may well be a secondary effect).

Leaders can interrupt or interfere at the beginning, during, or at the end of subordinates' work if they perceive that this work is not achieving their desired outcomes. The rationale for such intervention is to correct the subordinate's work before a deviation from the desired standard becomes too large, at which point it would take more effort to rectify. A fine line exists between positive, or desired, intervention and negative, or undesired, intervention. While a leader may perceive their intervention to be positive and appropriate, their subordinates may not. Such differences in perception between supervisors and subordinates with regard to the appropriate level of intervention can cause subordinate resentment. If these perceptual differences are minimised they are more likely to result in a minimised attainment deficit for individual subordinates.

An example of an attempted positive intervention from a leader's perspective is that of Lewis, as a result of a subordinate mismanaging their time and work priorities. Lewis intervened in order to devise a workplan for managing that subordinate's performance. This workplan is reviewed regularly with Lewis so that the subordinate can be supervised with a reduced level of intervention.

However, when subordinates perceive that their supervisors are over-intervening this can often have a limiting effect on those subordinates. Megan does not respect her overly interventionist supervisor because she claims that through this high level of intervention he is showing lack of respect for her. She believes that such a supervisor is failing to show confidence in Megan's ability and displays this by preventing her from "*doing things her way*".

" ... It's not that some people don't have great skills, its more that he (supervisor) doesn't have the ability to delegate and to have confidence in staff and that devalues respect and limits the person's capacity to perform. We have a higher level of intervention on irrelevant tasks without the ... strategic items being dealt with on that upper level."

When Megan wants to receive mentoring but instead receives a high level of intervention it makes her feel annoyed. She believes that some supervisors focus too much on detail, to the point of becoming bogged down and losing their direction. This often culminates in subordinate demotivation resulting from the perception that such supervisors "*don't seem to understand the big picture (and are) frustrated by the small things*".

In order for subordinates to perceive a minimisation of their attainment deficits they must perceive supervisor intervention as being positive. Intervention that is perceived as negative by subordinates is likely to limit those subordinates and prevent them from using their full capabilities. This may occur because a leader has either been excessively prescriptive in how work is to be done or is taking over some part of that work. An insufficient level of intervention can leave workers struggling to complete their work to appropriate standards, either through unmanageable workloads or through lack of knowledge. A level of intervention which is not excessive nor insufficient, but provides an appropriate level of assistance or guidance, is more likely to enable workers to achieve their full potential. It is the workers' perception of what is an appropriate intervention level that determines whether *unleashing* or *limiting* results.

5.3.1.1 Assistance

Leaders provide *assistance* to their workers by directly intervening in the work process by offering their own personal services in order to achieve work outcomes. There are three major ways in which leaders can offer their own personal services to workers:

- via others
- with others, or
- without others.

Via others refers to those types of assistance arranged by leaders for other people (third parties) to carry out the tasks on their behalf in order to achieve work outcomes for their workers. *With others* refers to those types of assistance personally provided by leaders when they combine together with others (which includes their own workers) in order to help complete a task. *Without others* refers to those types of assistance personally provided by leaders when they take over a task, or begin one afresh, and assume responsibility for completing that task individually and unaided.

Therefore, the types of assistance provided by leaders to their workers lie along a continuum which ranges from via others (no personal leader involvement) to without others (only personal leader involvement). Depending on the type of assistance required, leaders choose the appropriate mode according to resource availability, authority held/required, and the capabilities of others.

Workers primarily look to their leaders to provide assistance in achieving three major types of objectives: fixing problems, managing workflow, and pitching-in with the actual tasks.

Firstly, *problems* that occur from time to time can prevent workers from completing tasks, or cause them to complete tasks less efficiently and/or effectively. The severity of such problems can range from fairly minor issues to major obstructions to getting the work done. When leaders fail to fix problems this can cause their subordinates to be limited in their ability to perform. In contrast, when subordinates perceive their leader to be making an effort to resolve problems they are more likely to feel respect for that leader, especially if the resolution of the problem leads workers to achieve more meaningful work outcomes.

Thus, the provision of phones and recreational equipment for remote workers in the extreme outback adequately fixed the problem of workers' extended absences from their families. It provided an alternative to nightly drinking at the local hotel. Additionally, providing alternative, non-physical work for a worker with a back injury resolved an issue, as did the manager who used his authority to broker solutions to his staff's problems with their clients. Another example relates to AGRO offering external contractors the opportunity to win work from AGRO but not letting their own internal services delivery group compete for contracts outside the organisation. Senior management removed this barrier, even though resisted by industry. Sometimes different participants hold varying views about what fixing a problem might entail. For Steve this is being able to shed non-productive workers when the need to be competitive increases dramatically. Steve sees this as necessary for his crew's survival but those in the crew who must leave may see it very differently and would likely become upset.

When subordinates perceive that little or no effort is being made by a leader to fix problems they can often feel resentful, frustrated and unfulfilled and subsequently exhibit detrimental behaviour. Problems can be left to fester in the face of inactive or indecisive supervisors. Examples include supervisors who avoid making decisions, or who make no attempt to remove system barriers, or who are perceived by workers to be "*compromised by their own personal gain*". Vera experienced such unresolved issues in her interaction problems with her subordinate Mark. She perceived that she was not receiving any help from her own supervisor who was fully aware of the issues involved. The lack of involvement made Vera feel that her supervisor was exacerbating the situation. On the other hand, supervisors can be perceived to be creating problems through their actions and decisions. Examples include a supervisor whose initial indecision about making a decision about a construction problem forced a worker into finding a solution for that problem, only for the supervisor to subsequently veto that decision without explanation. Craig also felt his supervisor actually created problems because he insisted work be completed at very short notice so that he could attend golf that afternoon. Managers who are perceived to be more interested in paperwork than actual results can also limit workers who may otherwise be keen to do the job. For example, as Craig said,

“I’d be better off taking a job elsewhere and I’m still contemplating going back to wages as a network inspector because I wasn’t getting support with quality. Only from the managers, from the supervisors, because all they’re worried about – to them its just paper work ...And when that happens I start to lose interest and you think why should I be doing what I’m doing if no-one else is interested”

Secondly, leaders can *manage workflow* to ensure that it is equitably distributed among subordinates and is characterised by reasonable and achievable deadlines. Megan monitors her subordinates’ workloads for competing priorities. She does not want them to get bogged down or “*overwhelmed*”. She also tries to ensure that adequate resources are available, believing this will help maintain their motivation. Vera notices the incongruities between the actions of different supervisors. She compares her previous supervisor, who regularly monitored workload to ensure nobody was being overloaded, with her current supervisor who appears not to do so.

When workload is not managed adequately, subordinates often experience negative emotions and exhibit detrimental behaviour. Sue is left by herself in the office at the end of each week and is responsible for all daily office duties. When, on top of this, she is asked to collate contract documents for that day, she becomes frustrated and stressed. Sue expects her supervisor to manage workflow across the week and not let it build up at the end of the week to cause her stress. This situation has been ongoing for some time. Additionally, because Sue’s supervisor is located in an office in another suburb, Sue expects him to put in extra effort to be aware of her situation and provide help. This has not been forthcoming – a scenario she regards as “*unreasonable*”.

Thirdly, leaders may *pitch-in* to help subordinates with their actual work at times when it is not physically possible to meet a deadline without more hands, or in other circumstances when leaders perceive it is appropriate to do so. Clay, for example is “*at ground level working with the blokes*” and is ensuring they employ safe work practices at the same time. Leaders can also ask other workers to pitch-in when the need arises. When a worker has been ill or absent from work they sometimes need assistance to catch up, and so a supervisor assigns or allows another worker to pitch-in. The instance also arose of that worker who pitched-in, later not being able to receive any assistance

when his own work fell behind schedule because he was doing a rush job for his supervisor in addition to his normal work. Craig was given responsibility for two jobs but, as he says, “*you cannot do two jobs effectively*”. Thus, pitching-in has also created a problem with managing workload (see above) which in this case was perceived as not being adequately addressed.

5.3.1.2 Guidance

Leaders provide *guidance* to their workers by instructing them how the actual work could or should be performed in order to get the job completed and to achieve their desired results. The leader does not physically contribute to carrying out the actual work; the subordinate does it all. Guidance is quite different from *Positive Guidance* in the category of *Develop Subordinates*. Positive Guidance is intended to facilitate learning for subordinates through leader initiatives such as mentoring or providing constructive criticism and results in a developmental change in the workers. In contrast, the primary intention of guidance is to get the work completed.

Leaders can use guidance for either of two reasons: to avoid negative outcomes (such as industrial accidents), or to focus on positive outcomes (such as on-time delivery of services). There are several reasons for guiding subordinates in how they approach their work. These include avoiding stress, achieving safety standards, achieving desired outcomes, and avoiding frustration.

Firstly, workers can easily become stressed when they are attempting unfamiliar work. When workers are out of their comfort zone they often require *guidance* to assure them that they are on the right track. As Lewis said, it’s “*that issue of not leaving them in the dark*”. For instance, changing from physical work to mental work can be daunting for many workers. Phil experienced high levels of stress when his role changed to the training of fellow workers. Simple guidance to Phil about how to prepare and deliver training topics helped him to cope with these challenges.

Secondly, leaders must ensure that the work environment is safe. Clay provides guidance to his services delivery group workers to establish safe work practices through his safety improvement teams. This guidance not only helps achieve the necessary safe work practices but it achieves this through Clay empowering his workers and giving

them ownership of the process and the outcomes. This ensures their commitment to implement such outcomes.

Thirdly, the services delivery group need to efficiently achieve their outcomes to remain competitive. Harry provides guidance by telling workers what is happening across the services delivery group, what is planned for them to win work, and what they need to do to remain competitive. Sue seeks guidance in the form of advice from her supervisor when she is not sure about an aspect of her work. The remote location of this supervisor makes getting such advice difficult and leaves Sue dissatisfied.

Fourthly, frustration can often occur when a worker takes on unfamiliar work or a new job and the supervisor has “*not explained up front ... how something runs so that I can run it that way ...*”. More than anything, Vera needs guidance with where she is to start a process or task. A simple task that caused Vera much frustration was that of filing because she had not been told there was a particular system in place. Simple guidance about the use of the existing system and the associated file list could have solved this problem.

5.3.2 Affirmation

Leaders can show support for their subordinates in their work through Affirmation. *Affirmation* is the recognition of desirable performance or behaviour of a worker and the subsequent feedback response with which leaders acknowledge the worker for their performance or behaviour. The concept of affirmation is a strategic leader response process that is adopted by way of reaction to, and reinforcement of, worker behaviours and outcomes they achieve. Workers perceive that they are obtaining favourable feedback if their leader’s response to them includes *giving credit* (praise, thanks, or providing rewarding work) for outcomes achieved, and the simple act of genuinely *listening* to a worker.

Some leaders perceive that providing such a response for “*work that has been done well*” is very important to “*make sure that person is aware of how happy I am*”. This perception may be based on their own need for affirmation. A worker, Megan, expects her supervisor to show confidence in her by “*showing someone that you believe in*

them”, and Vera is inspired by such confidence and feels this increases her enthusiasm for her work.

When leaders not only fail to give credit but criticise workers in front of their peers, these workers can feel embarrassed and severely demotivated. Vera says when this happens to her she does “*not feel like doing anything*”. Another form of criticism is for a supervisor to check details with a coworker. When this happens to Sue she feels very frustrated and angry because Max appears not to trust her. Sue has developed the attitude “*so why should I do it for you*” and admits that her work is affected as a result.

Those leaders who provide no response to worker behaviours or the achievement of outcomes, fail to take advantage of the available motivational opportunity. When a worker has spent considerable time researching an issue and preparing a report and perceives that his manager has handed back the report unread, he can become very disappointed. This lack of response so angered Mike that he terminated his secondment and returned to his own substantive position in another AGRO office.

When Vera perceives that her supervisor is uncomfortable with her enthusiasm she is demotivated. She wants to try out new ideas but feels she is being held back and this very much limits her from attaining her potential.

5.3.2.1 Giving Credit

Credit can be given to workers in a number of ways spanning across a private-public continuum. This ranges between the extremes of saying a quiet, personal thankyou, to giving credit by virtually ‘shouting to the world’. This continuum includes such variations as giving credit privately, giving team credit, giving credit organisationally (for example across the entire AGRO organization via email or newsletter), or giving credit externally (for example in a local newspaper or media report). When leaders show their approval for workers’ achievements or for their behaviours, this can *unleash* these workers to even better performance.

Megan says that the degree of trust and respect she has for her supervisor is dependent on “*the extent that they fairly represent*” her publicly. This also relates specifically to instances when she represents AGRO externally and she expects to receive public agreement from her supervisor, having already received this privately. Megan abhors “*public contradiction*”.

Giving credit is manifest in a number of ways. These include praising workers, thanking them, or giving them work.

Firstly, leaders can arrange public *praise* for their workers. Clay, for example, arranged a story and photograph of one of his crews in the AGRO newsletter to highlight their active involvement in safety improvements. Clay even publicly praised two workers who are known to “*stir him a bit now and then*”. This generated respect for him.

Other leaders praise their workers as a group. Vera is aware that her workers like getting credit for good work. She has observed that they like to feel “*important*” and that this contributes to them preventing problems from arising.

Secondly, when leaders appreciate effort expended by workers and are grateful for the outcomes achieved, they can *thank* the workers for these efforts. Saying thankyou is a simple action but is important as an appreciative feedback response to acknowledge these workers’ efforts. Vera sees getting thanks from her supervisor as important and resents not having received this from her previous supervisor. About Steve, she says:

“whenever you’ve done anything for him ... he always thanks you for it. He always says its good and gives lots of recognition that makes you feel good about your work”.

Sue also sees it as very important. While her own supervisor fails to thank her, she does receive thanks from an engineer at the depot for doing even simple tasks. All it required was for him to say he appreciated what Sue did.

When workers do not receive thanks for the work they have performed they perceive that their efforts are not appreciated. When a leader fails to thank his/her subordinates this could take away their incentive to put in effort. Vera really resented being told of an error she had made, while no mention was made of the fact that she had given up her own time to finish the task.

“I was going on holidays and I stayed back to 10pm to do it and I sorted out all the information and that kind of stuff and when I came back the only comment was ‘you were 2 mm off with your bore hole’ and that was 200m as it was to scale. And I just got told to be more accurate next time, not thank you for doing it, and we didn’t get overtime”.

Craig felt the same way when his supervisor, after avoiding a decision necessary to complete a certain piece of work, did not thank him for having made an attempt but only denigrated him with “*what did you do it that way for*”.

Thirdly, having become aware of good behaviours or outcomes and apportioned responsibility, the leader chooses some feedback response. Often, certain types of work are perceived by the recipients as a reward. If such work is given out by a leader, this is likely to be regarded as *affirmation* by the workers concerned. It should be noted that it is the actual *giving* of the work that is perceived as the act of giving credit (although the subsequent performance of this work may serve as a developmental opportunity, and as such this aspect is more accurately identified as part of the *develop subordinates* strategy).

Thus some workers, such as Sue, consider that their supervisor’s act of giving typing is a display of confidence in their ability. For other workers, such as Megan, it is the more complex project given to her because of her demonstrated capability to achieve results. Megan interprets such confidence from her supervisor as also being a display of respect for her abilities. She adds that, as she herself responds to her supervisor’s confidence in her, her subordinates perform better when she displays confidence in them. Megan also believes that trust of subordinates is related to delegation of work and so endeavours to delegate to reinforce this trust.

Leaders may also give their workers tasks which the workers have not done before, and so display confidence in these workers. Again, this giving of work is the act of affirmation although the work itself may serve as a development opportunity. Megan at times sees affirmation as a tactic to encourage her to take on extra projects. Her supervisor will “*tell me I can do it and make it sound interesting and exciting so its hard to say no*” but she reminds herself that she has enough on her plate and cannot possibly take on another optional project. Her leader is paying her a “*huge*” compliment with this form of affirmation.

Phil, on the other hand, is in a situation where physical work is not possible due to his injury. His manager has allowed him to move into a training role and because this manager perceives him to be “*genuinely having a go*” he is now supporting the change

in work. Phil admits he has been a “*stirrer*” in the past and understands that he is receiving considerable affirmation in being allowed to undertake this work.

Steve, however, wants to give work in a different way. When commercialisation reduces the number of workers required in certain areas he sees this as an opportunity to give those remaining jobs to the “*dedicated*” workers. This provides affirmation for those workers so defined.

Whilst giving work may be seen as an effective form of affirmation, withholding work can be a powerful tool in limiting workers. This is the case for Lewis in his conflict at a country office. His supervisor failed to prevent a colleague from interfering in his work. Lewis believes his supervisor should have made it clear whose work this was. This situation resulted in Lewis choosing an *exit* strategy of finding another position within the district.

When leaders do not have confidence in workers and fail to delegate work to them, this may be perceived by workers as a denial of credit. When Megan sees this as the supervisor’s inability it devalues her respect for him. The same happens for Sue when her supervisor gives work to Joan but not to her, even if it is just a letter to type. This makes her feel annoyed and unhappy.

5.3.2.2 Listening

When leaders listen to their workers “*gripes and whinges*” these workers usually feel valued even when no action is taken on their behalf, as long as they perceive the listening to be genuine. The leader best achieves this by using active listening techniques and by clearly having empathy for their subordinates. Leaders can disagree but still listen. The leader who genuinely cares about their subordinates usually remembers key details of the subordinates’ topics of conversation and shows interest in the outcomes achieved for such issues. Some leaders actively follow up on outcomes, causing workers to perceive interest by their supervisor and so feel that they are being “*listened to*”.

Vera’s group manager for a previous role, for example, was prepared to listen to his staff regardless of the issue. If he disagreed with their point of view they still felt that

they had had a fair hearing. His approach made them feel valued and provided affirmation that they, and what they had to say, were considered important.

When workers perceive that they are not being listened to, this often creates resentment. Some workers may resort to moaning about no-one listening and attempt to influence other workers to share their dissatisfaction. Other workers either become caught up in this situation (and condone the moaning), or else display intolerance (and avoid the moaners). The resultant scenario often causes uncertainty and conflict on both a worker-worker level and on a leader-worker level.

5.4 Summary

This chapter has presented an analysis of *Subordinate Centred Strategies*, the first of the three types of leader strategies that comprise the phase of leader strategising within the overall basic social process of minimising attainment deficit. Subordinate centred strategies are leader strategies that focus directly on subordinates, and endeavour to minimise the attainment deficits that are influencing their behaviours.

The overall category of subordinate centred strategies is comprised of three separate sub-strategies – subordinate status, develop subordinates, and support subordinates. *Subordinate status* refers to a leader's attempt to monitor the state of being of a subordinate as determined by the subordinate's perception of the extent to which their current work reality matches the potential of which they consider themselves capable. *Develop subordinates* refers to a leader's attempts to devise strategies that are intended to develop the knowledge, abilities, skills, and attitudes of subordinates. *Support subordinates* refers to a leader's attempts to devise strategies that are only intended to provide help and affirmation to subordinates in order to assist them to complete the job.

Subordinate status can be assessed by means of three separate monitoring activities - perception of subordinate, subordinate needs, and subordinate situation. *Perception of subordinate* refers to a leader's attempt to measure a subordinate's perception of the magnitude of their attainment deficit. *Subordinate needs* refer to a leader's attempt to monitor the developmental and support needs that subordinates have for themselves to be better equipped to do their work. *Subordinate situation* refers to a leader's attempt to

monitor the extent to which subordinates believe that they are working within an environment that is conducive to their requirements.

Develop subordinates can be achieved by means of three separate strategies – team involvement, positive guidance, and skills enhancement. *Team involvement* can allow workers to learn how to achieve certain outcomes by working with people who are experienced in such activities. *Positive guidance* refers to those leader strategies that are aimed at providing instruction, advice or guidance to subordinates with the primary aim of developing their abilities. *Skills enhancement* refers to the strategy of leaders making provision to improve the skills of their subordinates when they perceive that those subordinates do not possess sufficient skills to enable developmental growth to occur.

Support subordinates can be achieved by means of two main strategies – providing help and giving affirmation. *Providing help* can occur when leaders offer assistance and guidance to their subordinates with the primary intention of getting the work completed. *Affirmation* is given to subordinates by leaders by means of giving credit and listening, again with the primary intention of getting the work completed.

The following chapter presents an analysis of the second of the three types of leader strategies that comprise the phase of leader strategising within the overall basic social process of minimising attainment deficit, that of *Environment Centred Strategies*.

6 Environment Centred Strategies

Environment Centred Strategies constitute the second of the three types of leader strategies that comprise the phase of leader strategising within the overall basic social process of minimising attainment deficit as presented in chapter 4. Environment centred strategies are leader strategies that focus on the work environment and endeavour to minimise workers' attainment deficits by making this environment more conducive to their performance.

The overall category of environment centred strategies is comprised of three separate sub-strategies – reduce communication barriers, operational planning, and create positive atmosphere. *Reduce communication barriers* refers to those leader strategies that are aimed at the removal or lessening of obstructions to effective communication that occur within the workplace. *Operational planning* refers to those leader strategies that are aimed at preparing for issues that may arise or actions that may be required, and to determine how desired outcomes can be efficiently and effectively achieved. *Create positive atmosphere* refers to those leader strategies that are aimed at gaining approval from their subordinates and by so doing helping to raise the spirits of these subordinates in a way that can often result in increased motivation to improve work performance. These strategies are depicted in Figure 6.1 below.

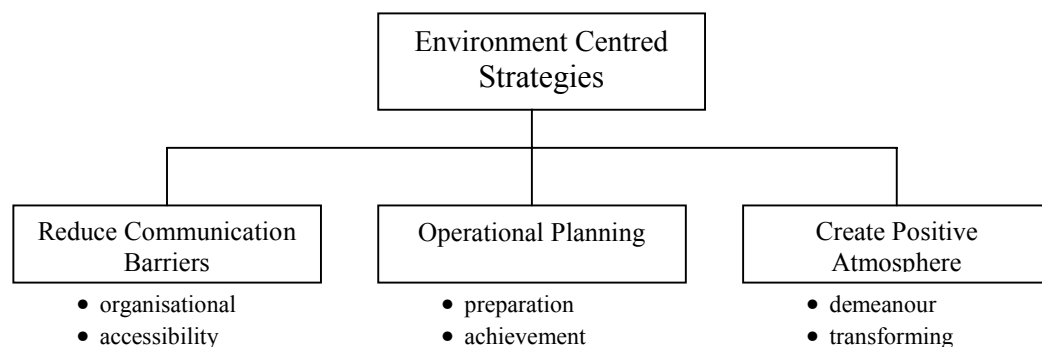


Figure 6.1: *Environment Centred Strategies*

When leaders monitor the work environment they are able to determine if any conditions exist that impact either positively or negatively on their subordinates. When the impact on workers from the work environment is perceived as being conducive, a leader may attempt to maintain or reinforce this impact through appropriate environment focused strategies. In contrast, when the impact on workers from the work environment

is perceived as being negative, a leader may attempt to remove or reduce that impact so as to reverse this detrimental situation. When leaders fail to mitigate negative impacts of the work environment on worker performance, *limiting* of subordinates is allowed to escalate.

Leaders can adopt environment centred strategies within an organisation at a variety of levels – political, corporate, unit/sectional, team, or individual. *Political* strategies are not formally sanctioned by AGRO but could occur through private actions by leaders (either individually or in groups) pursuing specific beliefs or principles. Private actions at the political level could include attending a political rally, writing to a government minister, or even casting a vote in an election. *Corporate* strategies are usually developed, or at least strongly supported, by the chief or directors and are implemented as organisation-wide initiatives. One significant example is that of performance planning and feedback (PPF) that is designed to create a system for team goal development. *Unit/section* strategies are invariably devised by unit or section managers in order to mitigate negative impacts or generate positive impacts on the work performance of their unit or section. *Team* strategies follow a similar format, where either section, unit or team leaders devise strategies primarily aimed at modifying team performance. *Individual* strategies are those that focus on individual behaviours. They intend to create an environment where an individual can feel a personal benefit from changes to the work environment. An example of such a strategy includes the maintaining of good personal work relationships to keep the work environment free from stress due to interaction difficulties.

6.1 Reduce Communication Barriers

Reduce communication barriers refers to those leader strategies that are aimed at the removal or lessening of obstructions to effective communication that occur within the workplace. There are two main types of factors that can act as barriers to effective communication – organisational factors and accessibility factors. *Organisational factors* relate to those barriers to effective communication that result from the locational, integrational and structural design of the organisation. *Accessibility factors* relate to those barriers to effective communication that result from the manner in which subordinates perceive they have access to both organisational leaders and information. These categories and properties are depicted in Figure 6.2 below.

