

https://dspace.org/

Meta skills and technical skills in team leadership

Law, Penny

2014-04-30
http://hdl.handle.net10539/14635

Downloaded from a DSpace repository. https://dspace.org/

Meta Skills and Technical Skills in Team Leadership

Penny Law
Student No: 8702856A

Supervisor:
Irene Broekmann, Department of Education

A Research Project submitted to the
Faculty of Education, University of Witwatersrand,
in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the
Degree of Masters of Education in Psychology

February, 1999

ABSTRACT

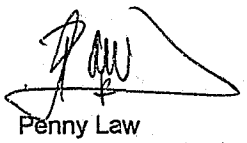
Extensive research has been conducted on the leadership skills that are required to improve a team's performance. However, theories have not managed to explain conclusively how certain leadership skills are able to improve a team's performance over others. Recent studies, have shifted the focus from trying to single out leadership skills that improve a team's performance to identifying categories of skills – like 'hard' and 'soft' skills – that improve a team's performance. This study develops and explains how the categories of meta skills and technical skills provide a more comprehensive explanation of leadership skills than the categories of 'soft' and 'hard' skills. This study explores the relationship between a leader's meta skills and technical skills on a team's performance. A case study method within an interpretive paradigm was used to assess the way in which meta and technical skills were perceived to improve a team's performance. The study drew from the rich insights of leaders and team members within four programmes located in the Graduate School of Public and Development Management. Open-ended and closed-ended questionnaires and semi-structured interviews gathered data to assess the perceived skills required in an ideal leader to improve team performance. The study revealed that a team's performance improves when a leader emphasises the exercise of meta skills above the exercise of technical skills. However, an over-emphasis of either meta skills or technical skills results in the demoralisation of a team which eventually leads to the reduction of a team's performance. The notion of meta skills and technical skills should therefore not be regarded as discrete factors that impact on a team's performance in a linear cause-effect relationship. Instead, a team's performance is affected by the interaction of factors within the individual, organisational and global context, as well as by the exercise of meta and technical skills in a dynamic and inter-connected process.

KEY WORDS

Meta skills
Technical skills
Soft skills
Hard skills
Team performance
Leadership
Leadership skills
Trust
Self-responsibility
Personal development
Reciprocity

DECLARATION

I declare that this report is my own, unaided work. It is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Masters in Education in Psychology in the University of Witwatersrand. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other University.



Penny Law

25 February 1999

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to thank and acknowledge the following people without whom this report would never have materialised in the limited time-frame:

Irene Broekmann – for her wisdom and empathy; for helping me to gain simplicity in complexity, and for always being there for me in truth and enlightenment.

The leaders and teams from P&DM – for being amenable to being part of my quest.

Marko Saravanja – for understanding.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT ii

KEY WORDS iii

DECLARATION iv

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS v

ABBREVIATIONS xi

DEFINITION OF TERMS xi - xii

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION 1 - 4

The Statement of the Problem 1

Research Questions 1

Aim of Research 1

Assumptions 1

Delineation of the Study 1

Rationale 2

Who will Benefit from the Findings 3

Organisation of the Study 3

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW 5 – 18

Introduction 5

Outline of the Literature Review 5

Review and Exploration of the Central Concepts and Theories related to Leader's and Teams 6

i) The Distinction between Leaders versus Managers 6

ii) The Distinction between Meta Skills and Technical Skills Applied within a Management Context 8

iii) Leadership and a Team's Performance

iii) Limitations of the Literature Available on Leadership Skills and a Team's Performance 18

CHAPTER THREE: CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK 19 - 22

A Leader's Skills and a Team's Performance 20

Organisational Context 21

CHAPTER FOUR: RESEARCH DESIGN 23 - 28
Interpretive Paradigm 23
Case Study Method 23
Participant Observation Approach 23
Data Gathering Techniques 23
Pilot Study 24
Sources of Information 24
Analysis and Interpretation of Data 25
Trustworthiness 26
Ethical Issues 26
Limitations of the Study 27

CHAPTER FIVE: ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION 29 - 63
Leader's and Team's Perceptions of the Meta and Technical Skills in an Ideal Leader 30
The Leaders' Perceptions of the Skills Required to Improve Team Performance 30
The Team's Perceptions of the Skills Required to Improve Team Performance 33
Combined Rankings of the Perceived Skills in an Ideal Leader 35
Comparison between the Leader's and Team Members' Reasons for Ranking the Perceived Skills Required in an Ideal Leader to Improve a Team's Performance 46
The Perceived Nature of the Relationship between Meta Skills and Technical Skills and a Team's Performance 47
The Classification of Meta and Technical Skills 47
The Inter-relationship between Meta Skills and Technical Skills 49
The Effects of Meta Skills and Technical Skills on a Team's Performance 51
The Nature of the Relationship between Different Skills in an Ideal Leader 56
The Effects of Trust on a Team's Performance 57
The Influence of Context 61

CHAPTER SIX: SYNTHESIS OF DISCUSSIONS 64 – 67

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSIONS 68 – 70

REFERENCES 71 – 76

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure One: A model illustrating the Interrelationships between a Leader's Skills, Team's Performance and Organisational Context 19

Figure Two: Bar Graph illustrating the Leaders' Ranking of Skills of an Ideal Leader to Improve Team Performance 32

Figure Three: Bar Graph illustrating the Teams' Ranking of the Skills in an Ideal Leader to Improve Team Performance 34

Figure Four: Bar Graph illustrating the Leader's and Team's Individual and Combined Ranking of the Skills in an Ideal Leader to Improve Team Performance 37

Figure Five: Model illustrating the Interconnected Relationships of Skills 64

LIST OF TABLES

Table One: Quotations reflecting the Leaders' Explanations for Ranking the Top Five Skills Perceived to Improve Team Performance 38

Table Two: Quotations illustrating the Perceptions of the Team Members' Reasons for Ranking the Skills of an Ideal Leader Perceived to Improve Team Performance 41

APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A: Cover Letter of Questionnaire 77

APPENDIX B: Questionnaire to Members 78

APPENDIX C: Questionnaire to Leaders 80

APPENDIX D: Interview Transcript 1 82

APPENDIX E: Interview Transcript 2 90

APPENDIX F: Interview Transcript 3 94

APPENDIX G: Interview Transcript 4 98

APPENDIX H: Interview Transcript 5 101

APPENDIX I: Interview Transcript 6 106

APPENDIX J: Interview Transcript 7 111

ABBREVIATIONS

P&DM – Graduate School of Public and Development Management
Wits – University of Witwatersrand
PDA – Performance Distribution Analysis
CEO – Chief Executive Officer

DEFINITION OF TERMS

A **programme** is a financially self-sustainable unit within the P&DM that develops and delivers sector specific certificate, executive and academic courses in public and development management in Southern Africa.

A **leader** is a programme manager tasked with the responsibility of strategic direction, marketing, financial sustainability, quality control, and delivery of courses, to meet the management and organisational development needs of the public and development sector. This is achieved through the management of team members and activities in her/his programme.

A **team** comprises academic and administrative staff who are responsible for convening or administering courses within a programme.

Meta skills are personal and interpersonal skills, which require the application of emotional intelligence and spiritual awareness. Spiritual awareness is described by qualities such as intuition and inner awareness to understand the tacit emotions and feelings of people. Meta skills operate within an affective domain where an individual is able to be intuitive about and perceptive to the energy that people resonate. Although the notion of emotional intelligence will be discussed in more detail in the literature review, emotional intelligence means "managing feelings so that they are expressed appropriately, enabling people to work together toward common goals" (Goleman, 1998:7). Some of the feelings from emotional intelligence are empathy, warmth and openness. Some of the meta skills are to: *build constructive relationships; build trust; communicate effectively (verbally),*

demonstrate assertiveness; demonstrate discernment in decision-making; inspire passion; maintain flexibility; mei . team members; motivate a team, and *reflect on own practices.*

Technical skills are skills that operate within a technical domain, which require the application of technical knowledge and intellectual reason. Intellectual reason implies being rational and logical in thought processes. Some technical skills are being able to: *apply discipline; communicate effectively (written); co-ordinate career planning and development; ensure quality of work; manage conflict; manage finances and raise funds; manage meetings; manage projects; manage strategy,* and *manage time.*

Leadership skills like *managing conflict, managing strategy, ensuring quality of work* and *applying discipline* cannot be categorised neatly under the classification of technical skills, because their effective practice also requires the employment of meta skills. For example, to *manage conflict* effectively, the leader should have technical knowledge of the process of conflict resolution and the rules and regulations pertaining to the issue of conflict. Although technical knowledge is necessary to manage conflict, it is not sufficient as the use of meta skills like *effective verbal communication* (listening, empathising) and *trust* (faith, integrity) is also required to resolve the conflict effectively.

However, for the purposes of this research, the distinction between the meta and technical aspects of these skills had to be drawn to understand the relationship between meta and technical skills as overarching categories. The meta aspects of the technical skills have therefore been excluded from the definitions of the technical skills. For example, the skill of managing conflict will focus only on aspects related to technical ability and intellectual reason like identifying and analysing causes of problems and planning strategies to solve the problem(s).

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

The Statement of the Problem

To explore the perceived relationship between a leader's meta skills and technical skills on a team's performance.

Research Questions

1. What are the leader's and team's perceptions of the meta and technical skills in an ideal leader?
2. What is the nature of the perceived relationship between meta skills and technical skills and a team's performance?
3. What is the nature of the relationship between the different skills?

Aim of Research

The aim of this study is to assess the relationship and extent to which a leader's meta skills and technical skills are perceived to improve a team's performance at *the University of Witwatersrand, Graduate School of Public and Development* Management (P&DM).

Assumptions

- A leader's meta skills and technical skills will influence a team's performance (positively or negatively).
- Meta skills and technical skills can be developed.
- A team's successful performance in programmes at P&DM will not only ensure the improved quantitative and qualitative delivery of certificate, executive and academic courses, but also the financial sustainability of the programme.
- The programmes are operating within a similar socio-economic context and internal policy framework.
- A team's performance is influenced by the organisational dynamics in which it is situated.

Delineation of the Study

1) This study is limited to programmes in the Graduate School of Public and Development Management, Faculty of Management, University of Witwatersrand.
2) Only programmes having a minimum of three people (a programme manager or leader and a minimum of two other members) were investigated.

Rationale

P&DM was established as a school to address the challenges of management capacity-building in the areas of governance, development and change. To achieve this vision of leadership through learning, P&DM operates in sector specific units called programmes, for example, health, defence, education, development, etc. Since P&DM's inception in 1994, the school has dramatically expanded the number of programmes it offers, to meet the particular management and development needs of the public and development sector. Programmes at P&DM are under pressure to render income-generating activities to ensure the programme's continued existence within the school. Each programme is therefore expected to operate as a cost centre.

Programmes at P&DM reflect varying degrees of success, determined by financial sustainability, delivery of courses and strategic direction. Programmes that are successful or moderately successful are generally able to meet their respective sector's management development needs in the form of either training, strategic planning or research. These programmes tend to be financially sustainable, have a clear strategic direction, and possess influential relationships with the key stakeholders in their respective sector. P&DM assumes that successful or moderately successful programmes consist of high or medium performing teams as their members tend to share a common organisational vision, are capable of meeting goals, and are highly motivated.

In contrast, unsuccessful programmes at P&DM tend to be floundering financially, are unclear of their strategic direction and unable to establish influential relationships within their respective sectors to attract income-generating ventures. P&DM assumes that unsuccessful programmes are due to

low performing teams, because despite great individual effort, the members as a team or collective do not work in synergy.

Because the ultimate responsibility of a programme rests in the hands of the programme manager or the team leader, P&DM assumes that a programme's success or failure can also be attributed to the programme manager. Hence, this invariably implies that a team's high or low performance can be attributed to the leader, who is finally responsible for directing and shaping the team's output. The successful performance of a team therefore weighs heavily on the performance of the leader of the team.

This research therefore endeavours to assist leaders to strengthen the organisational capacity of programmes by improving their team's performance. Because of time restrictions, this study will specifically explore the relationship between a leader's meta skills and technical skills in improving a team's performance.

Who will Benefit from the Findings

- Leaders and teams who operate in an organisational milieu similar to P&DM, by deepening their understanding and awareness of the perceived leadership skills required to improve a team's performance.
- A programme's organisational capacity to deliver sustainable and quality courses through a leader's ability to improve a team's performance.
- The body of literature, as previous research has been neglected in the area of exploring the relationship between a leader's meta skills and technical skills in improving a team's performance.

Organisation of the Study

This case study is organised according to the following chapters:

Chapter One provides an overview of the problem statement, research questions and aims. It highlights and defines the terminology that will be used in the report and discusses the delineation, assumptions, and importance of the study.

Chapter Two reviews the literature related to leadership skills, particularly meta skills and technical skills, and team performance. The theoretical and conceptual framework positions the study in a systems thinking approach. It introduces a model to analyse and interpret the data according to the inter-connected relationships between a leader's skills, team's performance, and organisational context.

Chapter Three explains the research design. It locates the research in an interpretive paradigm and explores elements of a case study method. It discusses the sources of information, the data gathering techniques (questionnaires and semi-structured interviews) and the way in which the data were analysed and interpreted. Finally, it identifies the key limitations of the study.

Chapter Four analyses and interprets the data using the research questions as overarching categories. It explores and elucidates the way in which a leader's skills, team's performance and context are inter-connected in a complex web of inter-relations.

Chapter Five concludes and highlights the central themes that emerged. It proposes ways to improve a team's performance through the exercise and development of a leader's meta and technical skills.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Despite the research and the literature devoted to the issue of teams and leaders, there are no conclusive theories or models on how a leader's skills improves a team's performance. Most of the theories and models on leadership pertain to the way in which a leader's roles and leadership styles can improve a team's success (Shortell & Kaluzny, 1994). Even then, the results of the research have remained inconclusive because there is no specific methodological tool that can attribute a team's (un)successful performance to the leader's role, skills or style (Shortell & Kaluzny, 1994).

The mistakes that are most commonly made relate to:

i) the validity of the tool, as some of the tools do not test what they purport to test;

ii) the attempt to establish a cause-effect relationship between a leader's style or behaviour and a team's success. Because most of these studies deal predominantly with issues related to attitudes, it is difficult to attribute a cause-effect relationship between a leader and a team's performance, as many extraneous variables (like policies and systems of the organisational context in which teams and leaders operate) contribute to the results. The most that these studies can conclude is that there is a high correlation between the factors being investigated;

iii) the inappropriate generalisation of results to different situations and contexts.

Outline of the Literature Review

This chapter will review and critique the major discussions, theories and models that have been developed to explain the relationship between leaders' and teams' performance as follows:

i) The distinction between leaders versus managers.

ii) The distinction between meta skills and technical skills applied in a management context.

iii) Leadership and a team's performance

Review and Exploration of the Central Concepts and Theories Related to Leaders and Teams

i) The Distinction between Leaders versus Managers

Zaleznick (1991) argues that the distinction between a manager and leader emerged as a result of industrialisation. Bureaucratic, rule driven and hierarchically structured institutions, which were characteristic of this era, realised that their successful performance depended on members who could enforce and perpetuate a rational and control orientated system. Managers were seen to advance the objectives of these institutions because they possessed an objective and mechanistic approach. Leaders by comparison, were regarded as being better suited to influencing and persuading members to support the institution's objectives, because they possessed a more flexible and visionary approach (Shortell & Kaluzy 1994, Gardener, 1993).

A manager was therefore expected to perform the roles of strategising, establishing goals, communicating effectively, collecting information, managing projects, solving problems, budgeting, and managing staff (Shortell & Kaluzy, 1994, Kotter, 1991). These roles are tightly defined in a job description and remain reasonably constant regardless of the person who occupies that position of management (Shortell & Kaluzy, 1994).

A leader was expected to perform roles of aligning staff with the changing direction of the organisation; motivating and inspiring members to support a new vision; creating informal networks and instilling a culture that enhanced self-esteem and individual growth (Kotter, 1991). Because a leader does not occupy a structured position within an institution's organogram, these roles are not cast in a job description, and change according to the needs of the organisation (Shortell & Kaluzny, 1994).

Joyner (1998) argues that managers are able to progress at a greater pace within a hierarchical structure than a leader, because managers are more detail orientated. Leaders are concept orientated as they see the bigger picture with

the desire to express creative and visionary ideas. A leader's flair for creativity is often stifled within a bureaucratic and hierarchical environment.

Hence, because leaders and managers are seen to hold disparate attitudes and approaches, which require them to perform different roles, they should remain as distinct entities (Zaleznick, 1991). This implies that an individual should not be both a manager and a leader simultaneously.

Dreher (1997) argues that the post-industrial era demanded radically different skills that would move organisations from being rule-centred to principle-centred, from role-orientated to relationship-orientated. Post-industrial organisations are characterised by flat structures, integrated systems, alignment of the organisation's needs with the individual's needs, and encouragement of innovative and creative thought (Dreher, 1997). The sharp division between the role of the manager and leader became redundant as it failed to serve the changing needs of the organisation. In a manager's pursuit for high productivity with a technical focus, post-industrial organisations deemed it was necessary for a manager also to exercise leadership skills.

Theorists such as Dreher (1997), Covey (1996), Peters (1994, 1993), and Senge (1994), influenced by systems thinking, argued that because organisations were becoming more principle-centred and relationship-orientated, the expectations of a leader had to be redefined. They expected the 'new' leader not only to make decisions and give direction, but also to facilitate processes, build teams, develop personal relationships and communicate effectively. A different attitude was also required of 'new' leaders (Senge, 1994). Instead of leaders thinking that changing attitudes and practices of members comes through persuading members to change their views, the different attitude expects leaders to set the example by first changing their own attitudes in the way they perceive or practise an issue. Team members noticing the change in their leader's attitude would be influenced to shift their own attitudes or adopt a different practice.

Gardener (1993) recognised that not all leaders are necessarily required to exercise management roles. However, because he maintained that effective managers are expected to elicit leadership roles, he developed the notion of a leader-manager. Apart from having to perform the expected management roles, like meeting objectives, strategising and managing projects, etc., the leader-manager is also expected to perform the leadership roles of the 'new' leader.

Hence, I will not create a distinction between a leader and manager, as the organisation in which the study is based is similar to that of a post-industrial organisation which requires a programme manager to demonstrate the roles of leader-manager.

ii) The Distinction between Meta Skills and Technical Skills Applied within a Management Context

In keeping with the general understanding of a leader as incorporating elements of management roles, the leadership skills identified also include management skills.

The most common leadership skills found in the literature are listed as follows:

1. Agreement building (for example, managing conflict; establishing common ground)
2. Networking (for example, establishing and recreating linkages)
3. Organising and institution building (for example, building purpose for institutions; designing structures and processes; carrying a vision forward)
4. Being flexible (for example, being open; accommodating)
5. Exercising power appropriately (for example, knowing rules and regulations; applying judgement)
6. Communicating effectively (for example, listening actively by paying attention, interpreting correctly, understanding the communicator's point of view)
7. Providing feedback (for example, giving positive feedback and negative feedback)
8. Trusting (for example, creating and instilling a sense of emotional safety and faith)

9. Mentoring (for example, improving practice of others through reflection and feedback)
10. Building teams (for example, solving problems; pulling a team together; inspiring; motivating)
11. Planning (for example, setting goals and objectives; establishing responsibility and accountability)
12. Facilitating change (for example, adopting new attitudes and practices)
13. Challenging people to reach their potential (for example, working hard to produce maximum outputs)
14. Designing a learning process (for example, creating an enabling environment that stimulates and fosters learning)
15. Being harmonious (for example, being patient under pressure; persevering)
16. Sharing a common vision (for example, co-creating a vision centred around values)

(Gardener, 1993; Dreher, 1997; Clemmer, & McNeil, 1989; Robbins, 1993; Merry, 1977; French & Bell, 1995; Hackman, 1990; Wilson *et al.*, 1994; Senge, 1994; Rossouw, 1994; Nienaber, 1990)

A crucial conceptual problem related to the literature regarding leadership skills is that consensus regarding the necessary and sufficient skills that leaders require does not seem to have been reached. A problem encountered in attempting to determine and prioritise the skills required to improve a team's performance is that most theorists attach a different significance to the above list of leadership skills.

The experience of a global economic decline in the mid 1980s caused the predominantly production-centred approach of the 1950s to give way to a people-centred approach (Korten, 1984). Organisations in the public and private sector were forced to revisit and transform their organisational systems (with regard to finance, human resources, etc.), structures (hierarchies, organograms, etc.) and culture (values, attitudes, beliefs) to become more people-centred (Robbins, 1993). Research in leadership had likewise to change to remain relevant. One of the most notable shifts in leadership theories

pertained to a rising interest in leadership skills which resulted in forming a distinction between categories of leadership skills, namely those of 'soft' and 'hard' skills. The notion of 'soft' skills, also referred to as 'people' skills, 'inter-personal' skills and 'social' skills is the umbrella term that covers all aspects of "relating to and with other individuals" (Strebler, 1997:24) whilst 'hard' skills refer to technical skills (Strebler, 1997, Dizdarevic, 1996, Pamplin, 1997, van der Vergt, *et al.* 1998).

