Drawing on Possible Self Theory to Explore the Influence of Subjectivity on Individual Learning and Employees' Attitudes toward Learning Behaviours Popularized by Two Learning Organization Models

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Abstract

Drawing on possible self theory, this is a qualitative study that seeks to explore two major connected assumptions. The first is whether diverse possible selves can generate a wide variety of individual learning experiences. The second which the present study seeks to explore is the joint influence of the latter two (i.e. possible selves and the individual learning experiences generated therefrom) on employees' attitudes towards learning behaviours popularized by two LO models: Senge's model and Marsick and Watkins' model. In setting the theoretical scene, the researcher argues that such models have only mildly considered the complex issues of self and subjectivity, and suggests that failure to realize the ideal of the learning organization may be partially explained by failure to acknowledge the powerful role of subjectivity in generating different individual learning experiences. In this context, possible self theory has been employed as a means to understand individuals' subjectivities and how they might influence attitudes towards formal learning behaviours associated with two LO models. This is the main contribution the present study seeks to achieve.

The sample of the study consisted of 19 employees working for a well-known Saudi public corporation. A semi-structured interview was used to elicit participants' responses after which those were explored and discussed. The findings of the study generally support the need to acknowledge the centrality of subjectivity in generating diverse learning experiences across the same organization. They also reveal the idiosyncratic nature of individual learning in a ways that challenge formal organizational learning policies and popular notions on the homogeneity of organizational cultures. The implications derived thereof for organizations, individual learning, and the LO concept are detailed in the concluding chapter.

Acknowledgement

List of Abbreviations

SWCC: Saline Water Conversion Corporation

TC: Training Centre

LO: Learning Organization

DLO: Dimensions of the Learning Organization

BSC: Balanced Scored Card

TOT: Training of the Trainer

EFQM: European Foundation for Quality Management

AS: Abdullah Al-Shehri

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Introduction

This is a study that took place in a training centre belonging to the Saline Water Conversion Corporation (SWCC), a Saudi public organization whose headquarters is based in Riyadh, the capital city of Saudi Arabia. Since its establishment by a royal decree in 1974, and in providing the most vital natural resource (i.e. water) for human life, SWCC remains one of Saudi Arabia's most vital public entities. As stated in its official website (SWCC, 2018), SWCC's core business revolves around desalinating and transmitting desalinated seawater across the kingdom.

SWCC has adopted a strategic plan with a vision to attain 'leadership and excellence in seawater desalination and power production'; and a mission to 'meet the needs of customers by providing desalinated seawater with effectiveness and reliability at the lowest cost possible and with the highest economic returns'; in addition to 'motivating' its employees and investing effectively in human resources, developing the desalination industry, and contributing to social and economic development while complying with safety and environmental standards' (SWCC, 2018).

SWCC's training centre is the context where the present study was conducted. Based in the industrial city of Jubail on the eastern coast of the Kingdom, and since its inauguration in 1987, the centre has experienced continuous change and development to meet the increasing demand for desalinated water. In order to achieve this goal, several management and business models have been imported and tried. They included the Balanced Scored Card (BSC) for building its strategy, Training of the Trainer (TOT) programs, and the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM) excellence model. These are now in operation but have faced numerous challenges before the desired results could become visibly tangible. The adopted BSC strategy articulates a vision to realize 'excellence in training in the desalination industry' and a mission to achieve 'professional development and qualification of employees operating and maintaining desalination plants and industrial facilities, utilizing the latest

international standards in training methodologies and technologies, with highly qualified trainers, in a safe work environment' (SWCC, 2018).

Apart from the models above, SWCC had an expressed intention to benefit from two popular learning organization models: Peter Senge's five disciplines model and Marsick and Watkins' LO dimensions. Until the moment of the study, neither of them has been officially adopted and implemented. One of the practical aims of the present study is to assess the viability of both models in the light of developing research on issues of subjectivity and the self. Although there are organizations which still aspire to adopt such LO models, some scholars have gone as far as to admit that "the ideal of the learning organization has not yet been realized" (Garvin et al., 2008, p.2). Against such developing awareness, one may propose that such models have only lightly acknowledged the particular tensions and contradictions peculiar to different learning experiences. Therefore, another aim of the present study is to explore this proposition qualitatively. Since learning in its broadest sense is the focus of the study, informal learning behaviours will also receive attention. More specifically, employees' attitudes towards formal LO learning behaviours will be the main focus but without losing sight of how informal learning experiences might have been shaped as well.

On the part of the researcher, interest in exploring this topic has developed from two experiences. The first is his experience with the theory of possible selves while completing his master's degree in applied linguistics. Research in this area (Al Shehri, 2009) has suggested that personally envisaged selves can have a powerful influence on individuals' motivations and learning behaviours. The other experience was his encounter with the challenges that continue to face the TC's implementation of various management and business models. Based on its BSC strategy, the TC, for instance, has developed a number of 'formal' business values (i.e. teamwork, creativity, sharing, transparency, excellence, social responsibility) which all employees' are supposed to embrace. Until the moment of the study, all attempts to bring espousal of such values to full fruition have largely failed. It occurred to the researcher that there might be

something wrong with imposing ready-made management/business models on employees without/before attending to the peculiarity of individual learning experiences across the organization. In other words, a 'straightjacket effect' was strongly sensed, and in order to investigate how different employees may experience it with the two prospective LO models, an appropriate conceptual tool was needed for this purpose. From first-hand acquaintance with its explanative capacity, the theory of possible selves seemed to offer both an innovative and useful one.

The two aims stated above are complementary, and they were partially pursued to substantiate growing literature on the primacy of subjectivities in generating diverse learning experiences in organizational contexts. Ultimately, both aims culminate in the normative purpose of helping SWCC avoid the pitfall of undermining individual learning experiences in favour of realizing LO models not infrequently regarded as 'universal' and 'one-size-fits-all'. In this light, the focus of the study is primarily individual but has multiple implications for both the concept of the LO in particular and organizational learning/development in general.

Structure Road Map

The structure of the thesis will proceed along two lines: procedural and conceptual. Concerning the former, the literature review will come to grips with four key concepts: possible selves, attitudes, learning, and the learning organization. Each chapter on these concepts commences with a short introduction explaining the overall aim, followed by a review of relevant literature, and finishes with a brief conclusion. A chapter will follow this on research design and ethical considerations, followed by a lengthy chapter dedicated to exploring and discussing participants' responses, and finally concluding with a chapter summarizing the main findings and implications for both individuals' and organizations' learning and for organizations planning to adopt the previously mentioned LO models. As for the conceptual line, the literature review intentionally starts with discussing possible self theory since it

is supposed to orient and situate readers' understanding of the remaining concepts. Therefore, the sequence of discussion proceeds from possible selves to attitudes, learning, and the learning organization respectively. The sequence is also intended to reflect the spirit of the study's overarching proposition: since possible selves are expected to influence attitudes, attitudes in turn are expected to influence individuals' learning and their perceptions of/reactions towards certain LO learning behaviours.

Literature Review

In the last two decades, studies (Eraut, 2000; Billett, 2010; Caldwell, 2012) on the relation between individuals and organizations have paid particular attention to issues of informal learning, subjectivity, and individual agency. In fact, some (Billett, 2010, p.2) have maintained that there is "a growing consensus about the role of subjectivity or self" in such learning, while other researchers (Eraut, 2004) have pointed out an intimate relation between informal learning on the one hand and the role of individual agency on the other.

According to Eraut (2004, p. 247) informal learning "recognizes the social significance of learning from other people" and also "implies greater scope for individual agency than socialization". Research has shown that individuals' subjectivities are critical in mediating various work-related learning experiences. According to Billett (2010, p. 2), "individuals' subjective dispositions shape and direct their thinking and acting, including how they construe and construct the experience (i.e., what they learn)".

The very close and sometimes interchangeable relation between subjectivity and the notion of the self has also received attention. Billett (2010, p. 2), as will be outlined later, uses the 'self' alongside 'subjectivity' in the sense above "to offer sets of views about concepts of 'self'". Such emphasis on subjectivity, the self, and their mediating role indicates a shift in perspective. It comes in diametric opposition to the more literal and extreme version of the claim that "persons are constituted by external, interpersonal, or social factors" and that "the person is essentially who or what she is in virtue of those external relations" (Christman, 2009, p. 22).

This resonates with implications from the structure-and-agency dilemma. For instance, one may argue that a shift has taken place from emphasis on structure, with its more or less deterministic implications and constrictive connotations, to emphasis on the role of individual agency, where notions of 'action', 'meaning', 'becoming', 'self', and 'subjectivity' come to the fore as key

factors in corporate learning experiences (Billett, 2010). In a similar vein, Herzberg (2006) has also discussed conceiving the self as emerging from an oscillation between 'agency' and 'structure'. In this connection, Fenwick (2008, p. 227, 240) reviewed articles examining workplace learning published in nine journals between 1999 and 2004, and identified emerging themes that signify the aforementioned shift, such as: individual learning acquisition, individual human development, and theorizing on subtle dynamics of learning processes. This development extends from the realization that individuals' internal worlds can participate in creating human settings which in turn feed into the larger sociocultural system in an almost never-ending cycle of reciprocal influence. This emphasis on the reciprocal relation between individuals' subjectivities and the external world, be it social or natural, coincides with Peter Senge's wholehearted subscription to systems theory, and in a passage from *The Fifth Discipline*, where the role of subjectivity is reduced to the impact of a partial player, Senge remarks that:

> "The simple description, "I am filling the glass of water," suggests a world of human actors standing at the centre of activity, operating on an inanimate reality. From the systems perspective, the human actor is part of the feedback process, not standing apart from it. This represents a profound shift in awareness. It allows us to see how we are continually both influenced by and influencing our reality" (Senge, 2006. p. 77).

Therefore, in order to enhance our understanding of the inner workings of LO models, one would have to penetrate overarching structures and examine the world of their most fundamental constituent parts: human beings. This realization, the realization that understanding individual social behaviour is no less important than understanding collective social behaviour, is not entirely

new. As far as formal sociological research is concerned, its germ probably dates back to as early as Weber's interpretive sociology, the science which, according to Schutz (1967, p. 6), interprets the subjective meaning of social behaviour by exploring the intentions of individuals.

Within this framework of enquiry, the study will commence by an extensive literature review that discusses concepts subsumed by four key themes: possible selves, learning, attitudes, and the LO respectively. To recapitulate before advancing any further, but in more technical terms relevant to the main research questions, the current study aims - drawing on possible self theory - at researching how subjectivities are likely to impact employees' attitudes towards learning behaviours formally popularized by two LO models.

Thus, the main research aim already assumes that individuals have subjectivities and that there are biographical future dimensions (i.e. possible selves) to them that are likely to influence individuals' attitudes towards certain LO learning ideals/ behaviours. As a result, the argument goes, learning assumptions will not remain unchallenged and individuals with differing possible selves are likely to respond differently to the same learning opportunities, either by adapting (adaptive learning), generating (generative learning), or resisting (defensive learning). However, it should be remarked that persons most of the time do not respond in a rigid either-or manner. They usually respond in a compound manner. They may respond at once adaptively, generatively, and resistively to different aspects of the one and same learning experience. For example, an individual may respond to 'team work' (Senge, 2006) by adapting to it as a mode of communication, and respond by generating new learning behaviours through it and also by resisting certain ways of managing it. Since learning, attitude, and the learning organization will be explored against the backdrop of possible self theory, it may prove convenient to start the literature review with the concept of possible selves. This sequence is essential for framing and contextualizing the ensuing discussion of the rest of the themes.

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Chapter One

Possible Selves

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1.1.   Introduction

The aim of this chapter is threefold. The first is to provide an overview of the theory of possible selves. Starting the literature review with a discussion of possible selves serves the purpose of situating the subsequent discussions on learning, attitude, and the LO. The second aim is to relate possible selves to relevant ideas in the literature such as, to name a few, habitus and horizons of action (Hodkinson et al. 2008). Habitus and horizons of action, for instance, can illuminate our understanding of the impact of possible selves on individuals' attitudes. The third is to show, in the concluding remarks for this section, how possible self theory may inform our understanding of the challenges possible selves pose to learning ideals promoted by the learning organization.

1.2.   Review

Since the 1980's, scholars working within the field of cognitive psychology have advanced a theory that proposes to enhance our current conceptions of self-knowledge (Markus & Nurius, 1986, p. 954). This theory is the theory of possible selves. Markus and Nurius' article *Possible Selves* (1986) is a landmark in psychological literature and is generally regarded as the first genuine exposition of the concept of possible selves. The authors maintained therein that possible self theory has emerged to tackle a critical domain that had, at that time, virtually received no attention (Markus & Nurius, 1986, p. 954). According to the authors, the possible self is a type of self-knowledge pertaining to how individuals perceive their potential about future self states. Literally speaking, they are:

> "…selves that we would very much like to
> become. They are also the selves we could

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become, and the selves we are afraid of
becoming" (p. 954).

Markus and Nurius (1986, p. 181) argued that possible selves are cognitive components representing one's imagined future outcomes including hopes, fears, goals, and threats. Because future outcomes will include desired and unwanted ones, the individual is likely to swing between two alternate possible selves: hoped for and dreaded selves (Markus and Nurius, 1986, p. 954).

In addition to individuals perceiving possible selves as different and separable from their current selves, individuals tend to experience possible selves as authentic representations as a result of their being assumed by the current self (Markus and Nurius, 1986, p. 954-955, 966). Besides possible selves being perceived as desirable admirable future selves (Markus and Nurius, 1986, p. 954, 962), possible selves may also act as powerful 'repellents' once they are perceived as undesirable or threatening selves (Markus and Nurius, 1986, p. 961), or selves which one is afraid of becoming (Markus and Cross, 1994, p. 424).

In addition to possible selves acting as strong incentives or powerful preventives, they can be a combination of both in which case they act as regulative selves (Oyserman and Markus, 1990, p. 113). Moreover, the more vivid, well-elaborated, specific, and borne out by proximity to reality possible selves are, the more powerful their effect as crucial behaviour determiners (Markus and Nurius, 1986, p.954, 964; Markus and Cross, 1994, p. 424, 343).

Furthermore, Markus and Cross (1994) have also set out to study the relationship between self-schemas, possible selves and competent performance. According to Markus (1977, p. 63), self-schemata "are cognitive generalizations about the self, derived from past experience, that organize and guide the processing of self-related information contained in the individual's social experiences". On the contrary, possible selves are future oriented, and thus defined as representations of selves persons "could become, would like to

become, or is afraid of becoming" (Markus and Cross, 1994, p. 424). Their findings revealed two salient features about possible selves:

1- Possible selves can represent selves which one would like to become, could become, or is afraid of becoming (Markus and Cross, 1994, p. 424).

2- Those whose (positive) possible selves are more elaborate and vivid are more likely to show better performance in a given task (Markus and Cross, 1994, 424).

Oyserman et al. (2004) took research on possible selves a step further by exploring how possible selves can act as guiding roadmaps towards future outcomes (Oyserman et al., 2004, p. 130). In this regard, they found out that "improved academic outcomes were likely only when a possible self could plausibly be a self-regulator" (p. 130), confirming their earlier hypothesis that "youths whose academic possible selves are self-regulating (provide a better road map for guiding affect and behaviour) will be more successful in the domain of school" (Oyserman et al., 2004, p. 134).

1.2.1 Relating Possible Self Theory to Similar Concepts

Thus far, the concept of possible selves has been discussed in its own right, apart from anchoring it to similar notions in existing literature on self-knowledge, self-concept, and corporate/organizational learning issues on the individual level. Tying possible self theory to relevant literature will be the focus of the rest of this discussion on possible selves.

The core concept underlying possible self theory is not entirely novel. Several authors working within a broadly sociological paradigm have raised similar ideas that are of particular relevance to the present discussion of this theory. Bourdieu (1993), for instance, is known for introducing the notion of 'habitus' which, according to Johnson in his foreword for Bourdieu's *The Field of Cultural Production*, stands for the deep subconscious dispositions and structures

embedded in individuals' selves as a result of "a long process of inculcation, beginning in early childhood" (Bourdieu, 1993, p. 5). These dispositions and structures are largely responsible for both generating and determining one's set of choices, practices, and perceptions (Bourdieu, 1993, p. 5; Herzberg, 2006, p. 37) by which he or she interacts with what Bourdieu also calls the 'habitat'. In *The Weight of the World*, Bourdieu (1999) maintained that "if the habitat shapes the habitus, the habitus also shapes the habitat" (Bourdieu, 1999, p. 128). From a social standpoint, Markus and Nurius' interpretation of possible selves appears to overlap with Bourdieu's view of habitus as a social product. For although "possible selves are individualized or personalized", relate Markus and Nurius "…they are also distinctly social… (and) are the direct result of previous social comparisons" (1986, p.954).

Furthermore, self-identity, as conceived by Wenger (2008) in his *Communities of Practice*, also seems to hinge on this social dimension of possible self and habitus. Wenger (2008, p. 151) sees identity as emerging from a continuous "layering of events of participation and reification" which, in turn, are internalized, interpreted, and informed by the individual's experience and social interpretation. Indeed, as Dunkel and Anthis (2001) have observed in their exploration of the relation between possible selves and identity formation, "possible selves play an important role in the identity formation process" (p. 774).

1.2.2   The Self and Organizational Contexts

The self has been the focus of intensive discussion in organizational (learning) studies as well. Billett (2010) for instance connects the self, agency, and mediation to highlight the centrality of the subject in modern day discussions of workplace learning. He argues that "individuals' sense of self and the agency with which that self is enacted, stands as mediating these relationships and what and how they learn". Billett then concludes that such a mediating role

"underscores the salience of placing the subject in discussions about work and learning through and for work" (p. 5).

In fact, Billett (2010) closely touches on the biographical aspect of the self by referring to the historical role of the self in determining individuals' future motivations and learning behaviours. His contention was that in order "to explain what motivates and directs individuals' learning through work and throughout working life" one needs to account for "the relations among work, subjectivity and lifelong learning or ontogeny", and that "standing at the centre of these relations", maintains Billett "are individuals' subjectivities or self" (p. 8).

In this connection, he introduces four distinct conceptions of the self and proposes "the view that the self arises through social experience and stands as the personal basis that mediates relations about work and learning throughout working life" (Billett, 2010, p. 1). He also emphasizes the realization that "Individuals' sense of self likely includes how they present themselves to and make sense of the social world". This allusion to the role of 'presentation' - individuals' capacity to present themselves - holds much in common with the idea of 'representation' underlying possible selves. The four selves mentioned by Billett include what he calls the autonomous self, the subjugated self, the enterprising self, and the agentic self.

The autonomous self is one where the individual enjoys freedom and exercises a great deal of autonomy in realizing their desired goals. This may be seen as a heightened and vivid experience of the actual/possible self in possible self theory (to be explained later). In relating to the social structures they happen to exist in, individuals with autonomous selves experience themselves as being separated in identity and agency, and the tradition they belong to is mainly humanist. The autonomous self, as far as learning is concerned, is one that rebels against and casts off social subjugation and, as Billett (2010) remarks, seeks independence in being able to be itself "without being constrained by

historical legacy" (p. 12). Its concept of subjectivity is one where freedom and spontaneous expression are salient.

The subjugated self, on the other hand, is one where individuals experience themselves as mere placeholders within the existing social systems such as corporations, families, tribes, or communities of practice. According to Billett, the tradition that guides and accommodates the subjugated self largely partakes of early Foucauldian structuralism. When it comes to learning in its broadest sense, the subjugated self achieves learning through engagement with the dominant social world and, in contradistinction to the autonomous self, hardly shows any serious resistance.

The enterprising self may be seen as falling between the autonomous self and the subjugated self or as incorporating characteristics that reflect autonomy and subjugation. Thus an individual with an enterprising self is one who is highly self-reflexive, entrepreneurial, and agentically involved in formulating and maintaining his or her identity within the extant social system. While the autonomous self seeks separation from social structures, and while the subjugated self just happens to find itself enmeshed in such structures, the entrepreneurial self maintains continuity within the existing social structures.

It is "entangled", to cite Billett (2010, p.12), but not enmeshed. The interposition of the enterprising self between the autonomous and subjugated self is evident from the way it behaves in learning contexts. In such contexts, it seeks self-regulation of its efforts so that they are not totally wasted but at the same time finds itself "subjugated to workforce practices and outcomes, seeking a fit between personal goals and enterprise goals".

As one may conclude from the forthcoming qualifications, the agentic self lies between the autonomous and enterprising self, but appears closest in nature to the latter. An individual whose self is largely agentic selectively engages and negotiates with social suggestions to secure, develop, and maintain his or her identity. A self that is agentic is said to negotiate selectively and rationally with existing social structures and in this sense it is considered to be entwined

whereas the autonomous, subjugated and enterprising selves are said to be separated, enmeshed, and entangled respectively.

Though the agentic self is closer to the enterprising self than it is to the other two selves, it does not try to transform the social system it happens to exist in or negotiate with. Thus, the agentic self achieves learning by "resisting, out-manoeuvring, and avoiding strong social suggestion through locating a position and role within social practice which is consistent with individual subjectivity and identity" (Billett, 2010, p.12). On this account, the agentic self sees social structures as inescapable realties to the extent that the furthest thing one can strive to do is minimize inconsistencies between the self and the dominant social system. In contrast to the enterprising self whose concept of subjectivity is represented by presentation of the self, the concept of subjectivity associated with the agentic self is reflected in the "open, reflexive, and embodied quality of human agency" (Billett, 2010, p.12).

This elucidation of the four types of selves advanced by Billett is important for the discussion of possible selves in relation to learning for several reasons, two of which can be mentioned. First, the four types of selves presented here can qualify different aspects of a person's actual/possible self. For instance, an individual may envision a particular possible self which is (for whatever reason) subjugated at some time in the future and which happens to be in conflict with a present image of the self which is highly autonomous. Secondly, and in relation learning organizations, the four types of selves offer a language of analysis that can enrich our understating of learning tendencies and behaviours associated with certain images of the self. For instance, expressing dislike for 'team learning' (Senge, 2006, 216) and 'collaboration' (Marsick and Watkins, 2003, p.139) is, given the respective traits outlined earlier, more likely to be expected from a self which seeks autonomy.

1.2.3 The Self, Learning, and Organizational Learning

As far as learning is concerned, the self as a learning agent has also been studied in terms of how it operates within 'horizons for action' or 'learning' (Hodkinson et al. 2008). Here, "for every learner", explain Hodkinson et al. "it is the horizons for learning that set limits to what learning is possible, and which enable learning within those limits" (2008, p. 39). Both habitus and horizons for action have relevant implications for the concept of possible selves. One may consider that learners' experience of their possible selves – how they envisage their selves at some time in the future – are defined by their present habitus, as well as constricted in terms of potential by their present/past horizons of action.

Similarly, based on Bourdieu's work and in contrast to his structural account of the genesis of habitus, in an account that chiefly attributes the formation of habitus to socialization processes, Herzberg (2006, p. 41) develops what she calls "the biographical learning habitus". In Herzberg's (2006) view, the evolution of a learning habitus is contingent on "a process which occurs between the two poles of 'subject' and 'structure'" (p. 41). The social origin and cultural basis of possible selves have also been raised by possible self theorists such as Markus and Kitayama (1991). The authors maintained that people from different cultural backgrounds hold strikingly different construals/representations of the self and, more importantly, that such construals have the power to shape or even determine "the very nature of individual experience, including cognition, emotion, and motivation" (p. 224). Like Bourdieu's habitus and the biographical self, the sociocultural geneses of possible selves are underscored by Markus and Nurius' (1986) assertion that possible selves derive "from the categories made salient by the individual's particular *sociocultural* and *historical* context" (p. 954, emphasis mine).

Moreover, the historical aspect emphasized by Markus and Nurius above seems to be captured by what has come to be known as 'individual biography'.

Hodkinson and his colleagues have maintained that although people appear to be integrated into their place of work, they are also separate from it because such people "have lives outside work", and because they bring dispositions, values, and identities, all of which composing different biographies, that happen to predate their participation in the current workplace (2004, p. 9, p. 13).

Although possible selves, habitus, and individual biographies are very much determined by individuals' sociocultural contexts, possible selves have been reported to exhibit intrinsic cognitive dimensions in the sense that individuals are free agents capable of accessing a rich repertoire of key mental processes such as willing, planning, reflecting, choosing, and deciding. More generally, 'cognition' in this context largely partakes of Billett's (2010) conceptualization of 'cognitive experience' denoting the "conceptual, procedural and dispositional premises that direct individuals' intentionality, focus, and intensity when engaging with the physical and social environment beyond them" (p.7).

Thus, possible selves are not only influenced and guided (passive, dependent) but also enjoy a capacity to influence and guide (active, independent). So it can be said that, in a sense, agency is not entirely determined by structure. In this regard, Unemori et al. (2004) opine that possible selves represent "self-relevant cognitions" that may function as guides for individual development; a conclusion which comes in agreement with Markus and Nurius' (1986) earlier remark that possible selves "can be viewed as the cognitive manifestation of enduring goals, aspirations, motives, fears, and threats" (p. 954).

Certain ideas in possible self theory are more relevant than others when it comes to organizational learning. For instance, the notions of defensive reasoning or defensive routines acting as "self-sealing" powers (Senge, 2006, p. 237) may inform our understanding of possible self-vividness. It was argued earlier that the more vivid and borne out by proximity to reality possible selves are, the more powerful their effect as crucial behaviour determiners is likely to be (Markus and Nurius, 1986, p.954, p. 964; Markus and Cross, 1994, p. 424, p.

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343). However, according to Senge, defensive routines tend to "obscure their own existence" and this "comes in large measure because we have society-wide norms that say that we *should* be open and that defensiveness is bad". "This makes it difficult", concludes Senge "to acknowledge defensive routines, even if we know that we are being defensive" (2006, p. 237). This allusion to the impact of observing 'society norms' on individuals' actual selves (Higgins et al., 1986), in the form of discrepancy between individuals' refusal to acknowledge defensive routines and their awareness of being defensive, may serve to explain the role of ought-to selves (Higgins et al., 1986) as "self-sealing" intermediaries. An ought-to self, according to Higgins et al. (1986, p. 6), is a person's representation of the attributes which others believe the person should or ought to have. But because not all "of the attributes which others believe the person should or ought to have" are necessarily desired by the individual's actual self nor always entailed by his/her possible self, struggle and conflict may follow, and where there is conflict, the chances are high that self-vividness, positive or negative, will diminish. As Markus and Nurius (1986, p. 964) have pointed out:

> "…others' perceptions of an individual are unlikely to reflect or to take into account possible selves. In fact, one of the dramatic differences between self-perception and the perception of others can be found in the simple fact that when we perceive ourselves, we see not only our present capacities and states but also our potential…When we perceive another person, or another perceives us, this aspect of perception, under most conditions, is simply not evident and typically there is little concern with it".

Another example of how possible self theory may inform particular themes in organizational learning is the supposed discrepancy between actual selves and perceived ought-to selves (Higgins et al., 1986, p. 6). But before showing how, it might be useful to set the context of the argument first. As far as learning in organizations is concerned, and drawing on findings from psychological research, some scholars (Leonard, 2007, p. 149) have pointed out that when people are pressed to "explain their choices or decisions based on unconscious reasoning" they tend to "give explanations that are clearly unrelated to their actual behaviour". In other words, Leonard wanted to demonstrate that individuals' reflections on their behaviours do not always result in revealing the real rationales or motives behind them. One implication to be raised in this connection concerns the concept of theories-in-use as opposed to espoused theories. Theories-in-use are those that are practically embraced, executed that is, in everyday learning situations. In contrast, espoused theories are those that people say they believe in and abide by but are rarely corroborated by everyday action (Argyris, 2010, p. 62-64; Senge, 2006, 178). As far as organizations are concerned, one possible consequence of such disparity between persons' theories-in-use and espoused theories is that, as Billett has argued in a relevant vein, "it would be wrong to assume that individuals intentions for and processes of work life learning are going to be wholly consistent with those of their employers and government" (2010, p. 2).

Again, the reason why this is the case is because that there will almost always exist a degree of mismatch between what we really do, our practical or applied theories, and what we overtly profess, our verbalized ideals. Thus, organizations and governments are not always in a secure position to understand subjects' actual needs, goals, and attitudes relying on their espoused theories. And even when they are, there is no guarantee that they respond in ways that support or reward the real needs. In highlighting the potential for disparity between espoused theories and theories in use, Senge notes that:

> "I may profess a view (an espoused theory) that
> people are basically trustworthy. But I never

lend friends money and jealously guard all my possessions. Obviously, my theory-in-use, my deeper mental model, differs from my espoused theory" (2006, p. 177).

1.3   Conclusion

One important implication from the previous discussion is that possible selves are likely to offer access to a richer understanding of topics on learning and the self in organizational as well as social settings. Another implication revealed by possible self theory is the complexity and richness of individual self histories. The challenges posed by this realization to learning organizations in particular and organizational learning in general are myriad. Two main challenges can be pointed out on two levels. On the individual level, selves change with time and, as a result, add new dimensions to employees' identities. Consequentially, their desired possible selves change from time to time. This challenges organizational efforts to align personal goals with organizational ones. On the collective level, actual as well as possible selves can vary across different groups in the organization to degrees that challenge homogenous team learning and uniform vision sharing. From a cultural perspective, the former realization has relevant implications for the viability of Hofstede's (1984) model on the unity and homogeneity of cross-national cultures. The most important one in this context affirms Rathbone et al.'s (2016) study on cross-cultural perspectives on possible selves. Their findings have shown "no significant differences between the proportions of social compared with autonomous possible selves across cultures", thus undermining what Hofstede's model might have predicted on the well-known individualistic-collectivistic scale. From an organizational learning perspective, possible selves can help explain the discrepancy between espoused theories and theories-in-use, the behaviour of defensive routines, and the habit of defensive reasoning. By drawing on the concepts of habitus, individual biography, and possible self theory, one can understand why certain

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individuals find it difficult to abandon personal learning preferences or espouse learning behaviours demanded by formal organizational models.

Chapter Two

Learning

2.1. Introduction

The main purpose of this chapter is to explore the literature on learning in its broadest sense. Learning associated with the learning organization is a more specific form of learning and will be taken up in the upcoming literature review on learning organizations. The reason why learning in its broadest needs to be addressed is twofold. Firstly, organizational learning cannot be divorced from the larger context of individual learning histories. Secondly, the broadness of the concept of possible selves necessitates approaching learning in its broader sense. As discussed in the previous section, possible selves both influence and are influenced by individuals' learning histories and this happens before exposure to specific LO learning ideals/behaviours. Treating learning in its broadest sense and accessing individuals' life histories both entail considering the subjective aspect of learning in any extensive discussion of LO. As Billett has pointed out, new learning perspectives increasingly "acknowledge that, beyond what is provided through intentional instructional interludes, or through workplace or governmental edicts, personal factors shape workers' learning and development" (2010, p. 2).