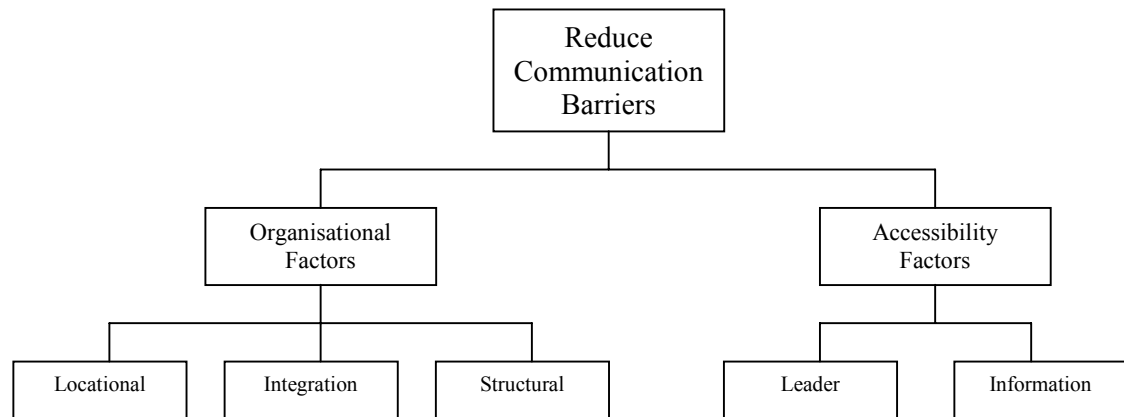


Figure 6.2: *Properties of Reduce Communication Barriers*

When subordinates perceive the existence of high levels of communication barriers, they are more likely to feel *limited* in their work performance. In an attempt to reduce their attainment deficit they expect their leaders to undertake either of two strategies; either attempt to remove the communication barrier at its source, or else attempt to mitigate the adverse effects of that communication barrier on the work performance of subordinates. When leaders are perceived to be taking no action in either of these areas, their subordinates can often feel frustrated and disillusioned.

6.1.1 Organisational Factors

Organisational factors relate to those barriers to effective communication that result from the locational, integrational and structural design of the organisation. *Location* can act as a barrier because offices are located across a number of separate sites and this can prevent face-to-face communication. *Integration* can act as a barrier because the organisation has been split into three functions, each of which is responsible for managing the funding for their function separately. *Structure* can act as a barrier because the hierarchical nature of the organisation creates high levels of segmentation through the elongated chain of command.

When subordinates perceive the existence of high levels of organisational barriers, they are more likely to feel *limited* in their work performance. Organisational barriers are often perceived as difficult to reduce or eliminate because the sources generally occur at a high level within the hierarchy. The only option generally available to leaders in the middle ranks of the hierarchy is to attempt to mitigate the effects of these organisational

barriers. When leaders fail to mitigate the effects of these organisational barriers this can enhance the *limited* perception that subordinates have of their work performance.

6.1.1.1 Locational

Locational barriers refers to those barriers to communication that result from the physical separation of teams or units/sections which need to work closely together. The existence of such locational gaps is likely to restrict communication options, especially the possibility of face-to-face opportunities. Although subordinates may not tend to hold their immediate supervisors responsible for such situations, they do expect them to act in such a manner so as to mitigate the consequences of such physical separation.

It is physical separation that impacts on Sue's work performance. She expects Max (her supervisor) to adopt a strategy to mitigate the impact of this physical separation. Due to his failure to do so, Sue instead seeks assistance and support from engineers in her own location. Lewis perceives a major barrier in being "*quite physically separated ... from other people in the buildings around [the district]*". This is an illustration of a long-term issue that has been caused by the lack of suitable accommodation. Although it is possible for only senior managers to address this barrier at its source, subordinates still expect their immediate leaders to mitigate the effects. Thus, for instance, Vera feels satisfied by the removal of the locational barrier to communication between two depots that has been brought about by the establishment of regular meetings. On the other hand, Vera perceives, and resents, the locational separation between her and the CEO and the fact that he makes so many remote decisions that impact on her. She has not even had an opportunity to meet the CEO and to possibly develop some confidence in his approach. Such a meeting may remove the impact of this barrier but this is not a situation she can create through her own endeavours.

6.1.1.2 Integration

Integration barriers refers to those barriers to communication that result from AGRO's organisational demarcation into three functional areas, each responsible for managing the funding of their function separately. Integration barriers exist at the highest level of the organisation and can result in operational inefficiencies. Thus, AGRO has experienced examples where work on one section of road can be carried out at separate times with separate funds, in the same budget year.

In an attempt to alleviate these problems, functional integration is often facilitated at the regional level in order to resolve issues in the region that relate to all three funding providers. Failure to integrate at the regional level can result in the waste of funds. At a regional level “*leaders have identified the need*” to make integrated decisions for programming work, irrespective of the funding source. When subordinates see their leaders acting positively in this manner to mitigate the effects of higher level communication barriers, they are more likely to perceive that the work environment is becoming more conducive to their requirements. This often has an unleashing effect on those subordinates.

6.1.1.3 Structural

Structural barriers refers to those barriers to communication that result from the structural design of the organisational hierarchy. AGRO is a traditional hierarchical and bureaucratic organisation. When strict hierarchical demarcations create high levels of segmentation within an organisation, subordinates are likely to attribute subsequent communication barriers to this organisational design. In the region, Vera is hampered in her ability to plan work in an integrated fashion because the structure has placed decision-making at too great a distance from her. Some decisions are not made by her direct client but at the level above. She is not permitted to approach this level and can only communicate with her client, who is apparently not passing on her concerns and suggestions.

When senior managers are perceived to be inactive in their efforts to ameliorate the impact of these structural barriers, subordinates may take matters into their own hands by establishing informal communication routes. Thus, for example, in addition to being a hierarchical organisation AGRO has also been segmented into three funding areas. However, these three segments only join at director level and the formal channels of communication are via this level in the hierarchy. This inconvenience has resulted in AGRO employees initiating their own communication strategies, thus creating a de facto situation where very few use only the formal channels of communication.

The perception and exercise of power is often perceived by subordinates to assume increased significance when the design of hierarchical organisations is further complicated through the creation of funder-provider structures. For example, the

service delivery group, in its role of service provider, often perceives that it falls victim to its clients' power when the clients choose not to listen to advice or suggestions. This inability to communicate effectively can sometimes be perceived as being responsible for the creation of an 'us and them' operating atmosphere.

In addition, the aspect of AGRO's structure that requires providers of services to recoup costs has resulted in the practice of cross charging. The cost attached to the provision of a service results in careful evaluation by the clients of the actual need for that service. Often a service is not sought because of the burden of meeting this cost. This applies to many forms of advice service. Technical advice flowed freely in AGRO prior to the introduction of the concept of cost recovery. The communication barrier created by this practice is sometimes perceived as preventing work groups from obtaining vital advice and can result in errors.

6.1.2 Accessibility Factors

Accessibility factors relate to those barriers to effective communication that result from the manner in which subordinates perceive they have access to both organisational leaders and information. *Leader accessibility* refers to subordinates' perceptions of the extent to which they are able to maintain effective contact with their supervisor.

Information accessibility refers to subordinates' perceptions of the extent to which information is readily available to all workers.

When subordinates perceive the existence of high levels of accessibility barriers, they are more likely to feel *limited* in their work performance. Inaccessibility of leaders often makes subordinates feel that those leaders are not interested in them. In addition, inaccessibility of information often makes subordinates feel that they are not properly equipped to perform their work, as well as leading them to doubt the trustworthiness of their relationship with their supervisor, especially if they perceive that their supervisor is deliberately withholding or distorting information for ulterior purposes.

6.1.2.1 Leader Accessibility

Leader accessibility refers to subordinates' perceptions of the extent to which they are able to maintain effective contact with their supervisor. Workers require access to their supervisors in order to effectively communicate about their work. When ready access is

difficult, or not available, this can sometimes lead to a feeling amongst subordinates that their supervisors are not interested in them.

From Craig's point of view there is a large difference between bosses and leaders. For him, leaders are defined by the extent and quality of the communication they enjoy with their subordinates. Some workers consider that access predominantly via the telephone is inadequate. Sue required face-to-face contact when an incident of harassment occurred, but this was not available. Sue feels that her supervisor should visit her office frequently. With such lack of contact she does not know if her supervisor has specific policies of which she should be aware. She cannot share work objectives with him because "*we don't really have a lot of time with him*". Another subordinate gave an illustration of lack of leader accessibility by referring to the fact that she and a co-worker are expected to write their problems in a book so that they can be dealt with at the monthly team brief meeting. She perceives this as an inadequate communication strategy because such formality exacerbates the barriers between them and their supervisor.

In some circumstances, subordinates may perceive a lack of accessibility not to their immediate supervisors, but to senior managers further up the hierarchical scale. This situation may be exacerbated when subordinates perceive that these managers appear to be accessible to their own direct reports, but act in such a manner so as to block or avoid access by others. For example, some managers may not return phone calls or e-mails and only respond when approached by their direct subordinates, on behalf of other workers. This, however, can be perceived as having impacts on all of AGRO's staff by creating communication barriers all the way down the hierarchical structure. One worker ventured to suggest that senior managers who are not accessible are sometimes seen as "*the enemy*".

6.1.2.2 Information Accessibility

Information accessibility refers to subordinates' perceptions of the extent to which information is readily available to all workers. Subordinates expect their supervisors to ensure that systems are in place to make such information available. New technology has acted as an important facilitating mechanism for ensuring the accessibility of certain types of information. For example, such information as corporate plans and strategies,

organisational policies and guidelines, and the entire human resource manual, can be conveniently accessed via the AGRO intranet.

When leaders devise and utilise strategies for information accessibility, subordinates are less likely to feel limited in their work performance. Leader strategies to overcome information barriers proved a positive experience for Vera in one of her roles. Regular team discussions during which information was shared and the progress of projects was analysed proved invaluable to her for optimising her work performance through interactions with others and for preventing the duplication of efforts and the elimination of errors. However, when subordinates perceive that leaders do not possess such strategies, they are more likely to experience difficulties in performing their work tasks effectively. Part of Sue's job includes responding to telephone enquiries from the general public. She finds this very difficult to do at times when the necessary information is not accessible. She expects her supervisor to develop strategies that will allow her to offer an immediate and accurate response to the public.

When subordinates perceive that leaders are in possession of certain information but choose to withhold, distort, or filter that information during its transmission to subordinates, they can become concerned not only about the impact of this omission on their work performance but also about the trustworthiness of the relationship. When Vera was new to the office routine her lack of information about office systems caused her to struggle with the performance of her new role. Her supervisor never thought to guide her through the details of the filing system. A consequence of withholding information, according to Vera, is the waste of time and resources that often ensues, as well as the emotional angst and frustration of the part of the subordinate. She claims *"they don't give you an idea of what they want, they just tell you when you've done something wrong or 'no you don't do it that way' ..."*. One reason for some supervisors to withhold information, according to Craig, is that *"they think that there's no need to know ... with regards to a lot of our projects ..."*. This rationale of *'the need to know'* can make some subordinates feel that their input is not appreciated by their supervisors or that they are not valued as employees.

"Not telling the full story" can create a communication barrier which inhibits effective participation. Craig explains that information about their future work is important to his co-workers but is rarely available. The consequence is that although these workers

receive enough information to perform the next part of their job, they receive insufficient information for them to plan their overall work effectively. Service delivery group workers do not have access to information about the five-year program of works. Although this information was readily available in the regional office, managers chose not to pass the information on.

6.2 Operational Planning

Operational planning refers to those leader strategies that are aimed at preparing for issues that may arise or actions that may be required, and to determine how desired outcomes can be efficiently and effectively achieved. *Preparation* refers to those strategies that are aimed at ensuring that leaders will be in an adequate state of readiness to respond to events or actions that may occur in the future. *Achievement* refers to those strategies that are aimed at *how* the achievement of outcomes that leaders wish to attain may take place. The properties of the category of operational planning are shown in Figure 6.3 below.

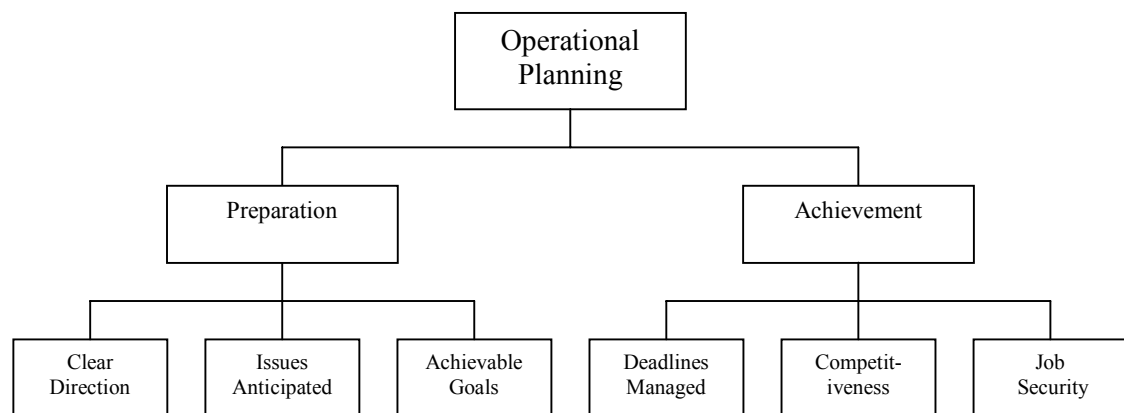


Figure 6.3: *Properties of Operational Planning*

Workers expect their leaders to adopt strategies of operational planning so that work projects run smoothly, successful outcomes can be attained, and all possible obstacles to work performance can be foreseen and avoided. Potential obstacles include any threats to completing tasks within a designated timeframe to the required standards of cost and quality. In a more general sense, organisational leaders indulge in operational planning in order to ensure that the work environment is conducive to workers in their attempts to complete their assigned work.

When leaders successfully plan their operations, workers are more able to anticipate issues and plan their own tasks. This allows workers to be efficient and so gain fulfilment from their work. When leaders fail to plan their operations, workers are more likely to lack an overview of their work and so are unable to adequately plan their tasks. This can lead to inefficient and ineffective worker performance. This limited status is likely to cause emotions of frustration and resentment amongst subordinates.

6.2.1 Preparation

Preparation refers to those strategies that are aimed at ensuring that leaders will be in an adequate state of readiness to respond to events or actions that may occur in the future. Leaders can ensure that they are adequately prepared by providing a clear direction, by ensuring that relevant issues are anticipated, and by setting achievable goals. *Clear direction* refers to a subordinate's perception of the extent to which organisational leaders are able to provide unambiguous direction in relation to *what* they are trying to achieve in the work situation, *why* they are trying to achieve it, and *how* they are expected to go about achieving it. *Issues anticipated* refers to a subordinate's perception of the extent to which organisational leaders are able to anticipate future events and obstacles to them carrying out their work as planned. *Achievable goals* refers to a subordinate's perception of the extent to which organisational leaders are able to set goals that are reasonable and practical.

6.2.1.1 Clear Direction

Clear direction refers to a subordinate's perception of the extent to which organisational leaders are able to provide unambiguous direction in relation to *what* they are trying to achieve in the work situation, *why* they are trying to achieve it, and *how* they are expected to go about achieving it. Workers expect their leaders to provide clear direction through either a general vision or more detailed aims and objectives. However, they do not expect their leaders to be over-interventionist, to the extent of removing the discretion and autonomy of subordinates. Leaders often tread a fine line in attempting to capture this balance.

Such a vision from the city's Lord Mayor provided Lewis with commitment to several shared objectives and a desire to participate in the improvement of the region's transport

infrastructure. For Steve, Harry and Reg's vision for the service delivery group became reality just one year after its announcement. This provided Steve with motivation and more confidence that the service delivery group would successfully make it through the change to commercial practices. In contrast, when clear direction is not provided at the senior levels of an organisation, this can have ramifications throughout the organisation. If the CEO is perceived not to possess an appropriate strategic plan this can impact on the process of setting relevant objectives elsewhere in the organisation.

At the team level, Lewis is adamant that "*shared objectives*" are vital for ensuring the success of the team, through the creation of on-going commitment. If workers are not given clear direction for how work is to be performed they are often forced into a situation where they must make their own choices. If workers are then subsequently criticised for making the wrong choices they often feel a double demotivation. These situations can severely limit subordinates in the performance of their work.

6.2.1.2 Issues Anticipated

Issues anticipated refers to a subordinate's perception of the extent to which organisational leaders are able to anticipate future events and obstacles to them carrying out their work as planned. Workers expect their leaders to anticipate events and obstacles in conjunction with having a clear direction. When leaders successfully anticipate such events and obstacles, they are more likely to avoid interruptions and delays to their subordinates' work. Anticipatory leaders also tend to receive more respect from their subordinates who often correlate such far-sightedness with increased knowledge and capability. However, when leaders fail to anticipate future events or obstacles, workers are often confronted with sudden and unexpected issues and decisions at a later date. These changes can often cause work projects to be delayed or sidetracked, creating a perception of poor performance and an increase in subordinates' attainment deficit.

The implementation of commercialisation had severe potential impacts for the service delivery groups across the state. When announcing this implementation, the chief also announced a plan to deal with the issues. He had anticipated a number of issues would arise and by briefing management, put in place the means to deal with these issues consistently across the service delivery groups. By conveying so much enthusiasm for

the future, and appearing to have the means to achieve it, the chief quickly gained positive approval from the senior managers.

The director of service delivery, likewise, devised a plan. He had anticipated some change in responsibilities for the service delivery group staff and saw that the development of newly acquired skills was a high priority. To be commercial, the service delivery group would be required to tender for work and to exhibit other behaviours more characteristic of contractors. These business skills were a top priority. Also anticipated was the changing nature of the workforce required to achieve the right people mix for a commercial operation. The consequence of anticipating these issues and announcing such a plan was to build increased confidence amongst the workers. They were previously feeling under threat but now saw senior management with a plan to strengthen their future.

6.2.1.3 Achievable Goals

Achievable goals refers to a subordinate's perception of the extent to which organisational leaders are able to set goals that are reasonable and practical. When leaders set achievable goals, subordinates are more likely to successfully attain these goals and consequently feel a sense of motivation and fulfilment. However, if workers fail to achieve organisational goals they often feel a sense of disappointment and disillusionment. "*Getting bogged down*" and failing to achieve goals can be a source of frustration for many subordinates.

At the team and individual level, leaders can adopt numerous strategies for creating achievable goals. Illustrations from AGRO include managing the workflow so that conflicting goals do not exist, ensuring adequate resources are available to complete work, providing team members with a shared reason to achieve their goals, and ensuring that each team member knows their role in the team and understands the responsibility of that role.

Phil's goals were previously reliant on him being able to exert physical effort. When he injured his back these goals became beyond his reach. He felt he was "*letting down*" his workmates who expected him to perform his share of the work. His reprieve came through a change in work type that provided him with new goals that could be achieved through intellect rather than physical effort. With goals he felt he could achieve, even

though they presented a stern challenge, he regained his motivation and sense of fulfilment. The leaders who enabled this change foresaw his current limitations and perceived an opportunity to extend his capabilities in a new role. Their plan for the future was to ensure that not only was Phil able to regain his own need for fulfilment through setting achievable goals but also that he could contribute to the achievement of the shared goals of the new team he had joined.

When it becomes clear that goals are not going to be achieved after they have been set, leaders often have to devise strategies to mitigate the sense of worker frustration and disillusionment that often follows. Megan feels that “*honesty*” is the best strategy in such circumstances. For her

“[Leaders] have to be clear with people about where we want to stand, or people just get frustrated and then churn out work that’s irrelevant, or they focus on goals that are unreachable”.

When leaders ‘bite the bullet’ (for example, by telling their subordinates that a project has been cut or is not going to receive further support) the short-term reaction to this approach can often be less damaging than the long-term failure to achieve. Such a strategy can also sometimes form part of a plan for ensuring the achievement of more effective team and individual performance through creating a more conducive overall work environment.

6.2.2 Achievement

Achievement refers to those strategies that are aimed at *how* the achievement of outcomes that leaders wish to attain may take place. In other words, when leaders consider outcomes they wish to achieve, they also contemplate how that achievement might take place. Such achievement can occur through three strategies – managing deadlines, ensuring competitiveness, and guaranteeing job security. *Deadlines managed* refers to those leader strategies that are aimed at ensuring that the processes of work projects are managed and completed in a timely fashion. *Competitiveness* refers to those leader strategies that are aimed at improving workers’ abilities to remain competitive within the industry. *Job security* refers to those leader strategies that are aimed at providing a guarantee that a certain volume of workers’ jobs will be preserved into the future.

6.2.2.1 Deadlines Managed

Deadlines managed refers to those leader strategies that are aimed at ensuring that the processes of work projects are managed and completed in a timely fashion. When leaders fail to manage their own deadlines effectively, this can adversely impact on the planning, organisation and completion of tasks by their subordinates. Added to the frustration of not completing their own work on time, is the resentment that subordinates may feel of appearing to be poor performers. Craig, for example, becomes irate when his supervisor wants something done immediately, resulting from an event that the supervisor had known about for some time.

“ ... you know we can sort of plan ahead with ourselves, know what we’re getting into instead of someone coming up to us and saying ‘hey I want you to do this now’ or go and do something, go and do it now. Instead of the day before or hours before, or they might have said well I require you to be here, because they didn’t plan ahead. I mean it makes it harder when they just come up and tell you to do something and you more or less have just got to drop a lot of other things and go and do this whereas if you knew that it had to be done in the morning you would have planned your day through. And everyone these days has got some sort of a program for the day ... ”.

Deadlines are more likely to be well managed if they incorporate a number of essential characteristics. These characteristics include the requirements that teams, units and sections have regular meetings; that such meetings in total provide a perspective of the overall direction, breadth and responsibilities of work projects; that they allow opportunities for contributions across teams, units and sections; that all team members are involved in the processes of setting and reaching agreement on deadlines so that they are perceived to be reasonable and achievable; and that all staff are provided with information updates on relevant and important issues.

6.2.2.2 Competitiveness

Competitiveness refers to those leader strategies that are aimed at improving workers’ abilities to remain competitive within the industry. AGRO has not been immune to the spread of commercialisation practices throughout the public sector. Such

commercialisation has enabled a transformation to occur in the manner of performing many work practices, particularly a movement towards more efficient means of delivery. When service providers are required to bid for contracts in order to secure future work opportunities they are more likely to be successful in this bidding process if they are already competitive in the performance of that work. Lack of competitiveness can increase operating costs that could price workers out of the contract. In other words, competitiveness can be regarded as a strategy for winning work that ensures the survival of their own jobs into the future.

Workers expect their leaders to help them become competitive. One such strategy strongly supported by workers was the offer of redundancy payments for workers over 55 years of age. By creating vacancies for younger casual workers, this strengthened the competitive position of the service delivery group. These fitter workers made a greater contribution to productivity thus aiding the cause of creating more permanent job opportunities.

Workers can sometimes become “*angry*” when they perceive that their leaders have allowed situations to occur that make it difficult for them to compete. An illustration of such a perception related to a road widening and interchange construction project in the district. Planning for the work had not been completed, but the commencement of the project became urgent. As a result, the project was awarded directly to the internal service delivery group to construct rather than going to contract. To go to contract would have required all planning to be completed or else the contractor could have been able to claim extra costs for contract variations. However, the consequence of awarding the work to the service delivery group in this incomplete state was that the group had to incur the additional costs of any variations. Since costs are related to each other in the form of unit rates (how much it costs to perform one standard unit of work), the nature of this extra work can cause the unit rates of the internal service delivery group to increase well above those of external contractors.

6.2.2.3 Job Security

Job security refers to those leader strategies that are aimed at providing a guarantee that a certain volume of worker jobs will be preserved into the future. Job security is extremely important to most workers. Without job security workers find it difficult to

buy a home and pay a mortgage. Some workers can also become emotionally distressed at the thought of losing their employment. When leaders supervise their subordinates in a way that allows them to achieve maximum productivity, these leaders can be perceived as helping to create job security. Leaders can help create such job security by developing strategies that ensure the creation of a 'level playing field'. Such strategies often reduce any impediments to achieving maximum productivity.