Based on Smith's (1996) analysis of the economic restructuring in New Zealand, the business world in the 1990s was forced to create a distinction between 'soft' and 'hard' skills in order to improve productivity. Smith contends that 'hard' skills or technical skills (for example *budgeting, goal-setting, appraising staff, directing,* etc.) were previously the only recognised skills. 'Soft' skills (*listening, motivating, trusting, empathising, and coaching,* etc.) received little recognition and status, because the production-centred era regarded them as unscientific and irrational.

However research on institutions undergoing organisational change found that a greater emphasis placed on 'soft' skills above 'hard' skills by leadership produced profound positive effects on the members' ability to cope with organisational change and uncertainty. The studies show that performance improved with the implementation of 'soft' skills, while productivity declined when leaders continued to exercise technical skills without the introduction of 'soft' skills (McGee, 1996; Strebler, 1997; Pamplin, 1997; Dizdarevic, 1996; Smith, 1996). The impact of a leader's 'soft' and 'hard' skills on an organisation's and team's success therefore started to receive more recognition from management theorists.

However despite growing interest in the notion of 'soft' skills, critics regard it as "ill-defined" (Strebler, 1997:25) and "loosely described" (Goleman, 1998) as the notion of 'soft' skills is seldom explained beyond being interpersonal or people related skills. Rationalists (who contend that truth can only be attained through rational thought) (Reber, 1995) criticise the notion of 'soft' skills for not being empirically sound. Rationalists claim that because 'soft' skills are based on

emotions which are irrational and subjective entities, they are difficult to measure (Goleman, 1998). This has, in turn, given rise to the perception that 'hard' skills are better than 'soft' skills, because the former is rational and scientific while the latter is not.

Goleman (1998) challenges the rational school of thought, by providing neuroscientific evidence of the location of emotions and how emotional thoughts and feelings operate in tandem with cognitive thought. Neuroscientific research posits that emotions are stored in and accessed from the emotional centre in the brain, called the amygdala, whereas cognitive thought is processed a different section of the brain called the neocortex (Goleman, 1998).

Goleman refers to the notion of emotional intelligence as the ability to detect and read emotions or "subjective currents" (Goleman, 1998:51) to guide and strengthen interactions with people with the intention of improving performance. A stimulus, like a person smiling at you, would be stored and encoded in the amygdala to elicit an emotional response. An awareness of the emotion that is triggered by the amygdala, will determine an appropriate response. In the example used, the person smiling at you would be interpreted as a friendly gesture. However, if the person were smiling and shifting her eyes irregularly, the combination of the stimuli could result in the feeling of distrust. The neocortex is simultaneously encoding and interpreting the stimuli related to cognition, for instance what the person is saying, to make a judgement.

Congruence is reached when the emotional thought and cognitive thought match. However if the amygdala signals for example distrust and the neocortex signals confidence (as a result of smooth talk) incongruence occurs. Goleman (1998) argues that the incongruence should not be overlooked as the emotional centre is signalling an inner or 'gut' message that should be incorporated when making a response.

More than a decade of research on emotional intelligence has consistently revealed that the exercise of 'soft' skills or 'emotional competencies' improves

the performance of others over the exercise of technical skills (Goleman, 1998). Goleman (1998:32) states,

> Interpersonal ineptitude in leaders lowers everyone's performance: it wastes time, creates acrimony, corrodes motivation and commitment, builds hostility and apathy. A leader's skills in emotional intelligence can be measured in gain or loss to the organization of the fullest talents of those they manage.

Goleman's contribution to theory on leadership skills is revolutionary in that he was able to explain scientifically the neurological processes of emotional thought and connect emotional intelligence to the maximisation of performance. Goleman (1998) admits that an awareness of emotional intelligence does not necessarily result in the improvement of performance, though he argues that the acquisition and demonstration of 'emotional competencies' or 'soft' skills, like trust, empathy and adaptation to change, are required to improve performance.

The criticism to 'soft' skills also applied to Goleman's 'emotional competencies'. Despite his elaborate explanation of 'emotional competencies', the exercise of an 'emotional competency,' like listening attentively, may not yield the desired end result of improved performance, as Goleman omits to mention one, significant element: spirit or attitude. This implies that emotional competencies are necessary skills, but not necessarily sufficient.

Mindell, the founder of Process Orientated Psychology, developed the notion of meta skills to explain an attitude that a leader brings to a group (Mindell, 1995). Mindell argues that the exercise of meta skills yields greater performance than the exercise of technical skills, because the exercise of meta skills allows the leader to integrate the emotional (emotions, feelings), spiritual (attitudes, supreme consciousness) cognitive (thoughts) and behavioural (behaviours) elements in her or his interaction with the individual and team.

Mindell (1995) outlines four meta skills which elucidates the spirit in which the task should be performed, namely: compassion (letting go and not judging of pre-determined ideas, plans, etc.), patience (allowing the process to unfold), humility and reverence (remaining open to learning from others; appreciating all

individuals in their entirety) and playfulness (welcoming spontaneity and creativity).

According to Mindell (1995), the difference between a meta skill and a technical skill is the attitude or spirit in which the individual exercises the skill. An individual may be proficient in technical skills. However if she/he does not approach the task in an appropriate spirit or attitude, the desired goal for a team will not be elicited. For example, a leader might be highly competent in the technical skill of *managing projects* (that is, analysing problems, planning, implementing objectives, monitoring and evaluating). However without the exercise of 'meta skills', like *patience* or *humility*, the project could fail because the team working on the project might be resentful towards and demotivated by a leader who does not value the opinions of others or is intolerant when team members make mistakes.

The application of a meta skill as a 'soft' skill would operate on the same principle as described above. The outcome of a 'soft' skill like *listening attentively* is also subject to the attitude in which it is exercised. If a person listens attentively (by eliciting all the expected cues or behaviours like nodding, rephrasing, etc.) but exhibits (consciously or unconsciously) an arrogant attitude, the person being listened to may process the listener's behaviour as being condescending. However, if the listener approaches the person in a spirit of humility the person being listened to may process the behaviour as being caring.

According to Goleman (1998) congruence should occur on an emotional and cognitive level. However, Mindell (1995) proposes that congruence should occur on an emotional, spiritual, cognitive and behavioural level. The improvement of performance will not occur unless congruence is reached on all four levels. Goleman perhaps omitted the 'spiritual' element because he wanted to remain within a scientific paradigm where he was able to account scientifically for the origins and processes of emotions. The notion of emotional intelligence is synergistic with Mindell's (1995) notion of meta skills, in that meta skills are a manifestation of emotional intelligence. Meta skills not only require a person to interpret the emotions transmitted by the amygdala, but to also identify the

appropriate attitude in which to exercise a 'soft' skill that will improve performance.

Although the notion of meta skills was originally intended for a therapeutic (Mindell, 1996) or psychological (Connell *et al.*,1997) context, Mindell contends that the notion is applicable in and transferable to contexts which seek to align the emotional, spiritual, cognitive and behavioural elements in a leader's interaction with teams or individuals.

The notion of meta skills is used within a management context. Unlike Mindell's definition of meta skills being used to include only 'soft' skills, the term meta used within a management context includes both 'soft' and 'hard' skills. Davis & Dean, a management consulting group (1996) listed seven meta skills, contending that the application of these skills yields more output despite the utilisation of fewer resources. However, the problem with their list of seven meta skills is that it includes the skill of project management (which is traditionally considered to be a technical or 'hard' skill) with 'soft' skills like "*applying people skills*" or "*guiding the transition of change*" (Davis & Dean: 1996:2). As a result, clarity regarding the relationship between meta and technical skills cannot be confirmed.

Tornow & De Meuse (1994) and Sashkin & Franklin (1993) argue that meta skills are essential elements to assist teams and individuals through a process of organisation transformation. However, they provide no further explanation or definition of the term meta skills.

The notion of meta skills is preferred to the notion of 'soft' skills or 'emotional competencies' as the notion meta skills emphasises the attitude or the spirit in which a skill should be exercised. Moreover, meta (Allen, 1990) implies that the skill should be of a higher order. The inclusion of spirit or attitude places the notion of meta skill in a higher order in relation to 'soft' skills or 'emotional competencies'.

iii) Leadership and a Team's Performance

One of the most difficult aspects of management theory is being able to assess the performance of a team. Performance measurement systems are an important means to develop a more strategic approach to measure employee and organisational effectiveness (Deadrick & Gardner, 1997).

Nerenz and Zajoc (in Flood, *et al.*, 1994) argue that in order to measure performance effectively, the unit of analysis should be an episode of a process undertaken in a project that involves a range of people and sites, rather than a single service or individual. Further to Nerenz and Zajoc's unit of analysis for performance management, Deadrick & Gardner (1997) focus on both individuals and processes within systems which provide a far more integrated and systemic approach to promoting improvement in performance. Studies by Jako & Murphy and Steiner *et al.* (cited in Deadrick & Gardner, 1997) on performance measurement suggest that the performance distribution analysis method (PDA) could serve as a more comprehensive and integrated management tool to measure performance. The PDA focuses on the distribution of an *individual's* feasible performance output over a specific time period. It is considered revolutionary because other performance appraisal methods only focus on an *average* level of performance. However, despite the PDA method being considered a breakthrough in performance measurement technology, insufficient studies have been conducted to determine the usefulness of the method (Deadrick & Gardner, 1997).

Flood *et al.* (1994) argue that problems related to performance assessment are not generally of a methodological nature, but are more conceptual. The reason for the failure lies in the inability of the researcher to determine *what* is being measured rather than *how* it being measured. Hackman (1990) differs with Flood *et al.* and argues that numerous methodological problems have been incurred when conducting research on performance measurement because it is not possible to determine how groups perform using neat and reliable performance measures. Hackman (1990) contends that the assessment of performance is affected by complex social and personal elements which influence a group's performance. Performance measurement requires much

more than simply measuring outputs, because the research needs to accommodate the complex interplay of interpersonal, organisational and social dynamics.

Hackman (1990) therefore suggests that the following three-dimensional conception of group effectiveness needs to be considered when undertaking research on performance measurement.

1) Performance assessments obtained from the group should measure the degree to which the group's output (product, service or decision) meets the standards established by the group (that is, timeliness, quantity, quality, etc.);
2) The degree to which the process of performing one's task influences the working relations of others (that is, enhances the ability of members to operate more independently, creates mutual antagonism, etc.); and
3) The extent to which the group's experience contributes to the development and personal growth of team members (that is, enhancement or impairment of team members' growth).

Robbins (1993) argues from a systems approach that the predictions of a group's performance must take into account the larger organisational context in which the group is performing. Factors such as the organisation's strategy, levels of power, structure, selection processes, and incentive systems provide a conducive or inappropriate environment for a group's performance.

An even more unresolved and less researched issue is the relationship between a leader's skills and team's performance. According to Shortell & Kaluzny (1994) and Robbins (1993), the following three perspectives have been developed since the early 1900s:

1) The Trait Perspective

Stogill, who was the most prominent proponent of the trait perspective, attempted to identify the characteristics that separate successful leaders from unsuccessful leaders (Shortell & Kaluzny, 1994). After conducting 287 studies (1904 - 1970) he identified the following traits: intelligence, dominance, self-

confidence, a high energy level and having task related knowledge, from the six categories of traits that distinguish successful leaders from unsuccessful leaders, namely, **physical** (age, appearance, height), **personality** (self-confidence, independence, dominance), **intelligence** (fluency, decisiveness), **social background** (educational level, social status), **social** (co-operation, integrity) and **task-related** (initiative, persistence, need for achievement). The problem with this study is that one cannot attribute a causal relationship between the above mentioned traits and successful leadership, because the conclusions were not verifiable when the study was conducted in different contexts (Shortell & Kaluzny,1994; Robbins,1993).

2) The Behavioural Perspective

Because the trait perspective was unable to attribute the success of a leader to traits alone, an alternative perspective was created which tried to assess whether the success of a leader could be attributed to the leader's behaviour. Models under this perspective were therefore developed to categorise the different behaviours into leadership styles. Lewin & Lippit developed a model that compared three styles of leadership, **autocratic** (makes a decision without the group), **democratic** (co-ordinates group and facilitates consensus) and **laissez faire** (does not facilitate nor direct) to assess how these leadership styles affect a group's performance (Shortell & Kaluzny, 1993). The research concluded that variations in leadership styles had an impact on group performance. However, this perspective was abandoned because it could not indicate specifically which leadership style should be selected for a specific situation (Shortell & Kaluzny, 1993; Robbins, 1993).

3) The Contingency Perspective

This perspective was initiated in the 1960s to address the shortfalls mentioned in the trait and behavioural perspectives (Robbins, 1993). Fiedler's model on situational leadership maintains that effective leadership (Shortell & Kaluzny, 1993) does not depend on matching one's leadership style to a situation, but rather selecting a situation that is, conducive to one's leadership style. Methodological problems related to the validity of the questionnaire weakened

the value of this model. However, the contingency perspective cannot easily be dismissed because it is able to offer a more comprehensive and holistic explanation on leadership effectiveness. The contingency perspective argues that leadership effectiveness is influenced by many interrelated factors such as the characteristics of a manager, the characteristics of the follower and the characteristics of the immediate context.

iv) Limitations of the Literature Available on Leadership Skills and a Team's Performance

None of these three perspectives was able conclusively to attribute a leader's success to particular characteristics, be they traits, behaviours or contingent factors.

After conducting a reasonably extensive literature search it was found that there was no recorded local or international study on the relationship between a leader's meta skills and technical skills on a team's performance. Even though international studies focussed on the relationship between 'soft' skills and 'hard' skills on a team's performance, the notion of 'soft' skills was not explored in great depth. Studies conducted in South Africa only investigated the central leadership skills required to improve teams within a school context (Rossouw, 1994; Nienaber, 1990; Spies, 1995).

In this research, the exploration of the relationship between a leader's meta skills and technical skills on a team's performance will therefore contribute to the existing body of literature available on leaders and teams. This study will raise awareness regarding the usefulness of creating a distinction between meta skills and technical skills. The findings of this study will therefore assist to develop a more holistic understanding of the complex interrelationships between leaders and successful teams that the various leadership models in the traits, behaviours and contingency perspective endeavoured to explain.

CHAPTER THREE: CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The principles and elements of system's thinking (Capra, 1997; Wheatley & Kellner-Rogers, 1996; Senge, 1990) have influenced the conceptual and theoretical framework. A systems approach essentially aims to examine an issue as a whole, within its context (Capra, 1997). Purporters of systems thinking contend that systems are interconnected, and therefore when change is affected in one system, all systems will also be effected (Senge, 1994; Capra, 1997; Flood *et al.*, 1994). Hence, a team's performance is influenced not only by the meta and technical skills of a leader, but also by the context in which both the teams and leaders operate. However, the connection of systems or elements is not experienced in a linear cause-effect relationship, but in a dynamic and non-linear web of interconnections (Capra, 1997).

Because this study is located in a graduate school of management, the results of this study will be applicable to members within the school or from similar contexts. The discourse contained in this study is therefore strongly influenced by management theory. The approach taken will not view management as an exclusive science, but will include and draw from psychological and educational theories.

A simple model will be used to illustrate the way in which the leader's skills, team's performance and the organisational context impact on each other in a complex web of interrelationships (Capra, 1997).

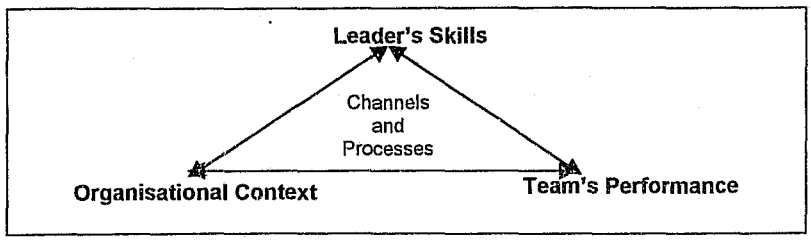


Figure 1: A Model on the interrelationships between a Leader's Skills, Team's Performance and Organisational Context

An explanation of the model will reveal the complex way in which the leader's skills, team's performance, and organisational context are interconnected.

A Leader's Skills and a Team's Performance

Although a systems approach has been predominantly applied in a management context, other disciplines (particularly psychology) have much to offer with regards to the way in which the interrelationships impact on performance. Mindell's (1989) theory on process work elucidates how processes (both conscious and unconscious) which are transmitted through channels, can affect behaviour and thought.

Mindell (1995) argues that the channel or the specific mode in which information is received provides the structure for processes to occur. Channels such as **auditory** (sound, speech, noise, etc.); **visual** (sight, visioning, dreaming, etc.); **tactile** (touch, force, pressure, etc.); **proprioceptive** (feelings, emotions); **kinesthetic** (body expressions, movement); **relationships** (relationships between others and within oneself), and **world** (behaviour or process in a group) impact on the way in which people will process their thoughts, feelings or behaviours whether consciously or unconsciously.

The channel used by a leader to transmit a skill elicits a particular process in a team member. The primary process (Mindell, 1985) refers to the conscious awareness of content (that is, the person's speech). The secondary process (Mindell, 1985) refers to the unconscious non-verbal and verbal signals of which the person is unaware. In contrast a technical skill evokes a different process. Hence the interaction between a leader and a member through a channel will elicit a primary and secondary process. For example, if a member openly states that she or he feels confident to complete a task, the primary process reflects that the member possesses the necessary skills to accomplish the work competently. However, if the member unconsciously behaves nervously and is unable to look into the leader's eyes, the secondary process may reveal that the member does not feel totally confident about completing the task. The inconsistency between the member's primary and secondary process intimates that the member is sending a double signal.

Mindell (1985:64) argues that "people double signal ... because they're at an edge, that is, they're unable to do something, they cannot allow themselves to express or do something". The leader has to exercise the necessary meta or technical skill to assist the member to be able to do or express something when a member is at an edge.

Organisational Context

Systems theory views organisations as open systems, which actively exchange with their surrounding environments (French & Bell, 1995). External forces like fiscal rates or government policies would therefore have direct and indirect repercussions on the way in which organisations operate. French and Bell contend that teams within organisations are microcosms or micro-systems within an organisation. In other words the internal state of a team is a reflection of the state of the organisation in which it is situated, because of the dynamic relationship between the parts and the whole. This implies that the overall performance of a team is influenced by the organisation, playing either an enabling or constraining role. For example, if the organisational context possesses dysfunctional support and service systems this will have a direct impact on the team's processes and performance.

Coleman (1998) identified key factors that lower performance in an organisation which invariably also impact negatively on a team's performance.

- Work overload – too much work with little or no support. If there are human resource and financial resource cutbacks members may feel resentful about having to do more work with fewer resources.
- Lack of autonomy – being accountable for their outputs and inputs, but unable to make comment. Teams may feel frustrated because their performance is restricted by rigid rules; the lack of flexibility stifles innovation and responsibility and makes members feel that their ideas are not valuable.
- Skimpy rewards – members may develop resentment and apathy when they receive little or no incentive for doing more than is required of them.
- Unfairness – hostility between members may result by giving members unwarranted differential treatment in payment or work loads; the disregard

and suppression of the members' grievances related to inequitable policies may result in the alienation and cynicism of members.

- Value conflict – members become demoralised when a mismatch exists between the members' values or principles and the demands of work.

The overall result of these organisational malpractices is exhaustion, disillusionment and loss of productivity of members. The inverse of these factors will yield the opposite results. The leader's skills in influencing a team's performance should therefore not be regarded in isolation, but viewed as being directly affected by the interrelated dynamics of its organisational context.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESEARCH DESIGN

Interpretive Paradigm

This study is located in an interpretive paradigm, because it is a small-scale research concerned with understanding attitudes and perceptions, rather than cause and effect relationships. An interpretive method was used to reflect the richness of the data and the complex interrelationships between a leader's skills and a team's performance within the management context of an academic institution. An interpretive method is appropriate because it acknowledges that attitudes and perceptions are difficult to measure and too complex and inter-connected to be reduced to cause-effect relationships.

Case Study Method

I have examined in depth one organisation (Leedy, 1997), namely P&DM. A case study is an appropriate method to use because the researcher is not only part of the organisation, but plays an interactive role with the team members and leaders within the organisation.

Participant Observation Approach

A participant observation approach (Cohen & Manion, 1980) was used within the case study method to assess the way in which the leaders and members constructed their individual, organisational and global context. This approach was used because as a researcher and staff member of P&DM, I am deeply immersed in the dynamics of the organisation. The establishment of "intimate and informal relationships" as an insider allowed me to gather rich data and observe the verbal and non-verbal behaviour without making respondents feel uncomfortable (Cohen & Manion, 1980:110).

Data Gathering Techniques

Data were collected by administering the following two data collecting techniques to the leaders and the team members of the four programmes in P&DM:

a) Closed-ended and Open-ended Questionnaire

The rationale of collecting quantitative and qualitative data was to:

- ascertain how team members and leaders rank the skills of an ideal leader in improving a team's performance.
- gain deeper insight into the reasons for ranking their five most important skills.

b) Semi-structured Interviews

The main purpose of conducting semi-structured interviews was:

- to uncover at a much deeper level how the skills are perceived to improve a team's performance.