2.2. Review

2.2.1. The Challenge of Definition and the Importance of Considering Learning in its Broadest Sense

The first and perhaps most formidable task facing any formal discussion of learning is that of attempting to define it. As Branud and Reiss (2004, p. 4) have personally experienced, "trying to define learning is an almost impossible task". In fact, Alexander et al. (2009, p. 176) went as far as to suggest that neither a definition of learning nor a detailed account of its constituent parts (e.g. learner characteristics) would suffice to capture the nature of learning. Nonetheless, a working definition is at least necessary before setting out in a certain direction. Owing to the scope and nature of the present study, a suitable definition would be one that aims at accommodating as much a broader view of learning as possible. The definition provided by The Campaign for Learning (2003), as cited by Branud and Reiss (2004), appears to fulfil the requirement above. It defines learning as:

> "...a process of active engagement with experience. It is what people do when they want to make sense of the world. It may involve the development or deepening of skills, knowledge, understanding, awareness, values, ideas and feelings or an increase in the capacity to reflect. Effective learning leads to change, development and the desire to learn more" (Branud and Reiss, 2004, p. 4)

Learning in this broad sense not only addresses formal learning modes in organizational settings but also informal (and sometimes subconscious) types of learning such as learning from peers, work colleagues, the family, tradition, and from mere exposure to daily social events. In view of learning in its broader

sense, it inevitably follows that all persons are continually in the habit of learning, unlearning, or learning how to learn/unlearn something (Alexander et al. 2009, p. 178).

This broad conception of learning was substantiated by research (Unemori et al., 2004, p. 323) documenting people who equated learning with what it means to be 'alive' and who thought that ceasing to learn meant to 'decay or stagnate as a person'. The same assumption about the scope and nature of learning has also received support from Alexander et al.'s learning principle that "being alive means being a learner" and that "being alive for humans brings with it the inevitability of learning, as well as its necessity" (2009, p. 178).

Much earlier research (Marton et al., 1993, p. 285) has also pointed out that learning is not simply restricted to narrow work-related skills, but can also involve broader and more fundamental reflections on, and shifts in, personal life-worlds. Marton et al. (1993) called this dimension of learning, which pertains to individuals' entire life-worlds, the 'external horizon' of learning (p. 285-286), prompting them to add the category "Changing as a Person" to the battery of previously identified categories on individuals' conceptions of learning (p. 284). The aforementioned category, with its emphasis on change, resonates with Branud and Reiss' (2004, p. 4) view that learning should lead to change and development.

The fact that learning, at least in most of its genuine forms, should lead to change and development is important for understanding why certain people fail to see the value of learning for their lives. It could be the case that some of them are tied to a narrow conception of learning. For example, such persons may think that good learning is normally associated with learning behaviours associated with formal programs and institutions such as training courses, schools, and colleges. With this narrow conception of learning, and given the fact that "it is now widely accepted that informal learning plays a critical role in

all workplace learning" (Clardy, 2018, p. 1), informal learning opportunities would hardly be appreciated as a vital source of change and development.

Learning viewed as engagement with one's experience (Branud and Reiss, 2004, p. 4) and as a way of expanding and enriching one's life-worlds (Marton et al. 1993, p. 285-286) tends to reflect two major characteristics. The first is that it is deeply rooted in sociocultural contexts, and the second is that it appears to follow a universal pattern across different societies. In other words, its causes and consequences seem to follow similar trajectories in modern-day societies. For example, it has been observed that the capacity for critical thinking is more likely to dwindle in educational systems that barely go beyond focus on memorization and rote learning skills (Mayer, 2002, p. 231). This latter observation has direct implications for how one may perceive and approach various learning issues, such as the impact of local sociocultural factors on learners' learning trends. Sondheimer (2009), for example, has noticed the influence of traditional learning methods prevalent in various learning settings across Saudi Arabia, and how such methods bear on Saudi learners' preparedness to cope with the demands of modern work environments. Sondheimer maintained that there is a widespread tendency to focus on rote memorization, thus resulting in students with a strong knowledge base but poor in critical-thinking, effective communication, and problem-solving skills (2009, p. 141,142). Revisiting Marton et al.'s conceptions of learning, it is worth mentioning that such tendency to focus on memorization represents a learning conception which only accounts for two out of five possible conceptions towards learning cited by Marton et al. (1993, p. 285-286) as follows:

1. Learning as the increase of knowledge.
2. Learning as memorizing.
3. Learning as the acquisition of facts, procedures, etc.; which can be retained and/or utilized in practice.
4. Learning as the abstraction of meaning.
5. Learning as an interpretative process aimed at the understanding of reality.

Relating this to Sondheimer's observation, access to a wide variety of learning domains is being missed by focussing on two (i.e. Learning as increase of knowledge and Learning as memorizing) learning conceptions only. According to this model, a truly integrative and highly enriched learning experience would have to assimilate the five learning conceptions above. Beyond the sociocultural conceptions of individual perceptions of and reactions to learning, it has often been approached within a psychological context from the perspective of 'cognitive engagement'. According to Blumenfeld et al. (2006), in their discussion of 'Motivation and Cognitive Engagement in Learning Environments', the notion of cognitive engagement generally stands for:

> "…willingness to invest and exert effort in learning, while employing the necessary cognitive, metacognitive, and volitional strategies that promote understanding"
> (2006, p. 475)

The relevant implication of 'cognitive engagement' here concerns the issue of taking responsibility for one's own learning in an organizational context, where commitment and generative learning are highly appreciated or demanded. According to Kauffman and Senge, in the absence of commitment:

> "…the hard work required will never be done. People will just keep asking for "examples of learning organizations" rather than seeking what they can do to build such organizations"
> (1993, p. 5-6)

Therefore, it may be argued that people with actual/possible selves that barely show genuine "willingness to invest and exert effort in learning" are more likely to engender resistive attitudes toward learning experiences involving high levels of commitment and initiative. Moreover, learners' employment of

cognitive, metacognitive, and volitional strategies, ranges between two levels: superficial and deep. While 'superficial cognitive engagement', according to Blumenfeld et al. (2006), refers to learners' employment of mnemonic and elaboration strategies, deep cognitive engagement' involves learners' use of elaboration and organization strategies in their attempts to connect new ideas to old ones. Eraut (2000, p. 114) addresses this latter sense in his depiction of learning as a process of knowledge acquisition. Viewed as such, "existing knowledge", says Eraut "is used in a new context or in new combinations".

In addition, more advanced levels of learning are accessed when various metacognitive strategies are involved, such as "setting goals, planning, monitoring, evaluating progress, and making necessary adjustments when accomplishing a task" (Blumenfeld et al., 2006, p. 475). Blumenfeld et al. conclude with volitional strategies and these largely depend on conscious learner autonomy; that is their ability to engage in efficient self-control strategies such as attention and affective regulation and management of distractions.

In organizational settings, relevant discussions of similar metacognitive and volitional strategies have also taken place, for instance, within the context of distinguishing between single-loop and double-loop learning. Both metacognitive and volitional strategies are required either to excel in correcting learning errors and adapting to already existing learning challenges i.e. single loop learning or, on a much deeper level, to engage in critical self-reflection and change the assumptions and values impeding better learning practices i.e. double loop learning (Argyris, 1999, p. 68-69). The implication here is that learning underlies virtually all human actions and therefore must be recognized as a richer and more complex phenomenon than conventionally received. Another implication is that learning strategies and behaviours come in countless forms and reveal themselves on multiple social levels to the extent that various adjectives have been coined to capture some of them: formal or informal, implicit or explicit, simple or complex, intended or unintended, and collective

or individual. Acknowledging this latter realization, some scholars have devised their own ways of taxonomizing learning concepts and behaviours. Alexander et al. (2009), for instance, in their exploration of learning from a topographical perspective, aimed at two main targets. One, as they put it, was to "advance a framework into which theoretical perspectives and empirical investigations of learning can be positioned" (Alexander et al., 2009, p. 176) and the second was to "find commonality across varied perspectives" in the discipline of learning (Alexander et al., 2009, p. 176). In their effort to achieve these two targets, Alexander et al. suggested nine learning principles, five of which are particularly relevant to possible self theory and the learning organization:

- **Principle 1:** Learning is change.
- **Principle 2:** Learning can be resisted.
- **Principle 3:** Learning can be tacit and incidental as well as conscious and intentional.
- **Principle 4**: Learning is both a process and a product.
- **Principle 5:** Learning is different at different points in time.

2.2.2. Relating Learning in its Broadest Sense to Organizational Learning and Possible Selves

Coupled with Marton et al.'s (1993) conceptions of learning and the upcoming treatment of relevant critical themes in organizational learning, each one of the aforementioned five learning principles is of particular significance for the current study. 'Learning as change', for instance, may be employed to assess participants' current possible learning selves (e.g. do they feel that they are changing toward a desired self or not?). It may also serve as a cue for eliciting participants' attitudes towards learning. Highlighting this aspect of learning, Alexander et al. (2009, p. 178) commence their treatment of the first learning principle (i.e. Learning is change) by asserting that "a fundamental characteristic of what it means for humans to learn is that change happens" (p. 178).

Alexander et al. (2009) then emphasize three learning corollaries they believe to be associated with this concept of change in relation to learning. First, change can "range from the dramatic to the almost imperceptible". Second, it can happen over infinite scales of time (e.g. in an instant, at intervals, or over long expanses of time). Third, "change is invariably systemic"; whether dramatic or imperceptible, immediate or gradual, change will always exert "a reciprocal effect on the learner's surroundings".

The next learning principle i.e. 'learning can be resisted' suggests that there are occasions when individuals resist learning when it involves change. To link this part to previous themes in the present literature review, one may consider the resistance individuals are likely to show when learning involves change in what they would like to become (i.e. desired possible selves) or change in their cognitive-affective dispositions (i.e. attitudes) towards something they cherish. From an organizational perspective, it has been suggested that learning, change, and resistance comprise critically interrelated themes (Argyris, 1999, p. 67; Senge, 2006, p. 88, Shipton and DeFillippi, 2011, p. 67). In this view, learning and change are causally reciprocal. Learning brings about change and change opens up new learning opportunities. However, resistance (in the sense of attachment to the status quo) is generally antithetical to change. This potential relation between one's image of him/herself, attitude, and change may explain why, according to Eraut (2004, p. 261), employees tend to experience a "period of disorientation while old routines are gradually unlearned". Even in such instances, as Alexander et al. (2009) have noted, the resistance implicit in such disorientation does not necessarily always preclude learning. In fact, they argue that individuals often shift their energy from learning to change to learning to resist, and therefore learn resistance-techniques of which they may have not been aware in the past.

A relevant learning principle to organizational contexts is that of viewing 'learning as being tacit and incidental as well as conscious and intentional' (Alexander et al., 2009, p. 179). According to Alexander et al. (2009, p. 179),

individuals cannot always explain how, where, when, and why particular learning instances have occurred. "Much (perhaps most) learning", state Alexander et al. (2009, p. 179) "happens outside the realm of conscious control or intentionality...hence, much of learning is tacit and incidental". Given this well-supported observation (Ahlgren & Tett, 2010; Eraut, 2000), it is possible that individuals who conceive of learning and knowledge as always explicit may be less inclined to engage in deep 'reflective practices' (Senge, 2006, p. 176) and 'double-loop learning' (Argyris, 2010, p. 109). This is partially due to the fact that double-loop learning involves inspecting and changing the deep assumptions underlying counterproductive organizational behaviours.

Alexander et al. (2009) also accentuate the learning principle that 'learning is both a process and a product'. Upon closer examination, this feature of learning turns out to be of particular relevance to both the concept of the self as unfolding and developing towards the future (i.e. notion of 'becoming' implicit in the notion of 'process') and the concept of learning as tackled by action science theorists. Alexander et al. (2009) recapitulate this dual nature of learning by noting that where learning is seen as a process, then change is in action; as opposed to learning viewed as a product, whereupon outcomes (e.g. acquired ideas and skills, formed habits, etc.) are most likely to ensue (Alexander et al. 2009,p. 180). Learning as a process involves change over time and this is where becoming as a person thrives (Colley et al., 2003, p. 490). In a similar vein, Lave and Wenger (1991) highlight the transformative implications of learning by arguing that learning involves "becoming a different person" and further caution that "...to ignore this aspect of learning is to overlook the fact that learning involves the construction of identities" (1991, p. 53).

From a pertinent viewpoint, action science, the science of bridging the gap between theory and practice (Argyris et al., 1985), with its emphasis on change and critical reflection (Argyris et al., 1985, p. 232), practically views learning as a process (Argyris et al., 1985, p. 240, 273). Thus, for Argyris et al. (1985), the act of "learning new actions and new theories-in-use can be understood as a

process of unlearning one set of rules and learning another" (p. 268: emphasis mine). With respect to Alexander et al.'s (2009) fifth learning principle, which emphasizes that individuals' learning 'is different at different points in time', Markus & Nurius, (1986) have similarly argued for possible selves that "their link to specific plans and behavioural strategies *will, of course, vary depending on the individual's position in the life span*" (p.954, emphasis mine). This suggests that if an employee joins an organization, his early years at work will differ from much later ones in terms of self-perception and attitude toward learning. It also suggests that the change that happens to the individual along his/her life will not always lead to what he/she desires to become and that the domains of the self (i.e. actual, ideal, ought to selves) will assume new roles and traits "depending on the individual's position in the life span" (Markus & Nurius, 1986, p. 954). From a complementary perspective, the learning process can be examined diachronically and the change resulting thereof can be seen as an event that "transpires in time and over time" (Alexander et al. 2009, p. 180). Thus, individuals at different life stages are very likely to engage in different unique learning experiences and as they do so they develop more "complex understandings and more intricate relationships" with other persons, groups, and environments (Alexander et al. 2009, p. 180). This complex evolution of learning experiences 'in and over time' brings up the notion of 'histories of learning' raised by Wenger (2008). According to Wenger, practice can be seen as an unstable "shared history of learning" which "persists by being both perturbable and resilient" (Wenger, 2008, p. 93). A similar feature has been raised with respect to possible selves. Different domains of possible selves have been found to exhibit different continuity paths and change patterns over time (Frazier et al. 2000, p. 240).

From a learning perspective, the cognitive and sociocultural content of possible selves allow individuals to access learning opportunities on different levels. On a social level, for instance, possible selves may guide individuals to learn the norms and mores which make them acceptable in certain communities; thus leading individuals to not only "learn what is possible but also what is desirable

from their social contexts" (Vignoles et al. 2008, p. 1168). Moreover, perhaps more importantly in the context of the present study, individuals' possible selves might bring them to conflict or tension with managers or organizational change (e.g. LO initiatives). Hodkinson and Hodkinson (2004), for instance, recounted the case of two teachers in a school where management practices were changing. Their dispositions, divided in their formation between work and non-work experiences, gave them very different attitudes and responses towards such changes (Hodkinson and Hodkinson, 2004, p. 177).

On a personal level, possible selves have also been found to generate profound self-portraits in relation to learning and personal growth. At this juncture, it might be worthwhile to point out in what way possible self theory may inform particular themes in organizational learning. To take an example, individuals' perceptions of their possible selves may sometimes inhibit their actual selves (i.e. current/present selves) from certain learning experiences and vice versa. That is, their perceptions of who they might become may slow down their present learning or preclude it all together. One way this might happen is through what Argyris (2010) calls 'defensive reasoning', a condition wherein employees "protect and defend" themselves "against fundamental, disruptive change" (Argyris, 2010, p. 63). Thus, one may argue that when individuals' actual selves perceive a future state which, in their calculation, involves a learning experience which may bring about 'disruptive change', the chances are that they will 'protect and defend' themselves against such learning. In this context, Senge (2006) offers two examples of how one's perception of his/her self-image may backfire and thwart the new learning experience or trigger protective measures that may ultimately prove detrimental:

> "Take the person who quits smoking only to find
> himself gaining weight and suffering such a loss in
> self-image that he takes up smoking again to relieve
> the stress. Or the protective mother who wants so
> much for her young son to get along with his
> schoolmates that she repeatedly steps in to resolve

problems and ends up with a child who never learns

to settle differences by himself" (Senge, 2006, p. 59)

2.3. Conclusion

To properly situate organizational learning and appreciate the varieties of individual learning experiences/ behaviours, it is important that researchers approach learning in its broadest sense. The traditional conception of learning as a conscious, simple, and organized activity undertaken by individuals for the purpose of knowledge accumulation is a very limited one. Even the less traditional view that individuals subconsciously learn from their social environments knowledge/behaviours they would not have learned otherwise is also limited in scope and depth. As discussed in this chapter, research in the last two decades has shown that multiple factors have come into play, factors which have not only shed light on the varieties of learning per se but have also revealed important themes about the nature of learning self. Two relevant themes for exploration can be singled out from the previous discussion. The first is the role which possible selves are likely to play in shaping individuals' 'external horizons' of learning. The other theme relates to capitalizing on the biographical aspect of possible selves in order to understand why certain formal learning behaviours are resisted and others espoused in organizational contexts.

Chapter Three

Attitude

3.1. Introduction

The main aim of this chapter is to briefly address the meaning of attitude and emphasize its possible role as a cognitive and affective mediator between individuals' experiences of actual/possible selves in relation to the learning experiences associated with the LO. Although the term 'mediator' has a quantitative tenor to it, it is meant to explore and qualify, rather than measure and quantify, the role of attitude in the aforementioned relation. It is possible to conceive of a non-positivistic dimension to attitude that can be explored and understood qualitatively. Without invoking the role of attitude, as will be discussed shortly, it would be difficult to understand the mechanism by which self-representations come to impact individuals' behaviours towards different learning experiences. In addition to the impact of identity formation (discussed earlier) in the process of developing a possible self, it would also be useful to explore the more transient and temporal nature of individuals' impressions towards themselves and their learning experiences. Certain perceptions about the self and learning are too chronic and durable to be associated with attitude. They would be better understood in relation to identity formation. On the other hand, there are perceptions that do not last long and are more like temporary impressions. The latter may be better explained in terms of attitudes. This is where incorporating the notion of attitude seems to be particularly relevant in this study.

3.2. Review

3.2.1 Defining and Situating the Concept

Any investigation of the cognitive relation between possible selves and learning should also take into account the (potentially) mediating role of attitude. Since possible selves are primarily represented as self-portraits or self-schemas (Cross and Markus, 1994; Vignoles et al., 2008), it may be argued that possible selves do not, by and in themselves, instantaneously influence behaviour but rather do so after having been transformed into a cognitive state that one may call 'attitude'. To begin with, there is no unanimous voice as to what 'attitude' accurately stands for. However, based on Bohner and Dickel's (2011) review of the literature published between 2005 and 2009, most researchers are agreed that attitude stands for something close to "an evaluation of an object of thought" and that such an object may:

> "…comprise anything a person may hold in mind, ranging from the mundane to the abstract, including things, people, groups, and ideas" (Bohner and Dickels, 2011, p. 392)

The authors' review has also indicated that there is no single conceptualization of attitudes. Instead, the plethora of evidence shows that researchers' conceptualizations occupy a continuum ranging from attitudes viewed as stable entities on the one extreme to attitudes seen as constructed evaluations on the other, or ranging in terms of value judgments from positive to negative (Bohner and Dickels, 2011, p. 392; Petty et al., 1997, p. 611).

In their primer on organizational behaviour, Bowditch (2008) and his colleagues point out four attitude characteristics: Direction, Intensity, Salience, and Differentiation. Respectively, an attitude's *direction* signifies whether it is favourable, unfavourable or neutral concerning a certain object of thought,

while *intensity* "refers to the strength of the affective component" (Bowditch et al., 2008, p. 57) meaning that our likes and dislikes range on a scale of intensity from weak to strong; yet *salience* refers to the perceived importance of an attitude. For example, an IT specialist's attitude toward a piece of software would be more significant, in terms of relevance, than that of, say, an amateur stamp collector. Finally, when attitudes are supported by a wide variety of beliefs and values, they are said to be *high in differentiation*, while those that are sustained by fewer beliefs and values are considered *low in differentiation* (Bowditch et al., 2008, p. 57-58).

3.2.2 Attitude, Possible Selves, and Organizational Learning

Although attitude has received some attention from prominent possible self researchers, such as Hazel Markus, Shinobu Kitayama, and others (e.g. Markus and Kitayama, 1991; Ouellette et al., 2005), little has been dedicated to addressing its (possible) mediating role between possible self content and individual behaviour. Content chiefly refers to the goals, wishes, desirable/undesirable traits, or for that matter, the range of experiences envisioned as being associated with one's future self. Markus and Kitayama (1991, p. 240), for example, only faintly discuss how private self-defining attitudes (genuine attitudes about one's self) may contribute to aggravating individuals' feeling of dissonance. In discussing the relation between images, exercise behaviour, and possible selves, Ouellette et al. (2005) include attitude as a peripheral measurement variable, thus presupposing its more or less tolerable effect on the overall results.

The present study seeks to explore the possibility of attitude as an intermediary determiner between possible self content and individuals' learning ideals/ behaviours. It might be worth noting that Markus and Kitayama's reference to 'self-defining attitudes', in the sense defined above, can be explained in terms of Bowditch et al.'s (2008, p. 57) characteristics. One may argue for instance

that for an attitude to be 'self-defining' (i.e. genuine and influential) it must be high on the scale of salience, intensity, and/or differentiation.

However, the role of attitude appears to have received more emphasis in organizational/workplace learning than in the literature on possible self theory. Hodkinson et al. (2004, p. 14), for example, unequivocally stress how different dispositions may affect individuals' attitudes towards learning, how one's awareness of her/his own learning is reflected in her/his attitude (p. 15), and how certain experiences of workplace environments may reflect prevalent attitudes among employees (p. 18). Clifford and Thorpe (2007, p. 19) have also pointed out the reciprocal impact between attitude formation and individual learning experiences. Since changing an organization's culture involves certain modes of learning, such as single/double-loop learning (Argyris, 1999, p. 127-128), attitudes and organizational change were found strongly associated (Abdul Rashid et al., 2004, p. 175). From a broader perspective, the impact which culture exercises on attitudes toward learning has been reported to vary from one society to another. "We can see", relates Peter Jarvis "that different countries' cultures and histories will act upon their (societies') attitudes to learning in different ways" (2008, p. 55).

3.3. Conclusion

In conclusion, the remarks above collectively assign a central role to attitude in determining individuals' behaviours towards organizational and individual learning. Yet, while the term 'attitude' has often been extensively employed in studies of learning behaviour, closer examination of the concept has often been neglected. The present study assumes that attitudes lie between individuals' possible selves and the learning behaviours they provoke. More precisely, attitudes can be seen as continually informed by the larger and richer repertoire of experiences derived from the self, whether actual or possible. This distinction between possible selves and attitudes allows one to avoid mistaking attitudes

for possible selves or reducing the latter to the former, for there are situations where individuals' reactions to certain learning experiences may not be better explained in terms of full-blown possible selves but in terms of temporary, yet fairly well-formed, attitudes instead. In a sense, this is consistent with a similar point raised by Molina et al. (2017) in their study on possible selves in adolescence, stating therein that "not every goal or aspiration provides an individual with a possible self" (p. 646). In this light, behaviours should not be seen as immediate unmediated reactions to possible selves, but rather as reactions to experiences (e.g. organizational change) ultimately guided by individuals' actual/possible selves and occasionally by attitudes.

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Chapter Four

The Learning Organization

</div>

4.1. Introduction

The main aim of this chapter is threefold. First, to provide an overview and critique of the concept of the learning organization (Senge, 2006; Marsick and Watkins, 2003). Second, to compare and assess some of the main features attached to 'learning' as conceived by Senge (Senge, 2006) and Marsick and Watkins (Marsick and Watkins, 2003). Among other things, the critique above will show some of the shortcomings following from the more or less idealistic nature of the LO. Finally, to show the possible ways in which possible self theory may inform our understanding of the nature of challenges facing the enterprise of adopting and implementing the LO.

4.2. Review

4.2.1 The LO: Grappling with the Definition and Problematizing its Viability

Peter Senge has been very influential in lifting the concept of the learning organization (LO) to unprecedented heights. His *The Fifth Discipline* (2006) can be seen as a turning point in (a) popularizing the concept in question and (b) associating a remarkable sense of optimism with its application (Garavan, 1997, p. 24). According to Easterby-Smith and Lyles (2011, p. 19), Senge's book was both a foundational work and a major popularizer. Nonetheless, Senge's own optimism, as one may infer from the forthcoming quote, was seasoned with doubt. Senge admitted that when he and his colleagues decided to adopt the term 'Learning Organization', they "did it with some trepidation" (2006, p. 316). It was feared that it would be received as another fad in what they described as an already 'fad-laden' business market (2006, p. 316) and it seems that this has

been the case. This is quite evident from assessing the workability of Senge's conceptualization of the LO in relation to what extent it can be handled without much confusion. The first source of confusion is the question of definition. Like many concepts in human sciences, the LO concept lacks a clear and universal definition. As noted by Grieves (2008) regarding the task of defining LOs, the lack of a clear, unambiguous definition which academics "can test, probe and contest" is one unmistakable flaw. "When this does not happen", remarks Grieves "we end up with a barren discourse because it does not possess a shared language"(2008, p. 456). Almost all definitions of the LO have sustained critique in one way or another, including Peter Senge's (2006, p. 3) widely received definition that learning organizations are "organizations where people continually expand their capacity to create the results they truly desire". Senge's view has been criticized for being overly optimistic, and therefore tends to neglect the subtle contradictions and reality-bound problems arising from the complexity of sociocultural settings across organizations worldwide (Garavan, 1997, p. 24-25). Friedman et al. (2005) have further argued that it is far from self-evident that organizations are capable of learning. Their contention is that "attributing to organizations a capacity to learn runs the risk of anthropomorphism" (Friedman et al., 2005, p. 22), hence adding further mystification to the LO concept. In fact, it has been suggested that one major reason behind the wide appeal of LO is, ironically, the very mystification of the term which tends to amplify the "concept's allure" over the years (Friedman et al., 2005, p. 27). Broadly speaking, one may argue that it is due to such confusion and mystification that we now have a conception of LO which is hard to capture in definite terms. Other factors appear to sustain the indefinite nature of LO. One of these, to reiterate an earlier point, is the utopian (Marsick & Watkins, 1999, p. 207) and seemingly overoptimistic view of LOs as a positive ideal (Driver, 2002, p. 33). In part, such over-optimism is more likely to have an anesthetic effect on organization members as it desensitizes their awareness of the acute sociocultural forces that surround them. On the surface, it would seem as a workplace in which everyone is innocently enthusiastic, proactive, and willing to learn, when in fact, due to the numbing effect of such optimism,

they are hardly in a position to grasp the direction of their learning (Easterby-Smith, 1997, p. 1095), the interests such learning really serves, and are almost completely oblivious to exploitative power and control strategies operating in the background.

Furthermore, the optimistic energy with which the LO concept perpetuates itself is never left to fade and is continuously revived by experts in the field even when results turn out to be less than hoped for (Marsick & Watkins, 1999, p. 210). A final clarification needs to be made concerning an earlier point on the vagueness of the LO concept: that it is hard to capture does not mean that there are not LO models that are more manageable and easy to grasp than others. It only means that it is almost impossible to reach a unified and universal conception of what an LO is and what it ought to achieve. For instance, as will be pointed out in this chapter, Senge's model is far less practical and manageable compared to Marsick and Watkins' model. The latter is easier to grasp and implement than the former. This is mainly because Marsick and Watkins' model is based on widely known and well established theories of learning and knowledge. These include the work of Michael Polanyi, John Dewey, Chris Argyris, and Donald Schön (Watkins & O'Neil, 2013).

To recapitulate some of the limitations characterizing mainstream LO models, such as Senge's *Fifth Discipline* and Marsick & Watkins' *Dimensions of the Learning Organization*, there is too much emphasis on issues of structure (i.e. the organization and systems) but little emphasis on the role of subjectivity and the self. As a result, the role of identities, personal learning experiences, and individual attitudes, were poorly addressed. Calhoun et al. (2011), in their evaluation of *The Fifth Discipline* (2006), have realized that Senge departs in his work from the foundation that "individuals and firms operate within systems and structures that influence behaviour" (p. 233).

The fact that the LO concept is not without its shortcomings does not mean doing away with it altogether. Despite the apparent confusion surrounding LO

literature, Garavan (1997, p. 18) manages to distil two broad conceptualizations. One views the LO as a construct that can be designed, overseen, managed, and measured; while the other speaks of LOs as some kind of (enabling) cultures or, as Garavan (1997) relates on behalf of Mabey and Salaman, as

> "…a piece of shorthand to refer to organizations which try to make a working reality of such desirable attributes as flexibility, teamwork, continuous learning and employee participation and development" (p. 18)

Some scholars (Örtenblad, 2002) suggest alternative ways of appreciating the value of LOs. They caution, for instance, that the term 'learning organization' should not be regarded as "unduly confusing to the practitioners" since "different versions of the idea in the literature seem to give companies the opportunity to choose a version suitable for their specific situation" (Örtenblad, 2002). This remark appears to be in line with the realization that organizations are highly complex and dynamic structures; not only because of the variety of activities and processes underlying their structures but also because of the rich variety of personalities, identities, individualities, and social histories they happen to accommodate. Both the realization above as well as the centrality of human agency are commensurate with the tenets of an underlying theme in mainstream 'organizational learning' definitions, the theme that "learning is the process of change in individual and shared thought and action" affecting as well as affected by the institutions of the organization (Vera et al. 2011, p. 154).

4.2.2 Understanding the LO from a Wider Perspective

A generally accepted truism about human beings is that they are born with "a predisposition towards sociality" (Ibn Khaldun, 2005, p. 45; Berger & Luckmann, 1991, p. 149). From another, yet complementary, perspective learning is in many respects a social activity. As pointed out by Vygotsky (1999, p. 8,), learning in social contexts can substantially shape the structure of an individual's experience from an early age. The bottom-line here is that learning in relation to LO should not be divorced from the broader concept of learning perceived as a social activity, and therefore meaning that the tensions and contradictions arising from employees' differentiated personhoods should always be acknowledged. This view, sometimes known as constructionism (which is different from constructivism), is deeply rooted in the modern learning sciences. According to Kafai, the "combination of individual and social aspects in learning is at the heart of many discussions in the learning sciences" (p. 36)

Like Senge, Marsick and Watkins (2003) are aware of the social nature of learning. They remark that "much valuable learning happens informally on the job, in groups, or through conversations" (p. 134). Compared to Senge, the latter authors seem more realistic in their expectations about individuals' learning in real LO contexts. For instance, they maintain that learning "takes place when disjunctures, discrepancies, surprises, or challenges act as triggers that stimulate a response" (p. 134). Hence, learning happens in a context very different from the one suggested by Senge's conception of learning. The context in which true learning happens is not as smooth and pleasant as Senge might have imagined. The norm is not that people are supposed to find themselves 'continually learning how to learn together', as Senge had thought. Rather, the norm is that individuals are in the process of handling problems, contradictions, and complexities that challenge their own personal learning. "Environmental jolts or surprises such as a new regulation…customer dissatisfaction…a new vision, or some other change in the status quo", argue Marsick and Watkins, "trigger learning" (p. 135). The authors further contend that alignment of vision

and shared meaning about intentions (i.e. Senge's 'shared vision') as well as the "capacity to work together across many different kinds of boundaries" (i.e. Senge's 'team learning') are requirements for the cohesiveness necessary for the strategy's success.