A strategy to 'level the playing field' was devised at the corporate level in the form of a change of rules for winning contracts. This change was in favour of AGRO workers and guaranteed a certain level of work for the service delivery group. There had apparently been some concern over the introduction of commercialisation because "... *particularly the blokes on the road, the ones that probably couldn't pick up employment ...*" saw a serious threat to their jobs.

Workers expect their leaders to look after their interest. Garry appears to have such a strategy for the service delivery group workers. Garry is seen to be spending money on training his workers and this is sending out positive messages. Phil believes this money is being spent to make the service delivery group "*a competitive organisation, and an alternative to contracting out*".

When leaders fail to adopt strategies to ensure job security, or to even inform their workers about the jobs that are likely to be targeted, workers can feel threatened, distressed and resentful, to the extent that their work performance can be adversely affected. If threats to job security continue over a prolonged period of time, this can sometimes induce a long-term undermining of collective work effort that can further impact on worker's ability to remain competitive.

Vera resents management for not providing adequate information about a major review conducted in 1993. Lack of certainty is often responsible for the introduction of a negative atmosphere into work situations. Steve reports that the recent introduction of commercialisation brought a threat to many workers who might lose their jobs because their work would go to private companies. When the word spread that the service delivery group may only win a third of the maintenance work it currently performed, this created an instant threat to jobs. Craig reinforced this by ascribing the insecurity in AGRO to never being told what is happening. When uncertainty is reduced, even if this

is achieved through the imparting of unfavourable news, workers can at least make firmer plans for alternative courses of action. Successful strategies to allay worker fears about job security are more likely to be achieved if workers are better informed.

Megan perceives that a feasible strategy to provide job security would be for senior managers to better argue the position about what work goes out to contract and to make it clear to workers what new work will take the place of the old. This would assist workers to let go of skills they no longer need and to focus on developing new skills they do need, and it can remove the perceived threat. Unfortunately, senior leaders are perceived to have missed this opportunity.

6.3 Create Positive Atmosphere

Create positive atmosphere refers to those leader strategies that are aimed at gaining approval from their subordinates and by so doing helping to raise the spirits of these subordinates in a way that can often result in increased motivation to improve work performance. Leaders can help to create such a positive atmosphere through both their demeanour and the extent to which they are willing to transform their own approach. *Demeanour* refers to the manner in which leaders portray themselves to others within the workplace through both their behaviours and attitudes. *Transforming* refers to those leader strategies that are aimed at creating and maintaining a consistent pattern of their own behaviour with the aim of progressively building a positive workplace atmosphere. These categories and their associated properties are shown in Figure 6.4 below.

Leaders can endeavour to maintain a certain demeanour, and to transform their own approach, in a way that they perceive will contribute to the creation of a positive atmosphere in the workplace. The creation and maintenance of a positive atmosphere often has a beneficial impact on work performance by generating positive attitude amongst subordinates. These attitudes can often be contagious. On the other hand, a negative atmosphere often has a detrimental impact on work performance, especially in situations where decisions, events, attitudes and behaviours detract from workers' motivation. A negative atmosphere can severely limit workers.

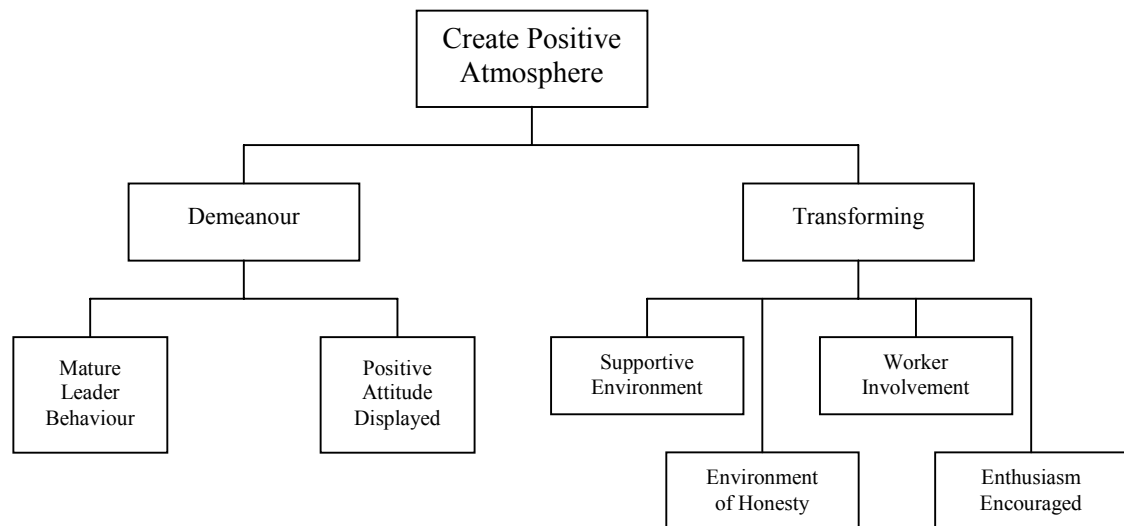


Figure 6.4: *Properties of Create Positive Atmosphere*

6.3.1 Demeanour

Demeanour refers to the manner in which leaders portray themselves to others within the workplace through both their behaviours and attitudes. *Mature leader behaviour* refers to subordinates' perceptions of the extent to which leaders behave in a manner that sets appropriate standards for others to follow. *Positive attitude displayed* refers to subordinates' perceptions of the extent to which leaders exhibit a confident and optimistic disposition within the work environment. Workers are often judgemental of their leaders' behaviours and attitudes. Workers' perceptions of the demeanour of their leaders can substantially impact on those workers perceptions of the extent to which they feel limited in their work environment.

6.3.1.1 Mature Leader Behaviour

Mature leader behaviour refers to subordinates' perceptions of the extent to which leaders behave in a manner that sets appropriate standards for others to follow. Workers expect their leaders to behave in an “*exemplary*” fashion, with an emphasis on enabling subordinates to perform at their best. When leaders exhibit mature behaviour they can contribute to creating a relaxed work environment with minimum stress and so act as a model for their subordinates.

The identification of a need to provide leadership training for senior and middle managers at AGRO provides an indication that this view is shared by senior management at the corporate level. At the section level this ‘focus on improvement’ relates to an attempt to create a continuous improvement work ethic. This strategy is

sometimes applied to the supervisor's own abilities and so results in a leader centred *accomplishment strategy* (as discussed in chapter 7). Harry, for example, appears to have adopted an accomplishment strategy by greatly increasing his visibility on job sites.

Craig appreciates the behaviour of some of the engineers who are prepared to participate in conversations with road workers where there is a mix of work issues and sports. This creates a more relaxed atmosphere where workers perceive their supervisors to have some interest in them. Megan also perceives interest to be important. Her own supervisor is "*excited*" about some of the projects and this interest greatly motivates her. Craig, on the other hand, is demotivated when his supervisors are openly not interested. "*They don't seem to have an interest in it*".

Vera displays mature behaviour by taking a worker into her team and resolving behaviour issues that his previous supervisor did not deal with. Megan also sees work relationships as important. She expects her supervisor not to be annoyed or irritated with her or "*if he's having a bad day I never expect him to be angry with me*". An environment of good relationships is also important to Craig. He perceives this to exist with some supervisors but when supervisors will not say "*good morning*" Craig feels rejected.

When leaders fail to display mature behaviour it can engender feelings of disrespect amongst their subordinates. Megan, for example, discussed some ideas with a manager at an early stage of their inception and requested time to develop these ideas more fully. This manager failed to respect this request for the sake of political kudos and so lost Megan's respect. Megan feels that "*some very negative people management skills*" in AGRO have the capacity to cause demotivation and result in poor performance. Craig gives the example of a supervisor who speaks to workers in an "*abrupt manner*". This annoys the workers so that an atmosphere is created where people work slower rather than faster. As Craig puts it: "*... if you are not satisfied with your leader your work is affected*".

Sue's work environment is negatively affected because two managers do not get along with each other. Her supervisor's lack of mature behaviour causes her to be the recipient of various retaliatory actions. Sue finds this increasingly frustrating. Craig

also refers to an environment of disharmony due to two engineers clashing over their work. Workers not only witness these clashes regularly but experience difficulties in completing their work. When “*everyone talks about them*” the impact on the work environment is more likely to be negative.

6.3.1.2 Positive Attitude Displayed

Positive attitude displayed refers to subordinates’ perception of the extent to which leaders exhibit a confident and optimistic disposition within the work environment. Workers find it easier to be positive about their work if their supervisors display positive attitudes. The displaying of positive attitudes by leaders helps to create a positive atmosphere in general. By displaying positive attitudes at those times when negatively perceived events are taking place, this can distract workers’ attention from those events and keep them more focused on their work. When leaders fail to display positive attitudes, workers can become demotivated and even despondent about the work situation. This can distract them from their work and limit their perception of their performance.

This was particularly evident at the corporate level when the chief and directors adopted the principle of commercialisation. The director of service delivery was perceived as being “*exceptionally positive*” about the opportunities that could flow from commercialisation in the future. The chief and directors determined what message they wanted to communicate to staff in order to be positive and to provide motivation. Garry, a senior manager, said of the chief’s announcement of commercialisation that “*it certainly conveyed a lot of enthusiasm for the future at a time when everyone else would have seen the future as being quite black*”. Garry added that the general manager of the service delivery group contributed to motivation created by the chief while “*gathered in groups afterwards and [Harry] talked up the issues too. He’s been very positive since ...*”. A plan had been devised for the service delivery group to deal with the many issues anticipated to arise. This approach brought a very positive reaction: “*the [service delivery group] attitude was to go out and compete ...*”.

Steve “*was quite amazed*” at the positive approach of Reg and Harry and claimed this did create a positive environment. This approach (witnessed within a context of perceived negativity due to the announcement of commercialisation) eventually

penetrated through to those workers who were unable to be present at the announcements. Harry and Reg “*never wasted an opportunity*” to use positive language. Steve perceived them to be reinforcing the positive attitude by spreading good news about the many opportunities that would become available for the service delivery group workers. At a time when Steve thought the workforce was generally unmotivated he was concerned it would be “*very hard to pull them back, once they’ve gone down that path*”. However, the positive attitude of Harry and Reg had tended to stop the demotivation going “*too far down that track*”.

6.3.2 Transforming

Transforming refers to those leader strategies that are aimed at creating and maintaining a consistent pattern of their own behaviour with the aim of progressively building a positive workplace atmosphere. Such strategies can often promote similar behaviours amongst their subordinates. These strategies include establishing a supportive environment, encouraging honesty, promoting worker involvement, and encouraging enthusiasm. *Supportive environment* refers to subordinates’ perceptions of the extent to which assistance and encouragement are readily available within an overall caring work environment.

Environment of honesty refers to subordinates’ perceptions of the extent to which leaders have created an open and non-deceitful work atmosphere. *Worker involvement* refers to subordinates’ perceptions of the extent to which they actively participate in the making of decisions that contribute to efficiency and effectiveness at the level of their work.

Enthusiasm encouraged refers to subordinates’ perceptions of the extent to which a climate of eagerness and zeal is prevalent within the organisation, section, unit or team. Workers’ perceptions of the success of their leaders in creating supportive, honest, involved and enthusiastic behaviours, can substantially impact on those workers’ perceptions of the extent to which they feel limited in their work environment.

6.3.2.1 Supportive Environment

Supportive environment refers to subordinates’ perceptions of the extent to which assistance and encouragement are readily available within an overall caring work environment. Steve describes this as being “*nice to know management was on your side and they were not working against you*”. A supportive environment is usually one where support has been available for a sufficient time that workers believe that they can

rely on obtaining such support. When leaders create a supportive atmosphere, subordinates are more likely to experience high morale and motivation. In contrast, when leaders fail to create such an environment, subordinates are more likely to experience higher stress levels and to feel limited in their work performance.

Clay has a reputation for being very supportive to all workers at his depot. His workers, according to Phil, feel motivated by this support and see their manager as being committed to the long-term survival of the organisation. Phil also perceives himself to work in such an environment. Since injuring his back and having to change his work type, his commitment has improved as a result of the support he has received. He perceives this support to be available regardless of where he turns. Phil also witnessed increased morale and work performance when remote workers were provided with better support. Feeling more cared about enabled them to perform more effectively. With improved facilities these workers no longer visited hotel bars each night to pass the time while away from their families.

Megan perceives that subordinate motivation can be enhanced by providing higher levels of support. Having deduced appropriate levels of support for them she attempts to maintain such levels to provide their desired work environment. Vera also expects to work in a supportive environment so she does her best to create such an environment for her subordinates. She tries to understand what motivates these workers and so endeavours to create an “*environment that encourages what motivates them*”.

However, if the larger organisation is perceived to be non-supportive, this can often undermine the individual efforts of leaders to create supportive environments within their own unit or team. For example, Vera claims that the creation of an “*adversarial model for the services provider in the funder/provider model ...*” is “*... killing in them the desire to do a good job because we only do what we get paid for ...*”. By this Vera means that, as service providers, her crews can only provide services for which they are being paid. They can no longer provide any form of assistance, as they have done in the past, to other crews or carry out any task not on their work order as they must account for all their time and costs. This, for her, destroys the notion of a supportive attitude and the concept of behaving as one organisation.

6.3.2.2 Environment of Honesty

Environment of honesty refers to subordinates' perceptions of the extent to which leaders have created an open and non-deceitful work atmosphere. Such an environment usually takes considerable time and effort to create. When leaders create an honest environment, subordinates are more likely to trust those leaders and have faith in their credibility. In contrast, when leaders fail to create an honest environment, subordinates are more likely to lack respect for those leaders. Such subordinates can become sceptical, disillusioned and non-trusting, to the extent that they feel limited in their work performance.

For Phil, Garry has created an environment of honesty. Phil claims that Garry has never lied to him. Garry has also separately claimed that “*you always tell them the truth and you can build up credibility*”. He sees it as important that his workers have faith in his actions and believe that their interests are being looked after. An environment of honesty is also important to Megan “*because at least you know where you stand ...*”. This allows her to have faith in her supervisors and so not have her work negatively affected through unrealistic expectations. She believes she gets value out of being honest; her subordinates have come to expect this as the norm.

However, if the larger organisation is not perceived to be honest, this can often undermine the individual efforts of leaders to create honest environments within their own unit or team. For example, the nature of the organisational structure and/or the demands of wider political considerations can place severe constraints on those leaders who strive to be open and honest on all occasions. When a supervisor is dishonest with Megan, after being placed in such a situation she is “*not going to suddenly lose all respect ...*” but will be disappointed and her respect for this supervisor can be diminished. Megan expects her leaders to avoid being compromised by such situations and to have strategies in place to mitigate any negative impacts on the environment of honesty.

6.3.2.3 Worker Involvement

Worker involvement refers to subordinates' perceptions of the extent to which they actively participate in the making of decisions that contribute to efficiency and effectiveness at the level of their work. When leaders successfully create a climate of

worker involvement, this is more likely to result in better decision-making and higher productivity through improved communication, commitment and teamwork. In contrast, when leaders fail to create a climate of worker involvement, this is more likely to prevent the attainment of shared objectives in the workplace. Workers can feel discouraged and rejected resulting in a perception of being limited in their work performance. In addition, when leaders appear to encourage involvement, but are not perceived as being genuine in their motives, this can result in demotivation. For example, Vera believes that at times she is regarded as the token female engineer and her involvement in committees is “*just an exercise in protocol ...*”

Megan monitors the extent and quality of her team members’ involvement. She wants everyone to be involved in thrashing out the issues because if everyone agrees without much discussion the result may be flawed. She is more confident if some “*stick in the mud person*” has questioned everything and the team has ensured that the “*outcome is robust*”.

Craig sees shared objectives as an indicator of involvement. He welcomes contributions and suggestions from his crew members and believes this helps achieve an effective team. When a manager prevents his team from sharing objectives by refusing to change a work practice, as negotiated to remedy a problem, his workers become frustrated and cynical. These workers perceive that their efforts to be efficient are being thwarted and that their involvement in developing solutions is being discouraged. This can be detrimental to the work atmosphere and can affect workers’ ability to perform.

Vera needed to expend considerable effort to achieve higher participation levels from Mark. Her effort to improve his involvement has been rewarded by improved communication and this has enabled her team to increase its effectiveness. A significant factor in this success was the involvement of her own supervisor. Another side to involvement for Vera is the joint involvement of two depots to resolve difficulties and misunderstandings by sharing information and experiences. This also results in shared objectives and helps create a positive atmosphere.

6.3.2.4 Enthusiasm Encouraged

Enthusiasm encouraged refers to subordinates’ perceptions of the extent to which a climate of eagerness and zeal is prevalent within the organisation, section, unit or team.

Enthusiasm is often reflective of a committed and positive attitude. Leaders who can encourage enthusiasm can often achieve excellent outcomes, such as high productivity, through the creation of a contagious and self-sustaining positive atmosphere. In contrast, leaders who fail to encourage enthusiasm, or in fact discourage it, are more likely to create a work environment that is not conducive to high levels of productivity, with the result that workers can often feel limited in their work performance.

Vera says that if people have enthusiasm she tries to encourage it further. The last thing she wants to do is to dampen it: *“if you dampen everyone’s enthusiasm they often move from being 100% [effective] to minus 10”*. Megan is motivated by *“someone who enjoys doing what they do, and the enthusiasm rubs off”*. Being aware of this, Megan deliberately encourages such enthusiasm by adopting strategies appropriate to the situation and enhancing motivation whenever possible.

Harry and Reg’s presentation of a *“united front”* to the service delivery group workers caused these workers to be *“quite astonished”*. Their enthusiasm appeared to be contagious. In a similar way Phil tries to create a positive environment by highlighting all shared successes. He hopes to generate further enthusiasm and encourages workers to continue to be united on issues to ensure future success.

6.4 Summary

This chapter has presented an analysis of *Environment Centred Strategies*, the second of the three types of leader strategies that comprise the phase of leader strategising within the overall basic social process of minimising attainment deficit. Environment centred strategies are leader strategies that focus on the work environment and endeavour to minimise workers’ attainment deficits by making this environment more conducive to their performance.

The overall category of environment centred strategies is comprised of three separate sub-strategies – reduce communication barriers, operational planning, and create positive atmosphere. *Reduce communication barriers* refers to those leader strategies that are aimed at the removal or lessening of obstructions to effective communication that occur within the workplace. *Operational planning* refers to those leader strategies that are aimed at preparing for issues that may arise or actions that may be required, and

to determine how desired outcomes can be efficiently and effectively achieved. *Create positive atmosphere* refers to those leader strategies that are aimed at gaining approval from their subordinates and by so doing helping to raise the spirits of these subordinates in a way that can often result in increased motivation to improve work performance.

Reduce communication barriers can be achieved by concentrating on two types of factors – organisational factors and accessibility factors. *Organisational factors* relate to those barriers to effective communication that result from the locational, integrational and structural design of the organisation. *Accessibility factors* relate to those barriers to effective communication that result from the manner in which subordinates perceive they have access to both organisational leaders and information.

Operational planning can be achieved by means of two main strategies – preparation and achievement. *Preparation* refers to those strategies that are aimed at ensuring that leaders will be in an adequate state of readiness to respond to events or actions that may occur in the future. *Achievement* refers to those strategies that are aimed at *how* the achievement of outcomes that leaders wish to attain may take place.

Create positive atmosphere can be achieved by means of two main strategies – demeanour and transforming. *Demeanour* refers to the manner in which leaders portray themselves to others within the workplace through both their behaviours and attitudes. *Transforming* refers to those leader strategies that are aimed at creating and maintaining a consistent pattern of their own behaviour with the aim of progressively building a positive workplace atmosphere.

The following chapter presents an analysis of the third of the three types of leader strategies that comprise the phase of leader strategising within the overall basic social process of minimising attainment deficit, that of *Leader Centred Strategies*.

7 Leader Centred Strategies

Leader Centred Strategies constitute the third of the three types of leader strategies that comprise the phase of leader strategising within the overall basic social process of minimising attainment deficit as presented in chapter 4. Leader centred strategies are leader strategies that focus directly on leaders and endeavour to minimise workers' attainment deficits by improving any leader behaviours that may be adversely influencing the behaviours of their subordinates.

The overall category of leader centred strategies is comprised of two separate sub-strategies – cognitive processes and accomplishment strategies. *Cognitive processes* refers to those leader strategies that are aimed at increasing a leader's awareness and understanding of the manner in which their own behaviours influence the behaviours of their subordinates. *Accomplishment strategies* refer to those leader strategies that are aimed at leaders accomplishing an improvement in some aspect(s) of themselves in an attempt to change the behaviour of their subordinates. These strategies are depicted in Figure 7.1 below.

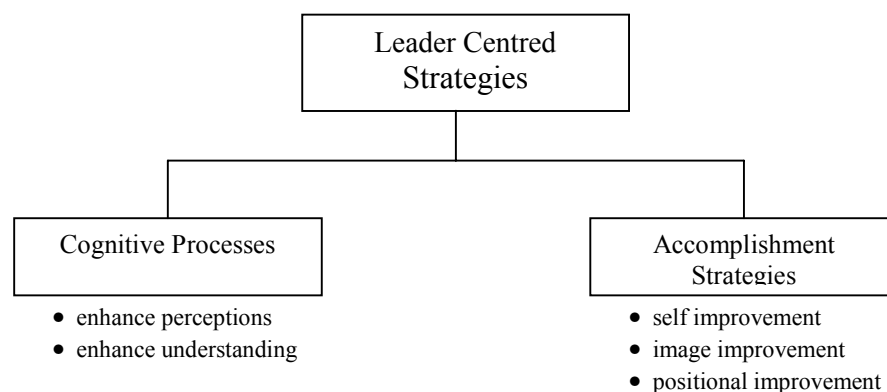


Figure 7.1: *Leader Centred Strategies*

A leader's ability to modify their behaviour relies on a number of factors, primarily their level of awareness of their influence on subordinates' behaviours and their preparedness to make changes to their own behaviours. When the influence of leader behaviour on subordinate behaviour is perceived to be positive, a leader is more likely to attempt to maintain or reinforce their behaviour. In contrast, when the influence of leader behaviour on subordinate behaviour is perceived to be detrimental, a leader is more likely to attempt to cease or modify their behaviour. Both of these actions are likely to

result in a reduction of the subordinate's perception of the magnitude of their attainment deficit.

7.1 Cognitive Processes

Cognitive processes refers to those leader strategies that are aimed at increasing a leader's awareness and understanding of the manner in which their own behaviours influence the behaviours of their subordinates. Two processual strategies comprise the category of cognitive processes – enhance perceptions and enhance understanding.

Enhance perceptions refers to those leader strategies that are aimed at increasing the awareness of leaders of the extent to which their own behaviour or actions influence the behaviour of their subordinates. *Enhance understanding* refers to those leader strategies that are aimed at gaining a more intense knowledge and insight into the processes by means of which their behaviour impacts on subordinates. The properties of the category of cognitive processes are depicted in Figure 7.2 below.

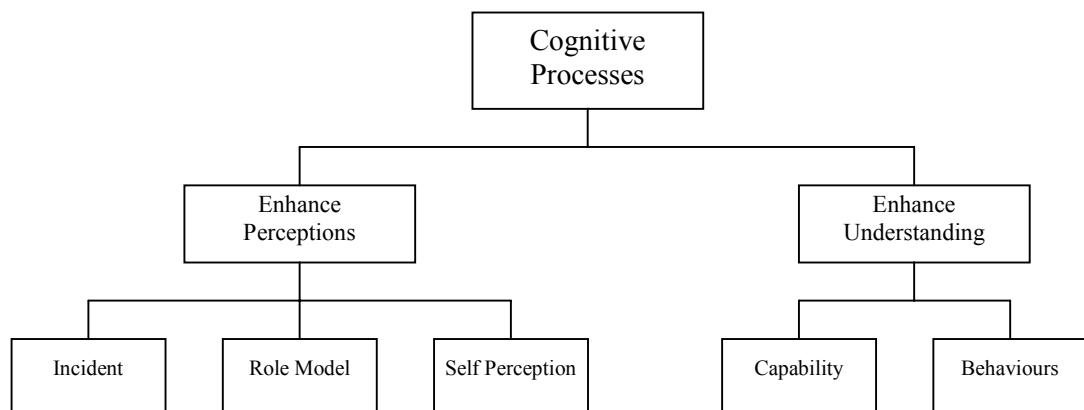


Figure 7.2: *Properties of Cognitive Processes*

By engaging in cognitive processes, leaders are engaging in processes of learning and obtaining knowledge. The outcomes of such processes can often be that leaders become more aware of, and are better able to understand, the impact of their behaviour on the behaviour of their subordinates. Leaders may become more aware of, and receptive to, the nuances of incidents, the role modelling behaviour of other leaders, and to their own self perceptions. This awareness is critical for developing a more intense understanding of how and why their capabilities and behaviours might impact on their subordinates.