Pilot Study

The open-ended and closed-ended questionnaire was piloted to assess whether respondents shared a common definition and understanding of the list of meta skills and technical skills. The pilot study also intended to identify and correct any question that was ambiguous, loaded or leading before the actual study was conducted.

Two members from the same team and a leader from a different team were asked to complete the questionnaire. The respondents' results were compared to assess whether the data yielded meaningful information that would address the research questions. The respondents were asked to explain how they interpreted the questions and the list of skills. Changes were made to the questionnaire's instructions and to the explanation of the skills where the respondents perceived them as being ambiguous. The layout and design of the data collecting tool were changed to present it in a more user friendly format.

Sources of Information

The population consists of all the programmes in P&DM, namely:
General (15 people); Development Management (4 people); Health (8 people); Arts and Culture (2 people); Local Government (3 people); Police (3 people); Environment (2 people); Economic Development (1 person); Education (2 people); Information Technology (5 people); and Defence (4 people).

From the above 11 programmes, a sample group was selected consisting of four programmes in P&DM, where the sample size comprised 14 respondents (four leaders and ten members). The questionnaire was administered to the 14 respondents. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with one leader and one member from each programme.

Purposive sampling was used to select the programmes that were studied. The following guiding criteria were used to select teams that could provide the most insight about the relationship between a leader's skills and a team's performance.

1. A programme should comprise a leader (programme manager) and a minimum of two team members. Even though a 'team' could consist of only a leader and a member (which is the case of some of the teams at P&DM) I wanted to assess whether members within teams carried similar perceptions of leadership skills, based on an assumption that some of these perceptions would also be influenced by their own leader's skills.
2. A programme must have delivered a minimum of one certificate course within the year. The exercise of leadership skills and a team's performance at P&DM occurs within a context of delivering certificate courses. Therefore reference made to performance and a leader's skills would be related to the processes required to deliver a certificate course.

Analysis and Interpretation of Data

The qualitative data were analysed and interpreted by coding and categorising the data to identify the patterns and themes.

Gall *et al.* (cited in Leedy, 1997) identified three approaches to analyse case study data:

1. Interpretational analysis: The categories were examined for explicit themes and constructs to explain and describe the data.
2. Structural analysis: After the explicit themes and constructs were identified and explained, I used Mindell's (1985) notion of primary and secondary level processes to determine the implicit patterns where meaning was tacit.

3. Reflective analysis: Finally, the main concepts in the conceptual and theoretical framework were used to interpret the findings and observations of the respondents' behaviour to connect the themes and patterns.

The quantitative data were arranged in order of perceived importance, in accordance with the respondents' ranking of the skills in an ideal leader. The rating of 1 - 20 that respondents placed on each of the 20 skills was totalled, to determine the perceived importance of each skill in an ideal leader. Tables were developed to reflect the way in which the skills were ranked in order of perceived importance. The rankings by leaders and members were compared to identify the explicit themes and patterns to develop the questions for the semi-structured interview instrument. These broad themes and patterns were used to analyse and interpret the data.

Because this study is situated in an interpretive paradigm, it acknowledges that there is no single objective and universal truth (Kvale, 1996). The analysis and interpretation of data have therefore attempted to capture the multiplicity of meanings embedded in the perceptions of respondents rather than to regard them as objective facts.

Trustworthiness

In order to ensure trustworthiness, the data gathered were cross-checked by using different data sets, namely, interviews and questionnaires. A pilot study was conducted to ensure that the data collecting instruments tested what they were expected to test.

Ethical Issues

This study received the interest and co-operation of all the respondents. The names of programmes and teams were not disclosed and information leading to their identification has been changed to avoid possible ethical dilemmas. Moreover, this study does not intend to view leaders in a static model of leadership, but in a dynamic model of leadership that will assist to inform the development of leadership practice.

Limitations of the Study

One limitation was that the sample size was too small to determine statistical significance from the data that were collected from the questionnaires. It may have been useful to have:

i) increased the sample size and,

ii) asked the respondents to firstly rate the skills that their leader possessed, then secondly to assess their perception of how their leader's skills affected their performance.

The second option would have entailed that I, as a researcher and colleague of the respondents, would have had to collect and be in possession of sensitive information regarding the way in which the respondents perceived their leaders' skills impacted on their performance. Even though the data would have been treated confidentially and the anonymity of respondents would have been respected, the trust established with the respondents could not be compromised to obtain more data.

Another limitation of the study relates to my subjectivity by being a staff member of P&DM. My own understanding of the organisational dynamics and problems encountered at P&DM therefore influenced the interpretation of the data. Perspectival subjectivity (Kvale, 1996) was employed whereby different perspectives and different questions were posed to the same data to generate a plurality of interpretations. During various stages of the semi-structured interview, certain key points were also paraphrased to ensure that the respondent's intention was reflected accurately.

However, the positive side of being a staff member of P&DM is that the establishment of trust with the respondents assisted me to gain their co-operation easily. This relationship also allowed me to probe the respondents without them becoming suspicious of my intentions. The respondents therefore felt free to express themselves openly. However because some of this information was shared in confidence, it has been withheld even though it would have added to the richness and depth of the analysis and interpretation of data.

Another limitation relates to the transferability of the findings to contexts other than to an academic environment, which is similarly structured to P&DM (Carter & Thomas, 1997). The findings would have carried more transferability if the study also investigated the perceptions and attitudes of leaders and members in the private and public sectors.

The final limitation relates to condensing all the data collected. The data needed to be condensed to create simplicity and logical flow of the patterns and themes that emerged Some of the detail could have been lost in the process.

CHAPTER FIVE: ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

Because the analysis and interpretation of data are so intricately inter-linked, they are not treated separately in this section. The interpretation of the findings will be provided after the data have been analysed.

The following research questions were used as an overarching frame for the analysis and interpretation of data.

1. What are the leader's and team's perceptions of the meta and technical skills in an ideal leader?
2. What is the perceived nature of the relationship between meta skills and technical skills and a team's performance?
3: What is the nature of the relationship between the different skills in an ideal leader?

Leaders and team members were requested to rank the following list of skills that they felt an ideal leader should possess to improve performance in a team. These skills include being able to:

1. **Apply Discipline** – enforce the necessary disciplinary procedures for improper behaviour or attitudes.
2. **Build Constructive Personal Relationships** with staff, customers and funders.
3. **Build Trust** – create and instil a sense of good faith and integrity.
4. **Communicate Effectively (Verbal)** – express ideas clearly, listen and understand.
5. **Communicate Effectively (Written)** – write reports (progress, funding), letters, memoranda.
6. **Co-ordinate Career Planning and Development** – multi-skill, match skills with task.
7. **Demonstrate Assertiveness** – use power appropriately, know when and how to agree or disagree.
8. **Demonstrate Discernment in Decision Making** – make appropriate judgements.

9. **Ensure Quality of Work** – ensure professional standard of delivery.
10. **Inspire Passion** – display enthusiasm that is, contagious and appealing.
11. **Maintain Flexibility** – be open, accommodate new ideas.
12. **Manage Conflict** – identify and analyse causes, plan strategies.
13. **Manage Finances and Raise Funds** – control and manage a budget, raise money for salaries.
14. **Manage Meetings** – set an agenda, facilitate the process of a meeting.
15. **Manage Projects** – analyse a problem, plan, implement, monitor and evaluate.
16. **Manage Strategy** – develop vision, goals, objectives, monitor and evaluate, restrategise.
17. **Manage Time** – be punctual, meet deadlines, prioritise, plan in advance.
18. **Mentor Team Members** – improve practice by guiding and reflecting on actions.
19. **Motivate Team** – inspire, create commitment, build vision, instil a sense of belonging
20. **Reflect on Own Practices** – be self-critical, able to self-reflect, accept criticism, be humble.

Research Question One:

What are the leaders' and teams' perceptions of the meta and technical skills in an ideal leader?

The leaders' and members' perceptions of the meta skills and technical skills required to improve a team's performance will be discussed separately in this section. Thereafter, the combined rankings of the perceived skills of an ideal leader will be provided.

The Leaders' Perceptions of the Skills Required to Improve Team Performance

The leaders perceived meta skills to be more important than technical skills in improving a team's performance. Of the 20 skills of an ideal leader the top five skills ranked by leaders in order of importance are being able to: *build trust, motivate a team, communicate effectively (verbally), reflect on own practices*, and *mentor team members*. The only technical skill that falls within the top ten skills is to *manage strategy* (ranked as the sixth most important skill). The

seventh to the eleventh most important ranked skills (that is, to *build constructive personal relationships, demonstrate discernment in decision-making, inspire passion, demonstrate assertiveness* and *maintain flexibility*) are also meta skills.

The remainder of the skills ranked in order of priority are the following technical skills: to *manage finances and raise funds, ensure quality of work, manage conflict, manage projects, co-ordinate career planning and development, manage time, communicate effectively (written), manage meetings* and *apply discipline*.

Figure Two reflects a bar graph ranking, in order of importance, the leaders' perceptions of the skills required in an ideal leader to improve team performance.

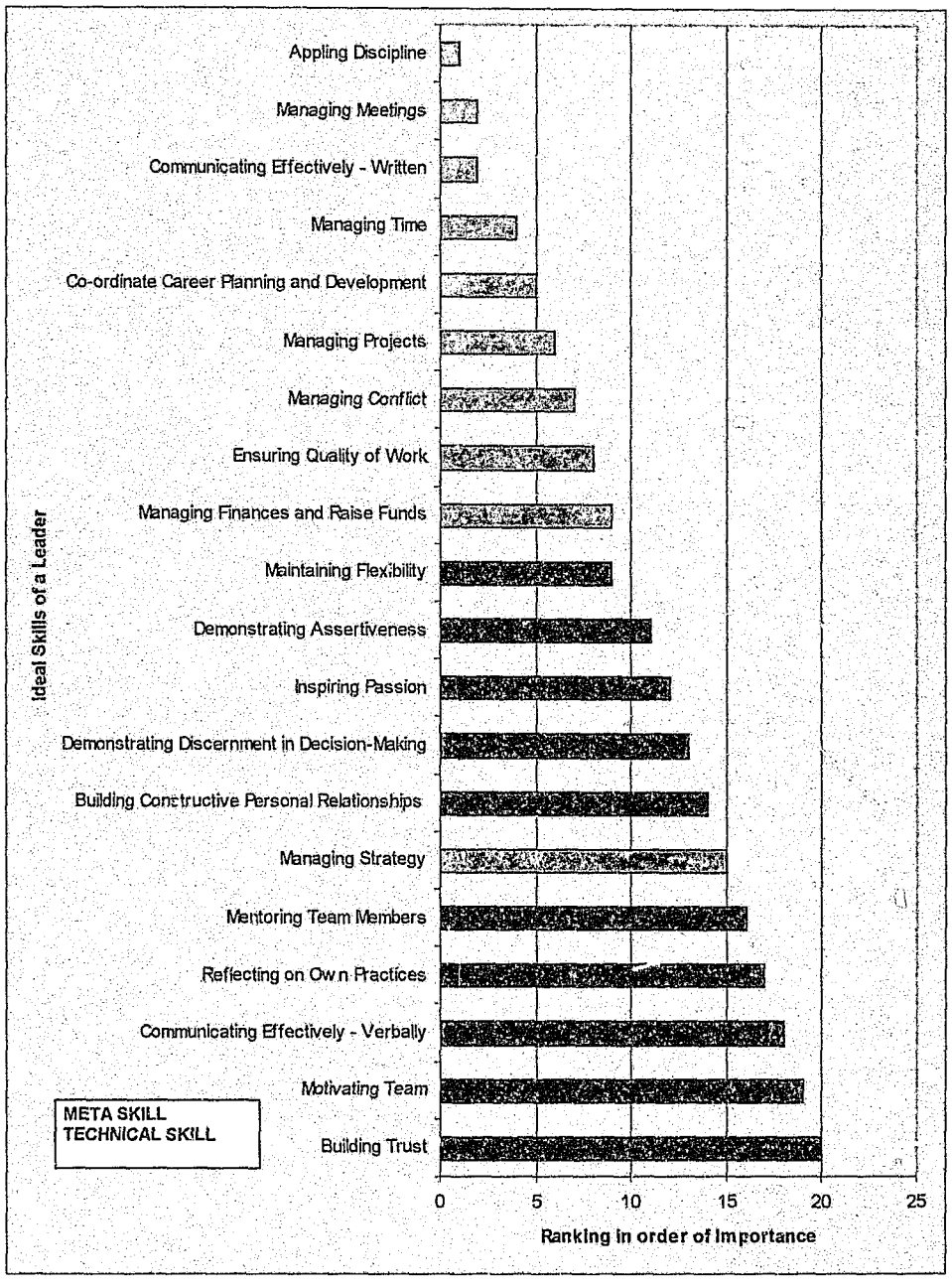


Figure Two: Bar Graph illustrating the Leaders' Ranking of the Skills of an Ideal Leader to Improve Team Performance

The Teams' Perceptions of the Skills Required to Improve Team Performance

The first five skills perceived as important to improve a teams' performance were ranked in order of priority as follows: *building trust, motivating team, communicating effectively (verbally), building constructive personal relationships, mentoring team members,* and *demonstrating discernment in decision making.* The sixth most important skill to improve a team's performance was perceived as being able to *ensure quality of work* (which is defined as a technical skill). The skill ranked seventh is *inspiring passion* (which is a meta skill). *Managing strategy* (a technical skill) was the eighth skill considered to improve a team's performance, whilst *demonstrating assertiveness* was rated as the ninth most important skill to improve a team's performance. The tenth skill prioritised was the meta skill of *demonstrating assertiveness.* In other words, of the top ten skills ranked in an ideal leader to improve a team's performance, teams prioritised eight out of the ten skills to be meta skills.

The eleventh and twelfth skills, namely: *reflecting on own practices* and *maintaining flexibility* are meta skills, whilst the remainder (*managing conflict, managing finances and raising funds, managing time, co-ordinating career planning and development, communicating effectively (written), applying discipline* and *managing meetings*) are technical skills.

The above discussion is graphically represented in Figure Three which reflects ranking, in order of importance, the team's perceptions of the skills required in an ideal leader to improve team performance.

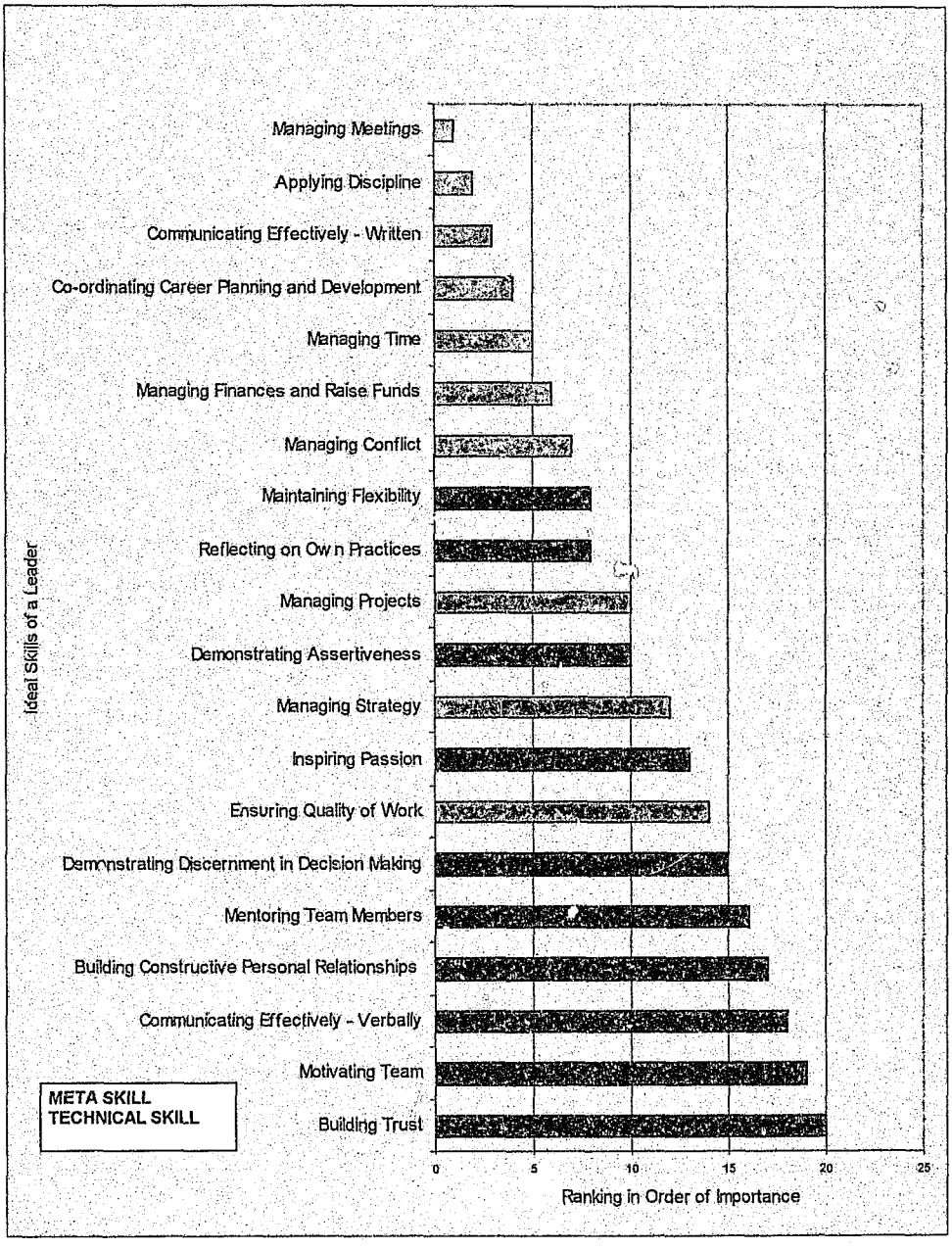


Figure Three: Bar Graph illustrating the Teams' Ranking of the Skills in an Ideal Leader to Improve Team Performance

The Combined Rankings of the Perceived Skills in an Ideal Leader

The following list reflects the leaders' and teams' combined rankings of the perceived skills in an ideal leader that improves a team's performance. The skills have been ranked in order of perceived importance:

1. Building trust (meta skill)
2. Motivating team (meta skill)
3. Building constructive relationships (meta skill)
4. Communicating effectively (verbal) (meta skill)
5. Demonstrating discernment in decision-making (meta skill)
6. Mentoring team members (meta skill)
7. Ensuring quality of work (technical skill)
8. Managing strategy (technical skill)
9. Demonstrating assertiveness (meta skill)
10. Inspiring passion (meta skill)
11. Maintaining flexibility (technical skill)
12. Reflecting on own practices(meta skill)
13. Managing projects (technical skill)
14. Managing conflict (technical skill)
15. Managing finances and raise funds (technical skill)
16. Managing time (technical skill)
17. Communicating effectively (written) (technical skill)
18. Co-ordinating career planning and development (technical skill)
19. Applying discipline (technical skill) and
20. Managing meetings (technical skill).

The first five skills ranked in order of importance are meta skills. In the top ten skills, *ensuring quality* (seventh) and *managing strategy* (eighth) were the only two technical skills. *Reflecting on own practices* (twelfth) was the only meta skill reflected in the remainder of the ranked list.

Both teams and leaders rated meta skills as the first five skills. However, the contrast between leaders and teams is that leaders *considered reflecting on own practices* as the fourth most important skill, whilst the teams believed *building constructive relationships* as the fourth most important skill. Leaders

rated *building constructive relationships* seventh on their list, whilst teams rated *reflecting on own practices* twelfth on their list. Leaders perceived *managing strategy* to be more important than teams and placed it sixth on their list of priorities, whilst teams placed it as their ninth important skill. The skills rated between 10 and 20 of both leaders and teams revealed a predominance of technical skills.

Although the order of the skills does not correspond between teams and leaders, the following technical skills fell within the 10 - 20 priority: *managing finances* and *raising funds, ensuring quality of work, managing conflict, managing projects, co-ordinating career planning and development, managing time, communicating effectively (written), managing meetings* and *applying discipline.*

Within the 10 - 20 ranking, *maintaining flexibility* was the only mentioned meta skill reflected by teams and leaders (apart from the already mentioned meta skill of *reflecting on own practices* which was rated twelfth by teams). *Maintaining flexibility* received a thirteenth ranking within teams and an eleventh ranking amongst leaders.

Figure Four is a bar graph illustrating in order of importance, the individual and combined ranking of the leaders' and teams' perceptions of the skills required in an ideal leader to improve team performance.