As social beings, different members in the organization bring to the workplace a multitude of identities from all walks of life; thus constituting a complex network of diverse and sometimes incompatible needs, likes, and dislikes. This is the existential level which better reflects the actual side of human nature in organizational settings, therefore offering observational access to contexts where power and control dynamics happen to thrive unstoppably. The somewhat romantic portrayal of the learning organization as a positive ideal starkly overlooks the day-to-day social workings prevalent in all organizations without exception. This has important implications for the present discussion and some examples may serve to clarify. For instance, it has been contended that some organizations, cognizant of the criticality of the social dimension addressed above, may take preemptive measures whose main attempt is to exercise certain forms of employee control.

Such attempts, relates Akella (2008, p. 224), may involve devising methods for "socializing new arrivals into perfect clones of an ideal and imagined employee" and, at the same time, invent strategies by which all means of employee resistance can be removed in order to guarantee that the socializing process achieves its exploitative goals. Indeed, learning in organizational contexts can easily become a double-edged sword and a vehicle for exercising covert forms of oppression. According to Driver (2002):

> "Paradoxically, the idea that the learning organization is a place in which employees fulfill their own developmental needs and cooperate for a common purpose, seemingly for their own good, may itself be the most powerful control

mechanism and potential threat for workers exploitation" (p. 39)

4.2.3 Relating Possible Selves to Organizational Contexts

Recent work in literature has also tackled possible selves in organizational and workplace contexts. Of particular relevance are the studies of Stam, et al. (2014), Reegård (2016), Reid (2015), Hatmaker (2015), Taber & Blankemeyer (2015), Hardgrove, et al. (2015), Strauss, et al. (2011), and Nazar, et al. (2013).

Stam (2014) and his colleagues maintained that possible selves can exist collectively and argued that creating 'collective possible selves' can enhance vision communication across the organization. They also observed a mutual effect in the sense that certain aspects of vision communication can facilitate the processes by which visions become embedded in possible selves. These remarks are particularly relevant to the disciplines 'team learning' (i.e. collective aspect) and shared vision (i.e. vision communication) in Senge's LO model. For instance, one may generally argue that team members can visualize their learning as a future event that is likely to enhance vision sharing as a result. This is consistent with Senge's view of 'teams', not individuals, as the fundamental units in any LO. However, one major challenge to the viability of 'collective possible selves' is that of differentiation and variation in subjectivities and identities among different individuals in a given community, be it organizational or non-organizational. Hatmaker (2015), in drawing attention to the changing nature of possible selves in organizational settings, pointed out that as newcomers adapt to new roles, "they may try out different provisional identities, or 'possible selves' that are shaped by role models in their networks" (p. 1157). Hatmaker called this process 'identity trials' and noted that they may establish or break network ties between employees across the organization (p. 1157). This implies that organizational contexts may disrupt individuals' possible

selves depending on the nature and intensity of the assumed role models. It also implies that conflict may arise on certain levels between employees and the formal organizational networks they join. For instance, in his analysis of occupational orientations, Reegård (2016) suggested that conflict between goals may be partially attributed to goals being "guided by imagined future possibilities" (p. 701). This latter point may serve as a stepping-stone to Reid's (2015) research. In discussing the 'ideal worker image', Reid maintained that people's differing statements about themselves largely come in response to identities they have formed in relation "to past, future, alternative, and possible selves". In his view, the challenge arises when:

> "...organizations expect professionals to assume an identity that centers on the ideal worker image, such that they are fully committed to and totally available for their work, with no external commitments that limit this devotion" (Reid, 2015, p. 998).

Again, this reinforces an earlier point on the pitfall of treating certain management and business models as 'one-size-fits-all' solutions to local organizational problems. To reiterate the argument, employees bring to work a wide range of subjectivities that defy unconditional commitment to formal organizational mores and behaviours. Following Reid's remark, the lag between multitudinous subjectivities and formal organizational demands can be understood by looking at how employees' identities are formed in relation to possible selves. Since possible selves develop along different trajectories from one person to another, identities will never remain the same throughout a person's life nor remain so among persons coming from different sociocultural backgrounds.

From a pertinent perspective, Ramarajan and Ried (2013) have acknowledged the proposed interaction between employees' actual/possible selves and their workplaces in their answer to the question: "How much of our self is defined by our work?"- suggesting that work and identity are two separate worlds. The authors have argued that rising job instability and workforce diversity as well as the spread of communication technologies are continually blurring, more than any time before, "the distinctions between work and non-work life domains such that", the authors have observed, "many workers, their organizations, and their occupations must now renegotiate the relationship between work and non-work identities" (2013, p. 621). Thus, one aim of the present study is to explore how possible selves may influence employees' attitudes toward learning behaviours typically promoted by the two LOs mentioned earlier. To reiterate a previous idea, studying possible selves cannot be divorced from addressing the larger context of culture, identity, education, and learning at large. This is a realization which, to quote Child and Rodrigues (2011), follows from the premise that:

"…various types of sources can inform the self:
the activities individuals develop, the role they
perform in different contexts, and the groups
they interact with" (p. 307)

In their study of a group of youths and their imagined futures, Handgrove (2015) and her colleagues found that youths with far less defined possible selves were less likely to "articulate specific occupations or fields in which they could see themselves working" (p. 168). The alternative image was a very broad one. They just "wanted to improve their lifestyle and socio-economic stability" and were willing to try as many forms of work as they could to achieve that objective (p. 168). Moreover, the researchers found that the life experiences of the youth belonging to this group were markedly instable, and reported their recollection of "churning through various work opportunities that prevented consistent

experience in anything" (p. 168). In broad terms, these findings are consistent with the idea that individuals' work and nonwork lives are inextricably enmeshed (Ramarajan and Ried, 2013). From a perspective more relevant to the present study, they may help explain why certain workers are far less committed and loyal to their organization than the rest of their colleagues. The "pervasive presence of instability" (Handgrove et al., 2015, p. 168) in their nonwork lives will not, to say the least, leave their work lives undisturbed.

The fact that various types of sources inform the self, and that formal learning contexts are but one source, necessitates focus on the role of informal learning in organizational contexts. Both types of learning, formal and informal, will be explored in relation to individuals' attitudes towards LO concepts and behaviours. More precisely, and as mentioned earlier, formal learning behaviours in this study are those enunciated by Senge's and Marsick and Watkins' models. It is assumed that employees are expected to adopt them in order to realize the respective LO concepts. On the other hand, informal learning behaviours are those that are more associated with employees' personal histories and evolving selves. Among other things, the research question proposes to explore whether tension, discrepancy, and perhaps conflict are likely to occur between informal and formal learning behaviours/expectations as a result of holding different actual/possible selves.

Research on possible selves in organizational contexts has also explored the impact of possible self vividness on individuals' behaviours. Two studies (Strauss, K. et al. 2011; Taber & Blankemeyer, 2015) are of particular importance in this connection. Strauss et al. (2011) provided evidence for the proposition that individuals with clearer and more accessible future selves at work are more likely to create discrepancies that motivate proactive behaviours. Similarly, Taber & Blankemeyer's study (2015) indicated that employees' future work selves predicted three organizational behaviours, namely proactive career planning, proactive skill development, and proactive

career networking. These findings corroborate an earlier argument that persons holding more vivid images of their future selves are more likely to be motivated.

In an in-depth study by Nazar et al. (2013) an influential relationship was identified between individuals' possible selves and current identities in career development. The researchers reported that employees who assumed multiple roles or those who developed a complex identity "appeared to translate that complexity in the selves that were imagined for the future" and "direct their behaviours towards or away from the expected or feared end stated" (2014, p. 74). These findings point to the powerful impact actual (present) selves can have on possible ones, especially when the identities associated with individuals' actual selves are more elaborate or highly developed in complexity. This means that possible selves not only orient peoples' actual selves towards the future but are also shaped by their present identities, indicating dynamic interaction between individuals' present and future lives. Two important implications for learning in organizational contexts can be derived from this conclusion. First, it is very likely that employees' formal learning needs will not remain stable for long periods during their careers. If this is the case for formal learning needs which are, by definition, more explicit and detectable compared to informal learning ones, then individuals' informal learning needs would be less obvious and more susceptible to change and revision. The second implication pertains to organizations'' adoption of foreign management/business models. When organizations experience failure to implement a newly imported management/business model they must not always blame it on employees' personalities. In the light of what has been discussed so far, it would be both despotic and harmful to force people into ways of learning, feeling, and thinking that directly oppose their actual/possible selves. This is conceivable when, for instance, a learning organization model is introduced into an organization and employees are asked to ignore their personal learning preferences/inclinations and fully subscribe to the model. In a situation like this, many employees will feel that their possible selves, their sense of what they would like to become, are being constantly threatened.

4.2.4 Expounding on the Two LO Models and their Relevance

With respect to the LO model that will be the target of this study, two LO aspects have been taken into account. The first concerns the LO as chiefly involving a set of 'ideals', while the other concerns the LO as mainly involving 'culture' and a set of 'practices'. The LO as an 'ideal' is informed by four learning disciplines in Senge's model, namely:

1- **Seeking personal mastery**: the discipline of "continually clarifying and deepening" personal visions, of "focusing our energies, of developing patience, and of seeing reality objectively...approaching one's life as a creative work, living from a creative as opposed to reactive viewpoint" (Senge 2006, p. 7, p. 131).

2- **Constructing the right mental models**: the deep assumptions, generalizations, and images that "influence how we understand the world and how we take action" (p. 8)

3- **Building a shared vision**: the "practice of unearthing shared pictures of the future that foster genuine commitment and enrollment rather than compliance" (p. 9). Senge believes that "without a genuine sense of common vision and values there is nothing to motivate people beyond self-interest", and he fully agrees with O'Brien's self-reported statement that "My vision is not what's important to you. The only vision that motivates you is your vision" (Senge, 2006, p. 197). In a sense, this sounds odd because endorsing O'Brien's statement hardly reflects concern for the primacy of "a genuine sense of common vision".

4- **Encouraging team learning**, which ultimately "starts with dialogue, the capacity of members of a team to suspend assumptions" and engage in "genuine thinking together"... (and) learning how to identify "patterns of interaction in teams that undermine learning" (p. 10). Because dialogues among employees tend to bring certain differences in opinion, Senge emphasizes the need to develop as sense of 'colleagueship'. That is developing a feeling of friendship towards others with whom one does not have much in common.

Senge's LO model will provide the framework for exploring participants' attitudes towards learning ideals against possible self theory, while exploration

of subjects' attitudes against organizational learning behaviours associated with the LO will mainly draw on Marsick and Watkins' (2003) learning dimensions. The reason behind incorporating a model that involves a combination of ideals (i.e. Senge) and practices (i.e. Marsick and Watkins) is that both possible selves and learning project themselves on two relevant levels: the level of beliefs, principles, and values (i.e. ideals) and the level of initiatives, actions, and behaviours (practices). According to Bishop et al. (2006, p. 23) learning features in learning-supportive cultures are subsumed under the tacit level of assumptions/values, the explicit level of beliefs/norms, and the more overtly explicit level of practices/artefacts.

In this regard, Marsick and Watkins (2003) articulate six LO practices: (1) Creating continuous learning opportunities, (2) Promoting enquiry and dialogue, (3) Encouraging collaboration and team learning, (4) Empowering people toward collective vision, (5) Connecting the organization to its environment, and (6) Providing strategic leadership for learning. Three of them were explored in the present study; namely: creating continuous learning opportunities, promoting enquiry and dialogue, and providing strategic leadership for learning. One reason for selecting them is that they represent areas which Senge's model does not seem to adequately cover. Thus, it is hoped that drawing on Senge's ideals and Marsick & Watkins' practices will offer an opportunity to understand possible selves in relation to the learning features across three levels of learning mentioned above.

Ultimately, the present study takes as its backdrop an LO model that combines features in Marsick and Watkins' (2003) and Senge's (2006) models. When needed, the study will also draw on notions of 'defensive routines' and 'single' versus 'double' loop learning; ideas which may occasionally inform further analysis of particular learning problems. Such problems, to name a few, include refusal of particular individuals to give up certain 'informal learning' practices (Eraut, 2004), or their failure to realize or overcome barriers to 'expansive learning' opportunities (Engeström, 2001), or their hostility toward 'personal

mastery', 'team work', and unwillingness to subscribe to the organization's 'collective vision' (Senge, 2006; Marsick and Watkins, 2003).

As far as learning in learning organizations is concerned, it is part of the current review to discuss a form of learning which has been deferred to this chapter. Learning in this sense addresses the practices and assumptions articulated/implied by Senge's LO disciplines and Marsick and Watkins' dimensions.

Starting with the former, Senge (2006, p. 4) expects people in a learning organization to "continually learn how to learn together". He assumes that learning organizations are viable because "deep down we are all learners". In fact, Senge is certain that they are viable because "not only is it our nature to learn but we love to learn". Another learning assumption articulated by Senge is that 'personal learning' and 'organizational learning' are connected and that there are 'reciprocal commitments' between the two. When it comes to mental models, he (Senge, 2006, p. 8-9) comes up with the notion of 'learningful conversations', which stands for people's ability to "expose their own thinking effectively and make that thinking open to the influence of others". Relatedly, Senge (2006, p. 94-95) warns against the danger of 'limits to growth', an unhealthy state of affairs which sometimes results from a culture of criticism prevention. Here, people learn to criticize less and the new situation continually reinforces the tendency to abstain from criticism until everyone is relaxed and happy with the status quo.

Senge is a firm believer that "people excel and learn, not because they are told to, but because they want to", and when he discusses 'team learning', he introduces the discipline of dialogue which involves "learning how to recognize the patterns of interaction in teams that undermine learning". Most importantly, Senge draws attention to a fact about the nature of learning which is sometimes ignored and that is its broad character. In emphasizing this point, Senge invites us to appreciate the meaning of the Greek word 'metanoia', which

denotes a 'shift of mind'. In this sense, true learning, argues Senge, should not merely involve 'taking in information' or spending time in courses and classes but should involve "a fundamental shift or movement of mind". In summing up his conception of what it means to engage in genuine learning, Senge contends that:

> "Real learning gets to the heart of what it means to be human. Through learning we re-create ourselves. Through learning we become able to do something we never were able to do. Through learning we perceive the world and our relationship to it. Through learning we extend our capacity to create, to be part of the generative process of life. There is within each of us a deep hunger for this type of learning" (2006, p. 13).

For Senge, learning conceived in this sense moves from 'survival' or 'adaptive' learning to 'generative' learning. An organization whose learning is chiefly adaptive only learns to cope with the status quo and resist threats or collapse. On the other hand, an organization where generative learning is said to thrive is one wherein people's capacities to create and transform are enhanced.

Despite the inspirational bent of Senge's model, his conception of learning can be shown to be partially unrealistic. Although Senge is assertive that people "love to learn", he leaves the verbs 'love' and 'learn' open which makes them sound inclusive. In other words, it is true that people are widely known to love learning, but when it comes to real and particular settings, people tend to be selective in what they love to learn and, in some cases, they may vehemently refuse to learn certain things (e.g. asking an employee to learn about the organization's strategy while his personal learning goals are being denied by the leadership). Revisiting the conception of 'learning as change' (Alexander et al., 2009, p. 176) addressed in the literature review on learning may help explain

this point. For instance, people may resist or avoid certain learning experiences even when they know that they are useful for them on the collective level. Organizational learning scholars have noticed this behaviour and differentiated between two related notions: espoused theory and theory-in-use (Argyris, 2010, p. 62-64; Senge, 2006, p. 178).

People may profess that they love learning a certain skill or performing a certain task (espoused theory) but when it comes to reality they behave to the contrary. Another example why Senge's conception of learning is partially unrealistic is his assumption that people in a learning organization will "continually learn how to learn together". Two challenges face this unrestricted assumption. The first is his expectation that everyone in the organization will participate in such learning and the second is his assumption that such learning will always happen in teams (i.e. learn together). Again, particular learning contexts show that not all people engage in such learning and that some of them may in fact dislike learning together. Drawing on Billett's (2010) four selves may help illuminate this point. For example, people with autonomous selves, given their tendency to seek independence and separation from social structures, are less likely to engage in team/collective/collaborative learning than people with subjugated selves. Furthermore, the theory of possible selves may also inform our understanding of the challenge in question. For instance, Senge assumes that such learning will happen 'continually' for every individual, but possible self theory suggests that individuals' possible selves and their link to specific plans and behavioral strategies vary depending on individuals' positions in their life spans (Markus & Nurius, 1986, p. 954).

However, Senge was both realistic and wise in drawing attention to the fact that learning is a much broader concept than usually thought. In doing so, he brings to light the importance of 'informal learning' and makes more room for the role of individual human experiences. In addition to 'formal learning' (e.g. "taking in information", according to Senge), 'informal learning' is just as important in shaping organizational as well as individual learning.

Since Marsick and Watkins' LO dimensions are part of the model under investigation, their conception of learning will also be addressed and analysed. First of all, Marsick and Watkins (2003, p. 132) are aware from the beginning that the implementation of the learning organization is "elusive and not often based on research about what constitutes a learning culture". They markedly differ from Senge in acknowledging the fact that the realization of learning organizations should be based on and informed by research. This discourse is more likely to avoid the overoptimistic tone in Senge's approach toward learning and account for the contradictions and discrepancies characterizing LO initiatives in real life situations. However, paying extra attention to the 'learning culture' is rather reductionistic. It tends to run into the same pitfall encountered in Senge's model, which boils down to underestimating the powerful impact of individuals as learning agents with unique possible selves and potentials. This may partly explain why "so many learning organization experiments sponsored by human resource departments", the authors have observed, end up with "more frustration than real organizational change".

4.2.5 Reconsidering Hofstede's Notion of Culture

As pointed out earlier, the DLO model stresses the importance of propagating a learning culture by organizational leaders. However, in the process of doing so leaders run the risk of marginalizing the role of individuals and their learning. As far as organizational culture is concerned, Hofstede's conceptualization of the concept needs to be reconsidered in the light of research on subjectivity and individual learning.

The role of subjectivities and possible selves in generating qualitative learning differences among individuals raises an underlying problem with Hofstede's conception of an organizational culture. According to Hofstede et al. (2010), an organizational culture is the "collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one organization from another". There are three problematic assumptions in this definition. The first assumes that there is a homogenous collective mind equally shared among members of a given

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organization. The second problematic assumption rests on a misleading metaphor (i.e. programming) which suggests that individuals' perceptions can be made to look identical and function in one particular manner. The third, which follows from the latter two combined, assumes that organizational groups develop cultures that rigidly and conspicuously separate them from other ones. In a much earlier study, Hofstede et al. (1993) point out an assumption which is consistent with this view of organizational culture. They posit that with an organizational culture conceived as such, "individuals can be replaced over time but the culture still remains". The assumption that cultures can remain intact even if individuals are continually replaced suggests that cultures are almost entirely independent from individuals. If this interpretation is correct, organizational culture will no longer be contingent on the so-called 'collective programming' of minds. This conclusion is inevitable from a logical standpoint. From an empirical standpoint, the problematic assumptions above are too bold and conclusive to survive critique from developing research on organizational learning and organizational culture. Studies in these areas "challenge the notion of a universal or homogeneous learning culture" (Stothard et al., 2013, p. 202) and, as early as the nineties, have shown that organizations ultimately depend for their learning on individuals (Kim, 1993), and that organizations' learning cultures are contingent upon the different "attitudes, expectations, values, and practices" (Stothard et al., 2013, p. 195; Watkins and O'Neil , 2013, p. 142) shared among their members. In reality, it is hard to defend the view of a single organizational culture that is uniformly distributed and evenly shared among all individuals in a given organization. This does not mean that organizational cultures are impossible or non-existent. It only means that their existence in relation to individuals is not as neat, perfect, and complete as one may assume.

4.3. Conclusion

Since possible selves are thought to act as future guides for individuals' present states, it may be assumed that attitudes toward particular learning ideals and behaviours will be formed accordingly. The basic assumption underlying the

forthcoming research questions is, to cite Billett (2010, p.1), "the view that the self arises through social experience and stands as the personal basis that mediates relations about work and learning throughout working life". A chief aim of the present study is to draw on possible selves in order to explore the nature of the challenge individual attitudes are likely to pose to learning experiences conventionally associated with the two popular LO models. To take 'personal mastery' as an example, a possible enquiry is whether targeted participants possess possible selves that allow them to approach their lives as 'creative work' (Senge, 2006, p. 7, p. 131).

In addition, the notion of attitudes cannot be divorced from the role of mental models. If mental models are "deeply ingrained assumptions…that influence how we understand the world and how we take action" (Senge 2006, p.8), then attitudes toward the self and learning will be influenced accordingly. Furthermore, it is very likely that participants' willingness to make the transition from 'compliance' to 'commitment' (Senge, 2006, p. 9) as well as their readiness to engage in 'team work' (Senge, 2006, p. 9) will at least be partly determined by the kind of possible selves they entertain. To clarify how this is possible, one may imagine an employee who is more at home envisioning him/herself as an independent worker, preferring to learn individually on his/her own terms, than envisioning him/herself as a member of an organizational family, where team work and commitment to a shared vision are highly received. More specifically, it is conceivable that subjects' formal and informal past learning histories, their upbringing, and social identities, play a fundamental role in generating possible selves of particular hostility toward certain learning ideals (e.g. competitiveness, flexibility, mastery, transparency) and behaviours (e.g. working as a team, double-loop learning, reflection on action, sharing knowledge).

A Recapitulation and Articulation of the Main Research Questions

Looking back on the literature review, two major tasks can be distilled for the aim of present study. The first pertains to the nature of the subject and the other to the appropriate methodology. By drawing on possible self theory, the study seeks to explore and understand how different subjectivities are likely to influence individuals' attitudes toward learning ideals and behaviours associated with the two LO models discussed in the literature review.

As will be addressed in the methodology section, only by approaching the subject in question qualitatively can issues of subjectivity, meaning, and interpretation optimally lend themselves to understanding. Within this framework of enquiry , and drawing on possible self theory, three major research questions may thus be formulated as follows:

- To what extent do individuals' perceptions of their actual/possible selves generate attitudes that facilitate or impede adoption of LO learning behaviours?

- In what way can individuals' personal learning experiences pose a challenge to organization leaders in their efforts to realize the LO learning behaviours?

- How would possible self theory inform our understanding of subjectivity and its role in accounting for perceived discrepancies between the formal LO expectations and individuals' informal learning choices?

Methodology

Chapter Five

5.1. Designating the Method and its Technique

Methodologically, the aim of the present study is not to detect the distribution of durable causal patterns of particular attributes among a large population of participants. This is an aim that would best be achieved by quantitative research techniques. In relation to the three main research questions enunciated earlier, the method will involve an exploration of participants' subjectivities in relation to certain learning experiences and what they might mean for them. Thus, the present study is chiefly concerned with aspects of meaning and understanding peculiar to single-case research encounters, in acknowledgement of the more recent sociological realization that not only do quantitative stratagems miss out on such aspects but also superficial qualitative accounts in their underestimation of the "complexity, uniqueness and indeterminateness of each one-to-one human interaction" (Fontana & Frey , 2008, p. 116).

Although original and earlier contributions to possible self theory (Markus and Nurius, 1986; Cross and Markus, 1991) were quantitative in nature, it does not follow, as a matter of methodology, that possible self theory cannot be approached qualitatively. In fact, some studies have already tapped into the qualitative aspect of possible selves (Kao, 2000; Abrams and Aguilar, 2005).

Within this framework of enquiry, semi-structured interviews were the main qualitative technique for two reasons. Firstly, it combines two attributes: flexibility and structure. The attributes may sound irreconcilable, but one can still conceive of a 'flexible structure' or 'structured flexibility' since the two are not antithetical or mutually exclusive. Furthermore, and as Mason (2009) pointed out, there is no such thing as a completely structured interview, in the sense that everything in the interview can be managed, predicted, and controlled; or an absolutely unstructured interview, meaning that everything works in a loose, chaotic, and happenstance fashion. According to Mason (2009), the term 'unstructured' interviewing is more of a misnomer "because

no research interview can be completely lacking in some form of structure" (p. 62). Secondly, the concepts specifically associated with the notion of possible selves are, by their very nature, subjective and therefore evade quantifiable positivistic explanations. In principle, researchers do justice to truth when they strive to 'understand' a person's thoughts and emotions, and when they do justice to this cause they are being objective or in the process of objective understanding. On this account, it is therefore reasonable to conceive of a researcher or research which is, though in a more or less relative sense, 'subjectively objective'.

Although generalizability of results is highly favoured by many researchers because they tend to reveal more or less stable patterns across similar contexts, generalizability is not the intended goal of the present study due to three reasons. The first has to do with the nature of the study which chiefly aims at understanding people's subjective experiences in relation to possible self theory and in the context of LOs. The second reason, though it follows from the former, is a pragmatic one. It is true that only 19 employees agreed to participate in the study, but limited participation offered an opportunity for more qualitative in-depth interviews. The third reason stems from the caveat that, in qualitative studies, "single members poorly represent whole populations" and thus tends to represent "a poor basis for generalization" (Stake, 1978, p. 7). From a prescriptive standpoint, the present study can serve as a motive for SWCC leaders to reconsider their plans for applying the LO models in a specific Saudi context. In this respect, it can provide input for future studies, perhaps quantitative ones, whose principle aim is to validate or invalidate the implications of the present study.

5.2. Justifying the Method

It is understandable that implications for research design are influenced by researchers' backgrounds and interests. The point at issue is that even when researchers' investigative models are carefully chosen, they must bear in mind that the level of reality under scrutiny will only reveal what their chosen models permit (Racher and Robinson, 2003). The traditional positivistic supposition that insight into causal relations can only be obtained via rigorous quantitative formulae is not as tenable as it used to be. Recent trends in research design have shown that the factor of 'influence' also "carries", notes Alan Bryman, "a strong connotation of causality"(2008, p. 49). The inferred implication here is that social researchers would do a disservice to truth if they solely relied on quantitative methods to understand the causal relations underlying all kinds of social phenomena. The fact that 'influence' is no less important than 'cause' is not accidental but rather reflects a developing recognition of 'meaning' as a fundamental explicator. To recapitulate, the general thrust of the proposed methodology springs from the assumption that in order to understand people's experiences of themselves as learners, as well as their attitudes towards certain organizational learning ideals, researchers should heavily rely on qualitative research methods to realize this goal; in line with Jennifer Mason's observation that through:

> "…qualitative research we can explore a wide array of dimensions of the social worlds, including the texture and weave of everyday life, the understandings, experiences and imaginings of our research participants, the ways that social processes, institutions, discourses or relationships work, and the significance of the meanings that they generate" (2009, p. 1).

The complex and interrelated social issues of biography, intention and meaning lend themselves more to qualitative than quantitative investigation. This

becomes the more evident when emphasis is made on the need to understand qualitative aspects such as respondents' self-concepts, their perceived experiences, their attitudes towards workplace learning, and reasons for doing/not doing, approaching/avoiding, entertaining/rejecting certain beliefs and behaviours associated with learning in personal, social, and organizational contexts.

As proponents of the qualitative method have argued (Lapan, 2004, p. 239), the thick descriptions and particular knowledge gained from research participants outweigh quantitative indicators such as test scores. It is widely argued that, unlike the natural world, the social world abounds in symbolic contents, and in order to interpret them the social researcher, according to Davies (1999), "must attempt to see the world first through the eyes of their informants, and this can be accomplished by talking to them and developing in-depth descriptive accounts of their interactions" (p. 42).

5.3. Interview Guide and Interview Questions

Research experts (Bryman, 2008, p. 442) lay emphasis on the need to form clear interview guides before embarking on interviews. Since semi-structured interviews make room for "flexibility in the conduct of the interviews" and offer latitude to ask questions in response to unforeseeable answers (Bryman, 2008, p. 699), the formulation of interview questions, notes Bryman (2008), "should not be so specific that alternative avenues of enquiry that might arise during the collection of fieldwork data are closed off" (p. 442). The choice of words, salient concepts, and recurrent phraseology used by Senge (2006) in his disciplines (i.e. systems thinking, personal mastery, mental models, shared vision, and team learning) and Marsick and Watkins in their DLO served as primary input for formulating the interview questions in this study. By grounding questions in such sources, participants were studied within a framework that enables them to think about their learning experiences in

relation to the learning implications associated with Senge's disciplines and Marsick and Watkins' dimensions.

In the process of question design, interview questions fell under two major rubrics: (a) main research questions and (b) possible interview topics and questions (Mason, 2009, p. 72). The questions were formulated from key concepts and ideas that underlay Senge's disciplines, Marsick and Watkins' dimesons, and possible self theory. Selected disciplines and dimensions represented themes under which interview questions were grouped.

To further clarify how interview questions were generated (see Appendix 1), several examples will be offered. Peter Senge (2006, p. 131-132) suggests two underlying conditions for the realization of personal mastery. "The first" says Senge, is the act of "continually clarifying what is important to us", and "the second is continually learning how to see current reality more clearly". In order to explore the possible impact of possible selves against these two conditions, several questions were devised to meet this purpose. For instance, in order to explore whether participants engaged in behaviours that reflected continual clarification of what was important for them, they were asked how often they thought about their purpose (the meaning) of being in SWCC and whether they ever felt uncertain about the purpose of their being there.

As for the behaviours that were likely to reflect continual learning to see current reality more clearly, participants, for instance, were asked whether they were aware of any challenges they felt they needed to face in order to become the persons they wanted to become and whether they thought of any plans for dealing with them. In addition, they were asked whether their current job and daily work tasks brought them any closer to the future persons they desired and whether they thought it would be difficult or impossible for them to become such persons without relating to the TC's strategy (i.e. vision, mission, main goals).

Interview questions were principally designed to explore employees' perception of themselves in relation to LO learning behaviours in the present (i.e. actual selves) and the future (i.e. possible selves). These are considered to be the core questions because they focus on the relation between the two core concepts of the study: LO learning behaviours and possible selves. In fulfilling this requirement, interview questions were formulated from two angles. One angle focused on the field of the LO learning behaviour. For instance, 'personal mastery' in Senge's model and 'creating continuous learning opportunities' in Marsick and Watkins' model are two distinct LO learning fields. The field determines the question's precise subject matter. The second angle focused on the formulation of the questions so that they draw participants' attention to their actual and possible selves. In this context, what matters most is the mode of the question. For instance, the questions 'Are you aware of any challenges you need to face in order to become the person you wanted to become? What are they? Have you thought of any plans for dealing with them?' approach the employee from the two angles pointed out above. The field is 'personal mastery' and the question is articulated to reflect a theme underlying personal mastery in Senge's model. This is the theme of awareness and taking responsibility for one's learning (i.e. … any plans for dealing with them). The question is also formulated to explore and reflect the 'possible self' mode (i.e. …the person you wanted to become?).

Formulating the core questions this way was chiefly governed by two kinds of themes. The first were called 'guiding themes'. These stand for the fields, mentioned above, which both supplied the subject matter of interview questions. The second kind refers to what might be called 'emergent themes'. These were the themes that emerged from participants' answers to questions conducted within the guiding themes' framework. One major difference between 'guiding themes' and 'emergent themes' is that the former are definite and known in advance because their function was to frame questions and direct the course of the interview. The latter themes, by contrast, are unpredictable and indefinite because they came from participants' answers. However,

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emergent themes encompass a host of sub-themes that are expected to arise in the interviews. These sub-themes, such as informal learning, defensive reasoning, and espoused theories versus theories-in –use, may need to be detected and explored in relation to core concepts of the study.