7.1.1 Enhance Perceptions

Enhance perceptions refers to those leader strategies that are aimed at increasing the awareness of leaders of the extent to which their own behaviour or actions influence the behaviour of their subordinates. When leaders do not realise that certain of their behaviours or issues exist, they are not able to act appropriately to either affirm or to rectify such behaviours or issues. Becoming aware of behaviours or issues can be the important first step for a leader to be able to modify their own behaviour in order to influence the behaviour of their subordinates.

Leaders can become more aware of their behavioural impacts on others through the occurrence of incidents, the observing of role modelling, or the recognition of self perceptions. *Incident* refers to an occurrence, event or happening that triggers awareness in a leader. *Role model* refers to the observance by a leader of another person's behaviour and allowing that observance to subsequently influence the leader's behaviour. *Self perception* refers to the view that leaders possess of themselves with regard to their own traits, behaviours, abilities, and the way that others see them.

7.1.1.1 Incident

Incident refers to an occurrence, event or happening that triggers awareness in a leader. An incident may trigger a leader's awareness because that leader may need to deal with the incident to allow work to continue in an effective manner. A leader's awareness may also be triggered by subordinate complaints or grumblings. Once awareness has been triggered, the leader can still choose to ignore or rationalise the incident or its results. However, leaders who wish to maintain workplace performance are more likely to heed the incident as a signal that some modification to leader behaviour may be required.

Lewis found it difficult to ignore an incident. His subordinate had failed to meet his deadline and had produced unsatisfactory work. Lewis realised that he had "*taken my eye off the ball*" and that his approach for monitoring this worker required modifying.

When Vera was experiencing behavioural problems, "*I had one bad experience with Steve when I was having trouble with Mark*", she had sought support from her own supervisor but failed to obtain any. This made her reflect on the experience and

consider that “*perhaps I wasn’t giving the best message but I wasn’t aware of how to do it*”. This was the apparent trigger for Vera that led her to develop strategies to improve communication with Mark and, in particular, take ownership of the problem. When Vera realises that stronger leadership with Mark helps to resolve behaviour issues, she can pay careful attention to aspects of his behaviour that she wishes to curb. In her reflections, Vera is reassured that the trigger for her awareness of her own influence on Mark’s behaviour has allowed her to find strategies that are proving extremely effective.

7.1.1.2 Role Model

Role model refers to the observance by a leader of another person’s behaviour and allowing that observance to subsequently influence the leader’s behaviour. Observing another person’s behaviour and having a strong reaction to it can be a great influence on the observer’s own behaviour. If the observed behaviour is perceived as being exemplary, it is more likely that the observer would wish to emulate such behaviour. In contrast, if the observed behaviour is perceived as being unsatisfactory, it is more likely that the observer would not wish to emulate it but, in fact, would be inspired to develop behaviours of their own which they perceive to be more appropriate.

Supervisors, in their subordinate roles, observe numerous behaviours of their leaders. Some of these behaviours can be perceived as good role models and these supervisors may adopt them as their own for use with their own subordinates. Some of the behaviours, however, can be perceived as being objectionable or immature and may irritate the observer. In these circumstances, leaders are more likely to ensure that they do not subject their own subordinates to such behaviours.

Megan likes to emulate behaviours she perceives as desirable and also to learn from other behaviours she perceives as less successful. The observation of her supervisors’ behaviours enhances her awareness of the difference between desirable and undesirable leader behaviour.

“ ... when I see things with people that I really respect a lot with respect to how they get their job done, and some of the leadership roles where they do things that I think ‘that’s a trap that you shouldn’t fall into’, so I do often look at [their behaviour] ”.

Lewis reported to a manager for a number of years and was relatively satisfied with the behaviour of his supervisor. When he had an opportunity to take on the manager's role for a short period Lewis realised how challenging it was to supervise those managers who were normally his peers. Lewis was now better able to understand the purpose of some of his supervisor's behaviours. He has now learned to be a better follower in his own role. In this way, the role model he now projects to his subordinates is one that is more supportive of the organisation, rather than one that could be construed as divisive.

When Lewis's supervisor left his position it was filled by a manager whose behaviour was significantly different. This manager questioned, disagreed with, and over-intervened with Lewis and his peers. For Lewis, this change highlighted that some of his previous manager's traits and behaviours were more desirable than he had realised at the time. Now, having experienced a range of leader behaviours that he perceives as undesirable, Lewis makes an effort to exhibit only those behaviours he himself perceives as desirable.

7.1.1.3 Self Perception

Self perception refers to the view that leaders possess of themselves with regard to their own traits, behaviours, abilities, and the way that others see them. Leader self perceptions can be influenced through the reactions of subordinates with regard to their supervisors' behaviours. It is the workers' reaction that often allows leaders to become aware of their own behaviours in the context of its influence on the behaviour of others. If workers react positively to their supervisor's behaviour, that supervisor is more likely to feel reassured that his/her behaviour is seen to be desirable by those workers. In contrast, if workers react negatively to their supervisor's behaviour, that supervisor may reflect on his/her behaviour and assess its impact.

Leaders generally perceive their credibility, in the eyes of their subordinates, to be important. Leaders will have experienced their own judgements of the credibility of their own supervisors. When they perceive their supervisors to be credible they are often more cooperative and motivated to work with them. When leaders perceive their supervisors to lack credibility they may attempt to disassociate themselves so that they are 'not tarred with the same brush'. These leaders expect their subordinates to react in a similar fashion, so they often consider their self perceptions seriously. Megan sees

this as so important to her that if “*they don’t find me credible then I will change my level of performance to try to change that perception*”. Thus, when leaders perceive a shortfall in their own ability as indicated by worker reactions, they can adopt a strategy to eliminate that shortfall. Megan admits that, while she is good at giving feedback on her staff’s technical abilities and achievements, she is not good at giving feedback on their behaviours. Acknowledging this acts as a trigger for her to develop such skills.

Phil has not considered credibility important in the past but with a change in role feels he must. He now feels that he must correct the poor image he maintained in the past by “*proving I am fair dinkum in that respect*”. He now feels more confident that his fellow workers trust him in his leader role.

Vera says of her supervisor that he now seems to acknowledge that things look different depending on which depot his workers see things from but that he is not yet perceiving his own behaviour and its influence on others. Vera reiterates that this observation, for her, helps her own development. Her observation that she is now more reflective of the environment, suggests her awareness of self has started. Her admission “*that we’re not interacting with him either*” has allowed her to take responsibility and so develop strategies to improve her interactions with Mark. Megan also thinks a lot about how she interacts with people and she wants to understand other options for behaviour. She observes other leaders ignoring many issues because of poor interaction skills and considers it important that she learns to exhibit appropriate interaction behaviours.

Vera claims that she has never been perceived as a leader by her subordinates because she is just “*one of the gang*”. She questions whether her familiarity with the workers enhances or detracts from any authority and respect she holds. She is reflecting on her interactions and becoming more aware of behaviours that give her desirable results. Vera’s dilemma is how to manage her interactions for optimum results. This leads her to try different approaches. She has become aware of her weaknesses and from this she is learning what approach best motivates her workers.

7.1.2 Enhance Understanding

Enhance understanding refers to those leader strategies that are aimed at gaining a more intense knowledge and insight into the processes by means of which their behaviour

impacts on subordinates. When leaders have perceived that certain behaviours influence their workers, they are more likely to seek an understanding of how and why those behaviours carry the influence they do. Logically, such strategies can only be adopted subsequent to the realisation that certain behaviours exist. By enhancing their understanding, leaders can ensure that their reaction to issues and/or the management of their own behaviours are the most appropriate to achieve improved interactions with their subordinates. Improving interactions with their subordinates can result in increased productivity. In contrast, failing to appropriately manage interactions with their subordinates can lead to reduced productivity and a higher likelihood that workers will feel limited in their work performance.

Leaders often seek to gain enhanced understanding into two important personal aspects – capability and behaviours. *Capability* refers to those leader strategies that are aimed at developing a better understanding of how their own capabilities might impact on their subordinates. *Behaviours* refers to those leader strategies that are aimed at developing a better understanding of how their own behaviours might impact on their subordinates.

7.1.2.1 Capability

Capability refers to those leader strategies that are aimed at developing a better understanding of how their own capabilities might impact on their subordinates. Leaders may perceive their capabilities as being limited in aspects of their interactions with their subordinates, in technical aspects of their subordinates' work, or even in regard to setting a good example as a role model. If these leaders can also better understand how and why these capabilities, be they strengths or limitations, impact on their subordinates, they can better influence the subordinates to help achieve desired outcomes.

Phil, in his leader role as part of a work redesign team, asks himself “*how can we do things better*”. Working through the many issues that have arisen has given him ample opportunity and information to reflect on these issues. Megan also ponders her capabilities “*when I do it badly I do tend to think long and hard about how I could have done it differently*”. In contrast, Megan is critical of a leader who seems not to be enhancing his understanding at all. She relates the example of a leader who “*doesn't have the ability to have confidence*” and so he maintains a high level of intervention,

even with his very competent staff. It is claimed that he “*doesn’t seem to understand the big picture*” which may explain his excessive attention to detail.

After identifying some of her own weaknesses, Vera is now trying to understand these. She is also trying to understand the weaknesses and strengths of her subordinates and how they affect her interactions. By finding solutions to interaction problems, leaders can be given hope. Active learning is one strategy that Vera employs in her quest for improved understanding. She has, for example, read books on personal interrelations. She has also improved her understanding of motivation as a key to performance and is “*learning what motivates people*”.

This knowledge is encouraging Vera to better understand her interactions. In her reflection she reminds herself that she does not have union problems and so can reassure herself that her approach in general is relatively sound. Understanding that troublesome interactions with an individual do not necessarily imply that her capabilities are poor helps Vera focus on the specific issues. She has realised that what works with other subordinates does not seem to work with Mark. She is now attempting to improve her understanding of why this is so. Vera has acknowledged that “*I’ve got to make the best use of my resources but that includes people and personalities and I think in that respect you’ve got to lead them*”.

7.1.2.2 Behaviours

Behaviours refers to those leader strategies that are aimed at developing a better understanding of how their own behaviours might impact on their subordinates. When leaders are aware of their own behaviours having an impact, they can actively develop an understanding of different behavioural options and why these may be effective. Leaders may perceive their subordinates as being amenable, cooperative people, suggesting that the leaders’ behaviours are not causing negative impacts. In contrast, leaders may also perceive their subordinates’ behaviour as being unsatisfactory, but not realise that this behaviour may be the result of a reaction to their own behaviours.

When Steve refused to assist Vera with her supervision of Mark she tried to understand her own behaviours. This forced her to consider the issues more seriously and devise options to attempt a resolution. When Vera became aware of differences in how she relates to her subordinates and how other supervisors relate to their subordinates, she

tried to understand why this gap existed. This may either reinforce her behaviour or may make her change it. She is also better understanding why approaches that work for other subordinates do not work for Mark. This understanding is leading to sound strategies to accomplish self-improvements. To gain further understanding, Vera now consciously compares her behaviours with those of other supervisors. As she changes her attitude and approach she understands even more about her own behaviour and its influence on others.

To disseminate the bad news about commercialisation, Garry had to consider some complex issues and attempt to behave in a manner that could “*avoid too many problems*”. He considered the many nuances of his behaviour to try to understand the least detrimental approach. Garry viewed the behaviour of a previous chief as a good role model and attempted to analyse the reasons for this so as to possibly emulate such behaviour.

Megan realises the contradictions involved in some behavioural impacts. At times she needs to weigh up the positive value emanating from being completely honest about a subordinate’s work against the negative consequences that may flow from such honesty. Sometimes there may be reason to tone down the level of honesty to avoid negative behaviours. Megan expects her supervisors to understand the nature of the contradiction in which she is sometimes placed.

7.2 Accomplishment Strategies

Accomplishment strategies refer to those leader strategies that are aimed at leaders accomplishing an improvement in some aspect(s) of themselves in an attempt to change the behaviour of their subordinates. Such strategies are aimed at accomplishing three types of leader improvements – self improvement, image improvement, and positional improvement. *Self improvement* refers to those leader actions that are aimed at improving a leader’s standard of performance and behaviour in an attempt to change the behaviour of their subordinates. *Image improvement* refers to those leader strategies that are aimed at improving how their subordinates perceive them in an attempt to change the behaviour of those subordinates. *Positional improvement* refers to those leader actions that are aimed at improving a leader’s position in relation to a situation

they can control in an attempt to change the behaviour of their subordinates. Properties of these strategies are depicted in Figure 7.3 below.

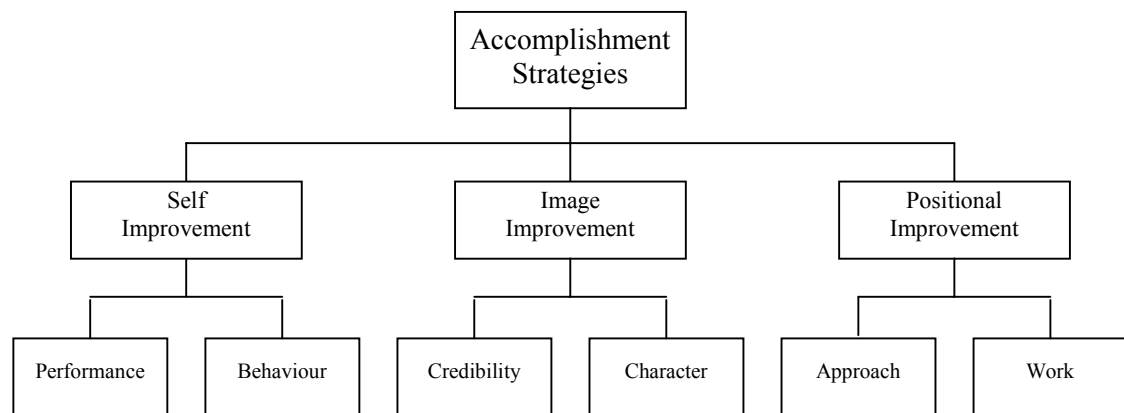


Figure 7.3: *Properties of Accomplishment Strategies*

Accomplishment strategies follow cognitive processes and are the actions leaders may take in consequence of their enhanced awareness and understanding of the manner in which their own behaviours influence the behaviour of their subordinates. Such strategies are the leaders' attempts to augment behaviours they perceive as being effective, and/or to remedy behaviours they perceive as being detrimental, to the behaviour of their subordinates. When leaders adopt accomplishment strategies, the objective is to achieve improvements in some aspects of themselves that are noticeable to their subordinates. These improvements differ from cognitive processes that occur at a psychological level and so are not directly visible to subordinates. If the accomplishment strategies are successful, leaders should see a corresponding change in the behaviour of their subordinates for whom they have primarily made these changes.

7.2.1 Self Improvement

Self improvement refers to those leader actions that are aimed at improving a leader's standard of performance and behaviour in an attempt to change the behaviour of their subordinates. When leaders perceive that personal shortfalls in performance and behaviour impact adversely on subordinate behaviour, these leaders may attempt to rectify these shortfalls to mitigate such adverse influences. When leaders are diligent in rectifying behavioural impacts on subordinates, these subordinates can be unleashed to attain a higher level of performance. In contrast, when leaders fail to rectify adverse

behavioural impacts on their subordinates, these subordinates can be limited in their ability to attain the desired level of performance.

Self improvement is composed of two separate strategies – performance and behaviour. *Performance* refers to those leader strategies that are aimed at improving a leader's standard or level of work outcomes or achievements in an attempt to change the behaviour of their subordinates. *Behaviour* refers to those leader strategies that are aimed at improving a leader's perceived standard of behaviour in an attempt to change the behaviour of their subordinates.

7.2.1.1 Performance

Performance refers to those leader strategies that are aimed at improving a leader's standard or level of work outcomes or achievements in an attempt to change the behaviour of their subordinates. Sometimes leaders may become aware that their performance is regarded as below standard by their subordinates, and that, in turn, this situation is having a detrimental impact on subordinate behaviour. In response to this awareness leaders may make a conscious effort to raise the level of their perceived work performance. On the other hand, leaders may become aware that their performance is regarded by their subordinates as being of a high standard. In response to this awareness leaders may be further encouraged to augment this performance in an attempt to gain continuing approval from their subordinates in the form of positive behavioural reactions.

Leader performance is an important issue for Vera. If subordinates perceive her level of performance to be deficient she is willing to “*change my level of performance to try to change that perception*”. Vera wants to perform at a level that she perceives she is capable of achieving. She knows what she wants to achieve and is keen to make positive changes in order to perform at that level. Vera is now comfortable that focusing on her own development will have significant benefits in relation to her interactions with subordinates. As Vera is improving her performance, she is gaining more confidence to push forward. It has changed her attitude in regard to blaming Mark and she is now prepared to improve herself and hopes to drag him along. Her strategy of monitoring subordinate status has alerted her to her own inability to change other people directly in the absence of looking at her own performance.

At the same time, leaders may be aware that their efforts to improve their own performance may set unrealistic expectations of their subordinates who, in consequence, may not be able to cope. When leaders' high performance expectations exceed those of their subordinates, those subordinates may feel that they are being "*rushed*" as a result of the mismatch. Thus, leaders may deliberately moderate their performance drive. This is the situation for Vera who has realised that the performance achievements she has set for herself must not be allowed to overtake the motivation that she is gradually enhancing in her crews.

7.2.1.2 Behaviour

Behaviour refers to those leader strategies that are aimed at improving a leader's perceived standard of behaviour in an attempt to change the behaviour of their subordinates. Sometimes leaders may become aware that their behaviour is regarded as below standard by their subordinates, and that, in turn, this situation is having a detrimental impact on subordinate behaviour. In response to this awareness leaders may make a conscious effort to improve their behavioural standards. Positive changes in leader behaviour often influence corresponding positive changes in subordinate behaviour.

Harry's behaviour has been perceived to improve in how he relates to workers. Phil claims that his recent behaviour on job sites is a vast improvement to a few years ago. He is seen to be making a genuine effort. Vera is also making a conscious effort with her behaviour. When she finally gets "*sick*" of a situation, she now changes her own behaviour and the positive response to this encourages her more. Vera eventually realised that until she changed her own behaviour, Mark's negative behaviour would continue to be detrimental to her workers' overall efforts to perform. Having made an impact with her initial change in behaviour, Vera is now committed to continuing down this path.

Megan claims she does observe other people's behaviours and takes appropriate cues. To achieve improvements in behaviours, Megan tries to emulate the behaviour of another supervisor that she perceives as successful. Megan also learns from the less successful behaviours of other supervisors and avoids those she feels could fail her. When Megan does encounter a subordinate's behaviour issues, she attempts to work

through the issues with the subordinate and endeavours to develop improvement strategies for herself.

However, when a leader reads cues but fails to respond with appropriate behaviour changes, their subordinate's behaviour may deteriorate and can limit them in their performance. Leaders who make no effort to change their behaviours often fail to gain respect. A previous chief had a reputation for pushing people around. Many AGRO workers heard stories of his boardroom behaviour. Some workers claimed to have personally witnessed poor behaviours themselves. Opinions formed by workers following such behaviours can detract considerably from their motivation.

7.2.2 Image Improvement

Image improvement refers to those leader strategies that are aimed at improving how their subordinates perceive them in an attempt to change the behaviour of those subordinates. Some leaders appear to focus more on how other people see them and, in consequence, they are keen to make improvements to their image to ensure that they are seen as credible leaders and/or to project themselves as amiable characters.

Leaders who attempt to improve their image can employ strategies aimed at changing the way in which subordinates perceive their credibility and their character. *Credibility* refers to a leader's capability to be believed and encompasses those strategies that are aimed at enhancing the leader's image of being perceived as reliable and trustworthy. *Character* refers to a combination of individual qualities (such as values, attitudes, beliefs, and personality traits and attributes) and encompasses those leader strategies that are aimed at enhancing the leader's image of being perceived as possessing a positive and amenable character.

7.2.2.1 Credibility

Credibility refers to a leader's capability to be believed and encompasses those strategies that are aimed at enhancing the leader's image of being perceived as reliable and trustworthy. One of the traits that workers often identify as desirable in a leader is that of credibility, and as a result of this realisation, many leaders recognise this as an important quality to be perceived to possess for the purpose of improving their image.

Credibility is important to Phil. He feels the need to achieve credibility in his role as union organiser. He tries to show his fellow workers that he is “*fair dinkum*” by planning for their future. Vera measures her success at achieving credibility by her ability to avoid union problems. She feels this reflects the positive attitude she displays towards her workers.

However, workers have their own perceptions of their leaders’ credibility and the effort they make to earn this, and these perceptions may often differ significantly from those of their supervisors. For Craig, part of being a credible leader is to “*make the decision and stick to it*”. His experience with an indecisive leader has left Craig demotivated, and this leader appears to be unaware of his lack of credibility as perceived by one of his subordinates. Another subordinate (himself a senior manager) regards a previous chief as being credible because he “*tells it as it is*”. In turn, this same senior manager is perceived by one of his subordinate’s as a person who “*does not lie*” and this credibility helps him to gain cooperation and respect. Megan defines credible leaders as those who are “*appropriately located in the position that they are in ...*” and who do not over-intervene in their subordinates’ work by focusing on the “*very finest detail*”. Megan attempts to concentrate on these characteristics in her own role because she finds it difficult to respect a leader whom she does not regard as credible.

7.2.2.2 Character

Character refers to a combination of individual qualities (such as values, attitudes, beliefs, and personality traits and attributes) and encompasses those leader strategies that are aimed at enhancing the leader’s image of being perceived as possessing a positive and amenable character. Workers often identify qualities such as honesty, trustworthiness, supportiveness, confidence in staff, and accessibility as constituting desirable leader characteristics, and as a result of this realisation, many leaders recognise these as important qualities to be perceived to possess for the purpose of improving their image.

For Garry and Phil the value of honesty is important and this helps to shape both of their characters. For Garry, “*my major thing about presenting pictures to the troops is to tell them the truth as I know it*”. He wants to be honest about the state of affairs in the

service delivery group. In addition, when Phil is in his leader role, he believes that he portrays the positive image to his fellow workers that *“they know I’ll never lie to them”*.

Phil is also aware of the need to enhance his image by trying to change the perception that some people have of him of possessing defensive and negative characteristics. His values appear to have changed with new opportunities that became available after his injury. His previous resistance to any change dissolved when he saw no end to the help and supportiveness people were prepared to give to him. He seems to regret his poor attitude of the past and is keen to enhance his image by changing that perception.

Megan perceives leaders’ characters to be lacking when they fail to delegate and do not display confidence in their staff. She believes a leader with a stronger character is able to trust subordinates more easily. Megan applies the same criteria to herself. If she perceives any flaw in her own character she is determined to remedy it.

A subordinate’s image of a leader may change according to that subordinate’s familiarity with a leader, or according to different perceptions of that leader’s character when performing different roles. Vera’s view of Harry was based on her lack of knowledge of him. Having had little contact, she had only experienced him make critical observations about her crews’ work. During the early period in her new leader role she found Harry to be inaccessible. Only after she had got to know Harry did she find her initial impressions to be wrong, as she began to experience and understand some of the more positive aspects of Harry’s character. Additionally, Vera’s image of Steve was influenced by her perception that she had not seen *“great leader qualities”* in him. However, she changes her perception of Steve when she observes his characteristics in meetings, *“he does act as a leader in these meetings and it has a very positive effect on everybody”*. Either Vera may have perceived aspects of his character she had not noticed before, or Steve may have attempted to change his image by developing that aspect of his character.

7.2.3 Positional Improvement

Positional improvement refers to those leader actions that are aimed at improving a leader’s position in relation to a situation they can control in an attempt to change the behaviour of their subordinates. Leaders can improve their position either by thinking

ahead to anticipate the approach they should adopt in order to deal adequately with certain issues and events, or by thinking ahead to anticipate how their own work should be planned. *Approach* refers to those leader strategies that are aimed at improving the manner in which leaders deal with an event or issue in an attempt to change the behaviour of their subordinates. *Work* refers to those leader strategies that are aimed at improving the manner in which leaders plan their work in an attempt to change the behaviour of their subordinates.