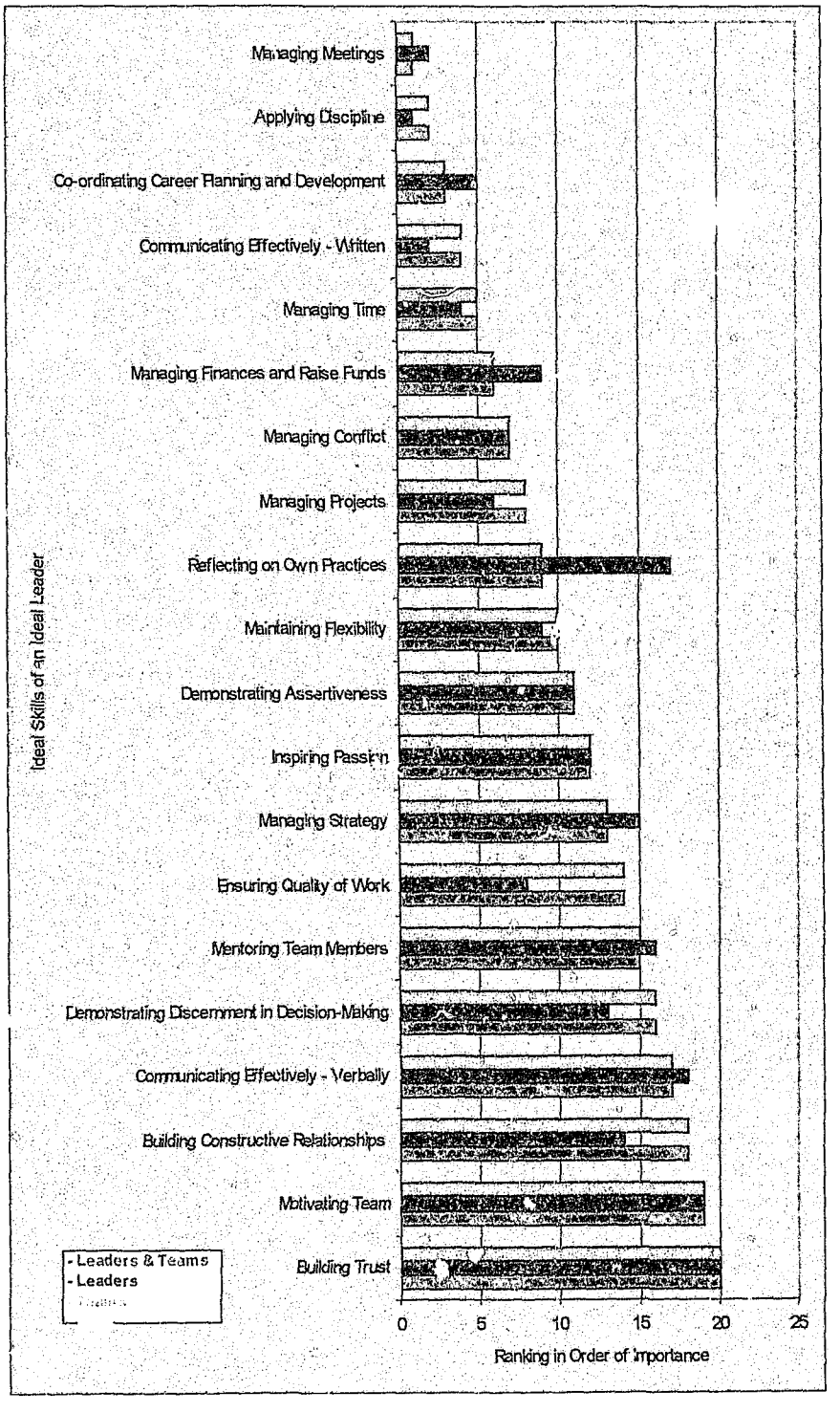


Figure Four: Bar Graph illustrating the Leaders' and Teams' Individual and Combined Ranking of the Skills in an Ideal Leader to Improve Team

The following quotations come from the open-ended questions where leader's and team members' were requested to provide an explanation for ranking the top five skills in an ideal leader. The quotations from the leaders and teams are reflected separately.

Table One: Quotations Reflecting the Perceptions of the Leaders' Explanations for Ranking the Top Five Skills Perceived to Improve Team Performance

Building Trust
"Trust builds the framework that allows people to give energy and commitment. It is the glue to hold [the] project together".
"Constructive personal relationships and trust are core foundation stones on which to build positive interactions between staff; [give the] impression that [the] leader can be relied on; willingness to participate in team endeavours; a feeling that personal good can come from [a] contribution to collective success, etc. I think, though, that these two things [building trust and constructive relationships] go hand in hand with the impression that team non-performance will lead directly to loss of trust and constructive relations".
"[The] foundation of good interactions relies on [the] threat of its potential loss".
"I don't think that it needs improvement from this angle, but a sense of honesty, integrity, and trust is essential for a team to work. I think we have it".
"Trust in the leader and trust in each other make for productive working relationships, without the necessity to constantly speculate about the motives and agenda, and thus much happier and healthier [teams]".
Motivating Team
"Know what makes the different team members enthusiastic and grow, [one team member] wants commitment and excitement, [another member] wants order and respect. Try to give this to get their best".
"Belonging to [a] team [is] not necessarily important. I think rather that getting people to see that by realising themselves within a unit or organisation that grows as a result, and whose growth

The following quotations come from the open-ended questions where leader's and team members' were requested to provide an explanation for ranking the top five skills in an ideal leader. The quotations from the leaders and teams are reflected separately.

Table One: Quotations Reflecting the Perceptions of the Leaders' Explanations for Ranking the Top Five Skills Perceived to Improve Team Performance

Building Trust
"Trust builds the framework that allows people to give energy and commitment. It is the glue to hold [the] project together".
"Constructive personal relationships and trust are core foundation stones on which to build positive interactions between staff; [give the] impression that [the] leader can be relied on; willingness to participate in team endeavours; a feeling that personal good can come from [a] contribution to collective success, etc. I think, though, that these two things [building trust and constructive relationships] go hand in hand with the impression that team non-performance will lead directly to loss of trust and constructive relations".
"[The] foundation of good interactions relies on [the] threat of its potential loss".
"I don't think that it needs improvement from this angle, but a sense of honesty, integrity, and trust is essential for a team to work. I think we have it".
"Trust in the leader and trust in each other make for productive working relationships, without the necessity to constantly speculate about the motives and agenda, and thus much happier and healthier [teams]".
Motivating Team
"Know what makes the different team members enthusiastic and grow, [one team member] wants commitment and excitement, [another member] wants order and respect. Try to give this to get their best".
"Belonging to [a] team [is] not necessarily important. I think rather that getting people to see that by realising themselves within a unit or organisation that grows as a result, and whose growth

through the individual success of each member reflects indirectly back on each other, is important". "Unit status [in the market] provides the basis for individual status, but this can only be realised if each contributes their share of effort". "The team needs to feel that they are working together for a common goal". "A team that believes in its own excellence, effectively and individually, is likely to perform excellently".
Communicating Effectively – verbal "Important from two angles – to communicate information and instructions unambiguously and to be able to persuade".
Reflecting on Own Practices "[A] leader influences others more through actions than words. Notice, admit, and try to learn from mistakes." "Open my excitements, fears and failure to allow others in to learn the same – so people (including me) can ask for support and not hide mistakes". "A team leader is only as strong as its greatest fault, to misquote a phrase, and a knowledge and acceptance of one's strengths and weaknesses is essential".
Mentoring Team Members "Teams need to reproduce themselves so that they can go on when one person leaves. Teams should always be growing and changing and developing. People are not indispensable and need to pass on their skills". "Know what they need – listen". "Be clear of your role to support them to deliver. Support in areas they are weak at and to support their growth". "Give a lot so you can expect a lot".

Building Constructive Relationships "Within the team, where constructive relationships exist, there is more likely to be a sense of co-operation rather than negative competition". "With external agents this is essential in establishing and maintaining beneficial working relationships".
Demonstrating Discernment in Decision-making "Important for the well-being of the team, the continuing inflow of work, and the standing of the leader".
Inspiring Passion "The team needs to have vision and excitement about the future and what it holds. Important to excite people in the work that they are doing. Does not have to be ostentatious or 'over the top'". "Involves communicating/instilling the idea that a good job equals the feeling of team success that is, personally rewarding. Just don't think I am very good at this".
Monitoring the Quality of Work "To be effective in delivery, quality must be ensured". "Leader's focus on quality follows through – I think it is something I must tighten up on". "Motivating a team can really only happen if one instils the important ethos that professionalism in work is the basis for success and personal well-being within job. Again, I think I could be better at this".

The following quotations are from team members explaining the ranking of the five top skills required in an ideal leader perceived to improve a team's performance.

Table Two: Quotations illustrating the Perceptions of the Team Members' Reasons for Ranking the Skills of an Ideal Leader Required to Improve a Team's Performance

Building Trust
"I believe everything flows from trust. Building and developing high levels of trust is critical in developing a lasting and successful project".
"Trust is the foundation of a team. It ensures a team's ability to work together and stay together during difficult periods. Trust is earned and not given and [is] therefore necessary for the improvement of a team's performance".
"If your leader has not got trust in you, nothing can go right".
"Trust is one of the most important aspects of dealing with staff. If staff don't trust their leader, or if the leader does not trust his/her staff, no collective decisions would be possible".
"Building trust is very important in a working environment".
"In order to be productive we, as a team, should be confident that we can trust each other. We should believe as a team anything is possible if we stick together".
"Trust is the base of teamwork. Enthusiasm, innovation, creativity cannot be unlocked without trust. [Trust] generates commitment".
"There needs to a sense amongst a team of knowing that the team leader has integrity, values input and will work fairly with each person".
Motivating Teams
"Because it is important for me to feel accepted and valued as part of the team".
"May reflect my personal tendency to perform best when I feel a sense of purpose, belonging. Members will contribute to identify with a project to the extent that they feel a stake in commitment to the goals of the team".
"It ensures that a team always strives to better itself and its work performance. It also ensures that the job of the members of a team does not become stereotypical".

"If there is not motivation, staff [become] demoralised".

"An ideal leader who possesses a strong motivational drive is guaranteed a committed team/staff. I believe that this will ensure that the team is committed to doing an excellent job, being responsible, open-minded, team-orientated".

"One of my weaknesses is that I [become] sensitive about people who don't like to be part of a team effort. [It] requires a strong leader to ensure that this does not happen".

Communicating Effectively (verbally)

"Communication is the essence of any group work".

"A leader especially, sends out particular messages by the manner (choice of words, tone, etc.) s/he uses".

"A genuine ability to listen sincerely means being able to tune to finer group dynamics and harness ideas/skills."

"Getting the job done requires that everyone understands what they have to do".

"If orders, instructions, reports are not clear – staff [become] confused".

Building Constructive Personal Relationships

"Flowing from the trust-building exercise is the ability to build constructive relationships for long-term sustainability. If your leader has a destructive relationship with staff, staff get demotivated".

"[Building constructive personal relationships] is related to trust. [It] generates commitment".

"I need involvement to the extent that my work becomes part of my life and not just an attachment. I believe if you enjoy your job, and do it well, everything else will follow".

"I am a person who requires job satisfaction in order to be happy and productive in my work. This is what I have set my mind to achieving in the medium-term. In order for me to have job satisfaction I have to work to my potential. I need to be busy. I need to be contributing and recognised for my contributions".

"An ideal leader would support and encourage the goals that I have set for myself".

Mentoring Team Members

"Guiding the team in the right direction and reflecting on actions is very important. [By doing this], we as a team would learn from our mistakes. [We] need to be taken forward by a strong leader".

"I would like to work in a team situation where everybody is pulling towards the same goal. It is important to me, so that I can know that I am doing things right and have the support of my leader. Also so that I can develop in my area of work".

"It also ensures quality. [It] gives both leader and member an opportunity to reflect on effectiveness and efficiency in performance".

"By creating commitment you ensure the unity of a team and its growth. Mentoring encourages team members to try new things, that is, [to] learn new things".

"Motivated teams lift [the] performance of individual members, [which] generates collective pressure".

Demonstrating Discernment in Decision-making

"This is important, since members of the team can also judge/decide. The leader should not be biased or else she loses credibility and trust by his followers".

"Decisions should be made for the sake of the organisation or its clients, not only for the individuals in a group. This would make me lose morale".

"Leaders should have their 'finger on the pulse of things'. Repeated 'bad judgement' [is] not good for teams."

"The team leader needs to make informed judgements to ensure both internal and external performance."

"Inappropriate judgement. [The] sense that your leader makes inappropriate judgements has implications for performance".

"Any team I've been a member of that had worked has had a leader who thought through and made sound decisions".

Ensuring Quality of Work "A professional standard of work gives a team a sense of pride. It also ensures more clients, that is, remuneration (which motivates people to keep a high standard of work)". "A leader only gets the job done if they make sure all members produce high quality work".
Inspiring Passion "The leader must be able to inspire passion, so that the members can have a role model, develop love for their work and be convinced that they are doing something good." "Again, in this sort of environment it is important to feel part of a team. Specifically given instances of intense pressure when team support is necessary".
Managing the Strategy "The leader has to do this to make sure that the team efforts are focused and there are no deviations from the expected performance. Deviations will be detected early and corrected, and costs will be reduced". "Managing strategy is critical as it is setting the parameters of any organisation. It involves directing, motivating and programmatic development which mobilises all resources". "Clearly as a team manager – having a uniform vision for your team is vital for focus etc."
Demonstrating Assertiveness "Assertive behaviour is important in a team, especially if all team members have strong personalities". "[A] team leader needs to be in a position to monitor [the] performance of team members and ensure that there is commitment and hard work". "It is a humane way of maintaining discipline. This is important to me because it will not destroy me, and because it is gentle and effective".
Managing Projects "Work (and life) is made up of smaller pieces. If they are done well, so is the achievement of bigger goals".
Reflecting on Own Practices "The hardest thing for any member to do is to consider his/her own actions when problems arise – it's even harder for a person in a leadership position. Yet very often the unwillingness/inability to

do so, is exactly the reason for the underlying causes not [being] dealt with". "Leaders are members like any other of a team, and prone to the same weaknesses". "Arrogance leads to team destruction and humbleness leads to success".
Maintaining Flexibility "The ability to be flexible is an important factor in the operational side of a strategic plan. It acknowledges a complex external environment". "Stems from the belief that each member of a team can add value and new perspectives if the space to do this exist". "By accommodating new ideas it increases the unity of a team as well as raising the member's self-confidence. It prevents a stagnation of ideas and ensures growth". "An ideal leader would be able to accommodate new ideas from anyone, no matter how low or high up the ladder one is". "Equal opportunity is extremely important". "Flexibility enables expression and utilisation of commitment, innovation, and creativity".
Managing Conflict "Conflict is almost inevitable in teams. Even the most productive, skilled team can be destroyed by conflict that is, not managed well". "It calls on a leader's ability to be sensitive, impartial, proactive, and focused and sets the tone for how other members deal with conflict in the future".
Managing Finances "Emanating from the skill to manage strategy is the ability to raise funding and manage financing so that the strategy can be implemented effectively".
Communicating Effectively – written "If written communication – reports, memorandum are not clear, there is chaos".

Applying Discipline "Be firm and decisive. [Do] not allow team members to act in an unfair and unjust manner even though the practices are flexible". "All teams fail if there are free-riders who don't pull their weight".
Managing Meetings "Meetings are the biggest 'time robber'. Teams should not spend too much time [on meetings]. This is the downfall of many teams".

Comparison between the Leaders' and Team Members' Reasons for Ranking the Perceived Skills Required in an Ideal Leader to Improve a Team's Performance

The leaders perceived the following meta skills – *building trust, motivating a team, communicating effectively, reflecting on own practices, mentoring teams, building constructive personal relationships, demonstrating discernment in decision-making* and *inspiring passion* – to be the most important skills that improves a team's performance.

The *building of trust* was generally regarded as the core foundation stone as it ensures that a conducive environment is created in which to exercise all the other skills.

Ensuring the quality of work was the only technical skill that was mentioned in the list of priority skills. This skill appears to be intricately related to meta skills in that it is concerned directly with the qualitative way in which outputs should be delivered.

Members perceived the following meta skills to be important in improving a team's performance: *building trust, motivating teams, communicating effectively (verbally), building constructive personal relationships, mentoring team members, demonstrating discernment in decision making, inspiring passion,*

demonstrating assertiveness, and *maintaining flexibility*. Similarly to leaders, members also perceived trust as the essential skill that ensures the successful performance and motivation of teams.

Some members rated the following technical skills as one of the top five perceived skills in an ideal leader that will improve a team's performance: *ensuring quality of work, managing strategy, managing projects, managing conflict, managing finances, communicating effectively (written), applying discipline* and *managing meetings*.

In summary, the above section reflected the priority of meta skills and technical skills by leaders and members perceived to improve a team's performance.

The next section will address the second research question regarding the perceived nature of the relationship between meta and technical skills and a team's performance.

Research Question Two:

What is the Perceived Nature of the Relationship between Meta Skills and Technical Skills and a Team's Performance?

This research question attempts to unravel the way in which leaders and team members perceive the dynamic inter-relationship between meta skills and technical skills in improving a team's performance. This section will reflect the thematic patterns that emerged from the questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. I will draw from educational and psychological theories to interpret the data.

The Classification of Meta Skills and Technical Skills

Some of the respondents developed their own categories namely, "personal skills or skills that empower people" and "project-related or technical skills"[1] to explain the reasons for certain skills receiving a higher ranking than other skills in an ideal leader, before I even introduced the notion of meta and technical

[1] Refer to Transcripts D and K.

skills to them. The respondents classified the top five ranked skills (*building trust, motivating a team, building constructive relationships, communicating effectively (verbally),* and *demonstrating discernment in decision-making*) as people-related skills, "personal skills" or "skills that empower people". These respondents referred to the bottom five ranked skills (*managing finances, managing time, communicating effectively (written), co-ordinating career planning and development, applying discipline* and *managing meetings*) as "project-related skills" or technical skills.

The categories of "personal skills" and "project-related skills" reflect broad distinguishing areas of skills, which support the need to create a distinction between the meta skills and technical skills of a leader. The implication is that some of the respondents are aware of the way in which different groupings of skills impact on a team's performance. They felt that the people-related skills are able to improve a team's performance more than the technical skills, because the people-related skills were seen to motivate and generate more commitment in members.

When the notion of meta skills and technical skills was introduced, most of the respondents supported the classification, but preferred to use the notion of 'soft' and 'hard' skills. This possibly relates to the respondents using terminology with which they are more familiar and comfortable. One respondent reacted to the classification of 'soft' and 'hard' skills as he felt that the notion of 'soft' skills had been stereotyped as being a lower status skill to 'hard' skills. He preferred referring to the 'soft' skills as skills that "cannot be learnt" or "non-delegatable" skills and the 'hard' skills as skills that can be "learnt" or "delegatable"[2]. The respondent felt that a leader is able to learn and delegate a 'hard' skill like managing a meeting. However the leader cannot delegate the direction or solving of problems in a team and the extent to which members are taken seriously.

According to Mindell's notion of primary and secondary processes, the respondent's primary process reflects a need to create new categories for skills

[2] Refer to Transcript J.

to avoid the stereotypical association of 'soft' skills as inferior and 'hard' skills as superior. However, the generation of the new classification reveals a secondary process regarding the respondent's tacit attitude towards the nature of skills. The preference to use the category of "skills that cannot be learnt" or "non-delegatable skill" above 'soft' skills assumes a model of leadership that is, static. An implication of operating within a static model of leadership places the responsibility of the team's performance solely on the intrinsic qualities of the leader without acknowledging the members' contribution and dynamic interaction in improving a team's performance.

As stated in the research design chapter (Chapter 3), a dynamic model of leadership has been used to frame the discussions, as it is accepted that 'soft' or meta skills just as 'hard' or technical skills, can be learned. Research done on emotional intelligence show that emotional competencies are learned and continue to develop as individuals learn from their experiences (Goleman, 1998).

The Inter-relationship between Meta Skills and Technical Skills

From the interviews, all of the respondents perceived meta skills and technical skills to operate in tandem. They regarded the skills as being different sides of the same coin. Both skills are considered as necessary, but not sufficient, to ensure the improvement of a team's performance. Differences regarding the emphasis that is, placed on each skill emerged.

One respondent used the analogy of the carrot and the stick to illustrate the importance of the leader's ability to balance the implementation of meta and technical skills. He contended that if a leader uses only a "carrot approach" (or only exercises meta skills) a team will most likely be happy, but a happy team does not necessarily imply a performing team. Likewise if the leader uses only a "stick approach" (that is, focuses on technical skills) it might give rise to positive operational results, like well-managed projects and financial security. However the stick approach could impact negatively on the team's performance as members may eventually start feeling demotivated and repressed.

He therefore regarded the leader's ability to balance the exercise of meta and technical skills as being the "secret" to good team performance.