Not all emergent themes were exposited or given the same weight of importance. The emergent themes that were found to support or undermine the key propositions of the study received more focus and discussion. For example, an emergent theme would be underscored if it supported, no matter how indirectly, the proposition that different possible selves would develop qualitatively different attitudes towards the same LO learning behaviour.

Attitude and individual learning behaviours were not directly explored by specific questions. It is not because that they were irrelevant. Instead, the intention was to observe how attitudes and individual learning behaviours might spontaneously emerge as influential factors in the course of the interview. From a procedural standpoint, it must be conceded, though, that approaching both concepts in this manner made the task of understanding their role/nature more challenging.

5.4. Sample and Interview Method

Targeted Environment and Rationale. Saline Water Conversion Corporation (SWCC) is the organization where the study took place. According to its official website, SWCC employs nearly 10,000 people with a Saudi population estimated at 89% of the workforce. The targeted sample was entirely from SWCC's training centre, based in the eastern coast of Saudi Arabia in the city of Jubail. The centre took initiative ahead of all other sectors in SWCC to develop its own strategic plan with a formal vision and mission and an approach to anticipate privatization. Besides the fact that it represented an environment where learning should typically thrive, it was largely for the former respect that

it constituted the target of a study involving particular focus on learning (i.e. LO, formal/informal learning).

The formal vision of the centre's strategy reads: 'excellence in training for the water desalination industry', and its mission being: 'The SWCC training centre specializes in the technical qualification and training of employees to operate and maintain desalination plants and industrial structures using the latest approaches and technology, in accordance with international standards, by highly qualified trainers, and within a secure environment' (SWCC, 2018).

From a wider perspective, the rationale behind choosing SWCC and no other organization as a case study was its professed intention to try two LO models: Peters Senge's learning organization model as formally outlined in his *Fifth Discipline* and Marsick & Watkins' Dimensions of the Learning Organization (DLO). Because it was going to be SWCC's first experience with the concept of the learning organization, the study aimed, among other aims, at exploring the prospects of its success in the light of possible self theory.

Sample Selection and Composition. The sample was randomly drawn from the population of employees working for SWCC's Training centre, based in the eastern province of Saudi Arabia. Employees were invited to participate in the study but selection was determined by constraints on time as well as the availability and consent of participants. With these considerations, the sample is a convenient one. According to Anderson (2010, p. 4) convenience samples are suitable for exploratory studies and involve choosing participants "who are either most accessible or most willing to take part".

From the beginning, the decision to participate was optional and no coercion was exercised. The employees who agreed to join were briefed on the nature of the study, its purpose, and were assured complete confidentiality. Nineteen employees with different educational, occupational, and national backgrounds expressed their desire to participate. The researcher was able to reach 6 expatriates and 13 Saudi nationals from different vocational and managerial

positions. The ages of the participants ranged between 25 to 59 years old. Information involving participants' pseudonyms, roles, and nationalities is provided in the following table:

articipant Pseudonym	Role	Nationality
Ali	English Teacher	Jordanian
Omar	English Teacher	Jordanian
Othman	English Teacher	Palestinian
Sami	Secretary	Saudi
Talal	Training Department Manager	Saudi
Bilal	Technical Trainer	Saudi
Musa	English Teacher	Sudanese/Canadian
Bakr	TC Manager	Saudi
Saqr	Safety Trainer	Indian
Fwazi	Technical Trainer	Saudi
Mahmoud	IT Technician	Saudi
Rida	Technical Trainer	Jordanian

Zidan	Social Advisor	Saudi
Waleed	Consultant	Saudi
Yasir	Training Services Manager	Saudi
Sultan	General Subjects Manager	Saudi
Nabil	Media Section Manager	Saudi
Nasir	Technical Trainer	Saudi
Hameed	Security Guard	Saudi

The interview process felt a bit awkward and bumpy for one main reason. This was the researcher's first concrete experience with a qualitative semi-structured interview. In a sense, the interview with the participants proceeded in a more or less mechanical manner. Notwithstanding the novelty of the experience for the researcher, this can be partially attributed to the nature of semi-structured interviews since they require observing a certain degree of discipline. Over all, the structure of the interviews for all participants was the same. Participants were interviewed in quiet and private venues and the interviews commenced by greeting and welcoming each participant. Questions relevant to the formal course of the interview started by asking participants to introduce themselves and briefly talk about their upbringing and formal educational backgrounds. Although the questions that were asked in this context were basically the same, participants' answers varied widely in length and detail. An observation worth mentioning here was that participants who gave lengthy introductions of themselves at the beginning were the ones who gave richer answers throughout the rest of the interview. In one case (i.e. Nabil), for instance, it was very hard to get more than patchy answers and whenever more details were necessary they were sometimes teased out with impromptu questions.

One of the most striking observations that surfaced during the interview was the notable contradiction between some participants' answers to certain interview questions and the attitudes they expressed towards the same topics in formal meetings and workshops. One extreme example was the case of Yasir who stated in the interview that the centre's vision "was not serious" and that he could do without it to become the person he wanted to become. In formal meetings where the strategy was regularly revised and consulted upon, Yasir had either publically endorsed the strategy or remained silent about it.

Although the concept of the learning organization is pivotal in the study, and although the nature of the study was generally explained to every participant, a technical and thoroughgoing explanation of the LO was avoided. This was

decided on for one main reason, and that was to avoid prior priming of participants before the interview. By being consciously aware of the concept, they might develop an unnoticeable bias for or against the concept. Especially if some of them happened to have been familiar with the term in question. In order to ensure that participants were properly acquainted with the concept in the course of the interview, the relevant questions were formulated such that they would introduce the LO model in simple non-technical language. Moreover, it was uncertain whether all participants were aware of the fact that SWCC had plans to adopt the LO models explored in the study.

A Comment on Gender Issues

Despite the radically different cultural context of the study and the fact that only male participants constituted its sample, it might be worthwhile shedding light on pertinent gender issues in relation to possible selves and learning. In examining gender differences in adolescents' possible selves, Knox and his colleagues (Knox et al., 2000) embarked on a study which aimed at using possible self theory to gain insight into "gender differences in adolescent self-views". The researchers examined the different domains which female and male adolescents were more likely to access in relation to dreaded possible selves. These are possible selves which persons would fear to become and would want to avoid. Their hypothesis was that female adolescents, compared to males, would be more prone to access "feared possible selves" related to 'relational functioning'. Relational functioning stands for the capacity to establish and maintain relationships in terms of quality or quality such as romantic, peer, and family relationships. On the other hand, it was hypothesized that male adolescents would be more prone to access 'feared possible selves' in relation to occupation, general failure, and inferiority (Knox et al. 2000, p. 287). In concluding the study, the researchers reported finding salient gender differences between female and male adolescents in the aforementioned domains. As hypothesized, females were found to access 'feared possible selves' having to do with failure to establish and maintain desired social

relationships, whereas males were found to access a domain of 'feared possible selves' having more to do with social inferiority or failure to obtain/maintain a desired occupation (Knox et al. 2000, p. 297). Despite the provincial nature of the study and the risk of overgeneralizing, one cannot entirely dismiss the fact that gender differences in possible selves (can) occur. One possible implication for the present study, though no female participants were included, is to explore whether males exhibit a visible tendency to access possible selves in relation to occupation and inferiority.

Another relevant implication has to do with the possible impact of accessing certain domains of 'feared possible selves' on training and learning. For example, one study (Huber and Huemer, 2015) has found that females burdened with marriage and childrearing commitments are less likely to participate in training. This is consistent with the finding that females are more likely to entertain 'feared possible selves' related to relational functioning. In this context, fear of failure in maintaining a desirable relationship to husband (i.e. marriage) and children (i.e. family) may partially explain why more time is expended on meeting such relational demands at the expense of training and workplace learning. This interpretation of the role of possible selves in explaining gender differences is supported by research (Anthis et al., 2004) reporting females having "interpersonally themed feared possible selves...with a greater likelihood of becoming true than did males". Here, 'interpersonally themed feared possible selves' coincide with the idea of 'feared possible selves' in relation to 'relational functioning'. Compared to males, females were more preoccupied with avoiding images of future possible selves associated with interpersonal failures. In the light of the aforementioned findings, it is plausible to assume that there are appreciable gender differences in the content of possible selves accessed by males and females though one must acknowledge the local character of the previous studies.

Themes and Data Analysis. The formulation of themes took place before data analysis. These were guiding themes that informed question design and were later used as areas of focus during analysis. Following interviews, participants' answers were assigned to their respective themes (See Appendix 2), which consisted of disciplines and dimensions, and then analysed thereafter.

The structure of the analysis chapter starts with an introduction for each section followed by analysis and a conclusion summarizing the main findings and implications. The analysis process involved the exploration of data against the aforementioned themes. However, the conclusions for each analysis occasionally drew attention to any significant themes that emerged in the course of data analysis. Each section represents a guiding theme (e.g. Possible Selves and Personal Mastery from Senge; Possible Selves and Creating Continuous Learning Opportunities from Marsick and Watkins) whose main purpose is to contextualize the analysis process and situate the findings derived thereof.

Quote selection for analysis was chiefly governed by two factors. The first was the factor of verification; that is adducing data that verified the propositions derived from the research question. According to the Qualitative Research Guidelines Project published by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (2008), the best excerpts are the ones that clearly support the researcher's interpretation of the data. The second was the factor of poignancy and degree of representativeness of research findings (Anderson, 2010, p.3).

On Management and Business Models Foreign to the Saudi Environment

One may think of several tensions that could arise from applying western management and business models in foreign geographical contexts. In a society

where primacy is given to family life, as in Saudi Arabia, and where such primacy is consecrated and sustained by religion, it is not difficult to experience one considerable tension. This would be the tension between management models that have been developed to meet the demands of a secular society which, compared to the former, gives more to occupational life and less to family life. As can be discerned, the source of this tension transpires at a general and overarching level: the sociocultural level. There are examples of likely tensions at a lower and more particular level: organizational and individual. Again, taking Saudi Arabia as an example, Saudi Arabia has no record in developing robust and recognized management models stemming from its Islamic Arabic culture. This has turned many organizations in the country into something like 'experiment hubs' where new foreign business/management models are continually tried and discarded. As a result, the employees in such organizations are always under the tension of quick and unpredictable shifts in strategies and policies. In some cases, the employees are not only asked to cooperate with the change management projects intended to alleviate such tensions but also warned or penalized for failing to show unwavering commitment.

5.5. Ethical Considerations

Principally, there is no question as to the importance of observing ethical issues when conducting research. However, methodologists have differed as to what constitutes the ideal ethical stance in social research and their views have ranged from a *Universalist* stance on one extreme to that of an *Anything goes* on the other (Bryman, 2008, p. 116). The ethical policy for the present study will chiefly follow a Universalist stance, the stance which "takes the view that ethical precepts should never be broken" (p. 116). As long as the researcher is capable of observing uncontroversial ethical considerations associated with disciplined research, no excuse should be sought for going back on such principles.

Drawing on Mason's (2009, p. 201) recommendations, the ethical question can be addressed in two parts. The first is the question of ethics in relation to the researcher and his work while the other has to do with ethics in relation to participants in the study and the wider audience to whom the results of the study will be communicated to. Observation of ethical principles pertaining to the former involve a commitment from the researcher to conduct high quality research (Bryman, 2008, p. 127, Mason, 2009, p. 201) and this comes in compliance with the first injunction (1.1, p. 6-7) articulated by the ESRC document released in 2015. 'High quality' research in this context may be further understood on Mason's (2009) injunction that researchers are expected to do their best to fulfil their responsibility to produce good quality research, the responsibility to anticipate how others might use the research findings and explanations, and the obligation to avoid inappropriate generalization of research conclusions (p. 201). Concerning privacy of participants and the rights of the audience be they researchers or the laymen, the researcher will see to it that three central ethical principles are observed:

1- Ensuring that power relations do not adversely affect the quality of research or negatively bear on participants' decisions. Since it is virtually impossible to imagine any social activity – and research is one- that is completely devoid of any power and control imprints, perhaps the more realistic option would be to strive to keep their negative repercussions to a minimum (see section on 'Privacy, Power, and Reflexivity Issues' below).

2- Ensuring that participants are recruited on the basis of informed consent (Crano and Brewer, 2002, p. 344).

3- Ensuring that harm to participants and invasion of their privacy are avoided and that confidentiality of information and anonymity of participants are respectively maintained and secured (Bryman, 2008, p. 127).

5.6. On Privacy, Power, and Reflexivity Issues

The first procedure in making sure that the negative effects of power relations are minimized as much as possible was the random selection of participants from the organization. Random selection can greatly help in narrowing down the chances of bias towards power relations that can negatively affect the course of the study and its participants. The researcher was aware of the possible influence his role as a management consultant could have on participants' expectations and interactions. One reflexive measure that was practically adopted to lessen the negative impacts of such was to explain the purpose of the interview, establish normal rapport (e.g. cordial welcoming, showing attention to personal accounts), and avoid sounding too formal in speech and behaviour. It must be admitted that observing this reflexive measure throughout the interviews was very difficult and did not go as ideally

as one would wish. There were times where the researcher's *self-vigilance* waned and times when it was so high that the researcher almost lost sight of spontaneous and ordinary exchange with the participants. The researcher currently heads the Studies and Curriculum Development Division in the training centre. In order to avoid possible power imbalances and violation of privacy/confidentiality principles, it was part of the researcher's intention not to include as participants any of the staff under his supervision. Because of the strong rapport that ties the researcher to most of his colleagues within the organization, the likelihood of falling into bias complications was not tolerated. Still, due to the highly subtle nature of bias mechanisms, nothing could be guaranteed. The researcher distanced himself as much as possible from close same-level colleagues and included participants from more remote management units in TC.

The issue of informed consent is a basic requisite and no serious obstacle to fulfilling this ethical requirement was encountered (see Appendix 3). All interviews were audio recorded and collected data was stored on the researchers' password secured personal computer in addition to a protected external memory. Extreme caution was exercised to ensure that no potential or actual third party was directly impacted by this study in any significant way. Both participants and potential gatekeepers were approached openly and were never the subject of any research activity before having obtained their full consent to participate and offer relevant information. These latter considerations were intertwined with issues of harm, privacy, and confidentiality.

In this respect, a sharp eye was kept on the possible threats that may arise from both his formal position as a potential gatekeeper and his influence as a perceived power agent. The researcher was resolved to reflect critically on his personal choices and decisions so that any unethical research behaviours may be shunned or neutralized as much as possible. In addition to distancing oneself from bias-inducing areas in the organization, as indicated above, the researcher

knew of no better solution to this dilemma than that of regular reflexivity and ongoing introspection on the researcher's part. Concluding with gatekeeper issues, the researcher received approval from key leaders and personnel to reach targeted participants and access relevant information. To recapitulate, gatekeepers' role was to offer access to interview participants and not have access to their collected data nor be present at any of the interviews. In addition, although it was the researcher's intention that gatekeepers' approval to reach certain participants should be sought before conducting interviews, this procedure had been cancelled to ensure anonymity of participants. Data transcription and translation was carried out by a locally well-known organization called "Effective Learning Centre" which aims at assisting Arab researchers in conducting and managing academic research (official account: https://twitter.com/ELC_UK). No party other than the researcher and ELC was involved in this process. For further security, data (audio interviews and their transcriptions) were stored on the researcher's password-protected personal computers at home and work. ELC, however, will only have restricted access to anonymized audio copies and it has been agreed that all copies handed to ELC will be destroyed immediately after satisfactory completion of transcription and translation.

All interviews were conducted in the Arabic language, except for two participants who preferred being interviewed in English. At the beginning, translating them into English was very time-consuming. This was solved by opting for a practical alternative by hiring an academic translator. However, the translated interviews were double-checked and amended as necessary. One of the challenges which raised a worthwhile point was participants' encounter with the term 'self'. In the Arabic language, the word 'self' refers to two salient meanings. One is 'Annafs', which connotes the sense of 'soul' in English. The other was 'Athaat', which primarily refers to one's sense of 'individual personality'. This latter sense was the most relevant to the meaning of 'self' as suggested by the term 'possible self'. During the interview, the researcher paid attention to any possible instances of mistaking 'Annafs' for 'Athaat'. Securing

the right meaning was greatly maintained by contextualization and assisting interviewees with indirect cues and clarifications.

Exploration and Findings

Chapter Six

The Possible Self and Personal Mastery

Employees expected to adopt Senge's model are also expected to develop personal mastery. The main aim of this chapter is to explore participants' conceptions of their possible selves in relation to two key themes thought to underlie the discipline of personal mastery. One is the theme of "continually clarifying what is important" and the other is the theme of "continually learning how to see current reality more clearly" (Senge 2006, p. 7, p. 131). In this chapter, each of the two themes will end with a conclusion summarizing the main findings. The same will replicated for chapters 7, 8, 9, 10, and 11. The last chapter, chapter 12, will report on the main findings of chapters 6-11 in relation to the three main research questions articulated earlier. It will also comment on the prospective viability of the LO for SWCC and summarize the main implications for organizations, individuals, and research in this area.

Before exploring participants' responses in more detail, it might be useful to draw attention to an overarching theme that emerged from the domain of personal mastery in relation to participants' imagined future selves. The interviews have shown that participants not only differed widely in perceiving the person they wanted to become but also held different subjective reasons for wanting to become this or that future self. Mahmoud has plainly put it: "...my motivation and desire may exceed SWCC...I don't want to be restricted...as you know governmental work and institutions are restricted"; Ali always wanted "...to leave a positive influence on people...to touch their hearts"; Omar's constant ambition was "...to keep teaching, giving and acquiring new information...to develop myself"; Bilal, however, reported a personal image that was less remote from the TC's core business (i.e. technical training) than his colleagues: "...I wanted to be a leader and a professional trainer. It is too difficult for me to give up training and leadership is essential for everyone".

The most important thread among all responses is the highly personalized visions associated with their aspirations to realize such future selves. Most of them conveyed highly personal pursuits that barely had anything to do with realizing the TC's formal vision and mission.

a. Imagined Future Selves on Continual Clarification of What is Important

Senge (2006) has remarked that employees often fail to realize what is important for them because they "often spend too much time coping with problems along" their path that they forget why they "are on that path, in the first place", and "the result", concludes Senge, is that they only "have a dim, or even inaccurate, view of what's really important" (p. 131). In theory, it would be reasonable to assume that participants with vivid possible selves are likely to report behaviours indicative of continual clarification of what is important for them. This is based on the assumption that 'clarification' is largely dependent on the feature of 'vividness'. Several participants have reported possessing high levels of possible self vividness along with reports of behaviours conducive to continual clarification of what is important for them. In fact, some instances seem to imply a connection between such vividness and the practice of continual clarification, as suggested by the following example:

AS: Do you have a clear image about yourself in the same issue (i.e. image of the self expanding its learning and opportunities)?

Mahmoud: Yes and every day it becomes clearer …

The factor of vividness is evident from Mahmoud's reference above to increased clarity of the desired self (i.e. what one would like to become) with time. And when Mahmoud was asked about what he liked or disliked about this self, he reported emphatic satisfaction with developing an ability to self-assess:

Mahmoud: "Thanks to Allah I have experience enough to assess….in the past I couldn't assess…I assess myself and SWCC in which I work to know the possibility of being here or work in another place, in this way I'm on the right way".

Mahmoud believed that his ability to assess not only allowed him to learn about himself, but also helped him learn about his work in order "to know the possibility of being here or work in another place". More importantly, such an ability was acquired through experience after having been absent in the past. As discussed in the literature review, the concept of 'self-schemata' captures and explains this development from experience quite neatly. According to Markus and Cross (1994), self-schemata are evaluations "about the self-derived from past experience" that guide the processing of self-related information contained in one's experience.

The supposed relation between continual clarification of what is important and the vividness of the possible self has also been suggested by Zidan's awareness of the need to resolve unexpected discrepancies between the actual and future self and find one's place in work life. This was in his response to whether he always had a clear image of what he wanted to become in SWCC: "I was expecting to be in …. (he mentions two technical occupations) the real operational fields, but of course this did not happen, I was able to contain this difference ". Like Mahmoud, Rida also refers to the role of past experience in facilitating this process (i.e. self-schemata): "…in fact thank God I was able to benefit a lot of experience from this area".

The interview with Rida also raised the possibility of ideal selves i.e. persons' representations of the attributes they would ideally like to have (Higgins et al., 1986, p. 6) and supports the view that they are realizable: "but now after all these years I found the place I'm in is good, the field of chemistry namely corrosion. I can say that I'm number 1 person in this area here" (Rida).

In the case of participant Zidan, what may count as suggesting a strong relation between continual clarification of what is important and increased possible self

vividness has been reported more forthrightly. In responding to whether he had a clear image of what he wanted to become in SWCC, Zidan sounded highly self-conscious in this respect: "I wanted to be in a place where I can be influential and give something to the society ...this is an image I had from long ago...regardless of this place or SWCC or whatever".

One of the main aims of the present study was to explore whether employees held possible selves that were conducive to LO learning behaviours. Until now, Mahmoud and Rida's reports on the relation between possible self vividness and continual clarification of what was important (i.e. an aspect of personal mastery) suggest that the relation between the two is, at least, not incompatible. Participant Zidan joins them in reporting that SWCC was highly favourable in increasing his image of the future person he wanted to become: "**AS**: Have you felt that the vividness of this image of yourself has increased after joining SWCC?; Zidan: Very much". As pointed out earlier, Senge considers mindfulness of one's purpose as essential for achieving personal mastery. Zidan was emphatic on reporting engagement in continuous evaluation of the purpose of his being in SWCC. The question: "what's the purpose of my being here in SWCC?" was, for Zidan, 'always present in his mind', and "very much influential". One notable association from the previous cases relates self-vividness to clarity of role and experience of importance (e.g. "**AS**: do you ask yourself what is the most important thing for me in SWCC?, Zidan: Yes I do").

Whereas Zidan reported a positive association wherein high levels of self-vividness were accompanied by a feeling of clarity and an experience of importance, some participants reported otherwise, as in the case of Othman who not only communicated a lack of vividness but also reported arriving at the wrong destination only to express frustration with his current situation. Further analysis of Othman's responses reveals the disappearance of vividness (**AS**: Do you still imagine the image that you want to achieve in the field of education and learning? Is this image still clear for you?, Othman: No...desalination wasn't my aim. The current situation of desalination is not referring to my ambition). What seems to have been partly responsible for this discrepancy is the fact that

he was 'made' to accept an option that was 'not planned' instead of him 'choosing' to stay where he thought he might have found what he desired (**AS**: Have you ever asked yourself about the reason of your existence in SWCC or have you thought about this question a lot or not?, Othman: Of course, this question came to my mind a lot but I came here by chance, it wasn't something planned. The first day for me here I wanted to leave but the people convinced me to stay). However, the situation did not preclude Othman from 'learning how to see current reality more clearly'. Othman was both aware of his desires and frustrations as a SWCC employee and cognizant of his expectations, hopes, rights, responsibilities, and area of expertise against the extant reality (**AS**: For example, the feeling of uncertainty towards your role in this place, your being here, did it happen to you frequently?, Othman: Of course, here you just give a small part of your energy and you are not getting benefit from your existence here. I have been working here for 11 years and we haven't got any courses; **AS**: You didn't take any courses?, Othman: We as foreigners didn't take any courses, only Saudi people took it. A lot of people have taken these courses but not us, Although the responsibility that I have needs courses. I as a volunteer taking care of Labs and I have servers, for example, I studied windows 93 and 95 in Algeria but now I have a server of 2012, which is considered as a big loss. Many people took these courses and they didn't make the best use of it. We ask them to come to Labs to help us and give us information but they never come).

Although Othman exhibited learning behaviours which apparently helped him see reality more clearly, such behaviours primarily served to clarify a highly 'subjective' reality whereas trying to understand reality in relation to the wider demands of the organization was almost lacking. As cited above, Othman displayed awareness of not being given courses, of taking initiative to volunteer, of being superior in the sense of applying knowledge where others did not, of not being satisfactorily recognized or awarded, and even of what he regarded as nationality discrimination (**AS**: Haven't you found anything like this?; Othman: Even if there is a (strategic) plan, it's only for Saudi people not for foreigners because the situation of the foreigners is marginalized).

Interview with Othman appears to raise important issues about personal identity in its relation to the goal of learning from an early age. The personal past of Othman seems to have affected his 'cognitive engagement', a notion discussed earlier in the literature review (Blumenfeld et al., 2006), and consequently his expectations of what his future self as a SWCC employee might be. It is possible to infer that learning for him was chiefly a matter of survival. That he had to learn not for the luxury of expanding his horizons of learning, or for the sake of knowledge, but primarily for the sake of survival (Othman: Generally, education for refugee Palestinians in Lebanon is like oil, so every family was concentrating on education; **AS**: This is the family atmosphere, what about the social one which is wider than that? Did neighbours, relatives and people you know support you the same?, Othman: All people are adopting the same attitude because Palestine left everything behind and the war swept everything. The refugee Palestinians only care about eating and drinking, the educated ones seek to work as their families support them so this is the current situation).

The relevant implication of 'cognitive engagement' as defined by Blumenfeld et al. (2006) concerns the issue of taking responsibility for one's own learning in an organizational context where commitment and generative learning are highly appreciated, and where employees as learning agents cease to believe that the purpose of learning "is the survival of an organization rather than its generativeness" (Kofman & Senge, 1993, p. 5-6). From Othman's response, cognitive engagement in the sense defined above was particularly weak on the level of 'deep cognitive engagement'. According to Blumenfeld et al. (2006) cognitive engagement ranges between two levels: superficial and deep. *Superficial* cognitive engagement refers to learners' employment of mnemonic and elaboration strategies while *deep* engagement involves learners' use of elaboration and organization strategies in their attempts to connect new ideas to old ones. Concerning this latter form of cognitive engagement, Othman not only reported disinterest in using the organization's strategy but also expressed

satisfaction in doing things his own way (**AS**: when you do your specific duties do you make sure you do them according to the strategic plan or, instead, according to your own perspective?; Othman: honestly when I did my duties usually I imagine them then I do my best, which makes me satisfied; **AS**: don't you see if the way you did them is included within the strategic plan or not?; Othman: ah, the best is using brain and logic).

As pointed out in the literature review on possible selves, identity formation in addition to habitus and horizons of action/learning are concepts which may provide a useful conceptual as well as sociological framework for understating the development of Othman's self to its present state. Starting with identity formation, Othman reported experiences that described the fluctuating nature of his life from an early age by referring to the Palestinian tragedy with its tacit allusion to problems of refuge, immigration, and struggle for survival. In fact, when Othman was asked about the amount of educational support he received in his childhood, he immediately invoked his identity as a *refugee* struggling to learn (Othman: Generally, education for refugee Palestinians in Lebanon is like oil, so every family was concentrating on education). The sense of instability and insecurity as well as autonomy and self-dependence was implicitly emphatic in his answer to the question of social upbringing and education. Othman neither expounded on the nature of his education nor even highlighted certain parts of it but instead ran a quick chronological film of events and destinations, perhaps to emphasize the compound sense mentioned above (**AS**: Could you give us an introduction about your birth, place of birth and your regular education briefly?, Othman: I was born in Lebanon, so my study was there, then I passed short time in Saudi Arabia, after that moved to Turkey and later travelled to Canada where I got a Master in curriculum instruction with emphasis on teaching English for scientific purposes.. in short).

Against this personal history, which for Othman appears to have followed a more or less erratic and unpredictable path, and which was chiefly characterized by a heightened sense of learning for survival in a world of

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competition, one may expect Othman to entertain a perception of the self which is markedly 'agentic' and 'subjugated' (Billett, 2010). Before citing evidence in support of this, it might be useful to recall what is meant by an agentic and subjugated self. According to Billett (2010), a subjugated self in a given social system, is characterized by a high degree of negativity and receptivity, to the extent that the Individual is perceived "as a mere placeholder within social systems" (p. 12). An agentic self, on the other hand, is one which is conspicuously active and proactive in weighing social choices and taking personal decisions compared to the subjugated self. In Billett's (2010, p. 12) words, it is a self which presents individuals as persons "selectively engaging and negotiating with social suggestions to secure, develop, maintain their identity and (are) highly adaptive in securing occupational as well as personal stability".

The interview with Othman reveals an identity that has formed to exhibit aspects of the two aforementioned selves. As quoted above, Othman reported having to accept the new situation although it was not planned and incompatible with his personal occupational desire. In fact, he reported unconditional acquiescence to the pressure to stay (i.e. "...the first day for me here I wanted to leave but (x) and the people convinced me to stay"). Recalling Billett's account of the subjugated self, Othman initially behaved "as a mere place holder within a social system", and did not report expending any effort to resist being "enmeshed" or "embedded in (the new) social structure" (Billett, 2010, p. 12). This suggests that individuals may sometimes give up on continual clarification of what is important for them and succumb to what is important for the organization or its leadership. A negative implication for personal mastery follows. Giving up on knowing what is important for oneself may adversely affect the realization of personal mastery.

Conclusion

The aim of this conclusion, and the forthcoming conclusions following each section or chapter, is to present relevant implications and summarize the main findings. According to Senge, 'continual clarification of what is important' is essential to realizing personal mastery. Across the interviews, different participants reported varying degrees of possible self vividness. The factor of 'vividness' is here used to describe the extent to which individuals possess clearly defined concepts of their desired or feared selves. Although 'vividness' may resonate with more popular notions such as 'ambition' or 'aspiration', it is not synonymous with them. To clarify this more, one may qualify an ambition or aspiration and their antonyms as being vivid. Hence, vividness is about the clarity of a perceived image of the self, be it positive or negative.

Analysis of the theme of 'continual clarification of what is important' in the light of possible self theory suggests a number of challenges to the realization of personal mastery. One challenge is the finding that individuals' efforts to clarify what was important for them does not always yield a neat realization of personal mastery. Zidan's case, for instance, conveyed a positive association among high levels of self-vividness, a feeling of clarity of role at work, and an experience of importance, while Othman, in response to the same question, reported negative associations among the same qualities.

Another challenge is the finding that individuals frequently respond to different senses of the self. This was suggested by the case of Othman who exhibited behaviours oscillating between an agentic and subjugated sense of the self. The road to realizing personal mastery is not as easy as one might expect. Still, there is evidence that achieving personal mastery in terms of 'continual clarification of what is important' is reasonably possible. The cases of Mahmoud, Rida, and Zidan reported possessing enabling images of themselves in this respect. Zidan was more forthright in reporting an association between vividness and awareness of what was important for him (i.e. AS: Do you still envision this

image of yourself?, Zidan: Yes; AS: Is it vivid for you as an image or as a feeling?, Zidan: Both).