7.2.3.1 Approach

Approach refers to those leader strategies that are aimed at improving the manner in which leaders deal with an event or issue in an attempt to change the behaviour of their subordinates. Workers can often display significant reactions to a leader's approach when it substantially impacts on them. For example, when leaders have an approach that is perceived as not being in the best interests of workers or the organisation, staff can become disenchanted. This was the case for Garry when he observed that a chief "*doesn't have a plan for [AGRO]*". In contrast, if leaders adopt a positive approach to an issue which attempts to minimise negative impacts on workers, the workers' behaviour can often be influenced in a positive way.

This was certainly the case for Garry during the introduction of commercialisation. "*I was thinking much further ahead, I was thinking of how we were going to compete, what we were going to do to compete, and how we were going to change the organisation*". Garry's approach to commercialisation emphasised the necessity to stay alert for the extra opportunities that might be provided by this new scenario. With regard to the same issue, Phil admired Harry's approach with regard to commercialisation. He perceived Harry to be committed to the organisation by telling workers "*he wants to fight*". Megan has her own approach of allowing her subordinates ownership of their work processes and is keen to show confidence in them. She sees this approach as being desired by her subordinates.

7.2.3.2 Work

Work refers to those leader strategies that are aimed at improving the manner in which leaders plan their work in an attempt to change the behaviour of their subordinates. Planning work is how the workers ensure their daily achievements. Leaders are

expected to plan to give subordinates their work ahead of time and so allow these subordinates to plan as well. Inadequate planning by leaders often manifests itself in inadequate planning by their subordinates. Being able to achieve planned outcomes gives workers satisfaction.

Craig expects his supervisor to plan ahead and becomes very frustrated when his day's plan is interrupted because his supervisor has not planned. Craig resents having to bail out this supervisor. Sue feels her supervisor could do more to help her position by taking an interest in the work and displaying better planning skills. Sue needs her supervisor to make provision for extra resources during peak workloads, or else to plan the workflow better so that peak loads occur when she has her colleague Joan in the office as well. The excessive work, which always 'must' be completed that day, always arrives on Fridays when there is only one person in the office.

Clay plans work with his crews to ensure that it is achieved safely. He and his workers discuss jobs so that all aspects are anticipated and to ensure safe and timely completion. Megan perceives that competing priorities can detract from her staff's ability to achieve timely outcomes. To alleviate the risk of her subordinates becoming bogged down she likes to plan workloads with them to ensure there is a balance. Lewis was let down by one of his subordinates and, in consequence, he now develops ongoing plans with this subordinate. He regularly reviews the work in progress and priorities so that he is not caught out again. Vera organises regular meetings with her supervisor and subordinates in order to ensure that all work is under control, that workloads are manageable, and that priorities are clearly understood. This allows everyone involved to experience satisfaction from achievements in their work. Vera, therefore, finds it very frustrating whenever her supervisor has failed to provide sufficient information for her to plan work, or when she fails to achieve her plan because the information provided is defective.

7.3 Summary

This chapter has presented an analysis of *Leader Centred Strategies*, the third of the three types of leader strategies that comprise the phase of leader strategising within the overall basic social process of minimising attainment deficit. Leader centred strategies are leader strategies that focus directly on leaders and endeavour to minimise workers'

attainment deficits by improving any leader behaviours that may be adversely influencing the behaviours of their subordinates.

The overall category of leader centred strategies is comprised of two separate sub-strategies – cognitive processes and accomplishment strategies. *Cognitive processes* refers to those leader strategies that are aimed at increasing a leader's awareness and understanding of the manner in which their own behaviours influence the behaviours of their subordinates. *Accomplishment strategies* refer to those leader strategies that are aimed at leaders accomplishing an improvement in some aspect(s) of themselves in an attempt to change the behaviour of their subordinates.

Cognitive processes comprise two main strategies – enhance perceptions and enhance understanding. *Enhance perceptions* refers to those leader strategies that are aimed at increasing the awareness of leaders of the extent to which their own behaviour or actions influence the behaviour of their subordinates. *Enhance understanding* refers to those leader strategies that are aimed at gaining a more intense knowledge and insight into the processes by means of which their behaviour impacts on subordinates.

Accomplishment strategies are aimed at accomplishing three types of leader improvements – self improvement, image improvement, and positional improvement. *Self improvement* refers to those leader actions that are aimed at improving a leader's standard of performance and behaviour in an attempt to change the behaviour of their subordinates. *Image improvement* refers to those leader strategies that are aimed at improving how their subordinates perceive them in an attempt to change the behaviour of those subordinates. *Positional improvement* refers to those leader actions that are aimed at improving a leader's position in relation to a situation they can control in an attempt to change the behaviour of their subordinates.

Having presented the basic social process of minimising attainment deficit in chapter 4, and the three leader strategies of this process in chapters 5-7, the following chapter attempts to locate this theory within the wider extant literature.

8 Literature Comparison

“When I ask in my seminars ‘how many of you would agree that the vast majority of the workforce possess far more capability, creativity, talent, initiative and resourcefulness than their present jobs allow them to use?’ the affirmative response is about 99 per cent” Covey (1992:15).

The purpose of a literature comparison in an orthodox grounded theory study is to locate the contribution of the emergent theory within the extant literature (Noble, 2002). To this end, similarities and differences are discovered in relation to existing works. Selectivity according to perceived areas of relevance is the guiding logic (Guthrie, 2000).

In contrast to more positivist methodologies, orthodox grounded theory researchers only commence a review of the extant literature once a grounded theory has been fully developed. This has two advantages. Firstly, it prevents the researcher from forcing the data into pre-conceived categories as a result of reading the extant literature (Glaser, 1992), and secondly, it allows the use of a delimiting process that narrows the scope of the literature review to permit a more informed comparison (Glaser, 1998, 2001). It is the emergent theory itself that leads the researcher to the extant literature to be examined during the final stage of the research process. The researcher does not attempt complete coverage. This is neither feasible nor desirable. Omissions are inevitable (Guthrie 2000). The benchmark for inclusion in the comparison with the literature is perceived relevance, stemming from the delimitation of the scope of the literature to that which bears the closest relationship with the emergent grounded theory. The literature has to earn its way into the comparison and so allowing a more informed analysis.

The substantive leadership process of Minimising Attainment Deficit (MAD), as presented in chapters 4-7, has presented a cyclical two-stage (leader actioning and subordinate actioning), seven-phase model (leader strategising, subordinate perceptioning, subordinate emotioning, subordinate behaviouring, leader perceptioning, leader concerning, and leader probleming). The main concern of the participants within the particular substantive setting of AGRO was to minimise the gap between their current work reality and that level which they believed themselves capable of attaining

(their potential). Effective leadership is regarded by the participants as that process which allows them to minimise this discrepancy.

A major point of significance of the leadership process of minimising attainment deficit is the contribution this makes to the literature on social influence leadership theory within specific situational contexts. Therefore the literature on situational analysis and leadership processes earns its way into this literature comparison. Additionally, the interplay between the two sub-core categories of leader actioning and subordinate actioning, to create a continuous context-action feedback cycle, is also an element of significance in the theory. Therefore the literature on these two sub-core categories also earns its way into the comparison. However, for the sake of the analysis these two process stages are not examined by means of a strict demarcation. Instead, the leader action – subordinate behaviour link is examined first, followed by the subordinate behaviour – leader action feedback link. Therefore, this literature comparison chapter is divided into three sections as below:

- Situational analysis and the leadership process
- Linkage between leader action and subordinate behaviour
- Linkage between subordinate behaviour and leader action.

8.1 Situational Analysis and the Leadership Process

As discussed in chapter 1, one of the two main areas in which the present research claims significance is that of contextual sensitivity. The research has not attempted to marginalise contextual issues (Bryman et al, 1996a). On the contrary, it has elevated them to centre stage. By focusing the research within the single organisation of AGRO, the present study has responded to recent calls within the literature to situate processual leadership research within specific institutional and situational contexts (Alvesson, 1996; Biggart and Hamilton, 1987). By so doing it is more able to meet Bryman's (1992:158) plea to "probe more deeply to ask whether (the) chief tenets of good leadership are appropriate to some organisations...but not others".

Because leadership is regarded as a relationship among persons in a given social setting at a given historic moment, Biggart and Hamilton (1987) suggest that any leadership theory must consider the legitimating principles, dominant structures of authority, and

the norms of the social structure in which leadership occurs. The purpose of the present research is to understand leadership as a social influence process within a particular substantive setting. As discussed in chapter 2, research suggests that both leader practices and subordinate perceptions of leadership are critically affected by the impact of organisational context (Jones and McLean, 1998; Leavy and Wilson, 1994). By focusing research within AGRO it is possible to generate a leadership process theory within a specific and familiar context, and thus make a distinctive contribution to the elucidation of that context. Thus, findings acquire their relevance within a certain kind of context.

The contextual environment within which the leadership process theory of minimising attainment deficit has emerged is of particular significance. AGRO is a large, complex, bureaucratic and hierarchical public sector organisation, that possesses a dominant engineering culture, and has not experienced periods of tumultuous change. The absence of significant change and the prevalence of long periods of relative stability have not created many significant new work opportunities for workers. Workers can only hope to progress within the system by moving their way up the hierarchy. Within such a context, when individuals are left to their own devices it is easy for them to feel abandoned and unappreciated within the system. They regard leaders to be those people who recognise their predicament and associated needs, and who, in consequence, intervene in a proactive manner to enhance the individual's chances of progress by minimising their attainment deficit.

The dominance of the engineering mindset stresses respect for the chain of command, dependence, discipline, conformity, limited mobility, specialisation, promotion through the ranks, and employer loyalty (Vaughan, 1996; Perrucci, 1970; Zussman, 1971). When the engineering mindset and the bureaucratic mindset are combined, these factors are compounded. Bensman and Lilienfeld (1973:291) define the bureaucrat as a "paid official employed in a large-scale organisation whose work is delimited by relatively narrow, legal spheres of competence or jurisdictions arranged in strict hierarchies". The official enters the job as a career and advances through the hierarchy on the basis of examinations and merit ratings. One's career will advance only if the individual is willing to serve. The bureaucratic individual is "a cog in a gigantic machine to which he must submit himself" (Bensman and Lilienfeld, 1973:292).

The aspect of powerlessness is a pervading element of the bureaucratic environment. As narrow expertness increases, the individual becomes less and less able to see the overall intentions that govern his/her actions and the consequences of those actions. Bensman and Lilienfeld (1973:292) define this situation as one of “trained incompetence”, where the individual “more and more becomes an expert over less and less”. In large organisations (such as AGRO) the total flow of rationality of action is broken down into thousands of formal procedural acts, each or only a series of which fall within the jurisdiction of any one official. No one official may know, or needs to know, the substantive rationality which governs the action of the total enterprise. The powerlessness of the bureaucratic individual (caused by strict delimitation of jurisdiction and by standardised procedures) can cause individuals to attempt to enhance what minor powers they do possess. One method is to conspire (perhaps unwittingly) against the bureaucracy by forming friendship groups, cliques, informal organisations and procedures to make the environment more human and informal (Bensman and Lilienfeld, 1973).

Within such a context of a large, slow change, public sector, engineering bureaucracy (‘Iscepseb’) workers who might be inclined to feel lost within the system realise that through their own efforts they can only achieve so much in their quest for liberation from organisational constraints. Career advancement in an environment with an absence of tumultuous change implies moving through the organisational management hierarchy. The bureaucratic individual (from a standpoint of relative powerlessness, technical narrowness, and jurisdictional delimitation) can only hope to progress through the hierarchy by means of calling upon the type of friendship groups, cliques, informal organisations and procedures as presented by Bensman and Lilienfeld (1973) in the discussion above. There exists a high expectation that a leader is somebody with whom they can form this type of ‘liberating’ and ‘informal’ alliance. In collaboration with leaders the individual can spread the otherwise narrow realm of expertise and influence. Leaders, therefore, are seen as people who are able to intervene positively in this situation and who would interact with the subordinate in order to facilitate the movement of the subordinate towards the achievement of their full potential. This enhances the chances of subordinate career progress through the organisational hierarchy. In other words, it is not *what* the leader does that is important in the

participants' perception of leadership, but rather the reason *why* the leader intervenes. Purpose is more important than substance.

Thus, the basic social process of minimising attainment deficit is seen to relate closely to the 'lscpseb' context and to the advancement requirements of individuals who work within such an environment. Many of the aspects of the leadership process involved in the MAD model are not concerned with the usual aspects of leadership associated with large-scale change scenarios (or in more fast-moving, flexible, or organic enterprises or professions) such as vision, charisma, inspiration and transformational attributes. Instead, many of the aspects of the MAD leadership process mirror issues usually associated with more mundane elements in *management* and *organisation* rather than leadership.

8.1.1 Non Grounded Theory Studies

Bryman (1992) presents four major types of leadership approach as shown in figure 8.1 below. The trait and style approaches were generally presented by theorists and researchers as universal approaches, that is they were offered as prescriptive one-best-way approaches that suited all situations. In contrast, the contingency approach proposes that the effectiveness of a leadership style is situationally contingent. Some of the more classic contingency theories include those of Fiedler (1967), Hersey and Blanchard (1982), House (1973), and Vroom and Jago (1988). Although the principle of contingency research is still strongly supported (from the viewpoint of there being no one-best-way of leading in all situations), the contingency approach as epitomised by these (and other) classic theories fell into disfavour for a number of reasons. As the number of possible contingencies (environmental and subordinate related) proliferated, many potentially useful ideas became hedged in with a panoply of ifs and buts. Theories became overly complicated and dry, evidence became inconsistent, and implications became ambiguous.

Period	Approach	Core Theme
Up to late 1940s	Trait Approach	What the leader “is”
Late 1940s – late 1960s	Style (behavioural) Approach	What the leader “does”
Late 1960s – early 1980s	Contingency Approach	It all depends: leadership affected by the situation
Since early 1980s	New Leadership Approach	Leaders need vision

Figure 8.1 *Trends in Leadership Theory and Research*
(adapted from Bryman, 1992:1)

In comparison with these three broad approaches, the MAD leadership process incorporates elements of trait, style, and contingency factors, although in principle it is closer to the spirit of the contingency approach because of the common emphasis on situational context. However, in contrast to the contingency approach, the MAD process has not emphasised the complexity, ambiguity and inconsistency which bedevilled the classic models. Instead, the MAD process has emphasised situational analysis through broader and more macro factors such as those incorporated within the ‘lscpseb’ context.

Bryman (1992) uses the term New Leadership to refer to the literature which has emerged since the early 1980s with an emphasis on transformational, charismatic, visionary, inspirational, or magic leadership. This approach is to be contrasted with the so-called Old Leadership with an emphasis on management and managers rather than leadership and leaders, which is transactional, non transformational, and non visionary in nature. One of the surprising features of the New Leadership literature lies in the observation that much of it heralds a return to the universalistic one-best-way approach to thinking about leadership that was characteristic of the trait and behavioural research prior to the late 1960s. Only a small number of research studies allude to the situational contingency of the New Leadership and this is often done in passing. Some of these studies, as cited in Bryman (1992), can now be examined.

Researchers make occasional reference that broader macro situational factors can be relevant in the emergence and prevalence of transformational leadership. Tichy and Devanna (1990) equate the transformational leader to the emergence of the unstable

competitive environments of many modern business organisations. Transactional leadership is equated to earlier eras characterised by gradually expanding markets and non-existent competition. Woycke (1990) draws on data about third world political leaders to suggest that charismatic leadership may be particularly appropriate to organisations in developing countries. House (1977) suggests that charismatic leaders are more likely to emerge when conditions are stressful. Roberts and Bradley (1988) studied a charismatic school superintendent who ceased to enjoy the status of a charismatic leader when she became a commissioner. Two situational factors appear to have been at least partly responsible for this failure to transfer her charisma: firstly, the new situation facing her was not one of crisis, and secondly, she had much more limited authority because she was directly accountable to the governor. Bass and Avolio (1990) pursue a similar theme in suggesting that such leaders are more likely to emerge under conditions of growth, change and crisis. Such leaders find more ready acceptance in organically structured organisations and in environments characterised by rapidly changing technologies and markets. The authors also suggest that mechanistic organisations “may inhibit transformational leaders and be resistant to their influence” (Bass and Avolio, 1990:245). Unfortunately, and perhaps surprisingly, Bryman (1992) observes that there has been virtually no attempt to examine these suggestions empirically.

Bryman (1992:160) offers two general suggestions that flow from the speculations and evidence of the “meagre literature” on situational effects. Firstly, leaders exhibiting the New Leadership probably find it easier to operate when conditions are stressful or when there is considerable uncertainty. Leaders who seek to activate a vision which entails substantial change when the organisation is not facing pressing difficulties are likely to find it much more difficult to get support than when there is an acknowledgement of crisis. Secondly, there is a possibility that when leaders are heavily constrained and their room for manoeuvre is adversely affected, transformational or charismatic leaders are unlikely to emerge. Thus, the overall conclusion is that leaders in mechanistic organisations, leaders with little autonomy or with great restrictions on their time, and leaders who operate in environments with low performance expectations, will find it difficult to produce the anticipated effects of the behaviour patterns associated with the New Leadership.

The MAD leadership process that emerged from the present research strongly supports Bryman's conclusions flowing from his review of the "meagre" literature on situational effects. Participants made little or no reference to transformational, charismatic or visionary leadership aspects and instead focused on the non transformational and non charismatic (basically *managerial*) aspects characteristic of the Old Leadership. In line with the conclusions of Bryman's review, the 'lscpseb' situational context, from which the MAD process emerged, represents a characteristic mechanistic setting with no imminent crisis or pressing difficulties, relatively low levels of uncertainty and stress, an absence of strong competitive pressures, and where participants feel heavily constrained, with little room for manoeuvre within a context of limited authority, autonomy and jurisdiction.

Leavy and Wilson (1994) examined strategy and leadership within a number of industrial settings in Ireland. Their intention was to build a relational model of strategy formation rather than a theory of the leadership process, and their analysis did not involve data collection from subordinate participants. Despite these differences their research does have relevance for the MAD process. The approach in their research was historical, inductive and contextual. Leaders in their study were viewed as tenants of time and context. Leavy and Wilson reviewed the voluntarism-determinism dimension of leadership and strategy (whether organisations are in control of their own strategies and destinies, or whether their environments and context are key). In situations of significant change (where leaders are categorised as builders, revitalisers, or turnarounders), leaders can often transcend their situational contexts. However, in slow change scenarios (where leaders are categorised as inheritors), leaders are more concerned with continuity and consolidation rather than change, and are seen to build on progress rather than make any new dramatic strategic departures. These leaders tend to be dominated by their environmental context, rather than transcend that context. This latter scenario closes mirrors the 'lscpseb' context within the present research, providing further support for the MAD process which has emerged within a context-dependent, Old Leadership situation.

Another point of similarity in their research concerns the inter-relationship between content and process in the study of leadership and strategy. Leavy and Wilson note that the dominant tendency in the literature has been to study either the *what* or the *how* of

leadership or strategy rather than both at the same time. The field has been influenced by the pre-dominance of the Harvard two-stage formulation (content – what) and implementation (process – how) model. As powerful and productive as the division of content and process has been, Leavy and Wilson take their point of departure through the work of Pettigrew and Whip (1991) who has encouraged research that explores how process and content are related in strategy and leadership and how they both interlink with context. This interlinking of process, content and context is a feature of similarity between the MAD leadership process and the approaches of Pettigrew and Leavy and Wilson. Thus, for instance, the phase of *leader strategising* as presented in chapters 5-7 is heavily content oriented, with an emphasis on presenting the *what* of the three separate subordinate, environment, and leader centred strategies. However, this is interlinked with the overall MAD leadership process as presented in chapter 4 which analyses the process of *how* the participants seek to resolve their main concern.

8.1.2 Grounded Theory Studies

Henderson (1998) investigated the formative life experiences of CEOs that helped to shape their use of a participative style of leadership. Henderson developed a core variable of *Extensive Engagement*, defined as an integral sense of engagement and involvement in multiple aspects of their lives, both intrapersonally and interpersonally. She interviewed seven CEOs from mid-sized Canadian oil and gas companies, all of them chosen because they were identified by industry associates as CEOs who practiced a participative style of leadership.

One of the important properties of intrapersonal engagement identified by Henderson was *values beyond personal needs*, defined as a state of being motivated by values that go beyond personal needs. One value given prominence was the desire to improve the world around them and to “somehow leave the world a better place for them having been there” (Henderson, 1998:80). Other prominent values were integrity, responsibility, honesty, trust and charity. These findings are supported by the MAD model throughout the stage of *leader actioning*, especially in the phases of *leader concerning* and *leader strategising*. However, Henderson’s model is not a model of the leadership process. Rather, it is an explanation of the factors that lie behind the development of a participative leadership style as identified by the leaders themselves. Other crucial aspects of orthodox grounded theory are also ignored by Henderson, such

as an enunciation of the main concern of the participants, and the absence of theoretical sampling and the concept of property saturation.

Nespoli (1991) identified six major themes from nurses' descriptions of a positive relationship with first-line managers who were perceived as leaders. These were: (1) the leader's creation of a positive work environment, (2) the leader's maintenance of an individualised relationship with the follower, (3) the leader's creation of opportunities for the growth of the nurse, (4) the leader's demonstration and maintenance of professional competence, (5) the leader's personal attributes or virtues, and (6) professional development issues. Most of these themes find active support in the MAD model. Theme 1 correlates with the property of *create positive atmosphere*; theme 2 correlates with *subordinate status*; theme 3 correlates with *develop subordinates*; and themes 4 and 5 correlate with *leader centred strategies*.

Nespoli's methodology has the advantage of obtaining data from subordinates concerning their perception of leadership, rather than from leaders only. However, her model merely represents a collection of themes and does not develop a theory of the leadership process. The main concern of the participants is not identified and no core variable is developed. Purposive, rather than theoretical, sampling is employed and the concept of property saturation is not followed.

Brooks (1998) derived the core variable of *Weighing Up Change* to theorise how middle managers respond to organisational change. His study was conducted in a unique contextual setting – a large New Zealand local government authority undergoing significant change. The model is a causal-consequence sequence based on Glaser's (1978) 6C code, and is not presented as a theory of the leadership process. Nevertheless, the model does have relevance to the present research. For instance, in Brooks' model the role of a person's *immediate manager* is important from two perspectives – the extent to which the manager is *supportive* and the extent to which he/she *walks the talk*. In the MAD model these concepts correlate with the category of *support subordinates* and the property of *role model* respectively.

Brooks' model shows that as a consequence of the manner in which managers perceive (weigh-up) the content and process of change, they subsequently pass through stages of emotional and behavioural response. This process is captured in the MAD model by the

stage of *subordinate actioning* (perceptioning, emotioning and behaviouring). In Brooks' (1998:78) model it is the consequence of a "for-and-against" evaluation of the content and process of change that triggers the subsequent emotions and behaviours. However, in the MAD model it is the perception of the gap between potential and current reality that triggers the subsequent emotions and behaviours. Given the contextual difference between the settings of the two pieces of research (in terms of different change scenarios) this similarity is significant in suggesting the importance of perceived disequilibrium situations for triggering emotional and behavioural responses amongst organisational actors. The particular types of disequilibrium to which participants pay attention are contingent upon the nature of the setting in which they are placed.

Irurita (1990, 1992, 1996) derived the core variable of *Optimising* to develop a theory of leadership that explained how senior nurse leaders in Western Australia achieved influence on the delivery of health care and how they advanced the nursing profession. The main concern of the nurse leaders was how to overcome and compensate for a previous repressing context (stagnation, retardation and mediocrity) and move nursing through a new context of turbulent change to a situation of excellence. Optimising is defined as a process of making the best of the situation, making the most effective (optimal) use of all available and potential resources. It is comprised of four distinct phases – floundering, surviving, investing, and transforming. Floundering is associated with a context of repression, surviving with inertia, investing with social change and expanded opportunities, and transforming with significant change.

Within the context of the MAD model, the processes of surviving (inertia) and investing (social change) are of the most relevance. Irurita's characterisation of surviving leadership strategies are those that make effective use of available resources to sustain basic performance levels. In essence they are "routine things" of leadership (Irurita, 1992:19). Examples include good management practices, planning, communication, delegation, time management, and self-education. However, characterisation of investing leadership strategies are those that develop potential resources for investment in the future. Examples include mentoring, staff development and positive role modelling with a view to developing subordinates' potential.