Other respondents felt that the two skills should operate in parallel. However instead of placing equal emphasis on meta skills and technical skills, as suggested by the previous respondent, the leader should place more emphasis on exercising the meta skills. The existence of technical skills in a leader was perceived as necessary in that it would instil confidence in a member knowing that the leader possesses the skills to do a task well. However, greater significance was placed on the leader's ability to exercise meta skills, as they are considered to create synergy in a team and would motivate and inspire the team's members to perform even better. To illustrate this viewpoint one respondent remarked,

> ...it would make me feel confident that there were certain areas of the programme that were taken care of ... that I didn't have to worry about [referring to the leader's technical abilities]. But ...if X was say a morose person, not a free communicator, not somebody who involved you and just gave you instructions, I don't think that it would be doing a tremendous amount for my morale.[3]

Even though some of the respondents felt that technical skills and meta skills should be placed parallel to each other, when they were compelled to rank the skills of an ideal leader in order of importance, leaders and members rated more meta skills higher up the list than technical skills. The different perceptions in the way respondents ranked an ideal leader's skills in the questionnaire and the responses from the semi-structured interview could be explained by not providing the respondents with a choice in the ranking process. Moreover, the organisational context was perceived to influence the way in which technical skills were weighted. This issue will be explored in greater depth later in this chapter. The significant factor is that all the respondents recognise the crucial role that meta skills play in improving a team's performance.

---

[3] *Refer to Transcript F.*

The Effects of Meta Skills and Technical Skills on a Team's Performance

All respondents perceived meta skills to elicit positive effects on a team's performance. The effect of meta skills was described as generating a sense of belonging, providing meaning to work, motivating members to work harder, instilling commitment, reducing stress, unlocking the potential of members, providing the space for innovation and creativity, creating a harmonious environment and creating an optimistic outlook. The team would therefore experience its potential as being greater than the sum of its individual parts.

Respondents provided varying opinions regarding the effect of technical skills on a team's performance. Apart from some of the respondents feeling more confident about the sustainability of the team if the leader was strong in technical abilities, most of the respondents felt that the exercise of technical skills without meta skills would be destructive to the team as it would suppress creativity and initiative-taking. Some respondents expressed surprise that several technical skills received such a low ranking. They felt that technical skills like financial management, strategic management, marketing and public relations management, time management, and conflict management should have been ranked higher on the list of ideal skills of a leader. The perceptions related to each of these above-mentioned technical skills will be reflected systematically.

Some respondents felt that even though financial management was the overall responsibility of the leader, it was the responsibility of all the members to participate in the process of managing funds. One respondent contended that financial management, strategic management, public relations and marketing are crucial to ensuring the sustainability of a team. He felt that if importance was not attached to these skills a financial crisis would arise in the team. Members would consequently compromise their values by engaging in corrupt activities and work only to protect their self-interests.

Applying the primary level process, the respondent therefore assumes that the application of technical skills will not only ensure the programme's sustainability, but will prevent corruption and selfish behaviour of members. The secondary

process reveals the member's assumption about financial sustainability reducing conflict in a team. Whilst this assumption could contains aspects of truth, low performance and self-interested behaviour could also be the result of a leader's inability to exercise meta skills effectively. The discussion on trust as a meta skill will illuminate this point further on in this study.

Several respondents felt that time management and meeting management should have received a higher priority because team members were unable to prioritise their workload and wasted time in meetings. Meetings were also considered necessary to ensure the process of accountability whereby people's performance could be monitored on a regular basis.

Most participants perceived the technical skills of *applying discipline, managing conflict, communicating effectively (written)* as necessary, but not so important for small teams. Because they considered smaller teams as more flexible, informal and less routine-driven than bigger organisations, a rigid chain of command and a disciplinarian and formal approach were not suitable. Most respondents felt that the application of discipline would have the reverse effect on improving a team's performance as it would lead to negativity and a feeling of being undermined. There was also a perception that disciplining breaks down respect. It could mean that the respect for the leader was broken – in which case, it reflects a fear of discipline as it would result in the disapproval of a leader. Instead of the exercise of discipline, they felt that it was more appropriate to increase the commitment of members to create an environment where members are self-disciplined. One respondent felt that it was an unrealistic assumption to create a situation of self-discipline because people come with their own individual baggage (problems, expectations, and influences).

Reliance on informal meetings and discussion was considered to be a more effective way of communicating than holding formal meetings and sending memoranda. Some respondents felt that *written communication* was only necessary to record strategic discussions or importan[illegible] They felt that a smaller team would perform far better if *verbal* [illegible] the primary

means of communication. They perceived *written communication* to lead to unnecessary misunderstandings as the reader might be unable to gauge the writer's intentions and motives. The secondary process could imply that trust is established more through *verbal communication* than *written communication*. One respondent felt that both *written* and *verbal communication* are essential skills because the teams operate in an academic environment which requires the ability of members to *communicate effectively* in whatever mode. Another respondent claimed that the skill to communicate effectively through writing is essential because rewriting reports that did not include all the relevant information wasted time. What seems to be illuminated from this respondent's secondary process is that importance is placed on a technical skill if it appears to be lacking in the member.

In one programme both the leader and member regarded the technical skill of *co-ordinating career development* as not being important. The leader viewed career development as being the members' responsibility "to plan their own future".[4] The member also considered *co-ordinating career development* as her responsibility, but saw it as having to "push for it"[5] herself. The primary process reflects the member being assertive and self-directed by carving her own future. However, the secondary process reveals a degree of resentment and loneliness in having to map out her own career path. Contrarily, when a different leader regarded career development as important, "because if people know where they are going, they feel that they can get something back", the team member never raised the issue of career development as an issue. This member possibly omitted to mention this skill not because she regarded it as unimportant, but because she felt that the leader was meeting her particular need. These two cases exemplify what happens when a disparity exists between the leader and member's rationale for placing importance on meta and technical skills. If a leader does not regard a technical skill as being important, the member might either also not see it as important or place even more importance on the need for that technical skill in the leader.

[4] Refer to Transcript D.
[5] Refer to Transcript H.

The leader's approach to meeting the needs of members is illustrated by the way in which respondents place importance on technical skills. All the respondents perceived the exercise of technical skills to be more relevant or appropriate in a larger organisation than in a smaller setting like their present team. Their assumption is that organisations that are large, bureaucratic and hierarchical require a greater emphasis on technical skills than on meta skills. Some of the respondents considered the work ethic, organisational culture, "vision, values and purpose"[6] of a business and government institution are radically different to an academic institution. For example, one respondent perceived the business environment as "dog eats dog", whilst another respondent felt that "people are selfish, and work for their own personal advantage". One respondent perceived the business sector as being "more competitive, entrepreneurial and disciplined" as he considered this sector to place a greater emphasis on technical skills.

Some respondents felt that there is "no space" and "no need"[7] to exercise meta skills, like *building trust* and *building constructive personal relationships* in a business or government institution because the environment is too impersonal and isolating. They reasoned that technical skills like *managing conflict, applying discipline, managing projects, managing meetings, managing time, managing strategy, communicating effectively (written),* and *managing finances* are more appropriate and necessary to improve performance of members. The respondents therefore perceived that it would be more possible and appropriate to exercise meta skills in a smaller institution or team.

However, the literature on the importance of emphasising 'soft' skills or "emotional capabilities" above 'hard' skills emanates from research in the business sector (Senge, 1994, Peters, 1994, Goleman, 1998). Because of the scope of the study, the perception that technical skills should be emphasised above 'meta' skills in public and private institutions could not be investigated.

---

[6] Refer to Transcript I.
[7] Refer to Transcript E.

However after probing some of the respondents regarding their perceptions about technical skills like *managing conflict* and *applying discipline*, their secondary process emerged. Some respondents suggested that some of the technical skills like *managing conflict, applying discipline* and *managing meetings* were rated lower than other skills because members want to suppress and avoid being disciplined or placed in a conflict situation. Those skills were perceived to be associated with punishment which leads to pain and feeling undermined. One respondent expressed the following in his reference to discipline, "...means pain, ... we try to avoid pain always. It goes against our ego. Punishment is unpleasant, undermining".[8] Two leaders who admitted to disliking the process of disciplining members who were abusing the system echoed this sentiment. They preferred to be with members who are self-disciplined.

These respondents' secondary processes relate to the resistance to change. Senge (1990:88) argues that resistance to change "almost always arises from threats to traditional norms and ways of doing things". Discipline produces pain because a person is expected to change something about him or herself.

A recurring pattern of meta skills and technical skills as "necessary but not sufficient" seems to be emerging. At a primary process level, respondents seem to be saying the meta skills are skills that will improve a team's performance, but only if the members are confident in the leader's ability to exercise technical skills. The secondary process level reflects an avoidance of respondents to exercise technical skills that might elicit negative feelings.

Further to the perceived nature of the relationship between meta skills and technical skills, the third research question investigates the nature of the inter-relationship between the different skills. The following section will explore the inter-relationship of the list of skills in an ideal leader.

[8] Refer to Transcript I.

Research Question Three:

What is the Nature of the Inter-relationship between the Different Skills?

The meta skill of *building trust* was ranked as the most important skill required to improve a team's performance which places it central to improving a team's performance. Because respondents perceived trust to be the "cornerstone", "core skill" and "glue that holds"[9] all other skills, this section will focus predominantly on how trust improves a team's performance and how it is intricately interwoven with other meta and technical skills in improving a team's performance. The model on the inter-relationships between a leader's skills, team's performance, and organisational context will be applied to interpret the findings.

The Leader's Skill of Building Trust

Respondents felt that a leader should reflect qualities of honesty, reliability, transparency, and integrity to ensure a productive team. These qualities are the key elements on which the notion of trust is embodied. Some respondents felt that if a leader does not behave with integrity or in a transparent fashion trust will be broken, even if the leader made a seemingly correct decision. The respondents perceived the leader's decision to be based on "bad motives" or "selfish agendas".[10]

Some of the respondents regarded trust to be intricately inter-linked with the meta skill of building constructive personal relationships. They viewed the building of trust as establishing personal relationships that would motivate members to deliver quality outputs, rather than simply "being nice to people".[11] At a secondary process level, the respondents reflected a desire to establish personal relationships that are based on equality, where all members are able to share similar goals and feel equally valued. In so doing, members would feel trusted to deliver and "get work done" despite the existence of personal problems.

[9] Refer to the open-ended questions.
[10] Refer to Transcript H.

The Effects of Trust on a Team's Performance

The establishment of trust by the leader has manifold effects. The effects will be discussed under the following themes: personal development, reciprocity and self-responsibility.

Personal Development

All respondents expressed their level of motivation, commitment, and inspiration to perform better increased when a trust relationship existed between the leader and member. Some respondents felt that the existence of trust not only created a safe environment in which to make mistakes but also made respondents feel open enough either to admit to their own mistakes and/or ask the leader for assistance. The respondents who felt that they grew from making mistakes were more receptive to taking on new challenges and were prepared to give more energy to advance the team's collective success. The secondary process shows how trust provides the space for members to solve their problems in proactive ways rather than resisting change.

Senge (1990) contends that an artful leader is able to identify the source of the resistance to address the implicit concerns of a member. When the leader places trust in the member's ability to perform, the member attempts to make every effort to succeed in the task even if she or he does not feel completely confident in her or his own abilities. If the task is accomplished successfully, the member does not only develop a greater sense of confidence but gains personal satisfaction from the knowledge that she or he has developed in a new way. One respondent viewed the existence of trust as "being the basis for seeing oneself as part of a unit ... where one gains a sense of belonging ... [but also where one can experience how] the whole can contribute to one's own personal development".[12]

Although trust forms the foundation on which personal development occurs, the possibility of extending the member's boundaries depends on the leader's ability to mentor the member. The leader thus challenges the member to perform

[11] Refer to Transcript E.
[12] Refer to Transcript D.

tasks or undergo experiences that go beyond the member's own perceptions of his or her capabilities. An excerpt from one member's transcript will illustrate this point,

> [My leader] did show me what to do and how to run a programme. But she left a lot for me to get on with ... Even though I run around and say, 'Please worry about these things with me' she says, 'No, don't worry, everything will be fine'.[13]

It is evident from the member's response that her leader mentored her. However, the mentoring process was done in way whereby despite the member feeling unconfident, the leader placed the member at an edge. The leader's faith in the member provided the impetus for the member to go beyond her own expectations of her abilities. The occurrence of personal development in the member therefore also depends on the existence of reciprocity.

Reciprocity

The respondents revealed two levels where reciprocity occurs. Firstly, members will perform well if the leader provides mentoring in a trusting environment. Secondly, members will be receptive to extending her or his limits if the leader acts with integrity and shows respect. One respondent remarked,

> I am more motivated and more creative in an environment where I can trust, than where I have to work in a team we just got together for the first time. ... I must trust their motives in what they want from me, as well as that we want the same thing in terms of the goals that they have here. ... As well as integrity, that their actions and mine are for the same goals. Whatever they are doing, I must have faith that those decisions are for the common good, even if those decisions are not correct, but that they wouldn't be out of bad motives.[14]

This perception highlights that trust cannot be established if it is not reciprocal. Therefore, in order for a member to trust a leader, the leader should likewise prove that she or he is trustworthy.

---

[13] Refer to Transcript G.

Fukuyama (1995:226) explains how trust occurs in reciprocity:

> If a person X does a service for person Y, that person Y will then feel grateful and seek to reciprocate in some manner. But groups enter into a downward spiral of distrust when trust is repaid with what is perceived as betrayal or exploitation.

The "downward spiral of trust" is evident where some of the respondents spoke about the repercussions of the leader breaking their trust. One respondent said that the leader could have all the skills and productivity, but once that person does something dubious then motivation is ruined. Another respondent reported that she would only perform the necessary and revert back to negative ways of behaviour if the trust relationship was severed. Both the respondents reveal a primary process of trust determining their level of commitment and performance. Respondents therefore suggest that the greater the level of trust, the greater the level of willingness to do more than is expected of them. The existence of trust in a reciprocal relationship creates a conducive environment for members to develop a sense of self-responsibility.

Self-Responsibility

Some of the members said that they ranked many of the technical skills lower down on the list because they did not regard those skills to be exercised by only the leader. The secondary process reflects that these respondents are taking responsibility for delivery at an individual and team level. However, these respondents felt that their performance was dependent on the integrity of the leader as well as the experience of personal growth. In this way the existence of personal development and reciprocity is a necessary, but not sufficient condition for the development of self-responsible members.

In order for members to become self-responsible, self-disciplined and self-directed, the exercise of meta skills like the building of trust and establishing of personal relationships should be exercised.

---

[14] Refer to Transcript H.

One leader remarked,

> ... Maybe that is what people mean when they say "build trust", "build constructive relationships", they are hoping for people who are self-disciplined...it ultimately means less management".[15]

The development of self-responsibility is also influenced by an ethos that is shared by the leader and member. The level of open communication in the team affects the attainment of a shared ethos. Several respondents claimed that they ranked effective *verbal communication* high up on the list, because they perceived lack of communication resulted in actions being misconstrued and motives misunderstood. Members therefore end up making assumptions about each other's level of commitment, integrity or understanding of what is expected to render an effective team. One leader commented, "I don't want to tell her what she should be doing. It is making people be self-responsible, self-disciplined, self-policed, self-managed".[16]

In this example the leader did not to tell the member what should be done, but at the same time expected the member to know what was expected of her. The leader's comment highlights a common problem that arises from the lack of effective communication. We want people to act or think in certain ways, but we do not communicate this understanding to them because we assume that they share the same understanding as ours.

Wertsch's (1985) notion of situation definition offers an explanation for the mismatch between a member's and leader's way of thinking. The notion of situation definition refers to the way in which the member and leader represent or define their own context or setting. The situation definition is determined by the way in which both leader and member represent the issue and represent their action patterns for operating on the issue. Intersubjectivity occurs when the leader and the member's situation definition of the issue are congruent or shared. Wertsch (1985:13) argues that the "negotiation of intersubjective situation definition" occurs through semiotic mediation which includes the meta

[15] Refer to Transcript D.
[16] Refer to Transcript D.

skill of effective verbal communication. The area of intersubjectivity increases, when the leader is able to temporarily suspend his or her own situation definition and through effective verbal communication assists the member to redefine her or his situation to be congruent with the leader's situation definition.

Therefore if the leader wants the member to be self-directed and self-responsible, the leader should not assume that the member would agree with her or his situation definition. The leader has temporarily to accept the member's situation definition and through effective verbal communication shift the member's understanding of what the leader expects. The leader has to direct the discussion so that the member recognises the repercussions of expecting the leader to take all the initiative and responsibility and to arrive to her own conclusion that she should be self-responsible and self-directed. The member's situation redefinition will not occur if the leader is unable to suspend his situation definition temporarily. Similarly if a member wants to redefine the leader's situation definition, the member would have temporarily to suspend her or his situation definition.

The Influence of Context

Both the leader and member's situation definition is greatly influenced by the inter-relationship of their individual, organisational and global context. Each of the respective contexts will be covered to interpret the way in which the leader understands and exercises the meta and technical skills and how the members will be receptive to and influenced by those skills.

Individual Context

One respondent felt that the members' inability to be self-disciplined is influenced by their individual baggage (that is, their values, beliefs and experiences) which results in the development of different assumptions between the members and leader. Low performance results when the leader and the member place different values on what is expected of each other.

One respondent conceived that performance of members would be low if they come from a position where they regard their work as "an opportunity be a free

rider, to get ...bucks at the end of each day".[17] Another member's performance was reduced because of a dilemma regarding the issue of trust. She was not sure of the extent to which she should value trust because trust received low priority in her past work experience. One leader felt that because he perceived himself as being poor in exercising certain skills like *meeting management*, the meetings conducted "deflated the team's commitment". His attempts to manage time or develop a strategic vision for the team were "weak and ineffectual", because the team's "energies [were] so diffused and [they did not] really feel like [they] were accomplishing goals".[18]

However, when members place importance in values that contribute towards the overall success of the team, performance is high. One respondent considered that his members' attitudes of dedication and commitment in wanting to give of their best played an instrumental role in improving the team's performance.

Even though the individual's context impacts on the team's performance, the organisational context in which members operate also plays a significant role.

Organisational Context

The respondents regarded the organisational context as affecting the team's performance in both a negative and positive manner. Some respondents perceived problems related to organisational structure, processes, systems and culture influenced apathetic, self-interested, and demotivated behaviour. Other members perceived the flexible organisational context provided members with the room to grow and thereby increase performance in teams.

Some of the respondents connected the low performance of members in the organisation with national and global trends.

Global Context

One respondent perceived the 'blame culture' to impact negatively on a team's performance. She states, "...I am not sure whether this is a cultural thing, or

[17] Refer to Transcript D.
[18] Refer to Transcript D.

organisational thing, but it seems that there is a reasonably entrenched blame culture...".[19]

Jones (1992) maintains people tend to be reactive instead of proactive when they engage in power-over relationships. However, if the power relationship is mutually beneficial, what Goleman (1998) refers to as a symbiotic relationship, people will feel em-powered.

Proto (1988) argues that the notion of blame is related to power. She contends that people who feel powerless tend to regard themselves as victims where they will attempt to blame someone for their problems.

To blame someone implies that the blamer is not part of the problem. This implies that the blamer has also relinquished his or her power to change the situation. However once someone admits to being part of the problem, the person not only takes responsibility for changing the problem, but also becomes empowered because the proactive steps taken to solve the problem are mutually beneficial to all those involved in the problem.

[19] Refer to Transcript F.

CHAPTER SIX: SYNTHESIS OF THE DISCUSSION

The common themes and patterns that emerged from the synthesis of the discussion have led to the following model on the relationship between a leader's meta and technical skills on a team's performance.

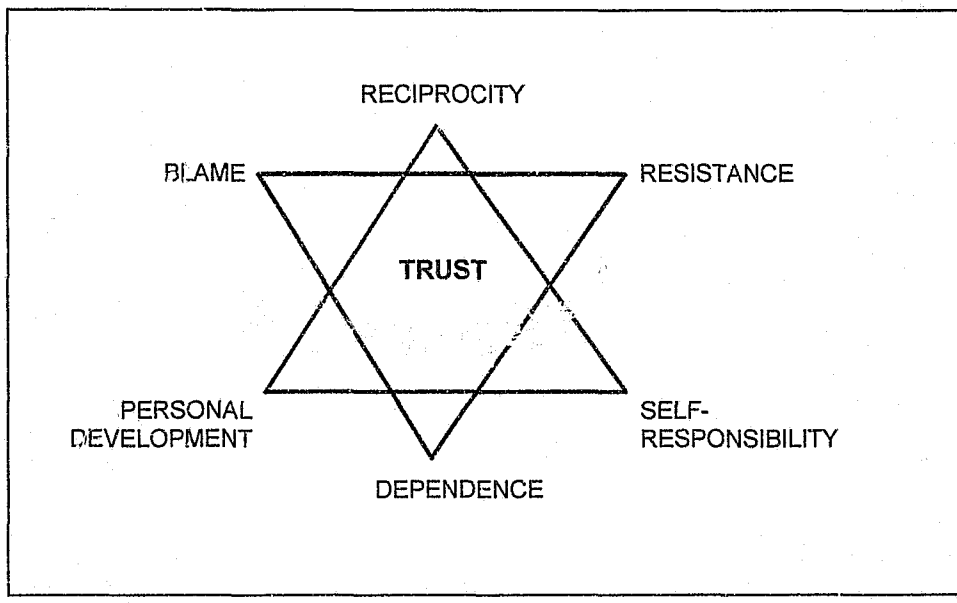


Figure Five: Model illustrating the Interconnected Relationships of Skills

The meta skill of trust has been considered by all of the respondents as being the most crucial skill of a leader to improve a team's performance. The existence of trust is seen by all the respondents as that which primarily determines whether a team will be high performing or low performing. The power of trust affects and operates in all spheres of life, whether it is at a global, organisational, team or individual level.