One vital implication for organizations in general and learning organizations in particular has to do with an earlier observation remarked by Ramarajan and Reid (2013). It is the observation that "work and nonwork life domains" are becoming ever more blurred and interconnected. Othman, for instance, was a clear example. His constant recollection of personal past experiences to account for later events in his professional life substantiates the proposition that past self experiences can be brought to bear on employees' present clarifications of what is important for them.

b. Possible Selves and Continually Learning How to See Current Reality More Clearly

Reflecting on Marton et al.'s (1993) earlier discussion of learning conceptions, Mahmoud and Rida's aforementioned engagement in behaviours indicative of an association between possible self vividness and continual clarification of what is important represents learning not as an increase of knowledge, memorizing, acquisition of facts and procedures, or the abstraction of meaning, but rather as an interpretative process aimed at understanding reality (Marton et al. 1993, p. 285-286). Learning thus conceived introduces Senge's other underlying condition for realizing personal mastery, namely "continually learning how to see current reality more clearly" (Senge, 2006, p.132). Learning as a way of understanding reality was not only reported by Mahmoud and Rida but also by other participants who pointed out an association between intermittent incidents of self vividness on the one hand and fluctuating circumstances on the other. Yasir, for instance, reports experiencing a less elaborate occasionally unstable image of what he wanted to become in SWCC. (**"AS**: Okay let's move now to SWCC..how true is this statement about you? ..."I have always had a clear image of what I want to become in SWCC"...like would you see it as highly moderate or low?; Yasir: I think it's moderate...neither a

satisfactory image nor a low one; **AS**: but highly vivid or..?; Yasir: It differs from time to time...every time it changes...in SWCC I have gone through certain circumstances"). Moreover, Yasir's reference to his image as fluctuating in relation to different circumstances substantiates Markus & Nurius' (1986, p.954) remark that the nature of "possible selves, their importance to the individual, their degree of cognitive and affective elaboration...vary depending on the individual's position in the life span". More significantly, Yasir's report of the positive impact of training, a form of formal learning, on clarifying his image of himself was readily discernible. His reported experience remarks how improved self vividness had made him more self-confident, thus highlighting the role possible selves may play in helping individuals see 'current reality more clearly'. ("**AS**: when you first joined SWCC was the image very vivid..?; Yasir: No...no...it was not...it was very vague...very very vague...after around one year it became clear with training and I became more confident in myself and the situation").

This latter exchange suggests three important implications for individuals, learning, and organizations. Concerning individuals, one may argue that well-constructed learning, heightened self-confidence, and increased vividness of one's role are strongly associated. With respect to learning, it is quite reasonable to infer that formal learning (i.e. training), when carefully designed and delivered, can help newcomers overcome some of the fears and doubts associated with/caused by their ignorance of the new work environment. As for organizations, Yasir's allusion to 'situation' highlights the importance of conceiving the self in relation to its environment. It underscores Bourdieu's notion of 'habitat' in the sense that organizations can enhance an employee's 'situation' by supporting forms of learning that broaden his/her 'horizons of action' (Hodkinson et al. 2008). Expanding more on the first implication, experience of "complexity", according to Senge (2006, p. 69), "can easily undermine confidence and responsibility". It can be argued that Yasir's experience of increased self-confidence was not only a direct consequence of increased self-vividness but may have also followed from the role which

increased learning (i.e. training) could have played in reducing the negative repercussions of complexity. When Yasir, for example, was asked whether he felt uncertain about the purpose of his being in SWCC, he recalled how this was the case when he first joined SWCC, and reported how he took initiative to engage in behaviours which helped 'clarify what was important for him' and also help him 'learn how to see current reality more clearly', two underlying conditions, according to Senge, for the realization of personal mastery. Yasir was aware of the vagueness of his role and took action to remove such vagueness by asking for other roles which he believed were more suitable for him. (**AS**: Have you felt uncertain about the purpose of your being in SWCC?, Yasir: Yes ..that was when I was working in the IT department ..at some time ..toward the end ..the IT it turned out that my role was not clear..I don't know what to do ..what my role exactly was ...; **AS**: what did you do?; Yasir: I asked changing my position ..there was some conflict because my role was not clear ..there were other roles which I wanted to participate in ..the problem was that you were blamed for a role that was not clear).

Not only was Yasir aware of the negative impact of vagueness, but also reported awareness of the importance of role clarity. (**AS**: why were you concerned about the clarity of your role?; Yasir: because when it is clear one can put goals and achieve them).

Despite the implication above for organizations and although some participants (e.g. Yasir) reported having engaged in learning behaviours which helped them see reality more clearly, there were instances which indicate that it was not the reality of the organization that was ultimately responsible for enhancing clarification. Instead, it was the reality of the self in relation to its personal desires and goals in an organizational context. In other words, pursuit of clarity was primarily driven by the need to reduce the gap between what Higgins et al. (1986, p. 6) call the actual self (i.e. a person's representation of the attributes one actually has) and the ideal self (i.e. person's representation of the attributes one would ideally like to have); even if this occasionally entailed total disregard for the organization's strategy. Again, participant Yasir exemplifies this

dimension (**AS**: Are you aware of any challenges you need to face in order to become the person you wanted to become?; Yasir: Okay...look...I think I'm contented with what I have reached so far...here I fully got what I wanted... a new stage in my life here there's nothing new for me...I had enough).

Similarly, although Zidan thinks that his current job and daily tasks enabled him realize the person he wanted to become, he nonetheless emphatically assumed that he was the 'measure of all things' to a degree which rendered the role of the TC's strategy almost supererogatory (**AS**: To what extent does this apply to you: I think it will be difficult or impossible for me to become that person without understanding the TC's strategy (i.e. it's vision, mission, main goals) ...do you see any necessary connection?; Zidan: No ..no; **AS**: Why isn't this the case for you?; Zidan: because I see that the role required from me is clear and that the strategy, whatever it may be, will be compatible and in line with this role).

The cases of Yasir and Zidan above suggest that implementation of management tools and models (i.e. strategic planning, the learning organization, and total quality management) cannot in themselves secure employees' commitment to them or guarantee the organization's success in the long-term future. The odds for success can be said to be higher only if organizations attended to the needs of different employees instead of relying too heavily on management models to effect collective change. Again, this conveys a vital implication for the relation between aspects of the self (i.e. actual and ideal /desired self) and the underlying conditions Senge suggested for realizing personal mastery. Broadly speaking, employees reported behaviours that reflected a desire to clarify not only what was important for the *organization* in relation to them but rather, and perhaps chiefly, what was first important for *them* in relation to the organization. Here, the primacy of selves for navigating between individuals and their workplace corroborates Billett's (2010, p.5) emphasis on "the salience of placing the subject in discussions about work and learning through and for work". This latter remark also coincides with an earlier assertion made by Hodkinson and his colleagues that whereas people

appear to be integrated into their workplaces, they are also separate from them because they "have lives outside work" and bring life biographies that predate their participation in their workplaces (Hodkinson et al., 2004, p. 9, p. 13). From another yet complementary perspective, the discipline of personal mastery turns out to be chiefly 'personal' rather than 'structural' or 'organizational' in the sense that individuals' desired selves are not chiefly formed around meeting the organization's explicit demands or, historically, after joining the organization, but long before joining it and in response to needs rooted in an entire social history. More specifically, for most participants continual clarification of what was important for them as well as their continual learning of how to see current reality more clearly happened in ways that were more consistent with what they wanted to become as 'personal agents' than with the demands posed by the TC's strategy. Yasir, for example, thought that the strategy was not important in helping him develop towards the person he wanted to become. In addition, Zidan not only underplayed the value of the strategy for himself but also reported that his role will always be compatible with the strategy even though he admitted that his understanding of the strategy was incomplete (i.e. **AS**: How long have been in the TC?; Zidan: Since two years; **AS**: And nobody has come to you and explained the strategy?; Zidan: In general terms yes.. but in detail so that I have fully understood it.. no.; **AS**: Have you expressed this to anybody here?; Zidan: No..no; **AS**: Why didn't you do so?; Zidan: Because I think the role required from me is clear).

Regarding the personal aspect above, it may also be argued that since selves are scarcely shaped by formal organizational tasks and systems, and given the very personal nature of the self despite organizational socialization, one is in a position to agree with Bishop's (2004, p. 150-151) finding that "the majority of firms" tend to display "high levels of informality in relation to most facets of organizational life". The informality Bishop reported was so high that "general decision-making, business planning, and interactions with external environments" were found to be largely conducted "without recourse to formal systems and rigid procedures". These findings make worthwhile sense only

when approached from the realization that selves fundamentally underlie the relation between formal organizational learning and the sociocultural history of persons. Thus, organizations may change certain habits, attitudes, or skills but they cannot entirely transform or determine persons' selves. However, there seems to be an exception. Bilal, after having been asked whether it would be impossible or difficult for him to become the person he wanted to become without understanding the TC's strategic plan, emphatically reported that his desire to become the person he wanted to become was contingent on an adequate understanding of the strategic plan (Bilal: I agree with this because if I do not understand the strategic plan I will not know how I will be and where to be).

The fact that some participants' realization of personal mastery is chiefly determined by attending to (personal) interests that hardly follow from commitment to the TC's strategy may partially be explained by Bourdieu's notion of 'habitus'. Habitus stands for the deep subconscious dispositions and structures embedded in individuals' selves because of "a long process of inculcation, beginning in early childhood" (Bourdieu, 1993, p. 5). Such dispositions and structures are largely responsible for both generating and determining one's set of choices, practices, and perceptions (Bourdieu, 1993, p. 5; Herzberg, 2006, p. 37) by which one interacts with what Bourdieu calls the 'habitat'. In relation to possible self theory, Markus and Nurius' interpretation of possible selves as socially determined overlaps with Bourdieu's view of habitus as a social product. For although "possible selves are individualized or personalized", relate Markus and Nurius (1986) "they are also distinctly social". This supports an earlier remark that selves underlie the relation between formal organizational contexts and the broader sociocultural context of persons.

In addition to the social factor, the weak alignment between participants' desired selves and formal strategic demands may be accounted for by Hodkinson et al.'s notion of 'horizons for action' or 'learning'. Here, "for every learner" horizons for learning "set limits to what learning is possible, and which

enable learning within those limits" (Hodkinson et al., 2008, p. 39). It may thus be argued that learners' experiences of their desired selves are partly defined by their past/present habitus and partially constricted in terms of potential by their past/present horizons. In this study, some participants have indeed reported instances that reflected the restrictive influence of horizons for action/learning (**AS**: Are you aware of any challenges you need to face in order to become the person you wanted to become?; Yasir: Ok ..look.. I think I'm contented with what I have reached so far ..here I fully got what i wanted ..what's the next step? I don't really know ..but I say that I had enough from the TC and SWCC and very satisfied with what I have achieved). When participant Yasir was asked whether he was aware of any challenges he needed to face in order to become the person he wanted to become, he related having arrived at a horizon of learning which was at the time both limited (i.e. contented with the present self) and limiting (i.e. not knowing what to do next). Participant Omar's awareness of the constrictive influence of his own horizon was even more pronounced. He refers to various constrictive factors such as age, the risk of limited opportunities, and a skeptical attitude towards other organizations. When he was asked how often he thought about the reason of his being in SWCC, a question aimed at exploring to what extent the participant engaged in clarifying what was most important for him, his answer was: "Look! The age is controlling you. Let's be realistic, if I want to leave the desalination, where I will go? Will the institutions and the other companies receive us and give us the same motive that I want? There a lot of things that you have consider before making any decision".

Although very few participants have reported smooth continuous development towards a desired self, such as Sultan who reported achieving "around 60 %" of what he wanted to become and expressed having had certain ambitions that "weren't realized", there were participants who reported unimpeded progression towards achieving the desired self; not as a result of pure will but also in virtue of possessing a highly vivid image of the self all throughout. To capture the whole process, the example of participant Sami is worth citing in

full (**AS**: So now let's move to the environment of the training centre…now I will mention a phrase and you tell me how strong you agree with it "I have always had a clear image of the person that I wanted to become in SWCC?; Sami: From the first day I became an employee here till now; **AS**: That was clear?; Sami: Yes clear and, god willing, that image nearly achieved; **AS**: So you agree with that?; Sami: Yes I agree; **AS**: So what was that specific thing on that image that you wanted to be; Sami: The image I wanted was of course transition from the secretarial job to become to the job I always wanted which is training specialist; **AS**: Specialist?; Sami: Yes I find myself in that job; **AS**: Nice; Sami: That's why I studied a specific study to become a training specialist; **AS**: Is that image still clear?; Sami: Yes still clear, god willing; **AS**: The same passion and the same …?; Sami: Yes sure).

In Sami's case, there appears to be no real discrepancy between self-vividness and marked discontinuities (or failures) in achieving the desired self. It may suggest that the very ambition of becoming a 'training specialist' has always acted as a constant regulator of behaviour in Sami's journey from the past self to the present one. Taking Sami as a possible example of endeavor towards personal mastery, two possible self phenomena appear to have been at work: the self as a regulator and the factor of vividness. Concerning the former, Oyserman and Markus (1990, p. 113) have argued that, inasmuch as possible selves can act as strong incentives or powerful preventives, they can be a combination of both and thus serve as regulative selves (Oyserman and Markus, 1990, p. 113). In this context, Oyserman and her colleagues (2004) have explored how possible selves can act as guiding roadmaps towards future outcomes (Oyserman et al., 2004, p. 130). In studying the academic achievement of certain learners, they have found that "improved academic outcomes were likely only when a possible self could plausibly be a self-regulator" (Oyserman et al., 2004, p. 130). As for the factor of vividness, Markus & Nurius (1986, p.954, 964) and Markus & Cross (1994, p. 424, 343) have observed that the more vivid, well elaborated, and borne out by proximity to reality possible selves are, the more powerful their likelihood as crucial

behaviour determiners. This observation is consistent with Senge's conceptualization of personal mastery as a discipline of continually clarifying and deepening one's vision, focusing energies, developing patience, and of seeing reality objectively (2006, p.7). It is consistent with it because individuals need to navigate their way competently through the challenges and hurdles facing them on their way to realizing the desired self. In the interview above with Sami, strong vividness, the image of wanting to become a 'training specialist', and the persistence of passion (i.e. Senge's focusing of energies and developing of patience), were necessary for regulating the self's journey to its present destination.

Conclusion

Possible self theory was used to inform our understanding of how individuals differ in organizational behaviour in general and learning in particular. According to Senge, 'continually learning how to see current reality more clearly' is a condition for personal mastery to be realized. The interviews have revealed instances where enhanced self vividness and learning as a means for clarifying one's current reality were found to be associated. A vital implication for organizations in this context is that much of individuals' learning is chiefly endogenous. That is, a substantial part of learning happens in response to personal visions and much less in response to formal organizational demands. This supports the fact that personal mastery is primarily about what matters most for the individual. This is only possible when the bulk of learning happens endogenously rather than exogenously (i.e. formally imposed). One of the aims of the current study was to raise some of the challenges issues of self and subjectivity are likely to pose to the LO. In this regard, the interviews have revealed examples where desired future selves seemed realizable even when acquaintance with the current reality of the TC was almost entirely lacking (e.g. Zidan). A relevant implication for organizations in this connection is that peoples' actual/future selves may influence their attitudes in ways that preclude

individuals from learning about their surrounding realities. On the other hand, there were instances where individuals' (e.g. Yasir and Omar) conceptions of their desired selves were reported with awareness of the limitations they needed to face in order to realize such selves. This implies that the behaviour of clarifying reality for oneself is not always as clear and straightforward as one may imagine. In some cases, it is a complex and long-winded process, thus posing a further challenge for realizing personal mastery in particular and Senge's model at large.

Chapter Seven

Possible Selves and Mental Models

According to Peter Senge (2006, p.8), mental models are "deeply ingrained assumptions, generalizations, or even pictures of images that influence how we understand the world and how we take action". There is a critical introspective task associated with the discipline of mental models which every individual is expected to observe. He or she is expected to 'turn the mirror inward' and learn to unearth internal pictures of the world and "bring them to the surface and hold them rigorously to scrutiny". The discipline of mental models also involves the ability to engage in 'learningful conversations' that allow people to expose "their own thinking effectively and make that thinking open to the influence of others".

The main aim of this chapter is to explore how participants' images of their possible selves might bear on the discipline of mental models and vice versa. The questions that were devised to interview participants for this purpose range from exploring participants' held assumptions about themselves, their colleagues, to those about the TC's strategy. Because mental models are implicit in various forms of learning on the individual and organizational level, the present discussion will also draw on participants' responses in other disciplines such as personal mastery and shared vision.

Since mental models, according to Senge (2006), involve the person's assumptions about him/herself, participants were asked about the future roles they imagined for themselves in TC. Like personal mastery, a similar common overarching theme emerged from participants' answers. Besides envisioning future roles that were highly personal and hardly had anything to do with realizing the TC's core business or formal strategy, the majority of participants' imagined future roles sharply differed in content and detail.

Waleed: "…the role that I imagine with my expertise is being a supporter of all youth". Juxtaposed with Waleed's self-reported role, Nabil's image seemed very bleak: "I do not know, actually you may see that I am the only person who has not changed since 25 years". Saqr's imagined role was wanting in specificity: "as I told you, I've got a lot of objectives but we are not getting enough time, the time is so tight, there is no time to spare, but the good thing is when we leave our name will be mentioned forever". For Sultan: "…I want to be supportive and an important person in the centre, which the centre needs, where I can benefit people".

What the emerging theme above implies, at least for organizations wishing to adopt Senge's model, is that employees are in possession of deep and diverse assumptions about their future roles which may not only sharply differ from the formal mental model sanctioned by the leadership but may also radically conflict with it on many levels. In this connection, Senge himself was aware of the danger of imposing on others a one-size-fits-all mental model. In a quote worth citing in full, Senge (2006) warned:

> "Imposing a favored mental model on people, like imposing your vision, usually backfires. There may be a temptation for the loudest person, or the highest-ranking person, to assume that everyone else will swallow his or her mental models lock, stock, and barrel in sixty seconds. Even if his mental model is better, his role is not to inoculate everyone else with it, but to hold it up for them to consider" (p. 188).

One critical question specifically addressed participants' assumptions about learning and knowledge sharing among colleagues in the training centre. Most of them reported that they believed all employees were willing to learn and share what they had learnt with their colleagues, thus suggesting that they held more or less positive attitudes towards their colleagues in this regard. However,

it might be useful to examine the mental models of those who believed that knowledge sharing was weak or missing.

The reason why this might be of particular usefulness is that it is more likely to reflect distance from possible collective acquiescence to generally held assumptions that might not be correct after all. In this connection, Rida's response is particularly important because, unlike all other participants, it reflects Rida's awareness of key learning and cultural challenges (**AS**: From your experience in the TC, how true is this? ... "All employees are willing to learn and share what they learn with their colleagues"; Rida: In the TC?; **AS**: Yes; Rida: The TC's environment is part of the Arab environment...the Arab environment is still unsupportive of learning...in sharing knowledge it is still weak.. there are reasons ..the first one is that there is sometimes a monopoly of information not for the benefit of my colleague ..for personal reasons ..so that I can be number 1 in this area. Other reasons is that there are no incentives to give others information...so there are causes in the Arab structure generally speaking ..and the TC is part of this culture).

Although Rida's response was not conclusively in the negative, it was pretty clear that he held what seems to be from his view a justified negative mental model towards effective knowledge sharing in the TC. What is more important in the exchange above is Rida's inclination to contextualize his response before giving a definite answer. This he has done in the discipline of personal mastery when he was asked whether he always held a clear image of what he wanted to become in SWCC. Thus, in situating himself in the relation between possible self-vividness and continual clarification of what was important in relation to SWCC's context, Rida avoids a simple yes or no answer and recounts his awareness of the need to contain unexpected discrepancies between the actual and future self and to find one's place in work life. Rida also exhibits awareness of the subject of his criticism. Unlike the rest of the participants, he was aware of some of the problems associated with knowledge sharing such as monopoly

and personal interests. This indicates that employees' perceptions on certain organizational problems tend to vary in scope and depth from one individual to another. This conclusion is important in terms of its consequences for organizations planning to install uncustomized business and management models, such as the LO models discussed earlier. Not all employees are likely to hold perceptions and display behaviours that are constantly amicable towards such models. Compared to other participants in the study, Rida was found to show a high degree of reflexivity, perhaps the reason why he tends to contextualize responses and why his mental model appears to be generally more compound compared to his colleagues, as evident from the following exchange (**AS**: What do you like and/or dislike about this image?; Rida: as I told you I loved this field because it is unique may be...even when you major in general area you also need to specialize in a specific thing to become an expert in it ..from this aspect I think there is more depth for me and the image became clearer and I lived it more).

The inclination to contextualize and self-reflect can hardly be missed. Very few, in fact none, showed such degree of acuteness and detail in reporting one's assumptions and personal image. This may be partly explained in terms of the association Rida reported between specialization and depth on the one hand and clarity and engagement on the other. It may be argued that self-awareness and self-assessment are more likely to intensify with increased engagement with one's desired state or outcome. Instances of Rida's self-awareness and self-assessment are evident from normative and evaluative phrases such as 'you also need to specialize' and 'from this aspect I think', respectively, whereas instances of increased engagement and acquaintance with the desired future outcome are evident from qualifications such as 'more depth' and 'became clearer and lived it more'.

Returning to the issue of learning and knowledge sharing, four participants thought that it was almost entirely missing. Asking Bilal, for instance, to what extent he agreed that all employees were willing to learn and share what they learned with their colleagues, he replied, though somewhat ambiguously: "I

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don't agree with it or disagree completely but to some extent. Not nice". To the same question, Nasir saw that "this is impossible" and he explained why he thought so in what follows (Nasir: because this is an individual effort. If I need something, I would go to brother X and ask him, but according to my understanding of your question you want that all people share with each other).

Nasir's mental model on knowledge sharing in the TC is loaded with assumptions. First, there is the major assumption that can be inferred from his belief that willingness to learn and knowledge sharing among colleagues is impossible. In other words, it is an instance that can never happen. This is an assumption about the present and the future. Secondly, there are what one may call 'auxiliary assumptions': the tacit assumptions fortifying and underlying the major one; such as his assumption that willingness to learn and share knowledge hinges on individual effort. This notion of major assumptions sustained by auxiliary assumptions finds support in Bowditch et al.'s (2008) earlier distinction between attitudes that are said to be *high in differentiation* and attitudes thought to be *low in differentiation*. The former standing for attitudes supported by a wide variety of beliefs and values, and the latter for those sustained by fewer beliefs and values (Bowditch et al., 2008, p. 57-58).

One major challenge these findings suggest for the learning organization is the need to acknowledge the diversity and perhaps uniqueness of different mental models among employees in the same organization. Leaders turning their backs on this realization are more likely to complicate their endeavours to unify mental models seamlessly across the entire organization. Earlier in the literature review, Marsick and Watkins have argued that the alignment of vision and shared meaning about intentions (i.e. Senge's 'shared vision') was critical for the cohesiveness necessary for the strategy's success. However, with the existence of sprawling diverse assumptions underlying different mental models the chances are that such cohesiveness may never be realized. Again, the nature of this challenge owes itself to the element of subjectivity inherent in the

sociocultural history of individual selves. Consequentially, organization leaders and management gurus may never be able to account for much of the failure of certain LO enterprises without adequately acknowledging the centrality of subjectivity and the self.

The kind of impact Nasir's self could have had on his assumptions about this particular issue may be identified against other responses. When Nasir was asked what he liked or disliked about the image he held about the person he wanted to be (desired self), his response was: **"thankfully, I gain a lot of information and knowledge after every course that I join so when you are with trainees, you may get information from an experienced trainer for many years"**. Nasir's response seems at odds with his former more or less negative assumption about learning and knowledge sharing among work colleagues. In this exchange, Nasir presents his self in favour of learning and knowledge sharing, and not only as a giver of information but also as a receiver, as he emphatically affirmed elsewhere (Nasir: No matter how much experience and knowledge you have, you will still have lack of information. The image that I like about trainees is about give and take). However, it should be noted that he was not talking about work colleagues in this respect. His context was about knowledge exchange with the trainees in his training sessions. Two possible reasons may account, at least in part, for this shift in context. The first reason is suggested by his response to the question of whether he faced any challenges in realizing the image of the person he wanted to become, and for which he replied: " Nasir: lack of interest in learning was one of the challenges that I faced at the beginning of working in desalination but I worked hard on it".

What this appears to show is that Nasir's attitude, compared to the rest of his colleagues, has been influenced by a personal learning ordeal. In contrast to Nasir, the majority of participants agreed that willingness to learn and share knowledge existed. To Sultan, for instance, such willingness existed "moderately if not less than that"; and for Talal, who appears to show a much more sophisticated awareness of the issue at hand, the answer was thought out and

in the affirmative ("Ok, I agree with it"). Talal then comments on how knowledge sharing should be organized: "but they need internal reflection and arranging a meeting with them to clarify the idea and the way they should begin"; and Mahmoud who thought that such willingness existed, though "low" and only "serious people do this".

The second reason apparently comes from the fact that Nasir does not think of himself as a person who works with a team. To the question "Do you think of yourself as a person who works with a team and achieves through his colleagues rather than a person who works alone and seeks independence", Nasir forthrightly replied in the negative (Nasir: I do not prefer working with a team).

And when Nasir engaged, for whatever reason, in any teamwork, it was not done as an initiative but instead as a more or less compulsory routine ("**AS**: To what extent you find this applicable to you: do you imagine yourself as a person learning from and achieving via teamwork or as a person who works individually, which image do you prefer?; Nasir: In terms of information we have to meet in the electricity section, we should participate in addition to work within teamwork"). In analyzing Nasir's responses, "have to meet" and "should participate" imply coercion and disengagement with the experience of team learning. It is not something that Nasir imagined and always liked to imagine about himself but rather something which one 'has' to comply with and 'should' participate in. The case of Nasir suggests two points which conflict with Senge's conception of an LO model. These points of conflict allow us to take a stand in discussing one of the main research questions in this study: 'In what way can individuals' personal learning experiences pose a challenge to organization leaders in their efforts to realize the LO learning behaviours?' The first point conflicts with Senge's expectation that people in a learning organization will "continually learn how to learn together". Nasir's negative assumption about learning and knowledge sharing among colleagues does not support Senge's expectation. The second point is that Nasir's lack of interest in learning stands in diametric opposition to Senge's categorical assertion that "not only is it our nature to learn but we love to learn".

A more conspicuous finding, in virtue of data from several cases, confirms the influence of imagined selves on mental models about learning, colleagues, and the organization at large. This is suggested by the association drawn between Nasir's concept of himself, in both of its manifestations actual and ought-to, and his attitude towards team learning and knowledge sharing. In fact, the proposition that imagined selves (possible selves) impact/shape mental models (attitudes) is corroborated by participants' responses to the question of the role they liked to envision for themselves at the centre. To this question, all participants except three (i.e. Nabil, Yasir, and Mahmoud) were found capable of easily entraining images of the future roles they liked to envision for themselves. The majority of participants expressed no difficulty or reluctance in envisioning a desired future role and went on to explain the nature of such roles with varying degrees of elaboration. Within this group of participants, Yasir, for instance, promptly reported imagining his future role in project management: "project management...I took a course and gave courses in this area". Participant Musa was also capable of envisioning the role he imagined for himself: "...I would like to be a person who can contribute positively in the outcome of the training centre their goals and objects and try to be a person as I said who can contribute towards these goals". However, a closer examination of Musa's latter response, compared to the more specified responses of his colleagues, reveals that the reported image is too broad, less elaborate, and very generic. For instance, a more elaborate image was that of Sami who responded: "...The role is that I built 3 to 4 roles for myself...first my role at training to develop Human Resources, or the role of a trainer, or a role at the human resources department in the training centre". One finding that can be pointed out here is that both Musa and Sami's responses were highly consistent with the degree of elaboration associated with their desired possible selves. For example, in a series of questions assessing possible self vividness and its vocational consequences, Sami was found in possession of a highly vivid and elaborate desired self that was not only envisioned but also nearly achieved (AS: So now let's move to the environment of the training centre...now I will mention a phrase and you tell me how strong you agree with it "I have always had a clear

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image of the person that I wanted to become in SWCC"; Sami: From the first day I became an employee here till now; AS: That was clear?; Sami: Yes clear and, god willing, that image nearly achieved; AS: So you agree with that?; Sami: Yes I agree; AS: So what was that specific thing on that image that you wanted to be; Sami: The image I wanted was of course transition from the secretarial job to become to the job I always wanted which is training specialist; AS: Specialist?; Sami: Yes I find myself in that job; AS: Nice; Sami: That's why I studied a specific study to become a training specialist; AS: Is that image still clear?; Sami: Yes still clear, god willing; AS: The same passion and the same?; Sami: Yes sure).From the latter exchange, to take a telling example, the association between possessing a vivid desired self and the achievement of the desired role is hard to dismiss as coincidental. Sami's self was not only clear in terms of what he broadly wanted to become but also clear in terms of certain transitions he experienced towards the desired future self. As for Musa, his less elaborate and highly generic image becomes evident when juxtaposed to Sami's account above. To the same question (i.e. I have always had a clear image of the person that I wanted to become in SWCC), Musa's response was "no it's not clear..."; and as to 'how often he thought about the purpose of his being in SWCC', Musa' s vision was very generic and his scope of concerns was very broad (Musa: Well...look...because I think I have a very clear vision towards life generally; AS: Life generally?; Musa: Yeah...wherever you live as long as you are happy...as long as you find your income...the income that you earn legally and without having it being done in things that are not allowed according to Islam...so then I'm fine).

In these responses, the responses reporting a highly generic image of a desired self include Musa's self-report that his image of the person he wanted to become was "not clear", and the fact that his 'very clear vision' was 'towards *life generally*' (italics mine), followed by his broad qualifications for what it means to have such a vision towards life 'generally', such as 'happiness' and 'finding income' in a decent and honest way. Although Musa did report that he had "a clear vision towards work, people, colleagues, friends, and of course family", he

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leaves it at that and does not elaborate in what sense it is clear. The conclusions raised above about Musa's case support (and are supported by) the findings of Handgrove et al. (2015) – cited earlier – on the relationship between broad life choices and less defined possible selves.

What the interviews above show (i.e. Sami and Musa in particular) is that Senge was right in emphasizing the importance of mental models as critical for the realization of the learning organization, but he does not expound on how far they may serve as enabling or disabling factors. In the case of SWCC, employees' mental models (i.e. include attitudes) about their colleagues and organization were so varied and nuanced that any attempt to homogenize them would be far-fetched. In order to further appreciate the impact of possible selves on employees' mental models (i.e. how they imagine themselves and the organization), it might be useful to strike a contrast and cite the (negative) responses of the participants (i.e. Nabil, Rida, Mahmoud) who, on the other hand, found difficulty envisioning a future role in SWCC. For Nabil, it seems that further development has come to a standstill: "I do not know actually, you may see that I am the only person who has not changed since 25 years". Rida also expressed a similar difficulty but had other reasons (J: This question is uuhhh (sighs of difficulty with laugh) …you know I have joined between two tasks one in the technical field which is chemistry and the other is in quality and I do not conceal from you the fact that until now I can't decide which one should I concentrate on more, here or out of SWCC. This is why I told you the answer was difficult).

As for Mahmoud, the difficulty was also there but this time the restrictions pertaining to habitus and horizons of action appear to be involved (Mahmoud: envisioning myself and my suitable role isn't possible in the current situation). And when Mahmoud was further asked to think of any challenges which may have prevented him from envisioning the role he wanted to achieve, he managed to mention some (Mahmoud: Yes, I think they are the positions and responsibilities, the people and development. It's wrong to identify recruitment

only with certificates because the creative aspect and achievements are very important).