The MAD model does not distinguish between surviving and investing leadership strategies. However, the contextual setting of AGRO sits neatly within the environment of both inertia and social change. Correspondingly, similar concepts have emerged from the data. For instance, surviving strategies (inertia) in the Optimising model correspond with *reduce communication barriers* and *operational planning* within the *environment centred strategies* of the MAD model. Additionally, investing strategies (social change) in the Optimising model correspond with *positive guidance* and *skills enhancement* within the *develop subordinates* category of the MAD model.

It is interesting to note that transforming leadership skills in the Optimising model incorporate aspects of charisma, vision, and inspiration. These are not evident in the MAD model due to the prevalent context of relative inertia and the absence of tumultuous change. As a result, despite the different terminology, the MAD model finds considerable support from the Optimising model within the specific contextual range of inertia-social change.

Parry (1997, 1999) derived the core variable of *Enhancing Adaptability* to develop a theory of the leadership process within the substantive context of turbulent change in selected Australian local government authorities. The core variable is comprised of two sub-core variables – *leadership manifestation* (which integrates leadership processes) and *following* (which integrates the outcomes of leadership). These two sub-core categories mutually influence each other. This model is similar to the MAD theory. Leadership manifestation is similar to *leader actioning*, and following is similar to *subordinate actioning*. There is a high degree of correlation between the two models in that the actions of leaders and followers (subordinates) mutually reinforce each other – leaders influence followers, followers influence leaders, and the process continues. This is a significant point of similarity in that this mutual reinforcement process within leadership theory is evident in situations of both turbulent change and relative inertia within Australian public sector organisations.

In Parry's model, leadership manifestation is comprised of six categories – accountable decisiveness, consultative consideration, person-job match, resource provision, uncertainty resolution, and role modelling (Parry, 1997:121). Many of these concepts are also mirrored in the *leader strategising* phase of the MAD model, especially strategies of reduce communication barriers, operational planning, develop subordinates,

support subordinates, and accomplishment strategies. The balance between task oriented and relationship oriented leader styles (accountable decisiveness and consultative consideration) is also alluded to in the MAD model. However, it is not so much *what* a leader's style is that is important in the MAD model but rather *why* that style is being applied (to minimise attainment deficit). The same allusion is relevant in the Enhancing Adaptability model where a leader's style is aimed at reducing uncertainty and helping followers to adapt to change.

Parry (1999:144) also considers that the leadership manifestation sub-core category can basically be divided into two major demarcations – *leader adaptability* (making self more adaptable to change and uncertainty), and *follower adaptability* (making followers more adaptable to change and uncertainty). These two concepts find similarities in the MAD model, although with the different objective of minimising the attainment deficit of their subordinates (in an inertia setting) rather than enhancing follower adaptability (in a turbulent change setting). Leader adaptability is referred to as *leader centred strategies* in the MAD model (comprised of cognitive processes and accomplishment strategies) where leaders focus directly on themselves and endeavour to minimise subordinates' attainment deficits by improving any leader behaviours that may be adversely affecting the behaviours of their subordinates. Follower adaptability is comprised of five strategies in the Enhancing Adaptability model (uncertainty resolution, resource provision, range of experiences, communicate a message, and complementarity of values). However, in the MAD model follower adaptability is referred to as *subordinate centred strategies* and *environment centred strategies* where leaders focus directly on subordinates themselves and on the wider environment to minimise subordinates' attainment deficits.

Walls (2002) derived the core variable of *Competence Frontier* to develop a theory of how civil engineers get through (cope with) difficult projects. She interviewed 39 New Zealand civil engineers working across a range of contractors, local councils and consultancies. Although not concerned with the topic of leadership, Walls' theory does have relevance for the present research from the point of view of the core variable. Engineers were found to be motivated to enhance their competence. The common concern of the participants was to do with performing competently in the roles that are presented by project involvement. Engineers develop and assess their own competence

through their involvement with projects. Competence includes not only technical competence but also managerial, relational and stress management types of competence. This main concern of the engineer participants is similar to the main concern of the engineer participants in the present research which found that participants wished to be unleashed to attain their full potential.

This close similarity between the two studies (that engineers are concerned to enhance their competence or attain their full potential) reveals that the two pieces of research provide strong support for each other. The concept of being an engineer is particularly important to their identity. Walls (2002:83) found that the engineering or role identity motive is a fairly stable motive that continues to drive engineers to attempt to advance their competence throughout their career. One difference between the two studies, however, is that the present research found participants to feel constrained below the level of their potential due to the restrictive features of a large bureaucratic organisation. In contrast, Walls' participants did not feel this extent of restraint. This probably stems from the nature of the workplaces which encompassed the theoretical sampling, that included the more flexible and organic environments of smaller consultancies and contractors, as well as local councils.

Walls found that participants processed their main concern through the core variable of *competence frontier*. This is defined as an engineer's self-concept of the extent of their competence, through the approximate position of their competence in terms of fulfilling their roles with their projects. This core variable (competence frontier) is similar to the core variable in the present research (minimising attainment deficit) which again reveals that the two pieces of research provide strong support for each other. One difference between the two studies, however, is that in the present research the participants expected leaders to intervene proactively in the process of minimising attainment deficit, and this constituted their perception of the leadership process. In contrast, Walls' participants did not express this perception of proactive engagement from others to the same extent. Again, this probably stems from the nature of the workplaces sampled. In the present research, participants worked within relatively powerless roles within a large single bureaucracy. In Walls' study, however, participants worked in more flexible and organic environments of smaller consultancies and contractors, as

well as local councils, and probably experienced more control over their own progress towards enhancement of their competence or attainment of their potential.

8.2 Linkage between leader action and subordinate behaviour

“Depending on the way people are managed they can either work to minimal specifications or unleash the sort of enthusiasm, energy, tenacity and synergy that makes one marvel at human capacity and creativity” (Whiteley 1995:45).

When leaders fail to intervene in the required manner (*leader strategising*) subordinates may perceive that little is being done to minimise their attainment deficit (*subordinate perceptioning*). This can act as a trigger to release various negative emotions (*subordinate emotioning*) which in turn can result in the exhibiting of detrimental behaviour (*subordinate behaviouring*). These processual links are important aspects of the MAD model. Comparisons will now be made with the literature to locate and analyse the significance of these links.

Melrose (1995) supports the contention that the greatest impact on an individual worker’s performance and attitude is provided by their leader. Workers judge the quality of leadership not by the intentions of their leaders but by their behaviours and actions – “the proof is in the pudding” (Melrose, 1995:65). Research conducted by Selvin (1960) has supported this contention. He published an early study on the effects of leadership, namely how the actions of leaders affect the behaviour of their followers. The study was conducted in several Army training companies in New Jersey, USA. He found the relationships between leaders and followers to be complex, involving both sociological and social-psychological aspects.

Theoretically and practically, the effects of leaders on their followers are central to the study of leadership. The theoretical importance of these effects is obvious: the idea of leadership is not meaningful without considering the followers. Practically, the effects of the leader’s actions are no less important. How, for example, can leaders be efficiently selected and trained without some knowledge of the ways in which the followers react to different kinds of leadership? The essence of Selvin’s model is shown in figure 8.2 below.

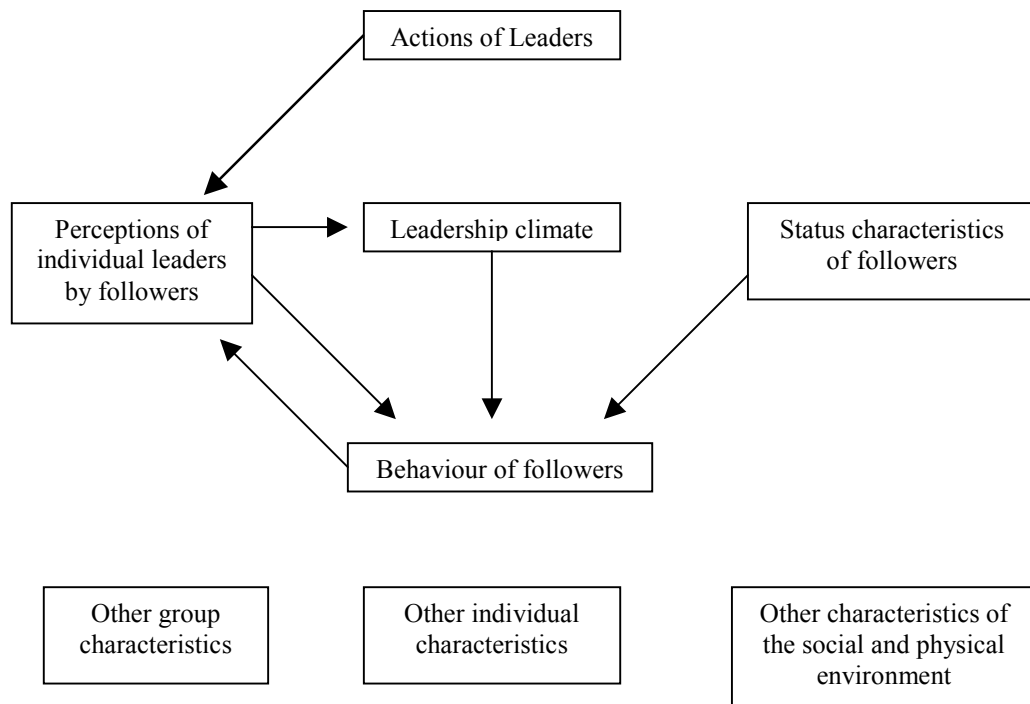


Figure 8.2 *Categories and Relationships in the Study of Leadership Effects*
(adapted from Selvin, 1960:9)

Two important factors are worth drawing attention to in this model, firstly, the actions of leaders affect the behaviour of followers, and secondly, the behaviour of followers depends upon the follower perceptions of individual leaders. In effect, follower perceptions act as an intervening variable between leader actions and follower behaviours. Both these relationships find support in the MAD leadership process. However, the MAD model extends Selvin's approach by postulating a feedback effect from follower behaviours back to leader actions.

Niehoff, Enz and Grover (1990) have also provided support for the linkage between top management actions and employee attitudinal and perceptual outcomes in a study conducted in a large insurance company situated in the midwestern United States. In particular, the employee attitudes and perceptions of organisational commitment, job satisfaction and role ambiguity were found to be closely correlated with management actions which inspired a shared vision, supported employee efforts, and allowed for employee influence in decision making.

Psychological literature and research studies on the self-concept also have important implications for the link between individual perceptions, emotions and behaviour.

James (1952:188) defined *the self* as “the sum total of all that he [a man] can call his”. The constituents of the self can be divided into three classes – material, social and spiritual (Knight, 1950). These different selves can give rise to rivalry and conflict so that it becomes imperative to pick out the one self “on which to stake his salvation ... all other selves thereupon become unreal, but the fortunes of this self are real” (James, 1952:200). For James, our self-feeling depends entirely on what we *back* ourselves to be and do. It is determined by the ratio of our actualities to our supposed potentialities: “self-esteem = success / pretensions” (James, 1952:200). For James then there existed an important distinction between the immediate and actual, and the remote and potential, “between the narrower and wider view, to the detriment of the former and the advantage of the latter” (Knight, 1950:105). The process of MAD supports these concepts. In the MAD model the term ‘actual reality’ correlates with actualities/success, whilst the term ‘potential’ correlates with pretensions/potentialities.

Markus and Nurius (1987) take these concepts further by introducing the notion of ‘possible selves’. People know what they have been like in the past, and what they are like currently. But they also have a vision of what is *possible* for them. They know what they would like to become, what they could become, and what they are afraid of becoming. Possible selves, therefore, are conceptions of the self in future states. This domain of self-knowledge is critical for understanding how the self-system regulates behaviour because it reflects how people conceive of their potential and their future. The repertoire of possible selves contained within an individual’s self-system are the cognitive manifestations of enduring goals, aspirations, motives, fears, and threats. They provide an essential link between the self-concept and motivation. Self-schemas define a past and present self, but even more importantly they define a future possible self. And it can be argued that this component is in fact the most significant aspect of the self-schema in shaping and fuelling behaviour.

Self-schemas are generalisations about the self, derived from such aspects as past experience, from one’s place in the social structure, or are constructed creatively and selectively from an individual’s past thoughts, feelings and behaviours in various domains. Represented within possible selves are the plans and strategies for achieving possibilities, that is the means-ends patterns for new behaviour. Thus it is the possible self that puts the self into action, that outlines the likely course of action. Possible

selves are the link between salient identities and role performance. They are the cognitive bridges between the present and the future. This concept of possible selves closely mirrors the term ‘potential’ used in the MAD model. When potential is not realised, subordinates have an expectation of what needs to be done to reach their desired end, and they expect their leaders to be instrumental in their intervention to close their attainment deficits.

Self-discrepancy theory (Higgins, Klein and Strauman, 1987) provides a general framework for understanding the emotional consequences of different types of self-inconsistencies. The theory distinguishes three domains of the self: actual self; ideal self (an individual’s representation of the attributes they would like to possess, i.e. their hopes, goals and wishes); and ought self (an individual’s representation of the attributes they believe they should or ought to possess, i.e. the sense of their duties, obligations or responsibilities). A person can be judged from either their own standpoint, or from that of a significant other. As a result, six kinds of self-state representations are possible: actual/own, actual/other, ideal/own, ideal/other, ought/own and ought/other.

Self-discrepancy theory proposes that people are motivated to reach a condition where their actual self-state matches their ideal and ought self-states. Particular emotional vulnerabilities (or discomfort) are associated with discrepancies between individuals’ actual self-states and potential self-states. Thus, for example, an actual/own: ideal/own discrepancy (where individuals fail to meet their personal aspirations) is associated with emotions of dissatisfaction, disappointment, depression, and shame. The MAD model is directly correlated with this discrepancy between one’s own actual and ideal situation. The perception of such a discrepancy can trigger such negative subordinate emotions as frustration, disillusionment, cynicism, disappointment and feeling unfulfilled.

The wider management and organisational behaviour literature has incorporated these psychological concepts within the framework of the rational-emotive behaviour model (Ellis and Harper, 1997; Clawson, 2002). This model has several elements: events and our perceptions of them, values and assumptions we have about the way the world should be, conclusions or judgements about the present situation, feelings, and behaviour. The key to understanding why people behave the way they do lies in the *comparison* of what they see and what they believe ought to be, the comparison between their perceptions and their VABEs (values, assumptions, beliefs and expectations).

Events that take place around us do not determine what we do. Rather the comparison we make between what takes place around us and our personal, basic assumptions about what ought to be taking place is what motivates our activity. This linkage between event and behaviour is referred to as the *meaning chain* (Clawson, 2002:78), as shown in Figure 8.3 below.

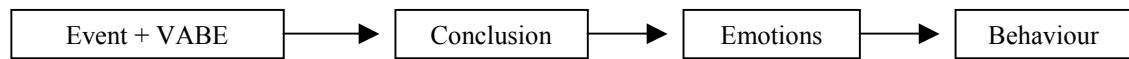


Figure 8.3 *Rational-Emotive Behaviour Model and the Meaning Chain*
(adapted from Clawson 2002:79)

Within the organisational behaviour literature the theory of job satisfaction, and its emotional and behavioural effects, provides an appropriate example of the ramifications of self-discrepancy theory and the rational-emotive behaviour model. Locke (1969) has defined job satisfaction as a function of the perceived relationship between what one wants from one's job and what one perceives it as offering. Any perception of an actual:ideal discrepancy by an individual results in a feeling of job dissatisfaction, which can result in the behavioural ramifications of exit, voice, loyalty or neglect (Hirschman, 1970; Farrell, 1983; Rusbult, Zembrodt and Gunn, 1982). Thus the activities and behaviours that subordinates engage in as responses to these dissatisfying periods is a route by which management can find out about its failures.

8.3 Linkage between subordinate behaviour and leader action

When subordinates exhibit certain types of behaviour (for example, detrimental behaviour resulting from a perception of a large attainment deficit) leaders can perceive these non-appropriate workplace actions (*leader perceptioning*). In response to these perceptions leaders may show concern for the welfare of their subordinates (*leader concerning*). This can result in leaders internalising the situation as a problem which they desire to solve (*leader probleming*) resulting in proactive actions to remedy the situation (*leader strategising*). These processual links are important aspects of the MAD leadership process. Subordinates who wish to resolve their main concern of minimising their attainment deficit rely upon the existence of a positive link between subordinate behaviours and leader actions. This relies upon the existence of a number of assumptions: namely that leaders are able to perceive the behaviours of their

subordinates, that leaders are concerned with the welfare of subordinates, that leaders possess a high likelihood of internalising problems rather than indulging in blame externalisation, and finally, that leaders devise and implement appropriate strategies to remedy the situation. For the sake of the analysis, this processual sequence will be referred to as altruistic leadership.

Altruistic leadership is that type of leadership based on an unselfish concern for the welfare and wellbeing of subordinates. What defines leadership behaviours and actions as altruistic is not based on *what* the leader does or *how* the leader behaves and acts, but *why* the leader behaves and acts that way. The actions of altruistic leaders are invariably based on adherence to a strong overriding philosophy or set of principles. Blanchard and O'Connor (1997) extol the view that leaders should approach their relationships with their employees based around a unifying factor of that leader's principles and values (managing by values). Ken Melrose, the acclaimed leader of the Toro company, also believes that most successful leaders lead from a set of principles and that this is an essential ingredient for long-term growth. Melrose (1995:37) states "my personal philosophy for success in business is that everyone has the potential to contribute to achieving the goals of the company – if you can unleash that potential, market leadership and financial success will be natural by-products".

The extant literature contains a number of themes and theories that can be represented as altruistic leadership. Four major themes that earn their way into this literature comparison by way of their relevance for the theory of minimising attainment deficit are presented below:

- Servant leadership
- Socialised power
- Individualised consideration.
- Super leadership.

8.3.1 Servant Leadership

In his writings, Robert Greenleaf (1991, 1998) discusses the need for a leadership model that puts serving others, including employees, customers and community, as the number one priority. A number of authors (Brumback, 1999; Giampetro-Meyer et al, 1998;

Spears, 1995) have attributed servant leadership to Greenleaf who began developing his conceptual ideas after reading Hermann Hesse's novel *Journey to the East* (1956). The central character of the story is Leo who appears as a servant to a group of men on a journey. Leo performs the lowliest, most menial tasks to serve the group, and he also cheers them with his good spirits and his singing (Daft, 1999:374). All goes well until Leo disappears and then the journey falls into disarray. Years later, when the narrator is taken to the headquarters of the Order that had sponsored the original journey he encounters Leo again. There he discovers that Leo whom he had first known as a servant was in fact the head of the Order, its guiding spirit and leader.

Hesse's fictional character is the epitome of the servant leader. After reading this story, Greenleaf concluded that the central meaning of it was that the great leader is first experienced as a servant to others, and that this simple fact is central to his or her greatness. True leadership emerges from those whose primary motivation is a deep desire to help others (Autry, 2001; DeSpain, 2000; McGee-Cooper and Looper, 2001). Blanchard (2000:4) states that amongst the cadre of business leaders there are those who are leaders first and there are those who are servants first. Being a leader first comes with tendencies to control, direct, and make decisions. Being a servant first comes with the tendency to only assume leadership if that is seen as the best way to serve.

The servant leadership style is probably most effective when followers are discouraged or disillusioned. This may arise when:

- followers have experienced past leaders who have made unrealistic promises or have exploited followers
- followers face a long or difficult task
- followers lack confidence in their own ability.

In this respect, the servant leadership style could be regarded as being relevant to the perceptions of participants operating within the context of an 'Iscape' environment as analysed earlier in this chapter. These arguments will not be repeated again at this stage, other than to emphasise the discouragement and disillusionment which can flow from a feeling of being lost within a system characterised by relative individual powerlessness, technical narrowness, and jurisdictional delimitation.

The concept of servant leadership is based on four basic precepts (Daft, 1999:375), all of which must be present for servant leadership to exist:

1. Place service before self-interest
2. Nurture others so that they grow as persons
3. Inspire trust by being trustworthy
4. Listen first to express confidence in others.

8.3.1.1 Place service before self-interest

Greenleaf's ideas are strongly biblical in their foundation. The idea behind servant leadership is that leadership derives naturally from a commitment to service. Servant leaders transcend self-interest to serve the needs of others. They view their leadership position as most useful when they are meeting followers' needs. In this sense, the servant leader is a servant first and leader second. It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead. According to Melrose (1995) serving others comes from the heart. "Real change in behaviour eventually requires a transformation of the heart – it is about character change, about being a good and caring person". Within the MAD leadership process, *leader centred strategies* capture this concept of leaders attempting to change themselves in order to change their subordinates' behaviour, and hence to serve their subordinates. The phase of *leader concerning* can also often lead to leaders putting their subordinates' needs first and so modifying their own behaviours to accommodate these. Covey (1992:160) describes the serving of others as a "privilege" and claims that the most selfless service is provided anonymously.

The servant leader concept focuses on the idea that leaders have the obligation to pursue service to others, rather than their own self-interest. Leaders must shift the focus of attention from their own needs and interests to the needs and interests of others. Autry (2001:10) proposes that "five ways of being" can help a leader achieve an attitude of serving. One of these five is "to be useful", to be a resource for subordinates, and to serve them. Within the MAD leadership process, the strategy of *support subordinates* demonstrates that leaders are conscious of the needs of their workers and focuses on *providing help* and on *affirming* the values of workers. Other *subordinate centred strategies* can also be adopted to fulfill those needs. The leader is perceived as the giver, not the taker.

Servant leaders are motivated not by what they can get from their position but by what their roles as leaders allow them to give to others, both within the organisation and in society as a whole. A servant leader therefore acts from moral values rather than greed, selfishness or fear. Thus leaders whose primary concerns are their own professional advancement, personal gain, financial reward, satisfaction of power needs, control, prestige, status, or a combination of these, are failing to meet the basic requirement of servant leadership. The fulfilment of others is the servant leader's principal aim. The servant leader calls for doing what is good and right for others even if it does not "pay off" financially. Blanchard (2000) believes that leaders who put service before self-interest can be easily identified because they are not possessive about their position. Such leaders see feedback as helping them serve better (and in terms of the MAD process utilise the *probleming* phase to take responsibility for perceived issues). Accepting such responsibility allows the leader to internalise any problems and adopt strategies to resolve them. Block (1993) has found this to be an area noticeably lacking in many leaders (and in terms of the MAD process utilise *blame externalisation* in consequence).

With reference to the present research, the *leader actioning* stage of the MAD leadership process is closely correlated with the focus on serving the needs of subordinates. In order to employ appropriate leader strategies for minimising attainment deficit, leaders must be able to appropriately perceive subordinate behaviour (*leader perceptioning*), show concern for the welfare of those subordinates (*leader concerning*), relevantly internalise their ability to be able to address the problem (*leader probleming*), and finally devise and employ strategic behaviours that effectively go some way to solving their subordinates' problem (*leader strategising*). Thus, the linking together (within the MAD model) of subordinate behaviour and leader strategising through the three phases of leader perceptioning, concerning, and probleming, provides a leadership process interpretation of one of the central tenets of servant leadership – that of placing service before self-interest. Leaders seek to *serve* their subordinates in a way that allows those subordinates to attain their potential.

8.3.1.2 Nourish others and help them become whole

Henry Ford's classic statement "why is it that I always get the whole person when what I really wanted is just a pair of hands", as cited in Pollard (1997:50), contrasts sharply

with Greenleaf's criteria-question "do those served grow as persons?" (Greenleaf, 1991:13). Servant leaders see all people as having the capacity to grow (McGee-Cooper and Looper, 2001) and gain satisfaction from assisting the growth of those they lead (Blanchard, 2000). The servant leader helps others find the power of the human spirit and accept their responsibilities. The objective is to ensure that those served grow as persons; that they become wiser, healthier, freer, more morally mature, more autonomous, and more likely themselves to become servants. Thus, for a servant leader the organisation exists as much to provide meaningful work to the person as the person exists to perform work for the organisation. The emphasis is on a holistic approach to work, the promotion of a sense of community, a deepening understanding of spirit in the workplace, and the creation of fluid systems which focus on the whole, and on relationships among people, rather than on maintaining order and control.

Servant leadership is not a quick fix approach. Nor is it something that can quickly be instilled within an institution. At its core it is a long-term, transformational approach to life and work, in essence a way of being, that has the potential for creating positive change throughout our society.