Fukuyama (1995) argues that the extent to which a society values trust will determine the way in which organisations are structured. He contends that societies that placed little value on trust structure their organisations according to bureaucratic, hierarchical and rule driven principles. The tightly controlled

workforce, regulated by rigid rules and procedures was an attempt to create obedient and passive members.

The assumption is that if people are denied the opportunity to express attributes like creativity, initiative, etc. they would operate like machines, instead of which it alienated the workforce. This model of structuring organisations failed because alienation of the workforce resulted in low levels of performance.

However, societies that place importance on trust model their organisations differently. These organisations are characterised by flatter, more flexible structures. The workforce operates in teams, where they are encouraged to develop personal relationships with colleagues and express their innovative and creative ideas (Fukuyama, 1995). Unlike the former type of organisation, these organisations therefore do not only acknowledge the importance of trust as a factor that improves productivity, but they also deliberately create an environment whereby even more trust can be built at an interpersonal level. Trust therefore can be considered as a factor that cannot only determine the way in which organisations are institutionally arranged, but also assists to precipitate or impede the level of productivity.

The green triangle in the model depicts personal development, reciprocity and self-responsibility as the core inter-related relationships required in a trust relationship to improve performance in teams. The intention of building relationships is not merely about getting to know other members better. It provides the conditions for members to realise their full potential or to feel safe enough to be at an edge so that they can extend their own limits. The establishment of trust therefore provides the impetus for the occurrence of personal development. Once a member becomes aware of his or her own personal growth the tendency to want to give of him or herself is greater.

The member then becomes aware of entering into a reciprocal relationship of 'give and take'. However if the member experiences the reciprocity to be unequal, the trust relationship becomes damaged. The existence of distrust reduces the level of personal development in the leader and member. However

if the leader and member experience equal reciprocity they will develop competence in the skills they are required to exercise.

The attainment of competence provides the condition for the member to be less reliant on the leader as the member becomes self-sufficient and self-responsible. The need to exercise technical skills like *applying discipline* or *managing conflict* reduces as the members take more responsibility for their problems or tasks. However if a member requires the assistance of a leader, the existence of the trust relationship will enable the member to be mentored or supported. In this way, the member continues to develop personally and become more self-responsible. The trust relationship therefore causes development to occur in hermeneutic cycles, as the factors of personal development, reciprocity and responsibility operate in a dynamic way.

In most situations the leader and team members start off with a trusting relationship. However if the three relationships of trust - personal development, reciprocity and self-responsibility - are not met, the relationship starts operating according to the three core factors related to distrust, namely those of blame, dependence and resistance as represented in the red triangle.

Once a team member or a leader starts to doubt the integrity of the other or perceives to be unjustly treated the trust relationship breaks down. This could lead to the emotional withdrawal of a member, which would affect her or his performance negatively. If the leader attempts to re-establish the trust relationship, the member's faith in the leader would possibly be restored and performance would continue at an acceptable level. However, if the leader does nothing to solve the situation or continues to behave untrustworthily, the member would tend to either under-perform or produce a minimal output.

The team member will most likely resort to blaming the leader for his or her low performance. Once the member starts to blame the team leader she or he abdicates all responsibility for the problem. The member may regard the leader or the organisation as the problem, without recognising how she or he, as part of the problem, can solve the contended issue. An aspect related to blaming is

giving the member's power away to resolve the issue. The member will as a result either continue to resist the leader or become dependent on the leader.

Resistance is related to the notion of 'flight or fight'. The member regards the situation as being a personal threat to her or his well-being. She or he therefore either fights back or decides to avoid the situation by fleeing. The leader at this stage could attempt to intervene by communicating in such a way that diffuses the mistrust and addresses the problem. However, if the leader also approaches the issue by fight or flight the downward spiral of mistrust exacerbates.

Dependence on the leader is created when the member chooses not to take responsibility for the problem. The notion of dependence is used in this instance to mean the abdication of responsibility where the member relies on or is dependent on the leader to perform the member's tasks. Even though the member still continues to blame and shows anger towards the leader, the member exercises passive resistance by being uncooperative. It is still possible at this stage for the leader to rekindle the trust relationship. If the leader or the member is able to suspend her or his situation definition with the intention of redefining the other's situation definition, which is influenced by individual, organisational and global factors, the process of increasing the area of intersubjectivity occurs.

The process of attempting to move out of the distrust relationship into a trusting relationship calls on the leader to exercise meta skills above technical skills. The leader has to be able to make appropriate judgements, exercise patience and humility, listen actively, and reflect on his or her own practices. The leader would exercise technical skills like *managing conflict, managing meetings, managing projects,* and *managing finances* to provide a conducive and sustainable working environment in which the meta skills can take effect.

CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSIONS

This study explored the relationship between a leader's meta skills and technical skills on a team's performance. The findings revealed that some respondents independently created a distinction between categories of skills that correspond with the notion of meta and technical skills. Their independent categorisation of skills signifies an awareness that skills comprise different qualities that yield different results.

Leaders and members perceived the following six meta skills (namely, *building trust, motivating a team, establishing personal relationships, communicating effectively (verbally), demonstrating discernment in decision-making,* and *mentoring*) to improve a team's performance above the following six technical skills (namely, *managing meetings, applying discipline, co-ordinating career planning and development, communicating effectively (written), managing time* and *managing projects*). Their selection of meta skills, therefore, expresses a need and preference for members and leaders to be treated at an inter-personal level rather than at a technical level to improve performance.

Meta skills and technical skills are necessary but not sufficient on their own to improve a team's performance. They are flip sides of the same coin (being a team's performance). The exercise of meta skills has to occur within a context of delivering outputs. Technical skills are required to ensure effective and efficient delivery. If meta skills are exercised without the knowledge of technical skills, performance will be low. Similarly, if technical skills are exercised without the support of meta skills, performance will again be low. The skilful practise and awareness of the effects of both skills are therefore required to improve the performance in a team.

The establishment of trust is the central meta skill that embraces and connects other meta skills. Trust enables the process of personal development through reciprocal relationships that leads to independent or self-responsible individuals. Team members will therefore become increasingly less reliant on a leader's ability to exercise technical skills. However if a leader over-emphasises meta

skills and is poor in technical skills, members will lose confidence in the leader's ability to perform and deliver.

A team's performance will diminish if a leader emphasises only technical skills without placing much attention on exercising meta skills. An over-emphasis of technical skills will result in demoralisation, miscommunication, suppression of creativity and innovation and mistrust. These inter-related factors would influence members to blame the leader, which would in turn sever the reciprocal relationship to a stage where the member withdraws or develops dependence on the leader. The absence or the presence of the technical skill in a leader is not the only factor that influences performance in a team member. Performance is affected more by a leader's ability to exercise the appropriate meta skill to identify and fulfil a team member's tacit or expressed need(s).

An over-emphasis of technical skills or meta skills (where one skill is exercised negatively at the expense of another) will therefore result in a vicious cycle that would lead to the diminution of a team's performance. In contrast, an emphasis placed on meta skills which is supported by the necessary technical skills will result in a virtuous cycle that would lead to the improvement of a team's performance.

If the reciprocal relationship built on trust is broken, attempts to continue the exercise of meta skills would probably fail unless particular interventions are introduced. The leader needs to be able to re-establish the reciprocal relationship by not only understanding the individual, organisational, or global context in which the member is situated, but also by temporarily suspending his or her situation definition to increase the area of intersubjectivity. Moreover the leader is required to use effective verbal communication skills to facilitate the redefinition of the member's existing situation definition.

Meta skills and technical skills cannot be treated as discrete elements as would be espoused by a static model of leadership. They are instead inter-connected in complex and dynamic inter-relationships whereby the inappropriate or appropriate exercise of meta or technical skills could result in performance

residing in a vicious or virtuous cycle. The appropriate exercise of meta skills has been perceived to be the cornerstone for improving a team's performance as it is able to shift the vicious cycle of destruction into a virtuous cycle of development.

REFERENCES

Allen, R. E. (ed.) (1990). The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English. Oxford : Clarendon Press.

Capra F, (1983). The Turning Point. Glasgow : Harper Collins.

Carter, Y. & Thomas, C. (eds.). (1997). Research Methods in Primary Care. Oxon : Radcliffe Medical Press.

Clemmer, J. & McNeil, A. (1989). Leadership Skills for Every Manager. Great Britain : Mackays Chatman.

Cohen, M. & Manion, L. (1980). Research Methods in Education. London : Routledge.

Connell, S., Sanders, S., Matthew, R. (1997). "Self-directed behavioural family intervention for parents of the oppositional children in rural and remote areas". Behaviour Modification. Vol 21, Issue 4, p 379 – 389.

Covey, S (1996). Principle Centred Leadership. London : Simon & Shuster.

Davis & Dean, Inc. (1996). "Metaskills" http://www.davisdean.com.

Deadrick, D.L. & Gardner, D. G. (1997, September). "Distribution ratings of Performance Levels and Variability: an examination of rating and validity in a field setting". Group and Organisational Management. Vol. 22, Issue 3, p 317 – 343.

Dizdarevic, T. (1996, February). "'Soft skills' on the rise". Computer Reseller News. Issue 6999, p 111 – 116.

Dreher, D. (1997). The Tao of Personal Leadership, the Ancient Way to Success Glasgow : Thorsons.

Flood, A. B., Shortell, S. M. & Scott, W. R. (1994). "Organizational Performance: Managing Efficiency and Effectiveness" in Shortell, S. M. & Kaluzny, A. D. (eds.) Health Care Management Organisation Design and Behaviour. 3rd Edition. New York : Delmar Publishers.

French, W. & Bell, J. R. (1995). Organisational Development Behavioural Science Interventions for Organisation Improvement. New Jersey : Prentice Hall.

Fukuyama, F. (1995). Trust: The Social Virtues and the Creation of Prosperity. Hammondsworth : Penguin Books.

Gardener, J. W. (1993). On Leadership. New York : Free Press.

Goleman, D. (1998). Working with Emotional Intelligence. London : Bloombury.

Hackman, J. R. (ed) (1990). Groups that work (and those that don't) creating conditions for effective team work. San Francisco : Jossey Bass Publishers.

Jako, R. A. & Murphy, K. R. (1990). in Deadrick, D.L. & Gardner, D. G. (1997, September). "Distribution ratings of Performance Levels and Variability: an examination of rating and validity in a field setting". Group and Organisational Management. Vol. 22, Issue 3, p 317 – 343.

Jones, R. R. (1992). The Empowered Woman. New York : S.P.I. Books.

Joyner, R (1998). "Leadership, Management and the Five Essentials to Success". http://www.forerunner/x0364_leadership.html.

Korten, D. (1984). People-Centred Development. USA : Kumarian Press.

Kotter, J. P. (1991). "What Leaders Really Do". Managers as Leaders. USA : Harvard Business Review.

Kvale, S. (1996). Interviews: an introduction to qualitative research interviewing. California : Sage.

Leedy, P. D. (1997). Practical Research, Planning and Design. New Jersey : Merrill.

McGee, M. K. (1996). "Wanted: More 'Soft' Skills". Information Week. Issue 610 p 110 – 113.

Merry, U. (1977). Developing Teams and Organisations. Philippines : Addison-Wesley Publishers.

Mesch, D. J. & Farh, J-L (1994). "Effects of feedback sign on group goal setting, strategies, and performance". Group and Organisational Management. Vol. 19, Issue 3, p 309 – 334.

Mindell, A. (1985). Working with the Dreaming Body. London : Arkana.

Mindell, A. (1989). The Year One: Global Process Work with Planetary Myths and Structures. New York : Viking-Penguin.

Mindell, A (1995). Metaskills The Spiritual Art of Therapy. Arizona : New Falcon Publications.

Mindell, A. (1996). "Discovering the world in the individual: the world channel in psychotherapy". Journal of Humanistic Psychology. Vol. 36, Issues 3 p 67 – 85.

Nerenz, D. R. & Zajac. B. M. (1990). in Flood, A. B., Shortell, S. M. & Scott, W. R. (1994). "Organizational Performance: Managing Efficiency and Effectiveness" in Shortell, S. M. & Kalusny, A. D. (eds) Health Care Management Organisation Design and Behaviour. 3rd Edition. New York : Delmar Publishers.

Nienaber, A. M. (1990). "The perception of the head prefect of the management skills of the school management team: a pilot investigation qualification". Unpublished MEd research project, University of Stellenbosch.

Pamplin, E. (1997, November). "The consultant's role is anything but 'soft'. People Management. Vol. 3, Issue 18, p 60 – 63.

Peters, T. (1993). Liberation Management. London : Pan Macmillan.

Peters, T. (1994). A Passion for Excellence, The Leadership Difference. London : Harper Collins.

Proto, L. (1988). Take Charge of Your Life. London : Thorsons Publishing Group.

Reber, S. A. (1995). Dictionary of Psychology. London : Penguin.

Robbins, S. (1993). Organisational Behaviour. New Jersey: Prentice Hall.

Rogoff, B. & Wertsch, J. (1985). Children's Learning in the Zone of Proximal Development. San Francisco : Jossey Bass.

Rossouw, H. C. (1994). "The role of the teacher leader team in the transformation of the effective to the didactic outstanding school". Unpublished MEd research project, University of Stellenbosch.

Senge, P. (1990). The Fifth Discipline, The Art & Practice of the Learning Organisation. New York : Currency Doubleday.

Senge, P. (1994). The Fifth Discipline, The Field Book. New York : Currency Doubleday.

Sashkin, M. & Franklin, S. (1993). "Anticipatory team learning: What is it and how does it happen?". Journal of Management Development. Vol. 12 Issue 6 p 34 – 43.

Shortell, S. M. & Kaluzny, A. D. (eds.). (1994). Health Care Management Organisation Design and Behaviour. 3rd Edition. New York : Delmar Publishers.

Smith, A. (1996, April). "Taking the soft option". Management. Vol. 43, Issue 3, p104 – 107.

Spies, C. J. (1995). "The role of the internal and external factors influencing the management tasks of the Head Master". Unpublished MEd research project, University of Stellenbosch.

Strebler, M., Niko. (1997, May). "Soft skills and hard questions". People Management. Vol. 3, Issue 11, p 11 – 16.

Tornow, W. W., De Meuse, K. P. (1994, June). "New paradigm approaches in strategic human resources management". Group and Organisational Management. Vol. 19, Issue 2, p 165 – 178.

Van der Vegt, & G., Emans, B., (1998, June). "Motivating effects of task and outcome in work teams". Group and Organisation Management. Vol. 23, Issue 2, p 124 – 144.

Wellins, R. S., Byham, W. C., Wilson, J. M. (1991). Empowered Teams: Creating self-directed work groups that improve quality, productivity and participation. San Francisco : Jossey and Bass.

Wertsch, J. (1985). "Some conceptual Issues in Theorizing the ZPD". In Rogoff B. & Wertsch, J. (eds.) Children's Learning in the Zone of Proximal Development. San Francisco : Jossey Bass.

Wheatley, M. & Kellner-Rogers, M. (1996). A Simpler Way. San Fransisco : Berrett-Koehler.

Wilson, J. George, J., Wellin, R., Byham, W. (1994). Leadership Trapeze. New York : Jossey Bass.

Zaleznick, A. (1991). "Managers and Leaders: Are They Different?". Managers as Leaders. USA : Harvard Business Review.

APPENDIX A

05 October 1998

Dear Colleague

It would be highly appreciated if you could participate in a research project that is part of my Master of Education academic requirements. The purpose of this research is to explore the perceptions of the way in which a leader's skills influences a team's performance. The findings of this study will make a valuable contribution to existing models and theories on leadership, because the relationship between a leader's skills and a team's performance has not yet been extensively researched. The study will serve to inform and improve our leadership practices in our respective programmes at P&DM. Moreover, the research project will also attempt to identify the tools for reflection on leadership priorities. The study has been located in P&DM primarily for reasons of convenience.

Please note that a programme or an individual's identity **will not** be revealed nor identifiable in any way in the research report. Your anonymity will be respected and the information from the questionnaire will be treated confidentially. It would be appreciated if you could please respond as openly as possible. The draft report and/or analysis of findings will be made available to you upon request, before the final submission of the report (January 1999).

The questionnaire requires you to complete all questions Section 1 and 2:
Section 1 – Closed-ended questions requesting you to prioritise and rate leadership skills
Section 2 – Open-ended questions requesting you to elaborate on some of your key responses

This questionnaire should take approximately 30 minutes to complete. It would be appreciated if you could complete it before the 9th October 1998.

If any part or question in this questionnaire is unclear, please do not hesitate to contact me.

I thank you kindly in advance!

Penny Law
Tel: 488 5687 or 083 457 6637
lawpe@zeus.mgmt.wits.ac.za

APPENDIX B

SECTION 1 (FOR TEAM MEMBERS)

LEADERSHIP SKILLS AND TEAM PERFORMANCE Leadership Skills necessary to improve a Team's Performance	A: IDEAL SKILLS Prioritise the skills that you feel **an ideal leader should have** to improve performance in a team. List in order of importance: 1 being the most important skill, and 20 being the least important.	
NOTE: Please read instructions for column A carefully before completing.	**Trial list**	**Final List**
Applying Discipline - enforcing the required disciplinary procedures for improper behaviour or attitudes		
Building Constructive Personal Relationships with staff, customers and funders		
Building Trust – creating and instilling good faith and sense of integrity		
Communicating Effectively - verbally - expressing ideas clearly, can listen and understand		
Communicating Effectively - written - write reports (progress, funding) letters, memoranda		
Co-ordinating Career Planning and Development - multi-skilling, matching skills with task		
Demonstrating Assertiveness - using power appropriately, knowing when and how to agree or disagree		
Demonstrating Discernment in Decision-Making - making appropriate judgements		
Ensuring Quality of Work - delivering work of a professional standard		
Inspiring Passion - displaying enthusiasm that is, contagious and appealing		
Maintaining Flexibility - being open, accommodating new ideas		
Managing Conflict - identifying and analysing causes, planning strategies		
Managing Finances and Raising Funds - controlling and managing budget, raising money for salaries		
Managing Meetings - setting agenda, facilitating process of meeting		
Managing Projects - analysing problem, planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluating new project		
Managing Strategy - developing vision, goals, objectives, monitoring and evaluating, restrategising		
Managing Time - being punctual, meeting deadlines, prioritising, planning in advance		
Mentoring Team Members - improving practice by guiding and reflecting on actions		
Motivating Team - inspiring, creating commitment, instilling sense of belonging to team		
Reflecting on Own Practices – being self - critical, being able to self-reflect, accepting criticism, being humble		
(other)...		
(other)...		
(other)...		

PLEASE TURN OVER

APPENDIX B

SECTION 2

2.1 Please list the five most important skills that you prioritised in Column A and explain why these skills are important for improving your performance in a *team?*

1. _____

Reason_____

_____

_____

2. _____

Reason_____

_____

_____

3. _____

Reason_____

_____

_____

4. _____

Reason_____

_____

_____

5. _____

Reason_____

_____

_____

2.2 Are there organisational factors which may have influenced your performance in your team, <u>other than</u> your leader's skills? If there are, please elaborate.

_____

_____

_____

_____

Thank you for your co-operation!!

APPENDIX C

SECTION 1 (FOR LEADERS)

LEADERSHIP SKILLS AND TEAM PERFORMANCE Leadership Skills necessary to improve a Team's Performance	A: IDEAL SKILLS Prioritise the skills that you feel **an ideal leader should have** to improve performance in a team. List in order of importance: 1 being the most important skill, and 20 being the least important.	
NOTE: Please read instructions for column A carefully before completing.	**Trial list**	**Final List**
Applying Discipline - enforcing the required disciplinary procedures for improper behaviour or attitudes		
Building Constructive Personal Relationships with staff, customers and funders		
Building Trust – creating and instilling good faith and sense of integrity		
Communicating Effectively - verbally - expressing ideas clearly, can listen and understand		
Communicating Effectively - written - write reports (progress, funding) letters, memoranda		
Co-ordinating Career Planning and Development - multi-skilling, matching skills with task		
Demonstrating Assertiveness - using power appropriately, knowing when and how to agree or disagree		
Demonstrating Discernment in Decision-Making - making appropriate judgements		
Ensuring Quality of Work - delivering work of a professional standard		
Inspiring Passion - displaying enthusiasm that is, contagious and appealing		
Maintaining Flexibility - being open, accommodating new ideas		
Managing Conflict - identifying and analysing causes, planning strategies		
Managing Finances and Raising Funds - controlling and managing budget, raising money for salaries		
Managing Meetings - setting agenda, facilitating process of meeting		
Managing Projects - analysing problem, planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluating new project		
Managing Strategy - developing vision, goals, objectives, monitoring and evaluating, restrategising		
Managing Time - being punctual, meeting deadlines, prioritising, planning in advance		
Mentoring Team Members - improving practice by guiding and reflecting on actions		
Motivating Team - inspiring, creating commitment, instilling sense of belonging to team		
Reflecting on Own Practices – being self - critical, being able to self-reflect, accepting criticism, being humble		
(other)...		
(other)...		
(other)...		