The latter analysis suggests that organizations planning to enhance employees' mental models should maximize their involvement in what Senge calls 'learningful conversations'. These are occasions where people are encouraged to "expose their own thinking effectively and make that thinking open to the influence of others". The qualifier 'effectively' is of particular importance because there are instances where employees may expose their thinking openly but not necessarily in an effective manner. Nasir, for example, reported that his openness was a source of nuisance for others (Nasir: At work, they said to me that my openness causes problems).

Conclusion

The learning organization as theorized by Senge stipulates that constructing the right mental models is necessary for its success. The phrase 'constructing the right mental models' obviously assumes that mental models are highly receptive to organizational control. It also assumes that there is one correct standard for mental models which employees must not fail to meet. However, the findings in this chapter have revealed that mental models are extremely varied internal worlds, replete with diverse assumptions and unexpected expectations about the self, colleagues, learning, and the organization. Existing literature on mental models in relation to LOs hardly alludes to this feature. The literature presents mental models as a requirement or ideal to be achieved but rarely, if ever, grapples with their nature in real life situations. One of the main research questions of the present study aimed at exploring 'To what extent do individuals' perceptions of their actual/possible selves generate attitudes that facilitate or impede adoption of LO learning behaviours?'. In the light of the considerations suggested above, organization experts and leaders alike should

curb their enthusiasm and be much more realistic in their aspirations to sculpt the most favourable mental models.

Chapter Eight

Possible Selves and Shared Vision

The aim of this section is to explore the impact of possible selves on the discipline of shared vision. Previous interviews in this discussion have revealed that employees held different images of the persons they desired to become and the role they wanted to assume in SWCC. Not only that, the vividness as well as the elaboration of the possible selves, be they ones associated with the desired future person or the ones associated with perceived vocational roles, markedly varied from person to person in detail and effect. These findings are significant in two respects. They substantiate the proposition that people's subjectivities are more complex and nuanced than previously thought. Secondly, this realization poses more challenges for organization models aiming at homogenizing both employees' mental models and, perhaps, personal visions.

According to Senge, common vision is fundamental for engendering the kind of motivation necessary for realizing the LO. In fact, Senge (2006, p. 193) believes that once people have developed a shared intrinsic vision, work for them should become part of pursuing a larger purpose not in their personal lives but "in the organization's products and services" (2006, p. 193). This effectively means that people's intrinsic shared visions should instantiate or at least reflect the organization's vision. Senge also believes that motivations and energies within the organization should be inspired by such a vision (2006, p. 192).

When SWCC participants were asked 'what it was that motivated them to wake up every day and come to work', their answers varied widely. Sami, for instance, reported a high level of motivation (i.e. "… higher than middle") and found his biggest source of motivation coming from the "interaction with the management" and that "if you work today you will find the results tomorrow". Zidan also reported a high level of motivation (i.e. …"I have a concern and a

goal...therefore...and thanks God...I never feel apathetic or lazy or sluggish"), and was more elaborate than Sami in explaining the reasons behind his high level of motivation (Zidan: Several things...and they are related and you cannot separate them...from the point of view of this life...it's your income which is necessary for you which you must expend legally...and an opportunity for you to give and develop yourself and make use of your time...different things related to one another).

If Zidan has developed any desired future self at all, then it appears to be associated with a personal vision that hardly reflects the centre's formal vision (which is: 'excellence in training on desalination industry). This is normal given the fact that Zidan has admitted earlier that acquaintance with the TC's strategy is unneeded to realize his desired future self. Again, this strongly underscores the impact possible selves can have on the discipline of shared vision. If a person's desired possible self is attainable without commitment to the organization's strategy, the prospects for entertaining a common (shared) will be very low. Rida also reported his reasons for being motivated and he was the most elaborate of all participants in recounting the incentives which made him so (AS: Now when speaking of motivation ... what is it that motivates you to wake up every day and come to work?; Rida: Well a number of incentives...the most salient among them are the strong social ties really...this is one of them...and the other incentive is that you really feel that you are realizing your own self...that is you don't feel that you are here to waste your time...sometimes in other workplaces...not the training centre...months could go without you achieving anything...in truth if a week goes for me without achieving something...I feel that it is a loss...another incentive is the training courses I deliver...although sometimes they might be engaging and sometimes otherwise...training courses where many employees come and I am able to transfer the knowledge to them...this course remains engraved in my mind and I still remember them...like the past course for engineers...some of the trainees complimented me openly...and this was very motivating for me).

The latter interviews with Sami, Zidan, and Rida reveal a finding and an implication. The finding is that there is little evidence for a genuine 'shared' vision responsible for the high levels of motivation they reported. The evidence is much in favour of high levels of motivation triggered by different personal needs and goals. Borrowing Senge's expression, there was hardly anything that motivated them "beyond self-interest". As for the implication, organizations should design their strategies in ways that help people experience a sense of achievement. A salient common denominator among interviewed participants was the feeling that they were achieving something and not wasting their time (i.e. respectively: "if you work today you will find the results tomorrow"; "an opportunity for you to give and develop yourself and make use of your time"; and "you don't feel that you are here to waste your time...sometimes in other workplaces...not the training centre...months could go without you achieving anything").

However, the nature of the incentives that motivated Rida for work, in contrast to Zidan and, more strikingly, Nabil who will be discussed below, seemed more relevant to the ethos of the centre's vision. It may be argued that Rida was influenced by a possible self whose vision was more aligned with the centre's vision. If the remoteness of Zidan's personal vision from the centre's formal vision may be best explained by self-reported indifference to the importance of the centre's strategy, then the proximity between Rida's personal vision and the centre's vision can be best explained by Rida's positive engagement with the centre's strategy (Rida: As for me you see...because I work in the quality department and well acquainted with the strategy...I strive every now and then to sustain this point...through the messages I send to other departments...like saying 'based on the centre's vision' or 'based on the centre's goals).

The latter exchange with Rida implies that positive engagement with the formal strategy makes a difference. It is more likely to reduce the discrepancy between employees' personal visions and the vision of the organization. It may not suffice to realize the discipline of 'shared vision' because, like mental models, personal

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visions tend to vary widely across employees in the organization. Yet, technically speaking, employees positively engaged with the strategy will be more inclined to move from what Senge calls 'compliance' (i.e. Billett's subjugated self: mere placeholder) to 'commitment' and/or 'enrollment'. (i.e. Billett's agentic and/or enterprising self).

Of all the participants in the study, Nabil was the most extreme in expressing complacency with the status quo even if it did not involve any short or long-term motivating vision. Nabil was asked: "what is the thing that made you motivated to come to work every day, are you motivated?" to which he answered: "actually I consider it as a routine, a routine that I am doing". And to help Nabil clarify his position, several confirmatory questions had to be asked and the following exchange ensued (**AS**: Ok in that case looking into the future what is the most important thing for you as an employee at this place?; Nabil: God owns the future; **AS**: Do you have a vision you want to achieve or is it you just care about your current tasks?; Nabil: I am living reality…I do not remember yesterday and god owns tomorrow). In contradistinction to the rest of his colleagues, the case of Nabil suggests that while some employees may hold desired possible selves relatively conducive to realizing a common vision, some others may not be in possession of any possible self in that capacity at all. Nabil is a case in point. However, this does not mean that persons without desired possible selves of some sort will spend their lives in a vacuum. Nabil's responses show that he is almost entirely engaged with his 'actual self', which qualifies for him as 'reality' (i.e. "I am living my reality"). Recalling Higgins et al. (1986), Nabil may be seen as content with the representation of the attributes he actually has. Again, as in the discipline of mental models, the findings show how difficult it is to realize a common (shared) vision, therefore posing a challenge for learning organizations in one of its crucial dimensions. To further examine the extent to which participants' possible selves accommodated a shared job-related vision, the questions: (1) "looking ahead, what's the most important thing for you as an employee in the TC?", (2) "do you remember the TC's formal vision?", and (3) "does it motivate you?", were asked.

Here too, responses varied widely from one participant to another, and none of them, without exception, referred to realizing the formal vision as the most important thing in their future career in the TC. For instance, Talal's future self did not include realizing the TC's vision and the most important thing was to find an opportunity to pursue "postgraduate studies". In fact, among the obstacles which Talal thought were responsible for preventing him from pursuing this path was the centre itself (Talal: yes there are many obstructions. Firstly, the centre doesn't allow me to join postgraduate studies). There appears to be a conflict of interest between the formal demands of Talal's current job and some part of his desired possible self. Bilal reported the following in response to what was most important for him as an employee in SWCC: "Just like any other employee seeking to improve his standard of living and that's why I'm here. Seeking the satisfaction of my conscience".

The relation of employees' possible selves to the building of a shared vision is more pronounced in their answers to the question: "Do you feel that this vision will help you become the person you would like to become in your career?". For instance, Mahmoud answered with an emphatic negative and thought that the TC'S vision demanded something that was beyond reach or difficult to achieve. (Mahmoud: "No"; "Excellence is difficult to achieve, remembering logo and vision is good, but we know that excellence inside the centre is difficult). Sultan was even more responsive in stating his negative view and the reasons behind it (Sultan: No...and if you want it again for recording [laughing] I say: NO!; **AS**: Why is this so? The vision already emphasizes excellence...I assume you want excellence?; Sultan: Yes all of us do; **AS**: So what's the reason then?; Sultan: Maybe it is a mental image I have that is influencing me in this respect; **AS**: What is it?; Sultan: It is my academic view ...the mission here is more concerned with technical and vocational things ...so it might be this).

Sultan is aware of the virtually missing alignment between his personal vision and the formal vision and he does not shy away from stating it. On the other hand, Sami thinks that the current vision will help him become the person he

wanted to become and answered with an emphatic affirmative (Sami: Yes sure). Participants Hameed, Musa, and Ali also reported that the TC's vision would help them become the persons they desired to become (Respectively: "Yes"; "I think yes"; "No doubt no doubt"). Ironically, Rida who, among others, is formally in charge of overseeing and evaluating the realization of the centre's strategy, reported that the current vision was very remote from helping him become the person he wanted to become, and candidly commented: "…the vision is now more of a routine and does not motivate me anymore towards what I aspire to be".

These latter interviews confirm a recurrent theme across the previous disciplines: personal visions may challenge and sometimes supplant the common (shared) vision formally instituted to realize a successful LO model. They also accentuate the unnegligible impact of possible selves not only on employees' personal visions, which were very diverse and unique to each, but also their attitudes towards the organization's vision.

Conclusion

Senge expects shared visions, once realized, to "foster genuine commitment and enrolment rather than compliance" (Senge, p. 9). However, the bone of contention is whether they can be fully realized to that effect. The findings in this chapter suggest that the concept of shared visions as promulgated by Senge's model is less likely to ever crystalize and that employees' personal visions are more likely to gain the upper hand in the organization. Moreover, the high levels of motivation reported by various participants were attributed to personal visions that varied in content and detail. However, interviews revealed that engagement with the strategy can help lessen the mismatch between personal informal visions and organizational formal visions. One implication that can be suggested here is that organizations should find ways to encourage positive engagement with the strategy. They should not expect

employees to make the transition from compliance to enrolment or commitment solely on their own, or even begin to move towards a shared vision without organizational aid. Finally, the interviews have revealed that employees were aware of their desired possible selves to a degree that enabled them to experience and report a sense of incongruity between such selves and the organization's formal vision. This underscores the powerful impact of possible selves on the likelihood of an effective vision evenly shared among the organizational members.

Chapter Nine

Possible Selves and Team Learning

The main aim of this chapter is to explore whether SWCC's TC employees held possible images of themselves that were conducive to the realization of team learning. In exploring this area, arriving at informed findings on two of the previously stated research questions should be possible. Those research questions were: 'To what extent do individuals' perceptions of their actual/possible selves generate attitudes that facilitate or impede adoption of LO learning behaviours?' and 'In what way can individuals' personal learning experiences pose a challenge to organization leaders in their efforts to realize the LO learning behaviours?'.

Starting with the most relevant question designed for this purpose – the question: "I would like to think of myself as a person who works with a team and achieves through his colleagues rather than a person who works alone and seeks independence…how much is this true about yourself?" -participants' responses did not vary much. All participants, except two, literally reported preferring team work/learning to individual work/learning. Their answers however varied in style and emphasis. On an improvised scale of 100%, Sultan thought that the phrase in the question above applied to him 90%. (i.e. " I would say it applies 90% on me"), Zidan believed that it was at least 80% and true about him (i.e. " To a large extent exceeding 80%"), Waleed 90% (i.e. "It`s about 90%"), and Musa thought the phrase applied 85% to him (i.e. "say 85% working with teams rather than being…").

The other participants who thought of themselves as persons who liked to work with a team and achieve through colleagues gave unrestricted answers without any numerical approximation. Such participants included Bilal who said, "I imagine myself as a person with teamwork achievements"; Yasir who was more

elaborate: "I love the team...I like to work with a team and find it more enjoyable...the team why? Because it inspires you with many ideas...instead of having one idea for implementation or application you have many ideas...and also in terms of excellence"; Rida: "Definitely...I love the work to be done in the spirit of the team...very much"); Talal (i.e. "I like to imagine myself as a person achieved through the work or teamwork"); and Fwazi (i.e. "Definitely...I'm one of these people ...for me we complement each other...I can never do something alone and then say I'm all in all").

One participant, however, gave a double answer (AS: To what extent you find this applicable to you when you imagine yourself as a person who learns through teamwork and achieve more by working with a team or as a person who works individually...which image do you prefer?; Nasir: The first image; AS: And did this happen actually?; Nasir: In terms of information we have to meet in the electricity department, we should participate in addition to work within teamwork; AS: Do you achieve your duties by working with teamwork?; Nasir: I do not prefer working with a team; AS: Does it annoy you to work with a team?; Nasir: Sometimes it is preferable to solve a specific problem without the intervention of others). Although participant Nasir 's first response is more inclined to an image of the self which learns through team work, Nasir 's second and third responses respectively reveal an individual who thinks of team learning as something demanded by others, an individual who, practically speaking, dislikes to be involved in team learning. This latter observation comes in stark contrast to Nasir's initial response. In some sense, it can be seen as an example of Nasir's espoused theory violated by his theory-in-use.

Another issue that has been explored in relation to team learning and possible selves is whether participants saw themselves as capable of engaging in criticism and discussion. Here, as mentioned earlier in the literature review, Senge raises the importance of 'colleagueship'. Each participant was asked to imagine that he was asked to work with a team in order to evaluate the team's performance concerning a certain action and then see whether he could

imagine himself criticizing his boss's views. Responses also varied for this question. Participants Yasir (i.e. " No problem...no problem"); Zidan (i.e. "Yes I can .."); Talal (i.e. " Yes, constructive criticism that he will do better"); and Musa (i.e. "Yes...nothing wrong with this") for instance answered in the affirmative, indicating that they had no problem imagining themselves as persons who would forthrightly criticize their boss if the situation requires. The impact of imagining a self that is blunt and transparent in criticism is quite evident. On the other hand, other participants imagined themselves differently. Rida is an example (Rida: Well ...as I said...I have tried this willingness to criticize but I found some sensitivities you see...this is the problem; **AS**: How did you react to such sensitivities? Rida: Well I promised myself to minimize criticism...and ...I don't know really whether this is wrong or not...I found myself swimming against the current...so I decided after that to go with the current).

What can be inferred from Rida is that he found it difficult imagining himself as a person who would freely criticize his boss whenever possible. Instead, he entertains an image of himself as a person who is uncertain or reluctant about this particular behaviour (i.e. "I don't know really whether this is wrong or not") and he decides to keep a low profile (i.e. "...so I decided after that to go with the current"). Whether this self is purely the result of Rida's own disposition or one that has temporally formed in reaction to certain external encounters is something that cannot be easily decided from the data collected. However, only indirectly may one infer that Rida's image of himself on this particular issue has been partially formed in reaction to negative past encounters (i.e. "I found myself swimming against the current...I found some sensitivities you see...this is the problem") whereupon he decided to introduce a new behaviour into his future character (i.e. "well I promised myself to minimize criticism"). Rida's decision to surrender and "go with the current" may be seen as an example of receding into a type of self which Billett (2010) calls the "subjugated self", one characterized by the individual becoming embedded and enmeshed in the existing social structure.

Examined in the light of colleagueship, Rida does not appear to entertain an image that is welcoming of "choosing to view 'adversaries' as 'colleagues with different views'", particularly with Rida's decision "to minimize criticism" and "go with the current". But Rida does seem to hold an image which is sensitive to what Senge describes as acknowledging "the mutual risk" and establishing "the sense of safety in facing the risk" (2006, p. 228). Thus, the fact that entertaining an image of oneself that does not comply with the requirements of 'colleagueship' may not be the result of a person's disposition as much as the result of external influences on one's attitude (or mental model). This is supported, for instance, by the case of Nasir, who reported being told that his openness was a nuisance (i.e. "At work they said to me that my openness causes problems"). The point here is that being deterred from/inhibited by criticism and transparent discussion may not be best explained by something characteristic of individuals' identities, notwithstanding that they are related at least in some distant way, but rather in terms of the dominant organizational culture and surrounding attitudes. This may explain why Nasir's reaction was different from Rida's, since the former was not put off by his colleagues' remark. In stark contrast to Rida, and despite the risk of looking rude, Nasir believed that what he was doing was not only formally ethical but also personally significant (**AS**: They say it's a problem…do you think this the case?; Nasir: No, it relieves my conscience).

The argument that can be advanced here is that individuals' past experiences do not always leave the same lasting effect on their possible selves. For instance, it seems that Rida's exposure to past negative experiences of criticism did not amount to the effect of forming an identity-based trait; instead, it has developed into an attitude susceptible to change depending on context. On the other hand, Nasir's prolonged exposure to supportive contexts not only amounted to forming a transient attitude but also to forming a quality that was more or less definitive of the self. As cited earlier, Nasir not only regards criticism as a behaviour that is useful for the organization but also relates to it as a value endorsed by his conscience (i.e. suggestive of identity). The interviews

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above suggest something important about the role of attitude as an intermediate determiner between possible self content and individual behaviour. First, they support the proposition that attitudes, possible selves, and behaviour are strongly interconnected. Second, they indicate that one may form a certain attitude without having the basic constitution of the self altered. Recalling the case of Rida, flinching away from criticism may be seen as a behaviour determined by a certain attitude rather than interpreting it as a defining character of actual/possible self identity. The inference that Rida's negative attitude toward criticism may have formed in response to negative workplace encounters is consistent with Hodkinson et al.'s (2004, 18) earlier observation that certain experiences of workplace environments may reflect prevalent attitudes among employees (p. 18).

As suggested in the literature review, one of the important features Senge thought was central to the effective realization of team learning was the ability to engage in learningful conversations. In the overall assessment of the relation of possible selves to team learning, the aforementioned feature was explored by asking participants the following question: " If it turns out for you that you are the one to blame for a certain problem at work, what are the chances that you will frankly admit this without hesitation before your colleagues?". Reponses varied between two extreme positions. In one extreme, some participants not only thought that admitting their faults in such a situation was good but also thought of it as an obligation. This is a position which participant Zidan reported siding with (**AS**: now suppose it turns out for you that you are the one to blame for a certain problem at work, what are the chances that you will frankly admit this without hesitation before your colleagues?; Zidan: The chances are present...present.; **AS**: have you ever been through this experience?; Zidan: Yes...I had to it...it is the nature of the situation which requires in order to correct a particular path...so you have to mention those places of deficiency).

In this exchange, Zidan is ready to fulfil an important requirement of effective team learning in Senge's LO model. Basically, Zidan reports a spirit which largely goes against the logic of 'defensive reasoning' (i.e. "… you have to mention those places of deficiency). This position comes in stark contrast to the other extreme where Omar, for instance, reports exactly the opposite (i.e. Omar: "I don't prefer admitting my failure in public, it must be privately"). And when he was asked what the problem was with such a behaviour, he thought that it "lies firstly in the prestige of this person…why should I criticize him in public and shame him so he may lose his work, I want to be positive, I prefer constructive criticism". Omar's reaction is consistent with what one would expect from a person with a noticeable degree of defensive reasoning. From the perspective of team learning, Omar's sensitivity to open criticism and preference for privacy is also consistent with his response to the question of whether he predominantly imagined himself as a person who would work with a team or work individually. To this latter question, his answer was unequivocal (i.e. Omar: "individually").

These findings imply that what Senge calls 'limits to growth' (an unhealthy state of affairs that sometimes results from a culture of criticism prevention) are existent and can negatively affect individuals' learning. Limits to Omar's growth can be seen in envisioning a self with aversion to open criticism and an explicit inclination to avoid team learning. Recalling Bowditch et al.'s (2008, p. 57-58) discussion of attitudes, the interview suggests that Omar has developed an attitude towards open criticism which seems to lie midway between *high and low differentiation* (The former standing for attitudes supported by a wide variety of beliefs and values, and the latter for those sustained by fewer beliefs and values). The reason why this is so is that Omar manages to sustain his attitude with a host of beliefs and values (i.e. preserving prestige, avoiding shame, wanting to be positive, preferring constructive criticism). This again underscores an earlier finding that mental models vary in structure and content from one individual to another. In this connection, two implications follow from this conclusion. The first is that efforts to bring about homogeny in shared vison

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and team learning face the challenge of diversity in mental models and imagined selves. The second underscores the need to encourage regular 'learningful conversations' in order to strengthen feelings of 'colleagueship' among employees and keep 'limits to growth' to a minimum.

Conclusion

According to Senge (2006, p. 10), "team learning is vital because teams, not individuals, are the fundamental learning unit in modern organizations". Ontologically, Senge assumes that teams exist as fundamental units. In order for teams to exist as fundamental units, it is necessary that they exhibit a greater degree of unity and cohesion. This entails unity of shared visions and mental models. However, data analyses in this chapter revealed findings that strongly challenge this assumption. The reality of organizations turns out to be messier than what Senge's model tends to suggest. Teams rarely exist, if at all, as perfect distinct units, and organizations in turn rarely exist as a body of discretely interlocked team units. Furthermore, attitudes to team learning varied in content and the contents themselves varied in differentiation. More importantly, there were cases where partial or full disinclination for team learning was reported in response to asking participants whether they imagined themselves as more inclined to work individually or with teams. Such findings reinforce the assumption that imagined possible selves can strongly impact attitudes towards learning in general and team learning in particular, thus rendering leadership efforts to change attitudes not only harder but also riskier.

Chapter Ten

Possible Selves and Creating Continuous Learning Opportunities

As pointed out in the literature review, the role of employees' possible selves will not only be explored against Senge's inspirational model, but will also be explored against Marsick and Watkin's comparatively practical LO model. To reiterate the rationale, Senge's LO model was adopted as a framework for exploring subjects' attitudes towards learning 'ideals', whereas Marsick and Watkins' dimensions served as a means for exploring subjects' attitudes towards certain learning ' behaviours'. For this purpose, participants were asked 'how clear it was for them that they will be able to continue learning in SWCC' and 'whether they perceived any serious conflict between their jobs and their desire to learn'. Learning here stands for the broader sense of learning discussed in the literature review.

To the question of how clear it was that they will be able to continue learning in SWCC, all participants without exception responded in the affirmative and expressed an intention to continue learning in the future. Sami's response, for instance, was "yes, for sure"; Rida was more affirmative, "certainly...in fact I have the problem of multiple projects in learning...but I like to concentrate on one option "; Zidan saw it as an inevitable prospect (AS: Looking ahead, how clear is it for you that you will be able to continue learning?; Zidan: Clear; AS: Clear? You don't see any possibility that your learning will diminish or stop in the future?; Zidan: No).

Although all participants seem to perceive selves that were favourable for continuous future learning, some of them conceived otherwise with respect to formal learning enterprises. As the forthcoming exchanges suggest, they were all unanimous about the continuity of personal/informal learning. In fact, when some of them sensed conflict between learning and work, it was not between work and learning in its broader sense but rather between work and learning in

its formal sense. Participant Fwazi is a vivid case in point (**AS**: Looking ahead, how clear is it for you that you will be able to continue learning?; Fwazi: Not as before...it is diminishing.; **AS**: Do you perceive conflict between your job and learning?; Fwazi: certainly.; **AS**: How?; Fwazi: The work pressure you are under...due to it the scope of learning has been limited very much.; **AS**: What kind of learning did work prevent you from?; Fwazi: Dedicating myself to studying for example...the time needed for learning has become very little...even if you try to get it online.. for example I bought one of the courses .. a course in curriculum design ..we bought it and I'm now memorizing this course...this course is about 4 days...and the 5th day is practical ..I'm still only half way although two months have lapsed now...I don't study this at home...I do it during work hours because it's something that has to do with work... the pressure of work).

Fwazi perceives present and future conflict between learning and work. The fact that work here is considered a pressure, instead of a learning opportunity, as well considering formal courses as a missed learning opportunity, suggest that some tend to understand learning not in its broader sense, which includes informal learning, but in a much narrower sense (i.e. formal sense). In short, the workplace for Fwazi may still constitute a valuable learning opportunity, but in reality, it remains a definite obstacle in the way of pursuing formal learning experiences. Recalling Marton et al.'s survey of conceptions of learning (1993), Fwazi 's conception of learning may be said to fall between two conceptions of learning: learning as memorization and learning as increase in knowledge (i.e. Fwazi: "...we bought it and I'm now memorizing this course"). There is further evidence which indicates that Fwazi's conception of learning reverberates between those two conceptions. This evidence is inferred from an earlier affirmation in the interview that learning does not motivate him as much as the sense of obligation does. (**AS**: Yes ...what is the thing ...the meaning that motivates you as such?; Fwazi: Clear now ...it is my conviction of that this is an obligation and that I have to complete it as far as I can according to my capabilities; ... **AS**: which is more the feeling of obligation...or the sense of

learning?; Fwazi: No...no...learning ...mmm...learning no longer). One implication that can be elicited here is that learning tends to become receptive when it is approached as an obligation. On the other hand, when learning is appreciated as value in its own right, it tends to become active and transformative. The interview suggests that people may engage in learning behaviours not because they are motivated by the value of learning but primarily by other drives such as the sense of obligation. This supplies evidence in favour of the proposition that 'ought-to' selves are effective in influencing peoples' choices and motivations. 'Ought-to' selves, according to Higgins et al. (1986, p. 6), stand for peoples' representation of the attributes which others believe they should or ought to have, such as the person's sense of duty, obligation, or responsibility.

Participant Ali also responded in a way that reflected his inclination to view learning opportunities from a formal perspective (**As**: Ok do you see any conflict between the nature of your work and learning?; Ali: Actually the only conflict is that there are no opportunities to learn this is the only one; **AS**: Are you talking about formal regular learning?; Ali: The formal study meaning that there are no universities that would accept you).

Ali reported seeing himself as a person whose chances for pursuing continuous learning are high (i.e. "actually high"), but when the exchange moved on, it turned out that learning opportunities for him chiefly meant formal ones, thereby increasing the likelihood of not being realized (i.e. "The formal study meaning that there are no universities that would accept you").

In order to highlight the contrast between participants who view learning from a broader perspective, to the extent of including informal learning experiences, and participants who are more inclined to see it from a formal perspective, it might be useful to cite the case of Yasir whose perception of learning is very different from Fwazi's and Ali's (**AS**: Let me put it again...is learning an ongoing potential for you in the future?; Yasir: No.; **AS**: you mean you will stop learning?;

Yasir: learning as a development no...but learning as an academic pursuit yes; AS: Do you perceive conflict between your job and learning?; Yasir: No...in fact I'm happy and comfortable.; AS: why?; Yasir: Because I'm actually learning...what I'm doing is learning).

It is quite evident from the interviews that there was an awareness of the two kinds of learning and some were able to juxtapose examples of informal learning (i.e. "learning as a development") to instances of formal learning (i.e. "academic pursuit"). And to the question of whether they imagined themselves as persons who would continue to learn in the future, work was not regarded as an obstacle for continued learning. In fact, they seemed to appreciate the value of informal learning and therefore approached it as a possible and favourable learning opportunity (i.e. " Yasir: No...in fact I'm happy and comfortable; AS: why?; Yasir: Because I'm actually learning...what I'm doing is learning"; Rida: Certainly...In fact I have the problem of multiple projects in learning..but I like to concentrate on one option", "...I decided to compensate that with self-learning").

Both the fact that Rida reported imagining himself as a person who would continue to learn in the future and the fact that he realized the importance of informal learning opportunities may partially explain why other participants hardly thought of themselves as being capable of continuing learning in the future. It may be due to the fact that such participants perceived formal learning opportunities as the ones that truly count. This is a conclusion supported by the case of Fwazi who reported conflict between work and learning. Fwazi regarded his work (i.e. "curriculum design") as a source of pressure when it conflicted with the formal learning opportunity he wanted to pursue (e.g. "course in curriculum design") whereas Rida, who also encountered the same experience of not being able to pursue formal learning opportunities, regarded his job as source of learning and personal growth (i.e. **"AS**: The learning that you would like to progress in for the rest of your life...; Rida: I had an ambition to pursue the masters and PhD but now because of the circumstances I decided to

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compensate that with self-learning...; **AS**: what self-learning?; Rida: In the area of my specialty and in quality").

This was also true of participant Yasir who not only thought that there was no conflict between work and learning but also expressed satisfaction with the realization that his daily work was a source of continuous learning (i.e. "**AS**: Do you perceive conflict between your job and learning?; Yasir: No...in fact I'm happy and comfortable; **AS**: why?; Yasir: Because I'm actually learning...what I'm doing is learning").

In contrast to Rida and Yasir, and in support of the conclusion about Fwazi , participant Bilal believed that, in the absence of formal learning crowned with certification, very little learning was achieved (i.e. Bilal: "very little learning without getting any certification"). Furthermore, Bilal 's following response reflects an attitude that hardly perceives informal learning practices as learning opportunities (**AS**: Are there other things you learned in addition to that (training)?; Bilal: I practiced some things *but I did not learn*). (Italics mine).

The cases discussed thus far suggest three findings. The first casts doubt on Senge's generic assertion that it is peoples' nature to learn and love learning. As far as informal learning is concerned, Bilal and Fwazi seem to be an obvious exception. Bilal believed that his informal learning efforts did not pay off and this is an outcome one would hardly expect to easily follow from Senge's earlier assumption. As for Fwazi, learning seems to be heading towards a standstill (i.e.: "**AS**: Looking ahead, how clear is it for you that you will be able to continue learning?'; Fwazi: Not as before...it is diminishing). This suggests that employees sometimes, not always, love to learn; and when they love to learn they only love certain learning experiences.

The other finding has to do with the possible impact of possible selves on attitudes towards continued learning. None of the participants showed reluctance or reported difficulty in envisioning a relation between their future

states and continued learning. In fact, there are clues suggesting that their attitudes towards continued learning were formed in relation to some future self. (e.g. **AS**: Looking ahead, how clear is it for you that you will be able to continue learning?; Zidan: Clear; **AS**: Clear? You don't see any possibility that your learning will diminish or stop in the future?; Zidan: No). This latter observation supports an earlier assumption that possible selves can orient learners' attitudes towards particular learning states.