Melrose (1995:166) believes that "the greatest impact on an individual's performance and attitude is their leader". Leader support can enrich subordinates' lives and help them become more valuable. He sees servant leadership as a philosophy which includes the belief that each worker has potential and that "the leader's role is to create an environment that allows them to reach that potential" (Melrose, 1995:37). Thus, the creation of an environment which enables the growth of subordinates and allows them to reach their potential, distinguishes servant leaders from other leaders. Within the MAD leadership process, this is the purpose of the *leader strategising* phase of the processual model (incorporating subordinate, environment and leader centred strategies).

The servant leader tries to provide followers with whatever they need to do their jobs and help them grow and develop as individuals by providing opportunities for others to gain materially and emotionally. Servant leadership can mean something as simple as encouraging others in their personal development and helping them understand the larger purpose in their work. In dealing with the whole person, performance of a task is linked to the development of a person. Servant leaders assume responsibility for this and so can unleash workers to achieve creativity, productivity, service, quality, growth

and value (Pollard, 1997). Block (1993) sees coaching as an integral component of any supervisor's role. In order to ensure that workers' potential is reached, Blanchard (2000) proposes setting clear goals, performance planning, day-to-day coaching, and performance evaluation. For Senge (1997) the key focus of such a philosophy is to create a culture of learning. Without essential principles, values and tenets, true learning communities cannot be created. Within the MAD leadership process, all of the above arguments find support within the categories of *develop subordinates*, *reduce communication barriers*, *operational planning*, and *create positive atmosphere*. A leader can utilise these strategies to develop subordinates' capabilities and so enable them to achieve their potential.

Thus, servant leaders (Greenleaf, 1991, 1998; Autry, 2001):

- listen carefully and seek to fully understand followers' problems and frustrations
- engage followers in problem solving and decision making
- communicate a vision and mission that are moral, exciting and challenging
- seek to become competent themselves at followers' tasks
- encourage followers to develop their potential through education, training and tackling challenging tasks
- create success experiences for followers to build their confidence
- provide an environment that encourages continued education, training and development
- encourage group norms for ethical behaviour and supportiveness among followers
- make tasks less discouraging by assuring that needed resources are readily available.

Within the MAD leadership process, all of the above behaviours are incorporated within the *leader strategising* phase of the model (including its three sub-categories and numerous properties shown in Figure 5a on page 92). One significant contribution of the MAD model, therefore, is that it not only contributes to a 'denser', more comprehensive and systematic analysis of the *what* aspects of servant leader behaviour towards expanding the capabilities of subordinates and enabling them to reach their

potential, but also shows *how* this behaviour fits into a processual account of the resolution of the participants main concern.

8.3.1.3 Inspire trust by being trustworthy

Since servant leaders are committed to helping others grow, their major personal attributes stem from the roles of guiding, supporting, developing and nurturing. Trust allows others to flourish. Block (1993:43) believes that “trust comes out of the experience of pursuing what is true”. For Dubrin (2001:109) “being trustworthy is a foundation behaviour of the servant leader, so he or she is scrupulously honest with others, gives up control, and focuses on the wellbeing of others”. In Dubrin’s view, people who aspire to become servant leaders may find this easy because they are already quite moral. For workers to be innovative and creative they need to be able to take risks, and they require an environment of trust to enable this. Within the Toro organisation, Melrose (1995) creates such trust as natural by-products of valuing workers and customers, and so enabling workers to solve problems, leading to enhanced quality, performance, productivity and profit.

Servant leaders often display the following characteristics which often evoke a high level of trust in the servant leader by followers (Greenleaf, 1991, 1998; Daft, 1999; Dubrin, 2001:

- humility
- honesty
- empathy
- healing
- awareness
- doing what they say they will do
- giving up control
- focusing on the well-being of others
- sharing all information, good and bad
- making decisions that further group welfare rather than self-interest
- trusting others to make their own decisions
- giving everything away – power, control, rewards, information, and recognition

- desiring to make a contribution
- valuing and respecting people as human beings rather than objects of labour
- sharing their own difficulties, limitations, pains and frustrations with followers
- open and willing to make themselves vulnerable to others
- supportive, participative and charismatic
- thinking the best of others and affirming their confidence in followers
- striving for moral excellence and emphasising and modelling ethical behaviour
- challenging the status quo and opposing injustice in the organisation.

This list of traits, attitudes and behaviours comprises an integral component of the *leader concerning* phase of the MAD process. Leaders who are concerned about their subordinates and who wish to ensure their welfare, usually possess and exhibit most, if not all, of these traits, attitudes and behaviours, to varying degrees. Workers who perceive their leader as having concern for them often develop respect and trust for that leader. However, these attributes also spill over, and are contained within, the adjoining phases of *leader perceptioning* and *leader probleming*, which combine together to link subordinate behaviours with leader actions in an integrative manner. For example, *problem internalising* results in leaders taking responsibility for attempting to solve troublesome situations. In contrast, *blame externalisation* results in leaders attempting to abrogate their personal responsibility and thus distancing themselves from possible involvement. These different approaches have significant effects on subsequent leader actions and impact on the ability of the leader to inspire trust from subordinates.

Covey (1992) states that when people trust each other they can enjoy clear communication, empathy, synergy and productive interdependency. For Covey (1992:31) trust is the consequence of “being trustworthy”. Trustworthiness is based on character (what you are as a person) and competence (what you can do). Both are required for a person to be trustworthy. However, the significant factor about trustworthiness is that its development lies entirely within the ability of individuals to create. Individuals possess large measures of control over their own trustworthiness, and can devise and institute strategies to achieve this. Within the MAD leadership process this is captured within the category of *leader centred strategies* (and its various sub-categories and properties), which focus directly on the leaders themselves and

attempt to improve their own leader behaviours that may be adversely perceived by subordinates. Trustworthiness is the bedrock not only for subsequent interpersonal trust to develop, but for organisational empowerment to exist. For Covey (1992:65) empowerment is not possible “without first having trust”. Without trust a leader tends to control rather than empower. Within the MAD leadership process, a number of *environment centred strategies*, particularly *transforming*, focus on this aspect of trust.

The valuing of workers as people is an integral part of the MAD process through the *support subordinates* category of *affirmation*. Not only must leaders value their workers’ contributions but “genuine expressions of appreciation contribute significantly to employees’ ongoing willingness to make the contribution necessary for personal and corporate success” (Melrose 1995:62). Positive contributions are recognised by the servant leader in order to nurture workers and increase their confidence. Within the MAD leadership process this is captured by the *develop subordinates* category of *positive guidance*.

When servant leadership has created an environment of trust and of workers feeling valued, they feel able to extend beyond their normal boundaries because they know that to fail is acceptable. Consistent with this view, servant leaders review their behaviour to ensure that this is not inhibiting workers from attaining their goals. This is an important step for servant leaders according to Melrose (1995:159) because “deterioration occurs in such small increments that it is difficult to detect”. Once standards of behaviour have deteriorated it is much more difficult to return to the desired standard. Within the MAD leadership process, the category of *cognitive processes*, incorporating *enhance perceptions* and *enhance understanding*, support the concept of leaders building and maintaining such a level of trust by modifying their own behaviours. This allows leaders to detect deterioration in their behaviours or standards before they impact on organisational performance. Self-improvement, however, cannot be achieved by leaders who are unable to be humble. For Halal (1998:14) the ability to be humble is a key requisite for being a servant leader – “humility is a virtue of strong people who do not need to prove their might, so they are open to new understanding”.

8.3.1.4 Listen first to express confidence in others

“The servant leader doesn’t just listen – he tries to figure out the will of the group and take his direction from it” (Kiechel, 1992:122). The servant leader emphasises listening to the concerns, requirements and problems of others in order to get to know, understand and affirm his confidence in group members. The servant does not have answers; he asks questions. The servant leader does not impose his will on others. He listens carefully to understand the will of the group and what course of action will help others to achieve their goals (Dubrin, 2001). He then furthers this action however he can. Through listening, for example, a servant leader might learn that the group is more concerned about team spirit and harmony than striving for companywide recognition. The leader would then concentrate more on building teamwork than searching for ways to increase the visibility of the team.

However, not everything can be accomplished together, so the leader listens carefully to the array of group problems and then concentrates on a few pressing issues. Thus, the head of a nurses union told the group “I know you are hurting in many ways. Yet the work overload issue is the biggest one, so we will head into negotiations working on obtaining sensible workloads. After that we will work on job security” (Dubrin, 2001:111).

Within the MAD leadership process, *leader perceptioning* is the first phase of the stage of *leader actioning*. This refers to the extent that a leader is aware of the actions, behaviours and needs of subordinates. A significant factor in this awareness is listening. A leader who is prepared to actively listen will generally be far more aware of their subordinates’ circumstances. Covey (1992:45) believes that people feel worth in themselves when they find someone truly listening to them, without agreeing or disagreeing. This true listening leads to the speaker feeling valued and so to renewed self-confidence. In this way, such leaders show genuine concern for their subordinates. Listening is an assertion of respect for the speaker, clearly different from the person who only half listens whilst they are preparing their own response. Such a person is not genuinely interested in the speaker and will probably not value the speaker’s input. This leaves the speaker with some doubts about their self-worth rather than confidence in their own ability. Within the MAD leadership process, listening is a component of the

affirmation strategy within the *support subordinates* category. The affirmation strategy is a key to developing the self-assurance and self-value of subordinates.

According to Blanchard (2000:4) servant leaders willingly listen, and receive advice and criticism, as “gifts”. Leaders who are prepared to receive criticism are able to better understand the consequences of their own behaviour and so modify these to maintain the standard expected by their subordinates. The servant leadership philosophy includes the belief that deterioration in standards will occur over time and so the leader must continually be alert to detect this. Listening is part of the detection mechanism, and it expresses confidence in those offering comments, feedback or advice. Within the MAD leadership process, leaders use such detection mechanisms within the *leader centred strategy of cognitive processes*. This enables them to enhance their understanding of their own capabilities and behaviours as perceived by their subordinates and helps them choose strategies most appropriate to maintaining their subordinates’ expected standards.

8.3.2 Socialised Power

According to Locke et al (1991:21) “effective leaders must *want* to lead”. Individuals with a strong leadership motivation prefer to be in a leadership role rather than in a subordinate role, and they exhibit a willingness to assume responsibility. A strong desire to lead others is characteristic of effective leaders (Boyatzis, 1982; Burns, 1978). In a study of successful Sears’ executives, Bentz (1967:179) found them to possess a “powerful competitive drive for a position of authority...[and] the need to be recognised as men of influence”. In another study, Boyatzis (1982) found executive-level managers ranked higher on ‘concern for impact’ (considered to be similar to a need for power) than their lower-level managerial counterparts.

The desire to influence others can stem from two different sources – personalised power motives or socialised power motives (Howell, 1988; McClelland, 1965). Leaders with a personalised power motive seek power for the sake of themselves and to further their own interests (Dubrin, 2001). They seek power as an end in itself. Such individuals have little self-control and are often impulsive. They focus on collecting symbols of their own personal prestige. They crave the trappings of power, such as status symbols, luxury and money. This type of power motive can be considered neurotic since

acquiring power solely for the sake of dominating others must be based on profound self-doubt. Such leaders typically enjoy dominating others. Their need for dominance can lead to dependent, submissive subordinates who are frequently “sycophants and yes-persons” (Dubrin, 2001:43; Kouzes and Posner, 1987). Leaders who use their power to further their own interests cannot be considered to be altruistic leaders since they are not motivated to act in the interest of their subordinates. This source of leadership motivation cannot form part of the MAD leadership process since it cannot effectively act as a link between subordinate behaviour and leader actions, with the objective of resolving the subordinates’ main concern of minimising their attainment deficit.

By contrast, leaders with a socialised power motive seek power for the purpose of “helping others” (Dubrin, 2001:43). They use power as a means to achieve a desired goal or vision. This motivation is more likely to result in effective leadership. McClelland and Burnham (1995) argue that leaders must exercise their power according to moral standards. Ethical exercise of power can develop trust and respect from subordinates, but these can be severely eroded when a leader displays personalised power motives. Leaders with socialised power motives tend to use their power to build up their organisation and make it successful, rather than to seek personal aggrandisement at the expense of others. They take into account their followers’ needs, and their actions lead to empowered, independent followers. The productive use of socialised power finds expression as the ability to develop networks and coalitions, gain cooperation from others, resolve conflicts in a constructive manner, and use role modelling to influence others (Locke et al, 1991). Compared with those having personalised power motives, individuals with socialised power motives (Kouzes and Posner, 1987):

- are more emotionally mature
- exercise power more for the benefit of the whole organisation
- are less likely to use power in a manipulative manner
- are less defensive
- are more willing to listen to, and take, advice
- have longer-range perspectives.

Leaders who use their power to help others can be considered to be altruistic leaders because they possess a strong sense of social responsibility and concern for how their actions impact on others. This source of leadership motivation forms an integral part of the MAD leadership process in the sense that it forms a strong link between subordinate behaviour and leader actions through the leaders' desires to minimise the attainment deficit of their subordinates.

8.3.3 Individualised Consideration

Individualised consideration is very similar to the Ohio notion of *consideration* (or employee orientation) whereby the leader displays concern for the feelings and welfare of employees, uses warmth and friendliness to enhance social atmosphere, and encourages job relationships that rely on camaraderie, mutual trust, liking, respect and sensitivity. *Individualised consideration* refers to the concept whereby the leader gives personal attention to subordinates. The leader displays caring and empathetic behaviour, making subordinates feel important, valued, trusted and respected. The leader deals with subordinates as individuals, treating them differently but equitably and providing special attention regarding their individual concerns. The leader first diagnoses the individual needs, abilities and aspirations of subordinates. Then, in attending to them, the leader can take on the roles of coach, adviser, teacher, mentor, or counsellor in order to promote and encourage the personal development of subordinates. To this end the leader helps subordinates to learn by encouraging responsibility and building the confidence of individuals so they come to believe in their ability to perform the job. The leader invests time in one-on-one communication, listens attentively, talks to subordinates about career goals and developmental opportunities, and delegates projects to stimulate and create learning experiences (Bass 1990, 1997; Bass and Avolio 1990; Sarros and Santora, 2001; Sarros, Densten and Santora, 1999; Hunt, 1991; Dubrin, 2001; Bryman, 1992).

The ten questions that comprise the individualised consideration component of the Multi- Factor Leadership Questionnaire (cited in Sarros, Densten and Santora, 1999:174) are shown below, and give further insight into the nature of the concept:

1. I give personal attention to those who seem neglected
2. I get them to look at problems as learning opportunities

3. I let them know how they are doing
4. I treat each of them as an individual
5. I find out what they want and help them to get it
6. I express my appreciation when they do a good job
7. I coach individuals who need it
8. I provide advice to them when they need it
9. I am ready to instruct or coach them whenever they need it
10. I give newcomers a lot of help.

Within the MAD leadership process, the category of *subordinate centred strategies* is strongly related to the concept of individualised consideration. Subordinate centred strategies are those leader strategies that focus directly on the subordinates and endeavour to minimise the attainment deficits that are influencing their behaviours. Within this category, the sub-category of *subordinate status* acts as the ‘diagnostic’ measure for monitoring the subordinate’s needs and aspirations. Once the subordinate’s state has been determined, the leader can institute any or both of two broad strategies to further the subordinate’s personal development by minimising their attainment deficit – *develop subordinates* and *support subordinates*. Between them these strategies incorporate team involvement, skills enhancement, positive guidance, affirmation, and providing help (which in turn possess many associated properties). In total, these categories and properties provide a comprehensive account of employee-oriented, altruistic leader behaviour which encompass all of the aspects of individualised consideration contained in the extant literature.

8.3.4 Super Leadership

Self-leadership and superleadership are two interlinked concepts. *Self-leadership* is an extensive set of strategies focused on the behaviours and thoughts that can be used to exert self-influence. Self-leadership is what people do to lead themselves. In some ways self-leadership might be thought of as a form of responsible followership, that is, if given the autonomy and responsibility to control their own lives, what specifically can followers do to respond to this challenge in a responsible way? *Superleadership* is the concept of leading others to lead themselves. Superleaders facilitate the self-leadership energy within others. They maximise the contributions of others through recognition of their right to guide their own destiny, rather than through the leader’s ability to bend the

will of others to his or her own way. They assist and nurture the leadership qualities of all their subordinates by concentrating on helping them to release their leadership potential toward accomplishing organisational and personal goals. The superleader designs and implements the system that allows and teaches employees to be self-leaders. The approach consists of an extensive set of behaviours, all intended to provide subordinates with the behavioural and cognitive skills necessary to exercise self-leadership. The superleader asks “what can I do to lead others to lead themselves?” (Manz, 1992; Manz and Sims, 1989, 1990, 2001; Glaser, 1990).

Superleadership focuses on the follower instead of some aggrandised version of the heroic leader. It is a new paradigm that is aimed at releasing the talent, energy, enthusiasm and expertise of everyone in the organisation – not just the people at the top. The leader becomes “super” by creating followers who are extraordinary self-leaders. The superleader concept extends beyond the myth of the heroic leader. Previous views of leadership have mainly focused on the leader and the talent of followers has often been wasted. The most effective leader will be the one who transforms ordinary followers into a “company of heroes” by leading them to lead themselves (Sims and Manz, 1996).

The concept of minimising attainment deficit is similar to the concept of superleadership in that both approaches fit into that form of altruistic leadership that focuses on the needs and development of subordinates to improve their capabilities. However, the manner in which the two concepts are applied is quite different. In the MAD process, leaders acknowledge their responsibility and desire to help subordinates achieve their potential. Superleaders can help their subordinates achieve their potential but they do so by teaching them to achieve this themselves and so take that responsibility. Leaders who minimise attainment deficit accept the responsibility as an ongoing one and alter the mix of strategies to achieve reductions in subordinates’ attainment deficits.

In this respect the impact of context may be crucial. In the ‘lscpseb’ context, within which the MAD leadership process emerged, the overall hegemony of the constraining environment could have acted as a powerful and realistic factor within which participants framed their view of the leadership process. Leading subordinates to lead themselves within such a context, could probably be regarded by subordinates as a distant and somewhat unrealistic goal. A more practical and attainable view of

leadership is probably one that sees leaders as providing more direct forms of intervention and assuming responsibility for helping subordinates to realise their potential.

8.4 Summary

This chapter has conducted a literature comparison in order to locate the contribution of the emergent theory of minimising attainment deficit within the extant literature.

Similarities and differences have been discovered in relation to existing works.

According to the principle of delimitation, it is the emergent theory itself that leads the researcher to the extant literature to be examined during the final stage of the research process. Complete coverage of the literature is not the objective. The size of the extant leadership literature is immense and could not be covered in its entirety. Omissions are inevitable. The benchmark for inclusion in the literature comparison is perceived relevance. The literature has to earn its way into the literature comparison in terms of its relationship with the emergent grounded theory, and the major categories of that theory.

This literature comparison has examined three major sections of the extant literature that have earned their way into the comparison according to the principle of ‘delimitation’ and the selection criteria of ‘perceived relevance’. These are:

1. Situational analysis and the leadership process
2. Linkage between leader action and subordinate behaviour
3. Linkage between subordinate behaviour and leader action.

One of the two main areas in which the present research claims significance is that of contextual sensitivity. Rather than attempting to marginalise contextual issues the research has elevated them to centre stage. The specific context of the research has been that of a large, slow change, public sector, engineering bureaucracy (‘lscpseb’). The basic social process of minimising attainment deficit has emerged specifically within this context. The concepts of relative powerlessness, technical narrowness and jurisdictional delimitation led to the participants main objective of moving through the managerial ranks in order to resolve their main concern of reaching their potential.

Within the ‘lscpseb’ context a leader is perceived as somebody with whom participants can form a ‘liberating’ alliance to spread their otherwise narrow realm of expertise and

influence. Leaders proactively intervene to help subordinates minimise their attainment deficit. Many of the dominant features of the New Leadership (such as transformational attributes, charisma and vision) were found not to apply in the emergent MAD leadership process.

The extant literature reveals that the leader acts as a significant impact on the attitude and performance of subordinates. The quality of leadership is judged not by leader intentions but in terms of leader behaviours and actions. The MAD leadership process discovered various processual links that related leader actions to subordinate behaviour within the 'Iscapeb' context, and labelled these according to the concepts of leader strategising, subordinate perceptioning, subordinate emotioning, and subordinate behaviouring. These links found considerable support in the extant literature, especially within the psychological literature relating to the self (especially the concepts of 'possible selves' and self-discrepancy theory), and the 'meaning chain' processes incorporated with the rational-emotive behaviour model.

When subordinates exhibit certain types of behaviour, leaders can respond to these cues by enacting various behaviours of their own to complete the cycle. The MAD leadership process discovered various processual links that related subordinate behaviour back to leader actions within the 'Iscapeb' context, and labeled these according to the concepts of subordinate behaviouring, leader perceptioning, leader concerning, leader probleming, and leader strategising. Subordinates who wish to resolve their main concern of minimising their attainment deficit rely upon the existence of a positive link between subordinate behaviours and leader actions. This relies upon the existence of a number of assumptions: namely that leaders are able to perceive the behaviours of their subordinates, that leaders are concerned with the welfare of subordinates, that leaders possess a high likelihood of internalising problems rather than indulging in blame externalisation, and finally, that leaders devise and implement appropriate strategies to remedy the situation. For the sake of the analysis, this processual sequence will be referred to as altruistic leadership.

Altruistic leadership is based on an unselfish concern for the welfare and wellbeing of subordinates. What defines leadership behaviours as altruistic is based on *why* the leader behaves in a certain way, rather than on *what* the leader does or *how* it is performed. The extant literature contains a number of themes and theories that could be

represented as altruistic leadership. Four themes in particular earned their way into the literature comparison by way of their relevance, namely, servant leadership, socialised power, individualised consideration, and super leadership.

Having completed the literature comparison in this chapter, the next and final chapter of the thesis deals with the conclusions and implications of the research and some suggestions for further research.

9 Implications and Conclusions

In the last chapter I carried out a literature comparison in order to locate the leadership process of minimising attainment deficit within the extant literature. In this final chapter of my thesis I commence by reviewing whether the purpose and aims of the research have been achieved before moving on to a review of the significance of the thesis and its contribution to the literature. A number of implications of the research for practitioners are examined as well as three main avenues along which further research may be conducted. Finally, the chapter is completed by an analysis of whether the research meets the four main criteria for evaluating a grounded theory study.

9.1 *Achievement of the Purpose and Aims of the Research*

In chapter 1 I stated the purpose and aims of the present doctoral research. The *purpose* has been to generate a theory of the leadership process within the particular substantive setting of a large, slow change, public sector, engineering bureaucracy ('lscpseb'). This setting has been represented in this study by the organisation named AGRO, an invented name given to a government department which manages broad aspects of roads and traffic in a state of Australia. The *aims* of the research have been to discover the main concern of the participants in the substantive area which has led them to adopt a certain perception of the meaning of leadership, and subsequently to explain the behavioural processes involved in leadership that resolve this main concern.

The *purpose* of the research has been achieved through the generation of the substantive theory of *minimising attainment deficit*. This theory has been presented in chapters 4-7 in this thesis. The basic social process is comprised of two sub-core categories (or stages) of *leader actioning* and *subordinate actioning*, each of which impacts on the other in a continuous context-action cycle of action and reaction between leaders and subordinates. The stages and phases of this theory are presented in Figure 4.13 (on page 90 of this thesis) and reproduced in more abbreviated form in Figure 9.1 below.