PLEASE TURN OVER

SECTION 2

2.2 Please list the five most important skills that you prioritised in Column A and explain why these skills are important for improving your performance in a team?

1. _____

Reason_____

_____

_____

2. _____

Reason_____

_____

_____

3. _____

Reason_____

_____

_____

4. _____

Reason_____

_____

_____

5. _____

Reason_____

_____

_____

2.3 Are there organisational factors which may have influenced your performance in your team, other than your skills as a leader? If there are, please elaborate.

_____

_____

_____

_____

Thank you for your co-operation!!

APPENDIX D

Interview Transcript 1

Why you think that the top five skills ranked were perceived to improve a team's performance?

With the building of trust, the easiest way to think about this is to contrast it with applying discipline. I can certainly say that I thought building trust was much, much more effective than applying discipline. Why that comes first and applying discipline comes last is really arbitrary in that they are polar opposites, in some respects. I have clustered things together from my experience.

My experience is that you can a take a team with you if you provide them [with the] basis of seeing themselves as part of a unit in which their own personal development contributes to the whole but, more importantly the whole's development contributes to them personally. In other words their status, their ideas, their available resources increase if the team as a whole is effective. The only way we can do that is, to start to build trust in people. The tricky bit is what building trust involves, because trust is this nice wishy-washy thing. What does it mean that they trust you? In other words you do a whole [lot] of nice things for them which says to them that they must be someone who is trusted in a job, which in this case how it is different to applying disciple? It is something where you don't see divisions between the fact that one person is a programme manager and an administrator, that each person is pigeon-holed in that certain people have privileged access to decision-making capacity and administrators simply apply those decisions. It is one of sharing in the goals, in the ability to make key decisions on what that programme should be doing and in a sense making people feel that they are valued members rather than cogs in a machine. [It] is key that each [team member] is valued for their contribution, although there might be an allocation of responsibilities which might be different. Each member is valued and by fitting in with that valued contribution they,

in turn, build a team which in turn reflects on their own personal skills and that investment in themselves to a team which ultimately builds them into a team [as] a whole.

Why does that improve a team's performance?

Because they feel valued, they feel goals are shared with them. For me the key thing is the relationship between trust and a team's performance. For me it is a question of what is a team. A team isn't this identity by itself - it is not a unit which is... I mean that it is a unit which is more than a sum of its parts. It is not just a sum of its parts, a team depends on each team member feeling personally gratified by working within an environment which amounts to a team effort. This has been my experience in the student movement, that the student movement worked best where it said to people "you're not an individual, but more than just a team, we're working together and in working together you will benefit from that personally. You'll grow, you will be empowered, you will recognise the limitations of your own consciousness, you will expand the boundaries of your confidence, of your understanding whatever".... Where people recognise that as a holding environment which they personally will start to grow. But that depends on contributing to a team effort first. But you can't do that without some kind of trust. I mean trust is a very awkward term, but it captures what that environment consists of which is a reciprocal relationship where people say that we value your contribution and we value it because a) we know that your contribution will build each of us in turn and we value the reciprocity that that involves, that our contribution will build you as well. And in building you, it will make you stronger and your becoming stronger will, in turn, make us stronger. The performance comes in from each person contributing more personally as a kind of investment in our own future via an investment in the group's future. I don't think there is a direct relationship between trust and performance where we see performance as coming to work each day and we do what we are told and we bring in the bucks and make the deadlines and make sure that the invoices are written up right. I mean it's not like a technical thing, it's more those are the

by-products of people feeling like they can gain more by doing their job well, with that job defined as being part of a team's effort...

Really, why? What makes our environments different?

We are smaller units which are reasonably flat, smaller units of people who relate to each other personally much more, in which one's position in the organisation is based on an understanding of the fact that we are all here together trying to make this organisation more successful. A larger organisation, especially local government, has this history of a very hierarchical structure, a grading system, where each person is slotted [in] according to their existing skills, or the slot is determined by very technical formulas.... And in that instance it would be very different to say that a person situated here, two thirds down the ladder, would be made a more effective team member by building trust...

The relationship between that member at the top and the other two-thirds down is very much one of placement within a hierarchy, which inevitably becomes a matter of discipline, where they must do a job, [and] be specified by their place on the ladder. I don't think that that applied here, clearly there are questions of discipline. I don't think that the nature of our units, which are more flat, necessarily make discipline a conducive lever to pull.

Using that same example and according to the findings that building trust, etc. will improve a team's performance, do you think that a team member's performance will improve if you exercise those skills or do you think that other skills will improve a team's performance?

This boils down to the nature of people. It comes from the theory of citizenship. What does it mean to incorporate people into a nation, state, a group of citizens? It is a process of offering them the opportunity to see themselves as self-disciplined and seeing the benefits of being self-disciplined, in which they see definite status and material and

personal growth advantages. And from sacrificing 'I can do what I like' attitudes to 'let me accept and submit to the rules that make for the greater good'. Now, that depends on people being particular kinds of people in that that offer isn't received equally by all kinds of people. Some people accept citizenship, others don't.

People prefer to see that their own personal advancement as being given by people which place them outside of the citizen or what makes for a good citizen outside of the corporate body of the state. I think that it is the same kind of thing in this small unit environment. You can make that kind of offer -- we think that your personal contribution and your personal growth will be advanced best if you see yourself as a good member of a team, in the anticipation that they will become certain people, that they are certain people in anticipation. Then they see themselves as good members of the team, that that is something that they want...but not everyone wants that. I think that it is a matter of hit and miss. I don't know whether I am good at making those kinds of judgements, which is why I placed *demonstrating decision* and *discernment making* fairly low down. I don't know whether I have that skill. I want to work with a person who does not want to be policed, because I am not a human resource person. I don't want to work where I have to baby people. I want to work with people who recognise that my leadership is simply one that offers them an opportunity to contribute to whatever work I bring in. I want to see them as equals, even equals in potential ... and that is simply one of trust, but not everyone is going to take that bait...

The question arose around how one develops a common work ethos

The prior experiences where people have been in...in political organisations, the code was strong. The code was if you want to, you can be whatever you want to be. The ethos was one where you come here and want to do the work. No-one will come and step on you. A lot of people haven't had that experience ... where they don't completely value this environment, where you see this environment as being an opportunity to be a free-rider, to get your bucks out at the end of the day ... because this environment offers

them too much openness and space. I am not trying to change those people. What is interesting about this is that it says that leadership is different in different organisations, ...that it is not a simple matrix which applies across [the] board equally and neutrally. That this matrix would be very different in different organisations and one would have to be very careful that it is not used as toolbox for a good leader in any circumstance.

Which skill would have made a difference?

Demonstrate assertiveness, manage strategy. It is difficult because the organisations changed over time as well...

Technical skills

Manage time, manage finances, manage projects and *ensure quality of work. Managing quality of work*, I think is one of the most important because it means nothing is possible if we are all here as valued team members ... if you are not actually developing anything of quality. If I say that what this team is all about is quality work; is meeting the deadlines of the highest of level of quality, is the reason that we are a team. That is the basis of us, for being able to say that the way in which we do that is by trusting each other, building each other, empowering each other, all those 'soft' things, but it must be organised around that [those hard skills] and that is like the foundation. You see it in two ways, but they rest equally on each other.

Distinction between meta and technical skills

There are two ways of seeing this – on the one side there is a set of expectations of technical [skills] and [on] the other [side] there are those skills that are making sure that people are feeling personally gratified and personally empowered and happy by virtue of that. If you make sure that both those things happen, then you are a good manager.

Could you class that as meta?

Let's call it personal growth.

Where do technical skills fall in because people have placed meta in the top five?

What we do on a daily basis is the 'technical', which is the dull grind of what we do. What we need to do is to make that right and then on top of that to make the difference to this, the extra element, the surplus, some kind of sense of vision – why this is meaningful. The nature of P&DM it imagines that if it gets this right, that vision society is needed to make a difference, because we have an understanding of how our organisation would be like in ten year's time. We have internalised the privileged knowledge of that 'ideal future and we are able to translate the policy into differences or betterings of what is happening here. I don't know whether that works. It works, as it is a scheme that can be defended.

Do you think that a difference would have been made if you were able to translate the broader vision to the organisational difference?

PL: Yes, we would be able to see the bigger picture when doing the mundane work.

I am a bit cynical about the broader vision giving people sense of their mundane work. I think that what people need to see is that the little things are valued because it contributes to them. The vision creates a mental divide. People aren't motivated on a daily basis by a broader vision. What really counts on a daily basis is that they must see that they are realised through their work. It is about a personal feeling of development. What people calculate as personal development isn't at all given as what people calculate as societal development. And very often what we do is that we set up an ideology where we imagine that people have this apartheid-less ideology. I don't think that people on a daily basis are necessarily motivated by that utopia. I think that it is more a sense of "if I do this thing right, I will get a sense of accomplishment and people will recognise I have done a good job and will trust me next time round to do the job and my status and well-being and sense of self-esteem, is going to be growing through that". It so happens that the field of operation is the apartheid struggle, but it is not the

apartheid struggle, which makes me do what I do.

PL: It is ego.

It is ego. It is all about giving people a sense that their placement here makes them realise themselves through their work and the trick is to draw the horizontal linkage between the two things. It is about making people feel that if they put in time and effort here there is going to be reciprocal development on the side of the line. This model breaks down the division between leaders and followers. So the ability to manage your technical skills is a key aspect to making yourself trusted by the other members of the programme and a key aspect of how you can want them to be trusted by you.

PL: The way in which you build trust is through deliverables, through your ability to demonstrate your technical skills.

Trust is related to respect. The environment of trust is one where each member feels that they can build themselves personally through their work. By being part of a collective their contribution will be recognised if and when they develop a respect for what everyone else is doing because that is prior, but see other people's respect for them, given the nature of this as the key.

The bottom five skills

I don't want to say that all this must be turned around, but I think that *applying discipline* just breaks down this possibility completely. I don't think that discipline is a way that can make people to respect you as a leader, not in the kind of work that we do. *Communicate effectively (written)* and *managing time*, I placed high up. I didn't put *career development* as high up because I think that people must be able to plan their own futures in P&DM. It mustn't be up to me to say that these are all the stages that they must go through. I put *communication (written and verbal)* together because it is

important that if we are to see this as an academic place, it is important that we are able to talk to each other, that we are able to communicate with each other in writing...for us to develop a plan on paper. What is important is not the paper or the instructions, but that we are able to share in a space in which everyone's work is necessarily knowledge and doing that means that we should be able to communicate through verbal and written [means]. But we don't operate in memos.

PL: *Demonstrating discernment* and *decision-making* means being able to make an appropriate judgement. Knowing when something is right and wrong and to take the appropriate action

Being able to be decisive based on clearly defined reason. I ranked it lower. Maybe it should be higher. It depends on the nature of one's programme. In [some] kinds of business that kind of thing is more important. We on a daily basis have certain products that we have to deliver; we don't have monumental things that we need to decide on. The nature of our work is that our work is departmentalised amongst different people. It is not up to me to make decisions around other people's work. I make decisions for my own work. I try and give them a lot of leeway to manage their responsibilities. I don't want her to tell what she should be doing. It is making people self-responsible, self-disciplined, self-policed, self-managed. Maybe that is what people mean when they say *build trust, build constructive relationships*, they are hoping for people who are self-disciplined...it ultimately means less management.

APPENDIX E

Interview Transcript 2

Top five skills

I can only talk about my team. I think that [*building*] *trust* and *motivating team* comes up in the top. Maybe there is an understanding that some of the skills to do the work already exist. So they don't have to monitor that kind of skill all the time, but as long as they trust you to do the work you get the task done.

You would see different groupings or areas of skills

Maybe the leader is comfortable that you have those skills, but the trust comes in where... you don't always assume that people are going to work. You may have the skills, but there may be other issues, etc. so they trust that besides the other issues, whatever else is happening in your life or at work you are capable of doing that work. But you need that element of trust. Like [my leader], if [X] gives me a task to do, X assumes or we discuss whether I am able to do the task, at hand, but X would trust I would deliver.

Different setting – different skills?

I think now that our team is expanding, there's more people coming in, because we were a small team, it was easy to manage these things. *Applying discipline*, I don't think it is necessary. In a team of three, it is easy to see when people aren't doing their work or are goofing off, so you wouldn't have to apply discipline. *Manage meetings, manage time* [was not necessary], because we could cope with the amount of work. In our team there was a lot of nurturing, and mentoring, and so time management and meeting management – it wasn't a problem. I think that it only becomes a problem when the organisation grows. Then, people will need to *manage their time*, people will need to *manage meetings* effectively, maybe explaining these results were important because of the size of the team...In a bigger organisation, or bigger team, maybe the bottom ones,

like *managing conflict, managing projects*, because we could cope with the work or the amount of people we had.

Explain difference in the top four skills?

Maybe the leader sees himself as the driving force and maybe if he practices self-refection he is able to lead the team better. In the sense of the team, *build constructive relationships*. Maybe the team feels that in building harmony and team spirit, then the team will function more effectively.

PL: They are different sides of the same coin.

Distinction between meta and technical skills

I would agree with that distinction. If I compare my team to a different team maybe, I see that in the other team, the thing that you refer to as the 'meta' skills is not there, or it is lacking. And I see that if the team is functioning on 'technical' skills and they are very efficient they rate that kind of thing very high. But I don't see the team happy.

Do you see performance related to that?

Absolutely, if you are unhappy in any team, if your opinions don't count irrespective, then I don't see the team functioning very effectively.

How does trust have a direct effect on your performance

Trust would involve a whole range of things. If I am trusted to get the task done, then, if I just know that if I am comfortable, if I have a problem, then it all relates to trust. If I feel that I can't do it, if I am overwhelmed, I will be able to ask so that I do what is expected of me. But also, I feel that if I am trusted, then you are confident to perform. If you are not undermined, then you would produce and do your best...you shouldn't feel scared... Then the result is that you don't feel confident enough, even though it may have been good or you could have excelled to do that if you weren't scared to do it. So all the time

you find yourself not performing because you don't trust the person. I am confident that if I make a mistake I would not be made stupid, but corrected.

If the trust is broken?

I may just revert back to the old, negative ways of not performing. If the trust is broken and you don't feel comfortable, you will only do the necessary.

Would the same results be elicited in a big organisation? The readings allude to the fact that different skills may be necessary for different roles.

The skills – I don't think that the skills would differ, the roles would definitely differ... But the size of the team matters because I think that you would manage a bigger team differently, so there obviously wouldn't be those kinds of things, *building trust*, and *motivating teams,* and I don't even think if there would be place or time for that. Maybe a manager would have to make time for that.

Why size and performance?

The size and the skills would matter...because you would get more dynamics, more personal relationships to manage, more time to manage, more meetings. It is easier in a smaller team than in a bigger team. Maybe you would behave more formally in a bigger team than in a smaller team. Because if you see your team fitting into a bigger team the skill that you would need to manage a bigger team is definitely different to that of a smaller team.

Why

In a bigger team *written and verbal [communication],* I would rate very high, because information, in a bigger organisation is so important, because everyone needs to be clued up. ...That is one of our priorities, the management of information flow is important. In a smaller team *written* [*communication*] is not so important as *verbal* [*communication*] ...

Why is "communicating verbally" receiving so much importance despite your saying that it is not such a big problem in your team?

Maybe it is because we have such an open policy.

What is the link between building trust and verbal communication?

Probably how you say it. When you need to get criticism – it is the way in which it is said and communicated in order to assist that building trust. Criticism has to be done properly. Maybe the kind of verbal feedback may be misconstrued. If I did trust you then I will feel that it is in my interest. If I don't trust you then it may be misconstrued.

Leadership styles

We were used to an open style, if motivation is not there then the leader is not trusted. You find that in a team that it is not performing. That leader was good at *managing meetings, managing time, managing project*, but that leader was not interested in how we are feeling. [Nor did the leader] ask 'how was your day?' That leader would say what is done, what is not done and then waltz out. We are going to [do an activity together as a team] and it helps to see leaders in different settings... It is not a 'boss' thing but a 'team' thing.

APPENDIX F

Interview Transcript 3

Why do you think that these skills were rated as the most important skills?

If we take these skills, it seems to me, and this is based from my experience that unless you get these things right you can forget about everything else. Nothing else will work effectively. I think, that the purpose of the task [is] that one is trying to accomplish as a team. If you don't *build trust, don't build constructive personal relationships*, if you don't *communicate effectively* (I will deal with *reflecting on own practice separately*), if [you] don't get these things right, then people will not feel confident to talk freely about what is going on. ...I am not sure whether this is a cultural thing, or an organisational thing, but it seems that there is a reasonably entrenched blame culture. So if one does not *build* the *trust, build relationships* and *communicate effectively,* people don't feel free to say, "I don't know", they don't feel free to say "I need help here. I have made a mistake, can we do something about this?". Unless we do those things we can't start working towards producing excellent teaching and real communication with each other. There is hardly any learning which can take place from each other because there is this defensiveness, there is this wall, ...which gets built up.

Do you think that these skills are better suited or more appropriate to a different organisational environment?

I would have thought that in an educational environment these skills are very important indeed, because you need to have development not only in the students, but personal development, development of each other. So in this kind of environment, I think that those skills are really essential. These skills are so important in whatever sector one works. So if we focus on an industrial setting, unless you have the trust of your workers, unless you have good relationships with them, unless you communicate effectively, you are going to have work which is not carried out effectively and you are probably going to

have labour unrest. So I think that they are core skills in any position.

Where would you place other skills like project management, fundraising, funding, manage meetings, etc.?

I found it very difficult to complete this questionnaire and try to rank things like that, because I kind of felt that there were certain skills, which are very important management skills, which are not necessarily people skills so much. And I felt that there were certain things that needed to go in parallel with some of these skills. But, thinking it through in the end I came to the conclusion that these are the ones that you really need to work on first, because otherwise you wouldn't have any chance, because they all involve the commitment of people. All those things that you mentioned, *project management, strategic planning,* all involve good will, co-operation, input from other people.

If you were a team member and X were a team leader and X was super sharp in managing funds etc., what would your performance be like?

That would depend very much on [what] X's personal style of communication was like. On the one hand it would make me feel confident that there were certain areas of the programme that were taken care of that I didn't have to worry about. But I don't know. If X was say a morose person, not a free communicator, not somebody who involved you and just gave you instructions, I don't think that it would be doing a tremendous amount for my morale. Therefore I don't know how much it would do for me to freely contribute my ideas, etc.

Why do you think that the bottom five skills were ranked in that position?

With the *managing conflict* and applying discipline they are often suppressed in dealing with it, in people's consciousness. ...I find it interesting why these things came at the bottom. I wonder if they were placed in parallel streams, I wonder whether these two would have got a different ranking.

Could you do that?

I would move *managing time* and *communicating effectively in a written way* to reasonably high up. I come across so many communications that lack certain vital information and you have to go back and ask about them. So I suppose the two are linked because if you don't *communicate effectively*, it wastes time and you need to go and sort things out again and so on. I think that you can fall into a mess if you don't think about priorities and *managing time*. There are things here that are directly related to *motivating a team* and so I find it very surprising that they are where they are, because you do need to *manage conflict* within a team, because there is a lot of motivation which just goes. You do need to *manage meetings* because they can just run away, they can go off on a tangent or they can just waste a lot of time. It gets back to whether you are able to *motivate a team* if certain people have particular agendas, and it gets out of hand. Others feel that they are getting far more than their due amount of time and attention and therefore start feeling neglected, not communicated to well enough. Some of them are personal because some people have very different ideas about *managing their time*. I think that it is necessary to be aware of that and to allow for that, within a team, because if I were to expect that if everyone had to work to my idea of managing time, I might be irritating them tremendously. I may be bumping into their natural rhythm in which they would get things done anyway. I think that there is a reasonable balance and awareness in how people manage their time, which is an individual thing. Applying discipline, I think that that is important in the area of motivating a team, because if there are certain people, who [they] see are getting away with things that they shouldn't be getting away with, they are going to feel that they are being unjustly treated.

But why was discipline rated so low?

I wonder if there is some perception that they are all adults and therefore they need to know how to conduct themselves so that that thing doesn't really feature.

PL: In other words to be self-disciplined.

Yes, I guess so, so in an ideal leader one would not have to *exercise discipline* because other things would be done in such a way that discipline was not necessary. But that is an unrealistic assumption to make. If one thinks of the individual baggage that people bring into a team, and the difference in individual skills being able to deal with conflict even in a situation where all that exists, I think that it is asking for a lot.

So you are saying that each person comes with certain baggage that impacts on the team. Explain?

It is their personal experience -- things that have formed them which have developed their values in life, which have developed their expectations of people.

I initially said that people's paradigm would influence their preference of skills

I think that combined with the mental model, I think that an emotional model, ...we don't only learn on a mental level. I think that the assumptions that one makes can steer one off the path. You have to acknowledge the emotional side.