The third finding has to do with attitude as an intermediate determiner between perceived continued learning and possible selves. Nothing definite in the responses of Fwazi , Yasir, Ali , Bilal , and Rida shows that well-formed lasting possible selves are chiefly responsible for their conceptions about formal and informal learning. The variety of responses, the nuanced distinctions made by some participants between formal and informal learning opportunities, and the ability to identify which one of them is more relevant or valuable, support the proposition that attitudes, whose impact is instantaneous and short-lived compared to the impact of possible selves, are behind participants' particular conceptions about the value of formal/informal learning and the prospects of being able to continue learning in the future.

Conclusion

Marsick and Watkins propose that learning organizations are ones where continuous learning opportunities are being created. The findings in this chapter reveal that if organizations should attempt to introduce continuous learning, they are less likely to be met with resistance on the part of employees. None of the employees in this study perceived future conflict between work and learning in the broadest sense of the term, nor did any envision the possibility that such learning will wane. This suggests an important implication for organizations compared to Senge's model. Based on observations in an earlier chapter, it was proposed that organizations should not expect employees to make the move from compliance to enrolment or commitment

without organizational support. What is special about Marsick and Watkins' model is that it aims from the start at creating enabling continuous learning opportunities instead of relying on employees to take full responsibility for doing so. Compared to Senge, Marsick and Watkins' LO model is more realistic and practical in this respect. It is more realistic in that it does not demand from each and every employee, to mention two examples, the realization of 'personal mastery' or complete compliance with a 'shared organizational vision'.

A final finding that clearly emerged from the interviews was about perceived future conflict between formal learning and work. While almost none perceived future conflict between work and the broader sense of learning – which includes informal learning, some employees unambiguously perceived present and future conflict between work and formal modes of learning. This sheds light on two issues. The first relates to the fact that some employees may depreciate or reject work in its own right as an experience where learning can expand and thrive. The problem with this attitude is that it tends to perpetuate the conflict between work and learning. The other issue has to do with appreciating the implications of subjectivity for both leadership and LO enterprises. One important implication in this respect is the need to heed employees' personal needs and maximize appropriate alignment between employees' personal learning objectives and the organization's overall learning policy/strategy. Another implication, to conclude, raises the issue of diversity and uniqueness among individual learning experiences in organizational contexts. Instead of trying to confront such diversity or treating it as a threat, the leadership should find ways to cultivate it for the betterment of both the organization and its members.

Chapter Eleven

Possible Selves, Promoting Enquiry and Dialogue, and Providing Strategic Leadership for Learning

In order to explore participants' attitudes in relation to practices associated with Marsick and Watkins' dimensions, each participant was asked to imagine himself five years into the future from the time of the interview and report whether he perceived any difference from his actual (present) self with respect to three learning behaviours:

1. Courage to question things.
2. Ability to engage in open dialogues and discussions.
3. Understanding the importance of your role for the TC as a whole.

In this chapter, these three behaviours will appear as sections and general guiding themes in which the relevant interview questions will be conducted. Each of the three sections will end with a conclusion summarizing the main findings and implications.

1. Courage to Question Things

When participants were asked to imagine themselves five years into the future from the time of the interview and say whether their selves were any better from their present (actual) selves with respect to their courage to question things and think critically, all except Omar responded in the affirmative with varying degrees of certainty.

Talal, for instance, not only agreed that his courage to question things will become better five years from the time of the interview but also thought that this is what should normally happen (i.e. "It is normal that every day I gain new skills so within five years I will gain many skills"). With a similar tenor, Bakr reported the same (i.e. "Well, after 5 years from now I would be 50, I think when I get older I would dare to criticize more, love to criticize). With Bakr, there is emphasis on the age factor and he appears to associate it with improved

learning behaviours, such as heightened criticism and questioning. However, it remains uncertain what criticism and questioning meant for him. Hameed (i.e. "surely would be better"), Rida (i.e. "certainly...certainly"), Musa (i.e. "it will be much better than now"), Fwazi (i.e. "It will change...change...it has actually changed"); and Yasir (i.e. "very much better and it will be strong") were equally certain that their courage to question and criticize would be better.

Participant Yasir also responded in the affirmative but differs from the rest of his colleagues in qualifying such improvement as 'strong'. Revisiting Yasir's previous responses in the interview reveal attributes in his personality which are highly consistent with his emphasis on 'strength'. The attributes were 'enthusiasm' and 'impulsiveness', as stated by Yasir in the following exchange (i.e. Yasir: It is my nature that I am enthusiastic and impulsive...I cannot keep silent about mistakes, I have to change and correct it...)

Together, the findings above are almost entirely consistent with employees' perceptions of themselves – reported earlier - as willing to continue learning in the future. It seems that willingness to continue learning is associated with becoming more agentic and enterprising (i.e. Billett's agentic and enterprising selves). In contrast to the subjugated self, agentic and enterprising selves interact with the reality around them and are not passive or mere placeholders. Courage to question things and think critically are two conspicuous examples of interacting with the extant reality. In contrast to Yasir, participant Omar reported that the prospects of changing to the better were zero. (i.e. "**AS**: five years from now - Allah Willing – do you think your courage to question things will have improved?; Omar: never"). However, Omar had reasons for not envisioning any improved change in this direction (**AS**: Never!; Omar: Never! Based on what?; **AS**: based on your existence in this place as an employee in SWCC; Omar: It is not enough if the centre did not activate the plans. Excuse me the man cannot depend only on one place. I am here developing myself on my own although it is not obligatory, but if the centre did not activate the plan, it may be the same with no change after 5 years).

However, Omar was specific about what he suggestively thought was the main reason behind such impossibility (i.e. "never") of not seeing any prospect for improvement with respect to the particular learning behaviour of courage to question things. It is his belief that the centre was not activating the plan it had designed and announced. Recalling Senge's model, this latter observation reinforces the significance attached to mental models' (i.e. underlying assumptions about others, work, and the organization) possible impact on employees' learning behaviours.

However, the nature of the (strategic) plan is far removed from posing a threat to Omar's future capacity to learn and question things. Even more, the plan does not include any promise or commitment to improve employees' critical learning skills. This weakens Omar's assumption that centre's failure to activate the plan would deter him from changing to the better (i.e. Omar: "… but if the centre didn't activate the plan, it may be the same with no change after 5 years). The main reason appears to be something else and that is his being an expatriate. Several non-Saudi employees envisioned themselves as employees who were given less privileges and denied certain learning rights. Omar for instance complains: "unfortunately the future will remain as it is in the past…, for example, I want to be a director, I won't be because the centre's policy doesn't prepare me for this".

Similarly Rida, an Arab expat, realizes that SWCC's system is in this respect not in his favour (Rida: I'll say it…I graduated 25 years ago…and it's very natural that someone wants to feel some development and promotion in his position and place…it may be due to SWCC circumstances…I believe that the long years at work…legal challenges having to do with SWCC's systems these are the main challenges). And Othman who not only denied that there was anything in the centre's strategy for him but also denied the existence of any plan at all (Othman: The issue is if they have a strategic plan to fulfil the objectives of the company; AS: Is there..?; Othman: No; AS: There isn't..?; Othman: No; AS: Haven't you found anything like it?; Othman: Even if there was a plan, it's only

for Saudi people not for foreigners because the situation of the foreigners is marginalized).

For Omar, the problem did not lie for instance in possessing a debilitating self-schema (i.e. endogenous factor) or, broadly speaking, an incapacitating future self but rather laid in the organizations' system (i.e. exogenous). In specific terms, he is capable of imagining himself progressing as an employee (i.e. "I'm here developing myself on my own") but he is also aware of the future obstacle that there is a limit to his growth and learning (i.e. "I won't be because the centre's policy doesn't prepare me for this"). Thus, one may suspect that Omar's disappointment with 'inactivated plans' was actually an indirect way of expressing disappointment with the organization's discriminatory system. Rida and Othman were more outspoken and direct in declaring the organization's system responsible for preventing them from realizing their desired future goals. Omar, although less outspoken in this regard, was more passionate in emphasizing disconnection and the absence of alignment (i.e. "No, Look! The strategic plan of the centre in the current condition is not linked with what I want to achieve").

Conclusion

The latter discussion raises vital implications for scholarship on learning organizations and for implementing them in reality. Scholarship should pay particular attention to the role of selves and subjectivities in shaping the future of organizations. In this context, employees differed in perceiving the possibility of future selves with improved courage to question things. The findings in this section have revealed that the majority of employees were capable of envisioning improved future courage to question and think critically. The fact that employees' attitudes were far less varied, compared to Senge's disciplines, on these two learning behaviours (i.e. continued learning & courage to question and think critically) suggests that Marsick and Watkins' model is more consistent with individuals' personal realities than Senge's model.

Interviews with Rida, Othman, and Omar support two earlier arguments in the literature review about the role and nature of possible selves. One was that possible selves must not be reduced to innate cognitive states or to sociocultural constructs but rather to an amalgam of both. The cases above support this argument in the sense that participants' vulnerability to issues of culture and perceived discrimination allowed them to feel that their identities were undermined or jeopardized (i.e. "…because the situation of the foreigners is marginalized").

The second argument follows from the former and suggests that acknowledging the sociocultural dimension of possible selves may help explain why structures succeed in both enabling and constraining individuals' lives (Brittan, 1996, p. 1328). More often, the participants attributed their limited formal learning opportunities to exogenous factors having to do with the organization's policy/system. This is a point acknowledged by Senge who argued that "individuals and firms operate within systems and structures that influence behaviour" (p. 233).

2.   Ability to Engage In Open Dialogues and Discussions

Participants were asked to imagine their selves five years from their immediate moment, and then assess whether their ability to engage in open dialogues and discussions would have by then improved. None of them expressed difficulty with the act of projecting themselves into the future and the majority answered emphatically in the affirmative that they will have acquired an enhanced ability to engage in open dialogues and discussions (i.e. Mahmoud: God willing it will be improved ,sure"; Yasir: "also strong ..I expect that"; Ali: "God willing it will be higher"; Saqr: "yes it will improve"; Nasir: "it will increase". Sultan: "God willing...God willing ...it will be better", Rida: "These have always been improving for me").

These responses suggest that participants are capable of envisioning future selves that are conducive to improved engagement in open dialogues and discussions within the organization. This observation is consistent with Rathbone et al.'s (2016) findings in their cross-cultural study of possible selves, namely that self-improvement was the most commonly-generated category of possible self. In relation to Hodkinson et al.'s (2008) notion of horizons for learning, this might be explained by conceiving desired possible selves as tending to come with highly enabling horizons, recalling that "for every learner, it is the horizons for learning that set limits to what learning is possible, and which enable learning within those limits" (Hodkinson et al., 2008, p. 39).

While the responses above express unconditional affirmatives, there were responses that varied between restricted and undecided affirmatives but none of the participants expressed difficulty with the act of imagining a future self. This suggests that they were vivid to the degree of allowing them to pass judgments on the behaviour in question (i.e. ability to engage in open dialogues and discussions). The restricted affirmatives include for example Fwazi: "with firm conviction it will change to better...but still remains limited"; Talal: "It may

be improved on condition that all teamwork has common culture because when everyone has different culture they can't discuss correctly and the criticize only for criticism. When they have common culture it will be better"; Hameed: "Yes because we would be more close to each other"; Musa: "much better than now because I'm working on my master's degree and as soon I done with it I will go for the PhD and the PhD might not make big difference but it will open doors for me to engage in other educational institutions around the world whether in the UK, America, Canada".

Unlike the former responses, these responses are restricted by fears and reasons. Fwazi, for instance, reported that the chances for improved engagement in open dialogues and discussions remain limited. As for Hameed, the likelihood of acquiring improved engagement in open dialogues and discussions appears to be dependent on the prospect of forming closer ties with colleagues. Similarly, Musa also conveys an ability to imagine a possible self in possession of improved engagement in open discussions and dialogues yet he attributes the achievability of such to progress in higher education. Talal, on the other hand, is not sure and believes that the likelihood of securing such improved engagement is dependent on the pre-existence of a common culture.

Participant Bakr's response does not describe his attitude in relation to a possible self but instead his attitude in relation to his actual (present) self. This is evident from the present simple tense (i.e. "I don't like the open discussions a lot...it's a personal issue, in such a kind of discussions I keep quiet). However, he also offers a reason, which is his dislike for open discussions in the first place suggesting that his attitude has little to do with a poorly vivid possible self or a possible self that is radically different in this respect from the actual one. Again, in all the latter cases (i.e. Fwazi, Talal, Musa, and Bakr) the 'horizons for learning' are not as broad as they seemed for the former group (i.e. Mahmoud, Ali, Yasir, Sultan, Nasir, Saqr).

It is very difficult to pinpoint the cause behind such differences among participants in relation to possible selves, yet one finding that seems to suggest

itself here is this: variation among perceived future selves tends to increase when it comes to envisioning learning behaviours involving complex relations with other individuals (i.e. ability to engage in open dialogues and discussions).

Conclusion

The findings in this section show that employees' attitudes towards future 'ability to engage in open dialogues and discussions' are more varied than they were towards 'courage to question and think critically' or 'continued learning'. One may expect such variation to have far-reaching consequences on the viability of a fully realized LO model such as the one idealized by Peter Senge. Disciplines such as "team learning", "shared vision", and "mental models" are highly sensitive to such variation: the more the variation among individuals in these areas, the less likely one should expect them to come to full fruition.

3. Understanding the Importance of One's Role for the TC

Participants were asked to imagine themselves five years in the future from the time of the interview and report whether their selves were any better with respect to understanding the importance of their role for the training centre. It is assumed that if individuals succeed in envisioning themselves as capable of understanding the importance of their role in the future of the TC, then one can infer that adequately appropriate strategic leadership for learning is being provided.

Participants' responses can be divided into two categories. The first includes those who answered in the affirmative with varying degrees of emphasis and detail. The second includes those who either answered in the negative or responded more or less neutrally, also with varying degrees of detail. Participants from the former category included Bakr: "I think it would be better, if Allah wills"; Sami: "Highly improved"; Bilal: "I feel it's better", and Yasir:"actually now I understand it...after 5 years I think everyone working with me will better understand his role"; Ali: "with no doubt higher". These were unqualified responses. But there were affirmative responses that came with some restrictions, such as Talal: "Sure it will be better especially if our duties formulate better because unfortunately there aren't clear duties for the person", and Rida: "let's be optimistic about the strategy and say that if we develop it everyone will better know his role, and Mahmoud: "Thanks to Allah, I'm satisfied and okay now. We'll see after 5 years".

The unqualified affirmative responses suggest that the employees were capable of envisioning future states that were less constricted by awareness of the circumstances surrounding their present/future selves. In more relevant terms, such responses seem to characterize possible selves which identify more with a conception of the self which is highly autonomous (Billett, 2010) but perhaps weaker in terms of conscious self-regulation (Oyserman et al., 2004). An autonomous self describes an individual who enjoys much freedom and

exercises a great deal of autonomy in realizing his/her desired goals. However, one possible problem with experiencing unbridled freedom to realize desired goals is that it tends to come at the expense of possible selves conceived as effective self-regulators. "The self-concept must contain not only goals or desired end states", remarked Oyserman et al. (2004), "but also strategies about how to behave in order to reach the desired end state". It may thus be urged that possible selves can sometimes heighten feelings of autonomy to the degree of diluting one's capacity to regulate motivations and expectations. In fact, one may plausibly argue that a true sense of autonomy is more likely to figure with a vigilant eye on reality rather than imagining the self as standing independently in a vacuum.

This implies that only by envisioning reality-based possible selves (i.e. desired future selves that are not mere figments of the mind but largely informed by reality) can one form a reliable sense of self-autonomy. This perfectly coincides with Markus and Nurius' (1986, p.954, 964) and Markus and Cross' (1994, p. 424, 343) earlier observation that the more specific and "borne out by proximity to reality" possible selves are, the more likely they would function as crucial behaviour determiners.

In this regard, and compared to the former group, Omar, Hameed, Zidan, Sultan, and Musa's responses were more critical and reflective in imagining future selves in relation to understanding the importance of their role for the training centre. When Omar, for instance, was asked to imagine himself five years in the future and report whether his self was any better with respect to understanding the importance of their role for the training centre, he had many things to say. First of all, he immediately shifted from talking about his future self to talking about the centre's status quo (i.e. "I'm sure that the centre's plan always improves and, no doubt, that this will be subject to change 100%"). Moreover, although an effort was made to restate the question and bring him back, Omar continued to digress and talk about other concerns that he deemed relevant (**AS**: Do you mean you as language instructors or as employees in

general?; Omar: This is the question, am I an employee or a language instructor? If I'm an employee, I would like to work and to commit myself, just like when you asked me to work according to the plan of the centre).

It seems that Omar perceives himself reverberating between two vocational identities: being an employee or being an instructor, although they are effectively the same because all instructors are in the end employees. However, it seems in what follows that such perceived differentiation is based on Omar's experience of being treated inferiorly compared to other employees such as technical trainers, engineers, and managers (**AS**: Do you think that your role in the centre differs from your being an employee?; Omar: Sure, an employee works in desalination but the language teacher is another position; **AS**: So the centre treats the teacher as a teacher not as an employee?; Omar: Yes teacher not an employee).

Omar not only digresses from directly reporting on his future self in relation to understanding the importance of his future role in the training centre but also fails to envision himself as someone enjoying the rights and privileges of a desalination employee (**AS**: Do you have a clear image in your mind that there is discrimination between employees and teachers?; Omar: First look! It's not about a matter of being a teacher; We are here as one society of employees and then the teachers come beneath them; **AS**: You consider the employee in this environment as a citizen?; Omar: Not like a citizen but made me feel like I'm a teacher so I kept feeling that I'm a teacher not an employee).

As the conversation continued to unfold, Omar divulged what appears to confirm the speculations inferred above. When he was asked what it was that made him feel excluded from being treated as an employee, his response indicated that being treated as a teacher was exclusionary (Omar: The work environment in general made me feel an employee only in my identification

card, but my profession is a teacher. I'm an employee but I'm treated like a teacher; AS: This is the image that you drew about the future?; Omar: Yes sure).

Several relevant implications follow for Marsick and Watkins' (1999) dimension of 'Providing Strategic Leadership for Learning' and Senge's disciplines of 'Shared Vision' and 'Team Learning'. The most recognizable implication for the former dimension is that the absence of effective strategic leadership may partially prevent certain employees from forming sustained and vivid possible selves conducive to learning. Omar's work environment does not seem to reflect the existence of an effective strategic leadership for learning at work. He may be formally approached as an employee but informally dealt with as if not (i.e. "an employee only in my identification card"). As for the two disciplines, it is not difficult to see how the likes of Omar may adversely affect the realization of effective shared vision and team learning. An employee who feels more or less excluded will show little interest, if any at all, in embracing a shared vision, let alone committed involvement in team learning. Employing Senge's terms, building a shared vision is supposed to "foster genuine commitment and enrollment rather than compliance" (Senge, 2006). However, feeling unassimilated undercuts this possibility and, at best, hardly drives the individual beyond the level of 'compliance' or, in Billett's terms, beyond the level of a 'subjugated self'.

As far as qualified/restricted affirmative responses are concerned, Fwazi and Musa, for instance, were among the ones who did not perceive a smooth future improvement in understanding the importance of their role in the training centre. For Fwazi, it appears that structural/organizational issues are largely responsible for stymieing the formation of a vivid future self in this respect (Fwazi: This is where the problem resides... in which department are you? In this department or that?; AS: So it is not clear for you in the 5 coming years?; Fwazi: For me ...I do not know...It is not clear for me whether this is the department that I will continue in or not).

Similarly, Musa restricts the possibility of improvement in this respect by the condition of promotion (Musa: I think yes with one condition; AS: What is it?; Musa: If I would be given a chance to hold a higher position where I can decide on things). As for Zidan, the possibility of further improvement is negated not because of a perceived undesired future self but because awareness is chiefly focused on the merits of the actual (present) self. According to Higgins et al. (1986, p. 6), an *actual* self is a person's representation of the attributes one actually has. For Zidan, no future change for the better in understanding his future role is expected simply because his present role is clear for him and because everything (for him) boils down to the virtue of 'giving and achieving' (Zidan: The role is clear for me...the question is a question of giving and achieving; AS: again...suppose that 5 years have elapsed ...would you think that your understanding of your role will have changed...is any different from what it was 5 years ago?; Zidan: No...I do not think that it will change).

A relevant implication here is that too much complacency with the actual self may hinder persons from envisioning future positive selves or expanding their learning horizons. In the light of earlier concepts discussed in the literature review, the case of Zidan draws attention to Alexander et al.'s (2009, p. 176) notion of learning principles, two of which are particularly relevant: the principle of learning as change and the principle that learning can be resisted. Actual selves may sometimes impede change and sustain 'defensive reasoning' (Argyris, 2010, p. 63) (i.e. R: "The role is clear for me...the question is a question of giving and achieving...No...I don't think that it will change").

Conclusion

The findings in this section suggest that envisaged future selves and organizational structures may exist in a state of strong conflict. In this respect, participants Omar, Fwazi, and Musa perceived themselves in ways that were hardly conducive to envisioning an improved understanding of the importance of their future roles in the TC. It may therefore be inferred that adequate

appropriate strategic leadership for learning is sometimes needed to dissolve or lessen such conflict. Apart from structural and political factors, personal factors have also affected envisioning a future self with such an improved understanding. As we have seen, one factor was the capacity to envision a future self that was highly autonomous. The second was the impact of complacency with actual selves on perceiving more desired future selves. The impact of the former factor can be positive and negative. Although it may permeate the actual self with motivation and confidence, it may also blind it to future risks and opportunities. The impact of the latter is more negative for the individual in particular and the organization in general because it tends to preclude personal growth and the successful realization of an LO.

Conclusions and Implications

The aim of this part is to outline the main conclusions and implications followed by stating the main contribution of the thesis. The most relevant conclusions will concern the three main research questions of the study. The implications will address the viability of the explored LO models and raise key implications for organizations aspiring to adopt them. Finally, the part on the main contribution of the study will be twofold. The first will concern the chief quest of the study as articulated by the thesis' title. The second will address the implications of drawing on possible selves for the long-held concept of culture popularized by Geert Hofstede.

Revisiting the Main Research Questions

- **How would possible self theory inform our understanding of subjectivity and its role in accounting for perceived discrepancies between formal LO expectations and individuals' informal learning choices?**

Although subjectivity has been useful in drawing attention to the impact of individual experiences on learning in organizational contexts, the current study proposed that drawing on possible self theory may enrich our understanding of the nature of such an impact. Approached from this angle, it was argued that employees – SWCC employees - may entertain possible selves that could generate differing attitudes towards adopting learning ideals/ behaviours associated with two LO models. Explicitly, it was articulated earlier that the main contribution the present study seeks to achieve was employing, perhaps for the first time, possible self theory to understand individuals' subjectivities and how they might influence attitudes towards formal learning behaviours associated with two LO models. Implicitly, one upshot of the proposed contribution was the relatively irreducible gap that turned out between individuals' subjective realities and the ideal of the two LO models. As will be illustrated below, the implications of this contribution for management experts and theorists are vital.

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To mention a salient one, management experts and theorists should approach such models more critically and pay adequate attention to the complex and rich nature of individual learning experiences.

Although it was challenging to devise appropriate and accurate interview questions that would exhaustively reveal the full contribution of possible selves in understanding the role of subjectivity, this did not preclude the present study from reaching relevant and significant conclusions.

Interviews with participants suggest a central role for possible self theory in broadening our understanding of the nature of subjectivity and the numerous ways it can influence the relationship between the organization's formal learning demands and individuals' learning experiences. Starting with Senge's model, participants' responses have shown that possible self theory can deeply inform our understanding of the ways in which different subjectivities tend to impact personal learning trends and choices. The study has also provided qualitative evidence in favour if the argument that popular LO models are too ideal compared to the diverse learning needs associated with different subjectivities. The application of possible self theory has made it possible to see the breadth and depth of such diversities among different individuals in the organization. Broadly speaking, participants displayed highly nuanced and differentiated perceptions of actual/possible selves across all disciplines: personal mastery, mental models, team learning, and shared vision. Although there were instances where some perceptions overlapped among participants with respect to certain disciplines, they varied in depth, detail, and impact. No two separate actual/possible selves for two separate individuals were found identical in their relation to or influence on individual learning experiences.

In the discipline of personal mastery, different participants held differing possible selves in relation to two key themes: the ability to continually clarify what is important and the ability to continually learn how to see current reality more clearly. Despite such differences, the findings have suggested a reciprocal relation between high vividness and the tendency to engage in continual

clarification of what was important. Some participants did report possessing high levels of possible self vividness in association with behaviours conducive to continual clarification of what was important for them. Similar findings were found for the second theme. While some participants reported actual/future selves that influenced their attitudes in ways that prevented them from learning about their current realities, there were instances where individuals' conceptions of their desired selves were associated with awareness of the limitations and restrictions they needed to face in order to realize such selves. Certain cases (i.e. notably the case of Musa) have suggested that such awareness tends to become more acute when possible selves are more vivid and elaborate, a finding consistent with Handgrove et al.'s (2015) qualitative study – cited earlier – in that broad life choices tend to be associated with less defined possible selves.

Findings in the discipline of mental models have revealed that individuals' mental models are very diverse and complex. Participants held diverse assumptions about themselves, their colleagues, and their organization. The discussion has also made it possible to see that 'attitude' can be used to mean mental models. This means that if possible selves were to impact attitudes they would also impact peoples' mental models. This is what the findings seem to show. While some participants reported relatively generic attitudes (mental models) towards their future role in the TC, there were participants who reported more detailed attitudes.

Concerning the discipline of shared vision, the findings have shown that shared visions are hard to realize to the effect of mobilizing employees towards collective commitment. Instead, personal visions frequently gained the upper hand to the extent that all motivations reported by participants were easily traced to personal learning goals and desires. However, there were findings where engagement with the TC's strategy was found to alleviate the wounds of discrepancy between personal vision and organizational vision.

Finally, findings on the discipline of team learning have shown that participants' attitudes were less varied and the majority (18 out of 19) reported imagining themselves as persons who would want to work with teams and achieve through colleagues rather than work alone and seek independence. At least for SWCC's TC, this is good news because the lesser the difference between participants' possible selves on team learning the more likely team learning will be realized. However, attitudes towards team learning were not always identical. They varied in content and the contents themselves varied in differentiation. Although the majority saw themselves as preferring team learning to individual learning, some of them reported partial reservations. It was then suggested that possible selves may significantly impact attitudes towards team learning in subtle ways.

As for Marsick and Watkins' model, it was suggested earlier that their model, compared to Senge's, was more down-to-earth and closer to meeting employees' learning needs. It does not require from them that they develop a grand shared vision nor does it oblige them to institutionalize team learning, or standardize their mental models, or achieve outstanding personal mastery. Instead of all of this, it strives to develop a supportive learning culture via learning dimensions four of which have been explored in the present study: creating continuous learning opportunities, connecting the organization to its environment, promoting enquiry and dialogue, and providing strategic leadership for learning. However, possible self theory, with its implicit emphasis on the role of subjectivity, shows that realizing such an effective learning culture is far from easy. Marsick and Watkins were apparently aware of this challenge:

> "There should be little doubt that a culture oriented toward supporting learning can lead to improved performance. Although studies confirm this, they also suggest that the path toward performance improvement is highly complex and idiosyncratic" (2003, p. 142).

As far as creating continuous learning opportunities is concerned, the findings have suggested that when learning is perceived in its broadest sense, it is less likely to be experienced in conflict with work. The findings have also suggested that this was because all participants reported imagining themselves as willing to continue learning in the future and when any conflict was perceived, it was when they imagined themselves willing to pursue formal learning enterprises. This highlights the highly subjective influence of possible selves on individuals' attitudes towards learning in general and continued learning options in particular. In more specific terms, formal learning projects will always fall short of meeting the wide range of personal learning needs.

When it came to imagining themselves five years into the future from the time of the interview and say whether their selves were any better from their present (actual) selves with respect to having courage to question things and think critically, all except Omar responded in the affirmative with varying degrees of certainty. It was then concluded that Marsick and Watkins' model, compared to Senge's disciplines, should be seen as closer to meeting individuals' personal learning needs. The reason being that employees' attitudes were far less varied on these two learning behaviour (i.e. continued learning and courage to question and think critically) than they were on many of the learning behaviours associated with Senge's disciplines.

The majority of participants also reported envisioning an improved ability to engage in open dialogues and discussions five years into the future. Interview with the participants made it possible to infer that the very act of projecting themselves into the future was not an obstacle. They immediately responded to the question and most of them reported no difficulty in having developed an enhanced ability to engage in open dialogues and discussions five years from the time of the interview. However, employees' reported future selves were more varied here than they were on 'courage to question and think critically' and 'continued learning'. In explaining such difference, it was then suggested that variation tends to increase when it comes to envisioning learning

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behaviours involving complex relations with other individuals (i.e. ability to engage in open dialogues and discussions).

In exploring the relation between participants' future selves and the dimension of providing strategic leadership for learning, participants were asked to imagine themselves five years in the future and report whether their selves were any better with respect to understanding the importance of their role for the training centre as a whole. Participants gave various answers and when they answered in the affirmative their answers also varied in detail and certainty. The marked variance could be explained on two accounts: a structural/political account and a personal/subjective account. On the former account, participants who hardly envisioned themselves as capable of developing an improved understating of their future roles were found more critical about leadership behaviour and the organization's strategy. This suggests that adequately appropriate strategic leadership for learning is much needed. This is suggested on the grounds that appropriately adequate strategic leadership for learning on the one hand, and inequity in addition to role obscurity on the other, could not peacefully coexist. Indeed, this may partially explain Marsick and Watkins' (2003, p. 141) observation that many LO enterprises sponsored by human resource departments" tend to end up with "more frustration than real organizational change".

On the latter account, the findings have shown that complacency with the positive attributes one believes he/she has (i.e. actual self) can prevent the individual from envisioning future learning opportunities. Again, this must be understood within the larger context of the organization. It is very possible that little was done to engage such individuals with the organizations' strategy (Zidan was a vivid case in point).

- **To what extent do individuals' perceptions of their actual/possible selves generate attitudes that facilitate or impede adoption of LO learning behaviours?**

In general, what the exploration of participants' responses have shown was that their perceptions of their actual/possible selves do influence the generation of attitudes that either facilitate or impede the adoption of certain LO learning behaviours. However, two remarks need to be pointed out here. The first is that, in view of the qualitative nature of the study, it is not possible to determine statistically the extent which individuals' perceptions of their actual/possible selves may significantly generate such attitudes. In fact, this should not be a prime aim of a study of this kind. The second remark is that such influence differs in nature and degree (on the face of it and as far as the researcher can make from participants' responses) from one participant to another. There were instances where different individuals developed images of their actual/future selves that were more likely to impede the prospects for adopting certain LO behaviours. As the findings have revealed, these instances were more pronounced when informal learning behaviours and personal learning projects were explicitly involved. When the majority of participants envisaged actual/future selves where informal learning goals were predominantly pursued, their commitment to embrace formal LO learning behaviours either declined or ceased to increase. Moreover, the interviews have shown that different individuals, with different actual/possible selves, are likely to respond differently to the same learning experiences, either by adapting (adaptive learning), generating (generative learning), or resisting (defensive learning).