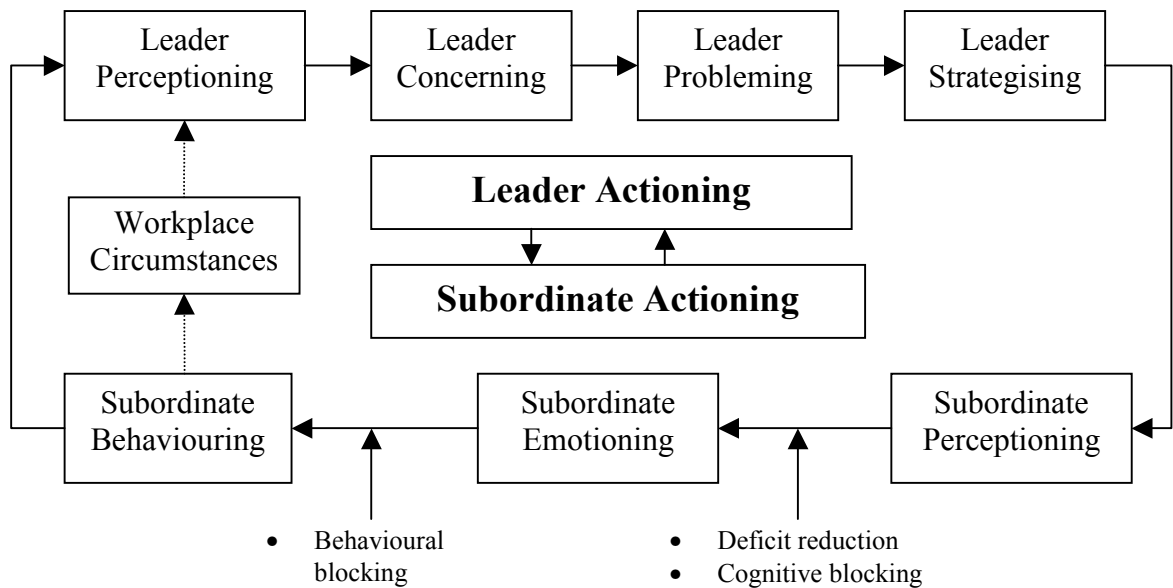


Figure 9.1 *Interaction of Sub-Core Variables and Their Phases*

The *aims* of the research have been achieved through the discovery of the main concern of the participants to be able to achieve their goals and full potential within an environment which they perceive to be constraining them below the level of their natural ability. They perceive a leader as somebody who is able to interact with them in order to liberate, unleash, and facilitate their movement towards their full potential. The behavioural process involved in leadership that resolves this main concern is that of minimising attainment deficit.

9.2 *Significance of the Thesis and Its Contribution*

In chapter 1 I stated that this thesis claims *significance* in two main areas: contextual sensitivity and research methodology. This study has not attempted to marginalise contextual issues. On the contrary they have been elevated to centre stage within the specific ‘lscpsb’ environment. Qualitative studies are relatively rare in leadership research. A qualitative approach was adopted in this research in order to remain true to the complex nature of the process of leadership situations (in terms of multiple levels of phenomena, dynamic characteristics, and symbolic nature) and to allow more sensitivity for contextual factors to emerge rather than being imposed on the leadership process. For reasons explained in detail in chapter 2, a research design was adopted based on collecting data through *asking people* (both managers and non managers, rather than managers only) to describe their perception of leadership in general within the context of a *single organisation*. Orthodox grounded theory was adopted as the research

methodology because of the desire to generate a model of the leadership process as a social influence process. Grounded theory can produce multi-faceted accounts of organisational action in context, it produces theory which is relevant to practitioners in the area, and it can bring new perspectives to theorising in mature areas such as leadership research.

This thesis makes a number of specific contributions to the literature. Four of the main contributions are analysed and presented below:

1. It has generated the new basic social process of *minimising attainment deficit* within the specific situational 'lscpsb' context.
2. Participants within the 'lscpsb' context are more concerned with reaching their potential within an overall constraining environment.
3. Other grounded theories studies of leadership processes within large, public sector bureaucracies have been conducted within a context of tumultuous change. The basic social processes generated from such research, such as *enhancing adaptability* (Parry, 1997), *optimising* (Irurita, 1990), and *weighing up change* (Brooks, 1998) have emphasised the participants' concern of adapting to uncertain and dynamic scenarios. In contrast, the process of *minimising attainment deficit* that has emerged from the dominant engineering culture and slow change scenario of AGRO has emphasised more stable management-type factors that reveal little or no concern of adapting to change situations. Aspects of the New Leadership literature such as charisma and vision are downplayed in favour of Old Leadership factors such as planning, training, delegation, giving help, improving communication, setting goals, providing rewards, developing skills, listening, offering feedback, mentoring and creating a positive atmosphere.
4. The two-stage, seven-phase MAD leadership process contains a mix of action (behavioural) responses and cognitive responses which combine together to create a continuous context-action cyclical process. This cycle is composed of two broad linkages: (i) from leader actions to subordinate behaviours, and (ii) from subordinate behaviours back to leader actions, and so on. As shown in chapter 8, these linkages combine *self-discrepancy theory* and *altruistic leadership*. These two pieces of theory are normally presented in the literature

as separate theoretical concepts, but have been employed in tandem in this thesis in order to locate the emergent theory of minimising attainment deficit within the broader extant literature.

9.3 Implications for Practitioners

Glaser (1978) suggests that the conclusions of a grounded theory should include details of how that theory has implications for practitioners. A grounded theory has implications for practitioners in the substantive area of research because it emerges from the experiences of participants within the area. It is directly aimed at finding the main concern of participants in the substantive area and generating a theory of how they behave to resolve that main concern. The research found that within the context of 'lscpseb' the main concern of participants was how to reach their potential within an environment which constrained them below the level which they considered themselves to be capable of achieving. The leadership process which resolves this main concern is that of minimising attainment deficit.

This theory has several important implications for practitioners within 'lscpseb'-type environments. Firstly, is the observation that leader actions substantially impact on the perceptions, emotions and behaviours of subordinates. Leaders, therefore, have a major responsibility for setting the tone or climate experienced by subordinates within the substantive setting. Depending on how leaders act, they exercise enormous influence over the extent of attitudes and emotions such as respect, trust, confidence, and credibility. Leaders can easily contribute negatively to issues or problems if they are not aware of (or do not care) how their actions impact on their subordinates' perceptions. Such practitioners can better ensure adequate awareness by frequently reflecting on their own behaviours and interactions with subordinates within the workplace.

Secondly, subordinates within 'lscpseb'-type environments perceive leadership to be that process which is directly proactive and interventionist with regard to enabling subordinates to reach their potential. Subordinates have high expectations of their leaders. They expect those leaders to actively monitor their *subordinate status* in order to be aware of their needs, attitudes, abilities and expectations, and to actively implement strategies aimed at minimising their attainment deficits. Leaders who go 'missing in action' and who distance themselves emotionally and physically from the

requirements of their subordinates are not highly regarded. Such leaders can better ensure the necessary level of proactivity by placing more emphasis on a feeling of concern for their subordinates and being prepared to take responsibility for issues and problem resolution. This invariably requires leaders to place more emphasis on ‘managing down’ rather than ‘managing up’ within the workplace.

Thirdly, this research has generated a comprehensive set of strategies that leaders can implement in order to attempt to minimise the attainment deficits of their subordinates. These strategies have been analysed and presented in detail in chapters 5-7 of this thesis, and comprise subordinate, environment and leader centred strategies. Knowledge of this suite of leader strategies by leader practitioners may give them greater awareness of the ‘toolbag’ of actions over which they have control in order to enable their subordinates to reach their potential. This may allow leaders to become more creative in their actions by providing them with additional ideas of how to act within their particular substantive setting. In particular, many leaders may be surprised to discover that a comprehensive set of strategies aimed at changing themselves is available to them, and how self-improvement strategies can have a major impact on the perceptions of their subordinates. Even though leaders in ‘Iscape’-type environments may perceive that they may have only limited freedom and ability to devise and implement various kinds of subordinate and environment centred strategies, they should still be aware that they have complete control over leader centred strategies. Efforts to improve and change *themselves* are absolutely within the control of individual leaders.

Fourthly, subordinates equate leadership more to conventional attitudes, actions and attributes characteristic of management-type behaviours within the Old Leadership model than with aspects such as charisma, vision, and transformational actions characteristic of the New Leadership model. Leaders do not have to be ‘heroic’ in the romantic sense to be regarded as leaders within AGRO. On the contrary, leaders are often perceived to be humble and self-sacrificing people who often act behind the scenes without notice or fanfare.

Fifthly, as analysed in chapter 8, the MAD leadership process can be regarded as an integration of self-discrepancy theory combined with altruistic leadership. Self-discrepancy theory provides the perception trigger which culminates in subordinate emotions and behaviours, whilst altruistic leadership provides the subsequent leader

response which is required to modify subordinate perceptions of self-discrepancy states in the feedback loop. The implications for leaders in this type of environment are concerned with their abilities to reflect on their own attitudes and behaviours as they affect subordinate self-discrepancy states, to actively monitor the consequences of those subordinate discrepancies as they manifest themselves in various behaviours, and to devise and implement remedial leader actions which will close subordinates' attainment deficits.

9.4 *Implications for Further Research*

Glaser (1978, 1998) observes that a grounded theory research project traditionally ends with a discussion of its implications for further research. He suggests three avenues by which this discussion can be structured: the leads to future research, comebacks, and elevation to formal theory status. Each of these themes will now be examined.

9.4.1 Leads to Future Research

As Glaser (1998:199) points out, there is a limit to how far any one researcher can go with a study. He suggests that it is the limitations of resources that often dictate the boundaries of the substantive area and the extent of theoretical sampling. This was certainly the case in this doctoral research. The objective of keeping the study 'unit bound' was a deliberate strategy in order to focus directly on achieving the purpose of the study, namely to generate a theory of the leadership process within a particular substantive setting. I did not wish to go outside the boundaries of AGRO. However, the limitations of time and finances were instrumental in confining the research within a particular regional area instead of 'site spreading' theoretical sampling widely across the state.

Suggestions for further research would therefore be to pursue the wider theoretical sampling avenues that were not possible in this present research. These provide what Glaser (1998:199) calls "natural leads". For example, as mentioned above, my research was conducted within a regional area. The contextual significance of this is that alternative job opportunities are less readily available than in larger urban and metropolitan areas. This reality further limits the mobility of workers making them more dependent on AGRO employment for their livelihood, and hence, more likely to

strive to reach their potential within the AGRO organisation. In areas of more readily available alternative employment opportunities, workers would be more able to seek to reach their potential by pursuing ‘exit’ strategies and thus would feel less dependent on proactive internal leadership for this purpose. Thus, it is possible that their perceptions of relative powerlessness within the AGRO bureaucracy could be softened by the greater availability of alternative employment. This could act as a significant moderating variable in the analysis. Because of the limitations on the spread of theoretical sampling this was not brought out in the present research, but could act as a fruitful ‘natural lead’ for future researchers to follow up.

9.4.2 Comebacks

Glaser (1998:200) has labelled as ‘comebacks’ those categories that have emerged from the data “that are sub-core or less in relevance for the theory but provide an interest area on their own”. The appeal to future researchers is to *comeback* to these areas to study them in more depth. The present research has generated seven phases of the MAD leadership process, only one of which (leader strategising) was ‘densified’ to any significant extent. The other six, therefore, provide excellent examples of possible comebacks for future researchers – subordinate perceptioning, subordinate emotioning, subordinate behaviouring, leader perceptioning, leader concerning and leader probleming. Five of these (the exception being subordinate behaviouring) are primarily cognitive, psychological processes. These categories emerged from the data but were not extensively densified in terms of sub-categories and properties, primarily because of the limitations on time and resources (and to keep the length of the thesis within tolerable boundaries), and also because the main interest was in developing the category of leader strategising (rather than the psychological aspects of the remaining phases).

Without analysing the comeback possibilities of all these six phases, nevertheless the links between leader perceptioning, concerning and probleming provide an interesting and potentially fruitful topic of research for future grounded theory studies. A number of AGRO leaders were perceived by participants in the present research to be ‘uncaring’ in regard to their relationships with subordinates. In terms of the MAD leadership process, this could be as a result of inadequate perceptioning, insufficient concerning, or a failure in probleming. The significance of this processual sequence is that although the research has generated a comprehensive set of leader strategies for minimising the

attainment deficit of subordinates, these can never be adopted by those leaders who fail to 'navigate' the sequence through the three pre-requisite cognitive phases.

A grounded theory of *leader concerning* could reveal the properties which indicate why some leaders appear to display concern for their subordinates whilst others do not. Could it be that some leaders' failings lie not in a lack of feeling of concern but rather in the demonstration of that concern? Should this be the case, then strategies could be developed to ensure that such concern is adequately demonstrated. Additionally, *leader probleming* could be an interesting psychological study. Why do some leaders internalise problems by taking personal responsibility for those issues and the resolution of the problem, whilst others throw their hands in the air and attempt to 'dodge' the issue by pointing the finger at someone else? Several leaders in the present research were perceived by subordinates to possess a tendency to avoid taking responsibility for issues or problems. This 'shirking' can have a considerable impact on the respect for, and credibility of, individual leaders. The understanding of such negative consequences could, for example, help leaders to be more focused on the cognitive processes which could allow them to adopt more positive approaches and so achieve more favourable leadership outcomes.

9.4.3 Elevation to Formal Theory

The MAD leadership process is applicable only to the substantive area from which it has been induced. The theory cannot be generalised beyond this substantive area. In contrast, formal theories have a much broader application beyond the boundaries of a single area of inquiry and hence encompass a much higher level of generality than substantive theories. Substantive theories can act as the building blocks for a formal theory. Guthrie (2000:177) points out that the development of formal theory is dependent on carrying out extensive further comparisons with emergent theories generated from diverse contexts. Such comparisons are likely to yield "highly robust theory on account of their transcending influence". Glaser (1978:153) points out that "formal theory is extensive compared to the intensiveness of substantive theory". He suggests that researchers could take the core variable and perhaps a few of those sub-core variables that worked best and generate their use for formal theory. Thus, for example, a theory of how milkmen "cultivate" housewives could be extended into the cultivating of relationships in general (Glaser, 1978:133). Additionally, Glaser and

Strauss (1971) generated a formal theory of ‘status passage’ based on their substantive theory of the process of dying in hospitals.

With regard to the present research, one possibility for formalising the research is to extend it beyond the ‘lscpseb’ substantive context. Thus, studies could be conducted in settings with a different dominant occupational culture, or in wider public sector settings, or in other types of bureaucracies, or in smaller and less complex organisations, or in faster change environments. Grounded theory studies have been conducted in other faster change, public sector bureaucracies (Parry, 1997; Irurita, 1990; Brooks, 1998) and the possibility exists of further comparisons between these different substantive studies in order to generate a wider formal theory of the leadership process in large, public sector bureaucracies. The most significant disadvantage of such a formalisation process is the loss of intensiveness in favour of the extensiveness of theorising (Glaser, 1978:153). It has been mentioned previously that one of the significant aspects of this present research has been its focus on a specific situational environment in response to calls within the literature for leadership research to become more situationally specific. The formalisation process would lose this intensive focus which contributes so much to the relevance of the theory for specific types of practitioners. When formalisation goes too far the resulting theory can become too general to possess any specific relevance for certain types of practitioners and thus runs the risk of not being perceived as useful. The theory becomes of little practical use.

9.5 Criteria for Evaluating the Grounded Theory of Minimising Attainment Deficit

Traditional notions of what makes good scientific research, such as validity, reliability, replicability, and generalisability, are extremely problematic when applied to qualitative research (Sarantakos, 1998). Historically, these criteria have evolved within the context of quantitative, verifical research, with an emphasis on testing, measurement and verification. When applied to methodologies whose purpose is to generate rather than test theory, these criteria lose much of their significance and relevance.

Glaser has addressed the need for an appropriate means for evaluating the quality of a grounded theory by suggesting it must meet four criteria which in total encompass the fundamental sources of trust in a grounded theory – fit, relevance, workability, and

modifiability. These criteria engender trust because a theory with fit, relevance, that works, and can be easily modified, has “grab” without pressure to force it on the data (Glaser, 1998:237). These four criteria make both grounded theory and the action it purports to explain tractable (Glaser, 1978:6). People feel that they can use it meaningfully. It is trustworthy to use. It is not based on conjecture nor impressionism, but on a rigorous methodology that empowers (Glaser, 1998:238).

These four criteria will now be explained and applied to the theory of minimising attainment deficit in order to demonstrate how this theory adequately meets all the criteria for it to be evaluated as a good and ‘trustworthy’ theory.

9.5.1 Fit

Fit is another word for validity, which implies that the theoretical concepts represent the pattern of data they purport to denote (Glaser, 1998:236). Categories must be readily (not forcibly) applicable to, and indicated by, the data under study (Glaser and Strauss, 1967:3). The categories of the theory must fit the data (Glaser, 1978:4). Data should not be forced, or selected to fit pre-conceived or pre-existent categories, or discarded in favour of keeping an extant theory intact (Glaser, 1978:4). Received concepts often do not fit the data. They are often conjectured, or only partially relate. They can easily be reified (Glaser, 1998:236).

Since grounded theory categories are generated directly from the data, the criterion of fit is automatically met (Glaser, 1978:4). Thus, grounded theory does away with the problem of fit by going right to the data and generating concepts from it, while constantly adjusting the best word to denote the pattern as constant comparisons occur and the pattern emerges. What fits will emerge as the pattern gets named (Glaser, 1998:236).

Fit can be verified in a grounded theory study by reviewing the process of theory generation (Brooks, 1998:62). If the appropriate grounded theory procedures have been followed (such as constant comparison, memo writing, theoretical sampling, sorting and saturation) and the researcher has remained close to the data, a high level of fit should result. Chapter 3 of this thesis describes in detail how these procedures were followed in order to generate the theory of minimising attainment deficit. This chapter shows

how the initial low level of conceptualisation prevented me from identifying the participants' main concern and how the scrupulous use of the Glaserian approach allowed the main concern to emerge by interview 8. The chapter shows how the use of open coding, constant comparison, memo writing, and theoretical sampling allowed the core category to emerge, and how the use of selective coding, saturation, theoretical coding, and sorting subsequently allowed the MAD leadership process to emerge. Thus, by closely following the Glaserian procedures I have remained close to the data and ensured compliance with the criterion of fit.

9.5.2 Relevance

What emerges with fit is the next criterion – relevance. It is automatic that the emergent concepts will relate to the true issues of the participants in the substantive area. Grounded theory generates a theory of how what is really going on is continually resolved. This is extremely relevant (Glaser, 1998:236). Grounded theory arrives at relevance because it allows core problems and processes to emerge (Glaser, 1978:5). This leads to trust of truly getting at what is really going on that is important to the people in the substantive area and therefore will have impact (Glaser, 1998:237).

In this thesis, contextual impacts have been elevated to centre stage in order to generate close relevance to the problems of the participants in the substantive area. The organisation studied (AGRO) represents a large, slow change, public sector, engineering bureaucracy ('lscpseb'). The core category and basic social process which emerged from the data have specific relevance to participants operating within this 'lscpseb' environment. The MAD leadership process addresses the problem of how participants in this environment resolve their main concern of reaching their potential within a context characterised by relative powerlessness, technical narrowness, and jurisdictional delimitation. This leadership process stresses a basic social process which is quite different from those that have emerged from grounded theory studies in different (and more volatile) contexts, such as 'enhancing adaptability' (Parry, 1997), 'optimising' (Irurita, 1990), and 'weighing up change' (Brooks, 1998). Thus, by staying close to the data, avoiding forced or pre-conceived theories, and generating concepts that are of importance, value and interest to the participants in the 'lscpseb' environment, I have ensured that the theory of minimising attainment deficit ensures compliance with the criterion of relevance.

9.5.3 Workability

The impact of fit and relevance leads to the next criterion – work (Glaser, 1998:237). For a theory to work its categories must fit, but also it must ‘work’ the core of what is going on; it must be relevant to the action of the area (Glaser, 1978:5). A theory should be able to explain what happened, predict what will happen, and interpret what is happening in an area of substantive or formal inquiry (Glaser, 1978:4). With concepts that fit and are relevant the grounded theorist starts to integrate a core category and sub-core category theory that accounts for most of the variation of behaviour in the substantive area. The researcher starts to explain how the main concern of the participants is continually resolved. The concepts and their theoretical coding are tightly related to what is going on. They work! This imbues with trust that we can understand and apply a theory about a substantive area (Glaser, 1998:237).

During the research process for this thesis I discovered at an early stage the meaning and pervasiveness of the criterion of workability. In chapter three I described my exuberance at my initial belief that I had generated a core category (subordinate conduct) and associated sub-core categories (leader influence and subordinate attributes) after only the first two interviews. However, I soon realised that the supposed model had a number of deficiencies. The core category failed to incorporate the importance of behavioural feedbacks and ignored any analysis of the significance of the processual issues involved. As a grounded theory it was incapable of explaining variations in the patterns of behaviour in the substantive area of inquiry or to account for how the main concern of the participants was being resolved. It failed to shed any light on what was really happening in the data in a theoretical or dynamic manner. In other words, it did not work! However, by diligent application of the Glaserian procedures of further theoretical sampling, constant comparison, memo writing and saturation I have been better able to ensure that my grounded theory of minimising attainment deficit can explain, predict and interpret what is happening in the substantive area, thus ensuring compliance with the criterion of workability.

9.5.4 Modifiability

According to Glaser (1998:237) there is no such thing as a “wrong” grounded theory – the theory gets modified by subsequent data, period. A theory must be readily

modifiable based on ever-emerging notions from more data. Always something emerges that requires generating a qualification of what came before, but also causing a need to hang on to what the researcher had generated up to that point as precious and inviolate. Generation is an ever-modifying process and nothing is sacred if the analyst is dedicated to giving priority attention to the data (Glaser, 1978:5).

Modifiability ensures that a theory is flexible and can accommodate changing circumstances and additional data. A highly modifiable grounded theory can easily integrate new categories or modify existing categories, so that the theory is able to remain relevant and continue to work in its substantive setting and when modified may have broadened its applicability slightly. Because a grounded theory is conceptual rather than descriptive or empirical it is able to “endure and change” (Glaser, 2001:123). Grounded theories make a long-term contribution to the literature because they are able to change or expand their dimensions if new data is discovered and incorporated. The quality of a grounded theory to maintain its relevancy through modifiability can be contrasted with verificational studies that often take long periods of time to change and in the process lose their relevancy as “the world passes them by” (Glaser, 1978:5).

Within the context of the present research the theory was continually being modified by constant comparison of new data with existing concepts and themes as they were documented on concept cards and conceptualised through memo writing. Thus, the theory can be constantly modified to fit and work with relevance. For instance, ‘the core category’ (after two interviews) of *subordinate conduct*, gave way to the core category (after 15 interviews) of *minimising attainment deficit*. By this stage, the point of saturation had been reached because no new categories or properties were emerging from the data. However, in Glaserian terminology, no theory is sacred, and the theory of minimising attainment deficit is always capable of modification. Perhaps one area in which greater qualification can be introduced into the theory is a stronger appreciation of moderating variables. The theory did incorporate several significant moderating variables that emerged towards the end of the research process, but a denser analysis may be revealed by site spreading beyond the regional area of AGRO within which this research was conducted.

9.6 Summary

In this, the final chapter of my thesis, I have reviewed the purpose and aims of my thesis to see whether the objectives I set for myself in chapter 1 have been adequately achieved. The purpose of the research was to generate a theory of the leadership process within the particular 'lscpseb' situational context represented by the AGRO organisation. The aims were to discover the main concern of the participants within the substantive area, and to explain the behavioural leadership processes that resolved this main concern. It is my belief, and hopefully the opinion of the reader, that the purpose and aims as presented have been adequately achieved. The substantive processual theory of minimising attainment deficit has been presented as the basic social process which resolves the main concern of the participants of wishing to minimise the gap between their current work reality and that level which they perceive themselves to be capable of attaining.

The research claims significance in two main areas: contextual sensitivity and research methodology. In an effort to remain faithful to the impact of the substantive setting on the participants' perceptions of leadership I adopted a qualitative approach to the collection and analysis of data, specifically through the use of orthodox grounded theory which is aimed at the generation rather than the testing of theory. Four main contributions of the research to the extant literature are presented and analysed in the chapter.

One of the advantages of grounded theory research is that its findings are of direct relevance to practitioners in the substantive area because it is aimed at discovering the main concern of the participants and the process by means of which this concern is resolved. This chapter presents five main implications of the research for practitioners, which could also have been considered in the previous section as contributions of the research to the literature, but which have been deliberately kept separate and presented under a different heading for the purpose of clarity of argument.

Grounded theory studies traditionally end with a discussion of the implications of the findings for further research. Three avenues for further research have been considered in this chapter, namely, leads to future research, comebacks, and elevation to formal theory status. Finally, the chapter concludes with an evaluation of the 'trustworthiness'

of the theory of minimising attainment deficit in terms of the four main Glaserian evaluation criteria – fit, relevance, workability, and modifiability.

As I conclude this extremely enjoyable and creatively satisfying piece of grounded theory research I can finally reflect on the journey I have travelled during the last four years of my life. This research has taught me that I, as a hands-on, engineering practitioner, can be challenged intellectually. I have realised that this brush with academia has been the most enjoyable intellectual journey of my life.

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