APPENDIX G

Interview Transcript 4

Explanation of the skills in order of priority

X: I think that there isn't an enormous discrepancy between what the team is saying because I don't see myself as a leader. I see myself as part of a team. I think that we all work together. We all give direction in different areas. I think that we all take the lead in different things, so there isn't an enormous difference, between members in a team. I think that is how things work at P&DM. I don't think that there is someone there who comes in and says, "I am the boss and you will do whatever I tell you to".

Y: *Building trust* – X did show me what to do and how to run a programme. But X left a lot for me to get one with.

X: [It] wasn't every day like "what have you decided to do today?" – leaving me to decide. Also not asking me all the time, "Is this done and is that done?" It helps me and motivates me to want to do things and to do extra things. Even though I run around and say, "Please worry about this thing with me". X says, "No, don't worry, everything will be fine".

Why do you think that these skills were preferred above the least rated skills?

X: For me it is about people. I know that I can't work with people I know I can't trust. Like I don't even think about three-quarters of the things that go on in the programme. I just know that Y will do it and know that I don't have to worry about it. So on that level, *trusting* people to do what they have to do and on another level, *trusting* people. I would hate, I would not be able to say to Y that "I am working at home today to get my course pack together, while I am doing some consultancy work". I think that that kind of honesty is important. Y knows what I am doing. It is about respecting each other.

Y: It is not about *managing your time*. It is about what you produce and how you relate to each other. I think that that is the foundation. You have to build that to actually be able to *manage meetings* and allow people to do their work. The fact that X trusts me, makes me want to prove myself... to prove that I can do it and that X doesn't have to worry and that I can just go ahead.

Are these skills relevant to a certain environment?

X: ... So I would say that the skills that one needs [in a larger organisation] are much more *time management*, much more *written and verbal communication*. Much more bureaucratic skills – *applying discipline*, etc. Those are the kinds of skills that one would need if you are managing a wide range of diverse people with a whole range of different personalities.

PL: To paraphrase - the smaller the unit, the more meta skills one would exercise. The larger the unit, the more technical skills one would apply.

Why did you rate Communicating Effectively - written and verbal - differently?

Y: I think that if you *communicate effectively (verbally)* you can understand the person more effectively. If it is written, I am really sure that you understand what the person wants or has said or the manner in which it is said.

X: I think that if it is written you can't trust what that person has said. You are not sure if that person is cross with you or begging you. While it is communicated verbally you can read their body language, etc. I also think that if the team is small, it will be stupid to send a memo, because you always see each other. In a bigger group you don't always see each other and you are not that close.

What happens if you don't have trust? How would it affect performance?

X: it would not work at all. I don't think that it would work. People would get trustrated with each other. If they kept on coming to the person and kept on asking if you have done this, what have you been doing, looking at you. If you don't have faith in someone why do you employ him or her? If you employ someone then you must know that you can coach or mentor him or her. I employ them because I can trust them... You can employ someone based on instinct.

APPENDIX H

Interview Transcript 5

Why were these skills rated as the top five? Why did leaders and teams rank the fourth skill differently?

These were mine as well, so they would be same reason. The trust thing may be personal, because I feel that I work best in an environment where I can trust people. I was saying that maybe it is a personal bias, and then I find everyone saying the same thing. I find that I am more motivated and more creative in an environment where I can trust, than were I have to work in a team where we just got together for the first time.

What is a mistrusting environment?

I mistrust their motives in what they want from me, as well as that we all want the same thing in terms of the goals that they have here. As well as integrity, that their actions and mine are for the same goals. Whatever they are doing, I must have faith that those decisions are for the common good, even if those decisions are not correct, but they wouldn't be out of bad motives.

How would you explain the relationship between the five skills?

I know that *motivating a team*, I find that people out there inspire me, but people I trust can get me motivated. They can motivate and inspire me from afar, but you need that individual trust that you get in a work relationship, to be more motivated. I feel that I need to trust people first before I can get motivated.

What happens if I didn't trust you, would your performance be higher or lower?

Lower, definitely lower... I was thinking that building trust and emphasising that too much was the wrong way of approaching a work environment. Most work environments, you know it, that "dog eats dog", but you go there and you work constructively because

you can tangibly get your personal advantage, because the attitude there is "I know that you are doing your own thing, so I will do it too?". And for me that was the wrong approach to have - so people are saying they need to have trust to get their own personal advantage. For me that trust was linked to getting your self-satisfaction. For me I would have to feel committed to the project and work. I felt committed because of growth. Getting a better degree or getting a better salary was secondary. It would play a role but for me the *trust* and *motivation* towards the end product has more to do about how I felt personally about the project and the end product and the integrity of the people involved.

What do you mean by self-satisfaction, how would you feel valued?

I could find that it is a wonderful project, I identify with the goals and aims and I am paid a good salary and I have growth opportunity, but if I found that I couldn't respect my individual people, for me I would find it difficult to produce in that team.

How would you create a conducive environment?

I don't know, but I think that it is determined by your actions. There are a lot of things that you see happening and you question which is maybe why *communicate verbally* is [placed] so high up, so you can question, where you have the space to say, "I think that doesn't look right, why did such and such happen?" I think that it is also knowing [how] a person's action have added up in the past... That is why I rated the leader's ability to *motivate that team.* ...While co-people have to motivate each other -- the leader had to be the one to rally and *motivate people.* But mainly they [the ranking of skills] seem to be around personal rather than project-related skills. Like *demonstrating assertiveness, managing strategy, managing projects* are all lower down. I thought that that was my own downfall, because my dad keeps telling me [to] grow up and learn what the working world is all about. It is not about how well you like your boss, and if there is trust, or whether they have double-crossed you. People will do that and that is how things work. I thought that it was my own weakness.

Do you think that different environments warrant different types of skills?

Do you mean that because we work in small teams?

PL: Maybe

I would think that because we don't have a rigid chain of command and everyday produce a certain amount of goods, there is so much leeway. For instance in my previous job, there wasn't enough space to know or trust people.

What was it like working there?

There you actually didn't know what they did... You had an accounts department where they did their own thing, but you knew your function very clearly... The leader was more authoritative, planning, no interpersonal relationships. No need to build trust. People performed well... We were all committed to [a similar goal]. But I think that people were there and they had built that trust. But we were very isolated from the top the CEO, etc.

What were the leaders like?

Very distant, we had lots of functions -- team building. There was a lot of respect, but there wasn't much room for doubting, like we have here, because of the individual projects. There we had one project and we knew what had to be done, and the decisions that were made could rarely be made for personal gain.

Distinction between meta and technical skills

There was very little room for initiative, but they were set in their ways in how things should be done. So there wasn't room to question, how things could be done better, except how could I make things nicer. Like we have to think here, what courses do we have to deliver and what is our market like.

PL: Are you then saying that because the organisation in your previous job was large, the leader needed to apply more technical skills?

Yeah

How are we different?

What your end goal is. Here the nature of the work requires us to be creative, to be responsive to students' needs, it is not like responding to [customers]. Here it is a different nature of work, coming up with different projects, research etc.

Bottom five skills

Those are the ones - *managing time* – I found that I had to manage my own time, it wasn't so much dependent on the leader. *Career development* I had to push for. *Discipline* seems to depend more on commitment rather than discipline. We can be here the whole day and do nothing. *Managing meetings* we don't have that. We have a brainstorming [session] and it works for us because we don't want someone to manage meetings.

PL: So the link that you are creating is commitment – commitment leads to higher performance, and would be in the top five skills.

I found that it was not only his responsibility to raise funds, it was all of ours. It was how he could get us together as a team to do that. *Managing finance* could be done by anyone of us. *Raising funds:* maybe X would have to spearhead it but we all had a responsibility for it - because they do have the ultimate responsibility to make decisions. *Discernment* would also relate to the trust factor. Whatever decision they make would have to *motivate the team*, contribute to *constructive personal relationships*. They need to have the ability to do those kinds of things which I rated higher up. The decision could have been seen as good, could have been seen as wise, to them personally but it would have to be such that it would have to have integrity even though it may have benefited

one team member. But I find that with most people, that they can have all the skills and productivity, but the one day that they find out that their leader has done something dubious then the entire motivation is ruined whether they want to act otherwise or not. But the trust doesn't relate to friendship, it relates to integrity, whether the leader acts in the group's interest or the goals that we have. *Assertiveness* came mid-way – funny. I was thinking about how important it was for a leader to be assertive. I thought that it was important because someone has to give direction, but I just wasn't sure where to put it. Maybe it is related to being self-responsible. One assumes that if you are self-motivated then a leader doesn't have to be assertive. *Discipline* is like pulling rank.

APPENDIX I

Interview Transcript 6

Why were the top five rated leadership skills perceived as improving a team's performance?

They are important and necessary but they are not necessarily the only skills required for effective team performance. The only problem is that you got the categorisation from individuals, which means that they are a reflection of individual needs and not necessarily the team's needs. It is important to balance individual needs and team's needs to balance in order to create synergy. It is a known fact that if individual needs and team needs are not aligned then there won't be good team performance. The secret is creating the balance between the first five mentioned skills and the other technical skills. I don't believe personally that the most important leader's skills are those five skills.

Which skills would you consider as being more important?

Those are important but without the hard core technical skills, like *strategic management, financial management, marketing public relations*, teams may not be sustainable in the long run and those financial factors may cause conflict and then destruction in the team. These five 'meta' skills are good for individual performance, for motivating individual performance, but happy individual's don't mean performing individuals. I think that it is a carrot and stick principle that explains that. Giving too many 'carrots' does not improve a team's performance or using a 'stick' as a management tool creates an imbalance and non-performing individuals in teams. Often the team's needs and individual needs are in conflict. The challenge for the manager or leader is to align the two needs.

How do these five skills improve a team's performance?

Those skills are able to lift an individual's performance, by generating a sense of belonging to a team, a sense of importance, meaningfulness. They generate motivation, commitment. They reduce stress and create a more peaceful working environment and increase security. They are able to unlock the individual's potential, innovation, and creativity. Those skills promote an optimistic and positive outlook or energy, which affects other team members, and they are necessary for the creation of synergy within the organisation and the team's development.

Previously you said that technical skills were also important, and you wouldn't totally agree that these skills are necessarily the most important. However, you claimed that these skills manage to improve the team's performance by increasing their sense of belonging. Do you think that what you have said above applies to any skills, or are they only specific to these five skills?

For me, for the team's effective performance, those five skills are pre-conditions but they are not sufficient. Without the ability to *manage a team strategically*, without *creating a vision* and *raising of funds*, the future of a team is bleak, not self-sustainable.

Why?

It is like in a family... there is a financial crisis which creates conflicts, compromises values and, creates corruption, self-interest. In the end it destroys a family.

Why would you consider these skills as being pre-conditions?

Those skills are necessary but not sufficient. Without them, it is impossible to create a collective vision, without that internal synergy it is impossible to raise money and succeed.

Why?

Because teams are the same as individuals, which have different needs – some are individual, some are emotional, some are spiritual, and some are social. So those meta skills are able to address emotional, spiritual and social needs of the individual in the team, but technical skills are needed to address physical needs. Teams are [similar to] human beings, emotional, psychological and material dimensions.

Why was trust rated as the most important skill?

Because without trust it is impossible to build commitment. It is impossible to get loyalty. Non-trust creates a sense of selfish agendas, or perceptions of selfish, hidden agendas, unfairness. Discretion is not totally soft, because some people have soft, pleasant speaking [voices] but not effective communication. Those things come from experience. Trust is the base, we are living in [in an era of] democracy and human rights. [The] age of authoritarian management is over.

Discussion of the bottom five skills

Conflict

Individuals just avoid conflict, they don't want to think about it. They don't want to acknowledge the importance of conflict in change and development. Again it is individual needs conflicting with team's needs. I would say that the skill of managing conflict in highly important. Because without conflict there is no development.

Managing meetings

People are scared of meetings. People don't like meetings. [The] human need which is conflicting with a team's needs. In meetings, accountability is checked, people's performance is checked. People don't like it [meetings] and try to avoid it, same like conflict.

Written communication

It is unpleasant, scary, has legal implications

Discipline

Means pain. We try to avoid pain always. It goes against our ego. Punishment is unpleasant, undermining.

Managing time

It goes against individual needs about having freedom and flexibility. Being efficient often means working hard, stress and pain. Because they are individual needs and not team needs. Individuals compromise team needs for their own needs. Individuals don't take them [team needs] as important because they go against their own needs. All these skills are important for good team performance, but individuals have rated them as low priority skills because they are in conflict with their individual needs. It doesn't mean that they are not important, but they had to prioritise them, they didn't have a choice.

Do you think that these skills would have been rated similarly in a different organisational environment?

Yes, I think that in a business environment [these skills] would move up on the list. Like *strategic management, public relations, financial management*, and *marketing.* Because of the existence of a different organisational culture which is more competitive, entrepreneurial, and disciplined. In an academic institution, government, or NGO sector, those abovementioned skills are not valued or necessary because of a different organisational context and culture – ideologically and strategically. The organisational context differs, because they are funded, they don't work in a competitive environment, they don't have to worry about their future, survival and profits. Their reward systems are fixed, while in the business sector, they are performance-based. Government, etc. aren't profit making. They operate in a protected environment. Ideologically they are driven by different visions, values, and purpose.

Do you think that the distinction between meta and technical skills is important in determining the performance of a team – if so, why? If not, why not?

I think that meta skills and technical skills are like two sides of the same coin. A leader without meta skills cannot enhance a team's performance. In the same way, a leader without technical skills cannot in the long run, ensure the welfare and sustainability of the team. The changing organisational environment emphasises more and more meta skills, unlike in the past, where technical skills were predominant. Because there is a change from modernity to post-modernity. Modern organisations were mechanistic and bureaucratically structured, while post-modern organisations are more organically structured. They emphasise team work more and more. We have discovered or realised that the team's potential is greater than the sum of individual potentials, and that that team potential can be unleashed and synergy cannot be created without meta skills. However, without technical skills that synergy or that potential cannot be sustained. People who are hard or good technically are not the type of personality who are good in meta. For example people who are strong in meta, tend to be very sensitive, emotional, subtle. While technical skills require an extroverted, outgoing, public relations type of person. If you focus on one [skill] then you neglect another [skill].

APPENDIX J

Interview Transcript 7

How do you see the top five leadership skills as improving a team's performance?

I would agree with all the leadership skills, but in a non-routine job, where P&DM is one of them, you don't get good performance by applying rules strictly and getting people to adhere to them by *discipline.* It is much more about building the creative capacity of people. The top one [skill] being *building trust.* It is only possible in a safe environment where you feel respected and trusted, where you [are] able to give your energy. Luckily my team has members who still have things to learn but they are basically good, strong capable people, so it is less telling them to do A, then B then C then D, then come back to me. It is much more creating the environment in which they can flourish and take [the] initiative themselves. It is creating an environment in which they feel respected, trusted and get their needs met, than very [a] strict "top down" hierarchy. So generally trust, yes. *Motivating a team* – which means building a vision, giving them what they need to do effectively within it. *Building constructive personal relationships* - absolutely. When people are stressed and have problems, attend to them and don't just bulldoze them if you can. Certainly *verbal [communication] is much more important than written communication*, because I don't think that we send any memos. Occasionally we write things up for policy. But while it is a small team, keep it informal and basically build on the individual personal initiative. I feel that any member of my team in a year or two, if they want to, will be equally capable of being a leader of a team. The way that the job was explained to me when I first came was "come in and build something in your own image. Take your enthusiasm and make something happen with it", and that is what I *want to do.*

Taking what you said, these skills are necessary for a certain environment. Looking at the bottom five rated skills, do you think that those kinds of skills would be rated higher in a different kind of environment?

Yes, it is difficult because none of the twenty are negative things. I think in my case, I put *co-ordinating* and *career planning* a bit higher. If people know where they are going, they feel that they are getting something back over five years as well as in a few weeks. In a much more classical Weberian bureaucracy, it is about sticking to discipline, about written memos... I am surprised that 'managing time' is so low because I think that it is an important thing to do. All the classical things of a manager, a manager manages other people, but more importantly manage yourself.

The best resource that any organisation will have is its people and that applies to the manager as well. I would have put *managing time* higher, but it would be difficult to put it higher, because there are other important things as well.

Would you see the manager and a leader as performing the same roles?

No, not really. I can see organisations where they are different, within the structure of P&DM I think that they are the same thing because a programme manager plays so many different roles. But I can see an organisation, like using a political structure where there is a general secretary and a chairperson. The general secretary is the manager, who is supposed to make things happen in time, meet deadlines, but it is the chairperson who gives the vision and is the leader, the motivator. So I do think that they are different roles. In an organisation like P&DM I do think that it is silly to make that distinction.

I have categorised these skills into two areas – meta and technical. Do you think that it is a useful distinction to make and if so how is it useful?

Perhaps it is being an academic. Firstly I react slightly to that classification, between the 'soft' and 'hard', because it implies that one is important and one is not ir
better classification is that 'the one can be learnt' and 'the other car

that the things called 'hard' skills, can be learnt on a two-day course – *managing a meeting* and *managing projects*. The things that you call 'soft' skills which in normal terminology are slightly of less high status. I actually disagree as it is those that hold something together more. Perhaps in a different way, a subordinate can bring what you call the 'hard' skills into an organisation, by the non-leader as well as a leader.

But what you call the 'soft' skills, if the leader is not empathetic and does not trust then there won't be trust. But if the leader can't chair a meeting probably then a team member will be able to chair the meeting or someone else will do the finances [or] whatever. It is the skills that build a team rather than the skills that the team performs. [These] are what the leader needs to do. The 'glue that holds things together', whereas you can have individual people who have skills in *finance, project management*. The role of the leader is to create that into a team where all the obvious things, ... where the team is stronger than the sum of its parts and dysfunctional with less.

What you introduced as the 'hard' and 'soft' skills is what I would call the delegable and non-delegable skills. What is important in a leader is the things that can't be delegated. I am absolutely comfortable that I can delegate the finances to a team member. What I can't delegate is where the team is going, how does the team respond to various problems, are people taken seriously, are people encouraged, is there enthusiasm in the things that they are trying to do? To be an empathetic leader, is not to be all touchy and feely, etc. On one level you have to gain people's confidence, which often comes from being someone who can perform 'hard' skills. It is useful that I can offer things to members.

So to be an effective leader it is important to gain people's confidence and trust [so] they believe that you are okay in what you are doing. From that, it is the softer skills that are more effective in making a team effective. The 'hard' skills could be contracted out (finance, etc.). Then one needs very 'hard' skills like *project management*. That is very

different from that of a team, because in that case the only direction that it can go is [in] one direction that the person in the centre is trying to do. A team is stronger, where if they are given support to use their initiative ... then they can bring a lot more of ideas and creativity. If I were in the centre with 'hard' technical skills then the team members wouldn't be able to do that [be creative]. I would have given them tight job descriptions and if they didn't do that I would have shouted at them. But that's what makes a team more effective. When people were learning, I was almost gauging what I believed, their capacity would be. ...Just [by] giving them support at their level. I allowed them to make mistakes. If you support them up to the point where they make mistakes, then you slap them on the back, what you are teaching is defensive activity.

The first thing that you do is that you make sure is that it is not your problem. It is important to give them huge support. when problems do occur, then get annoyed. But one thing that I learnt, where people are starting to take their own initiative, when you are giving praise, praise the person; when you are criticising, then criticise the act. Give them a way out. Because if you say that you are terrible, then all they can do is agree with you and feel terrible or they can say '#*!$' you. If you are giving criticism make sure that you criticise the task and make sure that you give them a way out, so that the person with the problem takes responsibility. As a manager you need to think through those issues yourself.

Other organisational factors influencing the team's performance

Yes, the team's success in bringing in money and the fact that P&DM is going through a lull.

To what extent do you feel your skills are responsible for the success of the team?

A lot. Tinkerbell – something only exists if you believe in it...Respecting yourself and other people is important. I will try to work the system so that it can try to support you, and I expect you to work as hard as possible. There were some people who didn't

respond to that where they tried to abuse the system and left. I felt that they tried to get away with minimal work, I wasn't tight on them and they were trying to use the system.

Based on that do you think that a different type of skill was necessary?

I felt that I placed too much trust in them. Within the first two weeks I ask people to run with things. I wouldn't write them off immediately. I should have maybe applied other skills like, written down their job description and disciplining them, but I don't particularly like doing that.

Author Law P
Name of thesis Meta Skills And Technical Skills In Team Leadership Law P 1999

PUBLISHER:
University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg
©2013

LEGAL NOTICES:

Copyright Notice: All materials on the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg Library website are protected by South African copyright law and may not be distributed, transmitted, displayed, or otherwise published in any format, without the prior written permission of the copyright owner.

Disclaimer and Terms of Use: Provided that you maintain all copyright and other notices contained therein, you may download material (one machine readable copy and one print copy per page) for your personal and/or educational non-commercial use only.

The University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, is not responsible for any errors or omissions and excludes any and all liability for any errors in or omissions from the information on the Library website.