Revisiting Leonard (2007), and drawing on the present findings, one way actual/possible selves may impede the realization of the LO could come from the discrepancy between individuals' un/subconscious behaviours and the conscious explanations they provide when asked to justify them. In LO terms, this may partly be explained in terms of the fact that they are not sufficiently aware of the conflict between their theories-in-use and espoused theories. In possible self terms, the discrepancy between persons' behaviours and their

conscious justifications of them can be partly attributed to their attachment to old ways of doing things (i.e. actual selves) and their being conscious of others' expectations of them (i.e. ought to selves) on the one hand, and their low commitment toward realizing their espoused theories and desired ideals (i.e. ideal possible selves) on the other.

- **In what way can individuals' personal learning experiences pose a challenge to organization leaders in their efforts to realize the LO learning behaviours?**

The interviews have revealed different ways in which personal learning experiences may challenge leaders' efforts to realize learning behaviours associated with the LO models explored in this study. The findings have revealed five prominent ways in which this may happen: low commitment towards formal LO learning goals; discrepancy between informal learning pursuits and formal learning behaviours canonized by the organization (P &J); explicit indifference from certain employees towards the organizations' formal strategy; hidden resistance and/or resentment from some employees towards the organizations' formal strategy. The most salient finding that can be inferred from the totality of interviews in this study is that employees' personal learning enterprises are larger and richer than their work-related learning behaviours and that the former deeply and incessantly interferes with the latter on many levels. Revisiting Marton et al. (1993) might be useful here. They called the former dimension of learning, which largely pertains to individuals' entire life-worlds, the 'external horizon' of learning (p. 285-286), a feature of human learning which organizations need to take into serious consideration. To appreciate its influence, two examples may suffice. On a personal level, the factor above was found to challenge organizational efforts to align personal visions with the organizational vision to leverage employees' commitment. On a collective level, actual as well as future selves have been found to vary in content and vividness to degrees that sometimes thwarted homogenous team learning and the prospect of evenly distributed vision sharing. This observation

is highly consistent with Hatmaker's (2015) earlier reference to the changing nature of possible selves in organizational settings. According to Hatmaker (2015), from their first encounter with the new job, individuals tend to go through 'identity trials' trying out "possible selves that are shaped by role models in their networks" (p. 1157).

Implications for Organizations

Realizing the learning organization is not impossible. However, possible self theory has made it possible to see the myriad challenges organizations need to acknowledge or deal with in order to ensure a reasonable implementation of the LO. Most of these challenges spring from the failure to adequately address issues of subjectivity and the self. The findings of the present study have revealed that organizations are continually affected by the sociocultural as well we personal content of individual selves. This content imposes certain demands on the nature of learning offered by the organization (formal learning) or the personal forms of learning going on in day to day encounters (informal learning). In this respect, most participants envisioned learning opportunities which had little to do with the formal learning enterprises associated with the organization's strategy.

In summary, and broadly speaking, employees held actual and future states of the self which, explicitly and implicitly, differed widely in attitudes they generated towards learning preferences, personal visions, horizons for action, assumptions about others and the organization (mental models). All of these differences had one fundamental thing in common and that was the centrality of the self as powerful agent in creating such diversity among participants.

Senge may have been right in asserting that "teams, not individuals, are the fundamental learning unit in modern organizations" and there is a grain of truth in this assertion. Yet, in the light of the findings in this study, and given the highly complex nature of social reality, Billett (2010, p. 8) was closer to truth in

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contending that in order "to explain what motivates and directs individuals' learning through work and throughout working life", one needs to account for "the relations among work, subjectivity and lifelong learning or ontogeny", and that "standing at the centre of these relations are individuals' subjectivities or self", not teams. In this respect, Marsick and Watkins' model appears to make more room for such than Senge's model. It was argued in the study that it strives to realize a supportive learning culture assisted by strategic leadership for learning. Compared to Senge's disciplines, it does not demand much from particular individuals and offers them greater flexibility to realize much of their personal learning needs.

The study suggests four implications for organizations. First, leaderships, decision makers, and management experts should not overestimate the merits of popular learning organization models. They should approach them more critically and, in devising the organization's learning policies and programs, they should take into account the complex nature of social reality as well as the richness of subjective experiences and diversity of individual learning needs.

Second, organizations should develop plans to benefit from scientific research in this area. It is vital that their policies, strategies, management/business models be regularly informed and situated by sociological studies. This step is essential to give many management models their true size and avoid overestimation, or even underestimation, of their value. Moreover, it will help organizations spend more wisely and invest more properly in people and resources.

The third implication is that organizations should not push too hard to unify or homogenize employees' mental models towards their strategies or formal learning cultures. This is likely to be met with more resistance and no organization would wish to focus most of its effort on suppressing employees' most personal experiences. The issue becomes more complicated given the fact that possible selves and mental models about the self are closely related. Effectively, this means that attempts to change well-formed personal mental

models about future roles/selves may amount to changing part of peoples' desired possible selves. To reiterate what Reid (2015) had previously remarked, employees' possible selves come in a variety of forms that are expected by organizations to assume a single identity centring on "the ideal worker image", with no external commitments limiting its devotion (p. 998). This expectation must be abandoned.

A fourth implication for organizations here is that they should do more to establish equity among employees and develop a culture conducive to continuous learning. In an environment like this, it is very likely that employees will be more capable of envisioning future selves with improved understanding of the importance of their future roles in the organization. In order to augment an appropriate learning-supportive culture, the associated learning features should be subsumed under the tacit level of assumptions/values, the explicit level of beliefs/norms, and the more overtly explicit level of practices/artefacts (Bishop et al., 2006, p. 23).

The Main Contribution of the Thesis

The main contribution which this study has sought to advance is that drawing on possible self theory can powerfully deepen our insight into the centrality of the individual as a critical learning agent in organizational contexts. Although conventional wisdom has broadly acknowledged the primacy of subjectivity in generating different learning needs, the current findings informed by possible self theory have shown that the influence of subjectivities on individuals' learning is more diverse and subtle than generally received. In this respect, the findings of this study are highly consistent with and lend support to Nazar et al.'s (2013) earlier study in that "possible selves at work" are characteristically different in content and "take a variety of forms, from being imprecise to elaborated notions of what someone wanted or did not want, or feared, to become" (p. 73). Two LO models (Senge's and Marsick and Watkins' DLO) were

employed to contextualize the exploration of subjectivities in the light of possible self theory. In employing such models, the findings strongly suggest that no robust LO model is possible without taking into serious consideration issues of subjectivity and individual learning, a realization resonating with Billett's exhortation that "it is necessary to offer an account of learning for work which acknowledges the independence of individuals acting within the interdependence of the social practice of work" (Billett, 2001, p. 22).

One more salient contribution of the present study is that drawing on possible self theory has made it possible to see how the idiosyncratic nature of individual learning could develop in ways that challenge popular notions on the homogeneity of organizational cultures. In view of this realization, one key assumption underlying Hofstede's (1984) conception of organizational cultures becomes less tenable. This is the assumption that organizational cultures are highly homogeneous, monolithic, and uniform constructs that can be linked to distinct national cultures. Hofstede (1984, p. 51) conceded that he based his major study on organizational cultures on between-group rather than within-group analyses and on the assumption that the groups involved were homogenous. What the interviews in the present study – which can broadly be described as within-group - have shown is that selves can develop along an indefinite variety of sociocultural ontogenies and in ways that complicate the nature of organizational cultures. The findings substantiate the observations of a host of earlier studies challenging the notion of a universal or homogeneous learning culture and accentuating the idea that organizations' learning cultures are highly comprised of the diverse attitudes, expectations, values, and practices (Stothard et al., 2013, p. 195, p. 202; Watkins and O'Neil, 2013, p. 142) peculiar to their respective holders. As noted previously in the literature review, in reality, the view of a single organizational culture, extending from a single national culture, and uniformly distributed or shared among diverse individuals is fundamentally indefensible. To reiterate an earlier remark, this does not mean that organizational cultures are logically impossible or empirically non-existent. It only means that they are not as neat and complete as usually

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thought or as one might have imagined. The insight which possible self theory offers into issues of subjectivity and individual learning can revolutionize our understanding of culture and its intricacies. The findings of the current study and McSweeney's (2002) criticism of Hofstede's cultural model converge in regarding his work as "a restrictor not an enhancer of understanding particularities" and in viewing his "attribution of national level actions/institutions to national cultures" as "an easy but impoverishing move" (McSweeney, 2002, p. 112).

By the same token, Drucker's (2011, p. 48) thesis that despite being composed of individuals, organizations must behave as "single-minded" does not hold water. Moreover, his fear that unless they behave as such, members will "follow their specialty" and "impose their own values" (Drucker, 2011, p. 48) is, in the light of the findings of this study, unrealistic and an inhumane gesture.

A General Implication for Future Research

Future qualitative research in LO can greatly benefit from possible self theory in exposing both the powerful role of individual subjectivities in real life situations and the unfinished project of organizational culture. One possible reason for the relative success of Hofstede's thesis on organizational culture is that the impact of cross-cultural exchange had not, at the time, gained the momentum it was destined to attain in recent years. Many national cultures were then largely enclosed and homogenous and the seismic effect of globalization was only in its infancy. Now that the world has radically changed, that cultural boundaries have become more and more fragile, to the effect of dismantling many 'grand narratives', researchers should shift their focus towards particulars and individuals, but without losing sight of structural influences. Perhaps this would offer an opportunity to enliven emancipatory research enterprises and better our understanding of the subtle aspects of both culture and human nature.

Appendix (1): Interview Questions According to Explored Themes

Explored Themes	Questions
Personal Mastery	1. "I have always had a clear image of what I want to become in SWCC?"...how true is this about you? 2. What is it that you wanted to become...can you explain? 3. Do you still envision this image of yourself? What do you like and/or dislike about it? 4. How often do you think about the purpose of your being in SWCC; for example: "what's most important for me in SWCC?" 5. Have you felt uncertain about the purpose of your being in SWCC? Was there a particular reason? 6. What did you do about this...what was your reaction? 7. Are you aware of any challenges you need to face in order to become the person you wanted to become? What are they? Have you thought of any plans for dealing with them? 8. In your opinion: is your current job, are your daily work tasks, brining you closer to that future person you desire to become? 5- I think it will be difficult or impossible for me to become that person without understanding the TC's strategy (i.e. it's vision, mission, main goals) ...how far would you agree with this statement? Why do you think so?

Mental Model	1- "All employees are willing to learn and share what they learn with their colleagues" …from your experience in the TC, how true is this? 2- What's the role you like to envision for yourself in the centre? 3- Do you envision any obstacles/challenges that may prevent you from achieving that role? What are they? (Paraphrased: what would like to achieve or become in the TC?) 4- How do you imagine yourself in relation to the TC's strategy…as a person who will benefit from it or harmed by it? (PROBE: why do you think so…in what way? Have you expressed this to anybody here? Why did you do so?) 5- How about the TC, do you think it will succeed in delivering its strategy? Why do you think so? 6- Have you ever disagreed with a colleague over a work issue? What was it that you disagreed about? Why? How did you react to each other? Do you feel that your relationship remained the same as before? 7- When you perform a task, do you make sure it relates to the TC'S strategy? What do you usually do to make sure that it's relevant to it? Do you believe that your tasks should be informed by the strategy? .
Shared vision	1- What is it that motivates you to wake up every day and come to work? 2- Looking ahead, what's the most important thing for you as an employee in the TC?

	3- Do you remember the TC's formal vision? (Excellence in training in the water desalination industry). Does it motivate you? 4- What is it that you do (or have done) at work to realize the TC's vision? 5- Do you feel that this vision will help you become the person you would like to become in your career? How...in what way?
Team Learning	1- I would like to think of myself as a person who works with a team and achieves through his colleagues rather than a person who works alone and seeks independence...how much is this true about yourself? 2- Which image are you more comfortable with: your image of yourself as an employee who achieves alone and solves problems on his own, or that of yourself as an employee who likes to achieve through teamwork? 3- Suppose you were asked to work with a team in order to evaluate the team's performance concerning a certain action. Would you imagine yourself criticizing your boss's views? Are you the kind of person who would welcome open – not private – criticism of your role in that performance? 4- If it turns out for you that you are the one to blame for a certain problem at work, what are the chances that you will frankly admit this without hesitation before your colleagues do?
Creating Continuous Learning Opportunities	Looking ahead, how clear is it for you that you will be able to continue learning? Do you perceive conflict between your job and learning?

• **Promote enquiry and dialogue** • **Providing strategic leadership for learning**	Try to imagine yourself 5 years from now into the future, is it any different from yourself at the present in terms of: • Courage to question things • Ability to engage in open dialogues and discussions. • Understanding the importance of your role for the TC as a whole

Appendix (2): Sample of an Interview and Categorized Answers

Explored Themes	Interview Questions in Context	Answer
Personal Mastery	In the name of Allah, I am thankful for you brother Mohammed, would you briefly tell us about the place of your birth, study and Education also where you grew up?	I Was born at Amman in 18/7/1970 I got a scholarship at Baghdad and studied at university of Baghdad at faculty of arts in 1988 and graduated in 1992
	Everyone was included in the scholarship?	Actually the scholarship was permanent cultural Exchange between Jordan and Iraq I was one of the students…
	So were you concerned about the idea of the cultural	Actually it was very useful it gave me the opportunity to study at one of the most well known

		exchange or just..?	universities in Iraq at that time ,it was not easy to get accepted in that university so it opened me the field..
		So is there any problem? Is there any kind of challenge? Maybe their education was high.	Yes the level…
		Were you afraid of that challenge?	Actually I faced that challenge ,I faced great challenge because of difficulty … but I had only two ways either go back which mean failure or go on and do your best , thanks god things …
		So what about the family especially mother, father, your close relatives, were they supporting education when you were young?	Actually It is not supposed to talk about family but my father had a truck he was a truck driver working at shipping field then

	175	he got a car station it was very important to him to keep us away from this field, I have 8 brothers they all have bachelor degree, my elder brother got PhD architecture engineering, other one is Bicatronics electronic engineer, another in computer science also one in agriculture…
	Becatronics?	Yes Becatronics, the other one in agriculture ,one of them in mathematics , I was English major , the youngest was in nursing , and now the last one is a doctor
	This family atmosphere,	Actually positively because if you

		how did it affect you positively or negatively?	have a chain you must follow it , I had models which I must have followed and were very effected on me
		So did your father support to education or felt caring for you?	Actually my father found out that that less of education led to all the bad things which it is fact, that led to other bad things in the non education environments..
		Unethical?	Yes bad environment he saw that good ethics means education
		Ok that is the family environment, what about the neighbours, relatives or the far Relatives environment?	Tribe was very simple , you can point to the learners, their number was very small

	Point to them positively?	Yes positively, the elders preferred educated person in many things ,of course education have all of respect
	So everyone around you supported education either inside the family or out?	Yes they pushing into Education positively
	Pushing into education?	Yes of course they pushing into Education Positively
	They mean it?	Yes they mean it
	Nice, so what if you had been told that" I always had an image of the person that I wanted to be in desalination" how do you agree with that? Did you always have an image	Actually my answer may potentially have two levels , the first level is the positions levels I am aware of my position, the second level is relationships level how I can influence people. I have great ambitions

		of the person you wanted to be in desalination? Was that image clear in that field?	regarding this point and I know well that through hard work I may reach to something that touch people I may have positive effect on people that what I am looking forward to
		So that image did exist?	Yes it was strongly existed I want to be affected on people to touch their hearts, also in the position levels.
		Touching people's hearts! what do you mean by That, do you mean helping them?	Yes sure because god gave us I mean learners gave us blessing of education and may give others blessing of …
		What made you help people what was your greatest motivation to	The nature of this job make you deal with different levels of society when you have a class of 25

	think about helping them?	students come from different environments and different social levels they may like talking to you reveal some of their secrets or needs so you talk to everyone not to particular level…
	yes	So you may some one in a good level and someone who is in … so you may get benefits from the experiences of one person to help the other
	So if I ask you what person you wanted to be will you answer the same question? What was the person you want to be in desalination?	Actually I wanted to leave something good that what is important to me why , because I offered help in the academic level because I made that subject easier , this subject is a challenge for

		students I also raised the physiological level because most of the weakness or problems in English language came from the physiological aspect
	So do you still keep that strong clear image about yourself?	yes
	Does it still need to be completed?	I wish to work more at the field work, I think kept me away from the field work and direct courses will affect me to love …
	Did it affect that image?	I love being at the field my effect will be stronger and if …
	Without interrupting you, is there any part of that	That part that I dislike when that affect home because

		image that you do not like or a part that you like , is there any part that you want to get rid of or dislike?	sometimes it is a human nature at your work you may use many weapons but your home still the place of rest so you may give up some weapons so these things maybe..
		Do you mean that you do not…?	Not with the same motivation..
		So you do not find the same strong clear image at home?	I do not find myself effected on my children and on … like I am out of home so that point maybe ..
		And that is something you do not like about yourself?	yes
		So you want to be with your family the same way you are with…?	Yes sure

		That's good, so do you think about the reason for being here at desalination, the question is what is the most important thing for you at desalination do you think about that during the day or not?	Actually I think about it a lot it hurt me a lot you know being at a place and being affected I learned a lot from being here at desalination I think 60% of what I achieved I achieve it by dealing with people not just at my work level but also back to Jordan they both are the same it just I am doing things in a different way or help categories which may need my help more at another place
		So correct me if I am wrong, it is like you say the answer of the question why I am at the desalination is that to learn and pass my	Actually to be honest with you sometimes I do not wish to come back to my work or felt like I have nothing to give to others

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	experiences to others who are in need, the people around me?	
	To anyone?	Anyone no matter what the country is, I do not care about that..
	So what is the most important thing for you? Is it the positions, you mentioned that you are limited, so is it all about affected and being affected or just affected?	Actually it is affect and being affected
	Affect and being affected?	Yes the most important thing at desalination is development
	What do you call that impact? How do you describe it? Do you describe it	Actually when it came to learning, it developed at the desalination it motivate the

		as learning, or financial incentive?	person to go on no matter of the financial situations person can paid for it but sometimes work does no give you the chance for that
		So how many times do you ask yourself that question about the reason for being here at the desalination? Is it always, medium or low?	No Medium
		So did you feel that you were not sure about the reason for being here at the desalination, did you feel mysterious about the reason for being here?	Sometimes when I set alone I need to measure things sometimes I think about going back to Jordan but there are so many things that keep you here to be fair the reasons of staying here is more than the reason of going

		back even at the family level.
	Is there any specific reason that led you to these doubts or..?	Yes sure
	What is it?	Actually it is more than one factor it is about the blessing of time, pray and religion which was not exist at Jordan I think many Jordanians would agree with me at that point you may earn the same amount of money at Jordan but you cannot save like here besides the different level of life here also the family ,I thinks the father here is more related to his kids more than Jordan
	So these factors which you	Yes beside the development of

		mentioned supported you on learning or not?	the family here at the religious and social level I noticed that when I came back to Jordan
		Is it related to that field?	No doubt
		So what have you done regarding these factors what were your reactions about them?	For example in Saudi I found that the fathers play the main role here at family unlike Jordan , at Jordan the mother can moves the duty of the father is offering concessions to reach his wife and kids to a place where there is education he pays extra money to offer them the best quality of education he ready to go to anywhere even faraway

	Now honestly tell me are you aware of any challenges that you have to face to become the person that you want to be? Are you aware of any challenges?	yes
	Are you aware that you must face them?	yes
	Ok what challenges for example?	The challenges are updating now days you have to develop every day
	Nice	So you have to be updated even at the academic level ,I have a wish to complete my study and I have been searching for awhile
		Actually one of them is studying on of them is to develop myself at

	So what are your plans or ideas to face these challenges… is one of them studying?	the technical level to be updated now you need computers with high speed to download as much as you can of the programs and information with the high speed internet you can be updated with everything
	So the factor of updating and development is the most important factor?	Yes yes
	Do you feel that?	Yes yes
	So your opinion is that your current job and tasks that you do every day help you to be closer to the person that you want to be or does it make you further?	Yes actually in my spare time I am trying to collect Information about any thing that may help me at my job through books,

		CDs or through …No… I do not try..
	The nature of tasks itself?	Yes the nature of the nature of tasks I try to know about other things that could be useful for him you can take part at courses or download some useful courses regarding life things
	Would you agree " it is impossible to become the person that I want without understanding the strategic plan of the centre" …that makes it harder for me to become the person that I want?	No I do not agree with that phrase

		Nice, so can you talk about the message and the vision of the strategic plan?	Yes , yes
		Can you tell me that reason why you do not agree with that phrase?	Because the plan of the centre is different from the personal plan ,the centre is committed to certain plan if I committed my self to rules, commitment and many other things I may reach earlier to the plan centre because the centre plan may face some obstacles that I may be able to get through and through my planning and working I can reach the centre's plan earlier or at least be ready when the

		centre reach his plan
	To perfection?	Yes sure I may not be able to stand side by side with the centre's plan
Mental Model	"All the employees are ready to learn and share their knowledge with each other ", how do you agree with that phrase?	Actually I agree with that phase at two levels
	Are all the employees ready to learn and share their knowledge?	Regarding their willing to learn I agree with you 60-70% ,and regarding sharing their knowledge I agree with you 40% because everyone is willing to learn even if it was oral not practical but regarding sharing I think everyone want to be special so he may not share 100% his sharing may be limited so the trainer may hide

		10-20% of things that he consider it as secrets..
	Secrets of some knowledge?	Yes it may be secrets or he think it is his secrets...
	The secrets of his success?	The secrets of his success because some people may use the effort of the others some people take the hard work of the others so that may be the main reason or else the reactions among persons
	What is the role that you imagine yourself playing at the center? Is it a pressing question? The question about your role at the centre?	I mentioned that I like to be at the field I mean at the place where the things happen the field of affect and being affected
	Nice, do you imagine any obstacles that may prevent you from playing that role?	No

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	How do you imagine your relationship with yourself and the strategic plan? What is the meaning of the strategic plan's nature for you?	Yes
	Does it have any benefits for you?	Yes the strategic plan of the centre target to the highness, classification, organization and reach to higher level at the centre?
	Do you see that the current plan harm you?	No I agree with it I followed it or passed it like I mentioned before it is familiar to the plans of myself
	So you are not against it?	No never it interrupting with me…
	Support?	Yes support
	Nice, so regarding the centre, do you think that it will be successful at	yes

	achieving the strategic plan?	
	Are you optimistic with that?	I am always optimistic
	Nice	Thanks god
	Why is that, what made you optimistic that the centre will be successful?	The first things that the centre have the high potentials and the human resources that what make the achievements happen, so the centre have all the factors that led it to the highest position it have the financial potential and there is a group of excellence human resources
	Do you remember what made it special	The first thing is the high education the second thing is the optimistic look the have positive

	the human resources..?	look at everything , open minded look
	Have you ever disagreed with one of your colleagues about a specific task or the perfect way to do something?	No actually most of time we disagree with the managements some time with our managers at some things
	Do you remember such a situation?	Actually some things through managing the courses .through managing the courses practically and the division of students and teachers into levels…
	That is the reason for the disagreement?	Yes it is works levels
	How were your reactions towards each other in dealing with that thing?	No we were suggesting some suggestions based on the field or the may be based on the need of the centre ….

	Ok, are there any situations that you have disagreed with someone at the centre and it has led to making changes to your relationship?	No never
	Ok , when you perform a specific task, do you make sure that it will match the strategic plan of the centre? Do you do that permanently?	Actually I follow specific rules so I am sure that everything I do match the centre's plan
	It is not against the plan?	No it is not
	Nice, so do you feel it or is it just spontaneous?	Actually I am aware that the centre plans an organization and everything is planned…
	So, you are aware of the centre's plan.	Yes I am aware of it and others fields
	Like?	Like being at excellence also being with other managements

		sometimes made me…
	Is being excellent in other departments a burden or an opportunity for you?	No opportunity. …
	You do not see it as burden?	Never
	Nice, do you think that all of your tasks must be inspired from the clear plan of the centre?	Not necessary
	Not necessary?	Yes sometimes…
	Ok, so what is the positive idea?	Actually it is positive as a Commitment factor but need you to develop it is not like robot list goes in one direction you need to be opened and speed learner yes
Shared vision	Now what if I ask you about the motivate that led you to wake up in the	Actually it's a mix the daily life became routine so

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	morning and come to this place active and optimistic, is that thing related to you or just related to the desalination?	having such real models and it is not compliment like managers that respect you and appreciate you made you came to work optimistic and have non stressful environment at work and feel comfortable even at the rush hours is ….
	Now what if we look forward to the future at the desalination or the centre. What is the most important thing for you? Is it related to being at the centre in the future or does it depend on affect and being affected or it depends on something different?	Actually no doubt my ambition at work is to develop my learning which will have strong effect also it may be the financial motivation the person can achieve a lot of achievements…
		Yes at the desalination , at the family level I have plans for my

	At desalination?	family like memorizing Quran a lot of things actually come into my mind
	Can you remember the official vision of the centre?	The vision is excellence at the training of desalination.
	Does it motivate you that vision or do you see that it is far away from you and does not affect you directly?	Actually being at the excellence I moved the excellence to my house also so some times you leave effects of success at what you offering…
	So you find that you are affected personally by the excellence vision?	yes
	So not just at work but…?	At the life level
	It was not there before?	It did not

	Is there away?	Actually it is not a theoretical way is a spontaneous way but without but without disabling without systematic way
	That systemic way was for you …?	Yes I settled down every thing and it were titles show up
	Did you have excellence before?	It was but with other name it was perfection or achievements but now it have a name and a way and have ….
	What is the thing that you did and are still doing to achieve the vision of the centre as a person and as an employee what is the thing that you do directly to achieve the vision of the centre?	Actually yes I am trying to do my best at the work level so that…

	So at your work level, do you do specific things?	yes
	Like what?	Like teaching language and develop the students at short time at my work I can give my best something fit to the centre and the place or the ..
	Do you make sure that you are on the right way?	Yes sure
	Ask yourself?	Yes yes
	Doing what..?	yes
	Do you think that the current vision will help you to become the person you want to be or it does not help you?	No doubt no doubt
	On which considerations?	In fact through doing my best when you reach to certain level you can not be under it

		so you have to raise your performance
	That is about the vision?	Yes when the vision raise your level you will not look back to the below levels no matter anything
	Put a limit?	Yes put a limit
	Do you see that there is a limit for excellence?	no
	Nice so you see it as open end,ed?	Yes it is open end
Team Learning	What about the phrase" I see myself as a person who can work and achieve through a group more than a person who works by his own" how do you agree with that phrase?	Yes it is clear I love being a part of a group if I was required to do something I will do my best and be special not better but special with my achievements and results

		So you see yourself as a person who works with a team?	yes
		With a group of colleagues more than seeing myself work alone?	Unfortunately I can be useful as individual because maybe the team includes some persons who are disappointed
		Does it depend on the team?	Yes it depends on the team the team may include some negative people so you may not reach what you want
	So how do you agree with the phrase: I see myself as a person who works through a group or a team, is your agreement high, medium or low?		I work through a team almost 50% medium 50-50
	What is the image that makes you more comfortable is it seeing yourself as an employee working with on his own to solve problems or as a		No at the problems I can say groups

	person depending on a group to solve problems?	
	Nice	Yes the groups at the problems
	Why you see the group solving problems?	Because at the problems you may not be the only person…
	The only?	Yes the only, you may need manager or college you may need…
	Ok so let's suppose that you were required with a team to evaluate the performance of a team member regarding a specific point?	yes
	Can you imagine yourself criticizing your boss or someone in charge, do you consider that as something normal or do you see it as…?	I am a person who likes to offer suggestions I think I am full of suggestions, so yes it may not be direct criticism it will be more like suggestion because criticism may be look like

		hustle so the suggestion is better
	Even if you were sure that the person made a mistake and was responsible for it and sure ..?	yes
Team Learning	In that case, can you criticize him openly and with Transparency in front of all the team members?	maybe between me and him because the criticism should be on a polite way not just with the manager also with my colleges because we all make mistakes
	So you do not like public criticism even if it was in a polite way?	yes
	Even if it was politely?	It maybe yes during the solving the problem so yes
	So in case that you are the	I accept it and take responsibility for

		person that must be blamed for a mistake what was the chance for you to accept the criticism in front of everyone?	my mistake if it was my mistake yes
		Of course I am not talking about someone who offends you or curses you or …?	yes yes
		But really …	Yes there is direct criticism
		Honestly direct criticism?	Your responsibility about that yes
		Do you see that you will highly accept that criticism?	yes
	Creating continuous learning opportunities	What if we look at the future what are the chances of you willing to learn is it high, medium or low?	Actually high
		High…?	In god willing high
		Ok do you see any conflict	Actually the only conflict is that

	between the nature of your work and learning?	there is no opportunities to learn this is the only one
	Are you talking about formal learning?	The formal study meaning that there are no universities that would accept you
	Is there any informal learning, I understand from your talk that there are irregular studies?	The irregular study is not accepted at Jordan this is the problem …
	I mean that you mentioned that you have learnt a lot about this environment?	yes
	And now you tell me there is not…?	I mean the systems of the universities , I mean the universities and the …
	So you agree with me in …?	Yes what I thought about when you ask me is getting certificates a higher level

	Do you call that learning or there is no learning except the regular learning?	No all of it is learning but the regular learning target is limit you reach to a limit level or a limit degree the other learning come to you daily spontaneously routinely ,the simplest things maybe…
	If I ask you would you tell me honestly which kind of learning you appreciate and accept more?	Actually at my job level ,I am now an employee so the regular learning may not affect me , I gain my experience daily through my work , but I cannot deny the importance of the certificate and the degree…
• Encouraging collaboration and team learning	Ok now I will mention five points it depends on imagining	I think it will be higher

• Connecting the organization to its environment • Promote enquiry and dialogue	yourself in five years from now and how your image now will be different from your image after five years from now regarding daring to ask questions and criticize things?	
	Ok what about your ability in participating in interviews and open discussions?	God willing it will be higher
• Providing strategic leadership for learning	Ok what about your understanding of your role at the centre in general?	With no doubt higher
	Ok what about your willingness to learn from your colleges and cooperation with them to achieve the vision of the centre or its strategy?	God willing it will be higher , almost the same level
	Nice I think we finished the interview	God bless you

	I am very thankful for this interview	God bless you actually I talk about myself I saw it not like an interview but…

Appendix (3): Used Informed Consent Form

Letter of Informed Consent

I agree to participate in the study entitled: "**Drawing on Possible Self Theory to Explore the Influence of Subjectivity on Individual Learning and Employees' Attitudes toward Learning Behaviours Popularized by Two Learning Organization Models**", and conducted by the researcher Abdullah Saeed Al-Shehri (employee No.: 105896), currently an employee at Saline Water Conversion Corporation (SWCC). I agree that the researcher has adequately explained to me the nature and purpose of the study. I also allow anonymous citing of my data for formal academic purposes and publications as well as for use in local management development plans for SWCC. In conclusion, have no reservation whatsoever against participating in such a study.

I have been reassured that the information which I will provide in the course of the interview will be treated in the strictest of confidence and that my answers will be unattributed to either myself or to any organization which I work for or have worked for. I understand that any information I provide during the interview is confidential and will not be used for any purpose other than the research project outlined above. The data will not be shared with any other organizations.

Name: ………………………………

Signature: ……………………………

Date: ………………

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