DESIGNING A LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY FOR NONACADEMIC LEADERS AT A MID-SIZED UNIVERSITY

By

KIM LOEB

BA, University of Winnipeg, 1981
PGDip CS, Concordia University, 1983

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We accept this Thesis as conforming to the required standard

.................................
Dianne Caldwell, BA, Organizational Sponsor

.................................
Brigitte Harris, PhD, Thesis Supervisor

.................................
Brigitte Harris, PhD, Committee Chair

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ABSTRACT

This inquiry sought to answer the question: How can the University of Winnipeg (UW) design a learning and development strategy for its nonacademic leaders that will benefit both the leaders and the university? As higher education institutions experience increased competition and rising demands, senior leaders need to find new ways of developing one of their most important assets, their employees. Using an action research approach, this inquiry sought participants’ perspectives through an online survey and a world café. This inquiry puts forward the following three recommendations: develop and communicate a formalized learning and development strategy that is supported by senior leadership, aligned with organizational goals, customized to the unique university environment, and values learner needs; provide diverse professional development opportunities for leaders; and create an environment that improves communication, fosters collaboration, develops competence, and values community. This inquiry adhered to all ethical requirements set by Royal Roads University and UW.
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT ............................................................................................................................................. 2

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .......................................................................................................................... 3

LIST OF FIGURES .................................................................................................................................. 7

LIST OF TABLES ...................................................................................................................................... 8

CHAPTER ONE: FOCUS AND FRAMING ................................................................................................. 9
  Significance of the Inquiry .................................................................................................................... 12
  Organizational Context ......................................................................................................................... 14
  Systems Analysis of the Inquiry ........................................................................................................... 16
  Chapter Summary ................................................................................................................................. 19

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW ............................................................................................... 21
  Learning and Development ................................................................................................................... 21
    Definition of learning and development ......................................................................................... 22
    Types of learning and development ............................................................................................... 23
    Trends in learning and development ............................................................................................... 27
    Benefits of learning and development for the organization ......................................................... 29
    Benefits of learning and development for the individual ............................................................... 32
  Learning and Organizational Culture ................................................................................................. 35
    Enablers of a supportive culture ...................................................................................................... 35
    Barriers to learning and development ............................................................................................ 37
    Learning in higher education ........................................................................................................... 38
  Organizational Strategy ....................................................................................................................... 42
    Strategic role of human resources .................................................................................................... 42
    Best practices on designing a learning and development strategy ................................................. 45
  Chapter Summary ................................................................................................................................. 48

CHAPTER THREE: INQUIRY APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY .................................................. 49
  Inquiry Approach ................................................................................................................................. 49
  Project Participants .............................................................................................................................. 51
  Inquiry team ........................................................................................................................................ 53
  Inquiry Methods ................................................................................................................................ 54
    Data collection tools ......................................................................................................................... 54
    Study conduct .................................................................................................................................. 58
    Data analysis .................................................................................................................................... 61
  Ethical Issues ....................................................................................................................................... 66
    Respect for persons ........................................................................................................................... 66
    Concern for welfare ........................................................................................................................... 66
    Justice ............................................................................................................................................... 67
    Conflict of interest ............................................................................................................................ 67
Chapter Summary .................................................................................................................68

CHAPTER FOUR: ACTION INQUIRY RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS .........................69
Study Findings ....................................................................................................................70
  Finding 1: Leaders require organizational support to develop a culture of learning
  and development ..............................................................................................................70
  Finding 2: Leaders desire professional development opportunities ..............................72
  Finding 3: Leaders are impacted by the lack of organizational resources .....................78
  Finding 4: Participants noted the need for an organizational learning and
  development strategy ......................................................................................................80
  Finding 5: Leaders need universal and equitable access to learning that is aligned to
  organizational goals ........................................................................................................82
  Finding 6: Participants expressed an interested in building internal capacity ..................84
Summary of study findings .................................................................................................86
Study Conclusions ............................................................................................................87
  Conclusion 1: Senior management support is critical .......................................................87
  Conclusion 2: Leaders have a desire to learn new skills and improve themselves now
  and in the future ..............................................................................................................88
  Conclusion 3: Resource issues are a factor, and any strategy must take this into
  consideration ....................................................................................................................90
  Conclusion 4: A learning and development strategy must be created and
  communicated to formalize professional learning for leaders ........................................91
  Conclusion 5: UW could build its capacity through increased internal knowledge
  sharing and networking ....................................................................................................93
Scope and Limitations of the Research Inquiry .................................................................95
Chapter Summary .............................................................................................................96

CHAPTER FIVE: INQUIRY IMPLICATIONS ................................................................97
Study Recommendations .................................................................................................97
  Recommendation 1: Develop and communicate a formalized learning and
  development strategy that is supported by senior leadership, aligned with
  organizational goals, customized to the unique university environment, and
  values learner needs .........................................................................................................98
  Recommendation 2: Provide diverse professional development opportunities for
  leaders ...............................................................................................................................101
  Recommendation 3: Create an environment that improves communication, fosters
  collaboration, develops competence, and values community .......................................103
Summary of recommendations .........................................................................................105
Organizational Implications .........................................................................................106
Implications for Future Inquiry ....................................................................................110
Chapter Summary ...........................................................................................................111
Report Summary ............................................................................................................111

REFERENCES ....................................................................................................................113
APPENDIX A: ONLINE SURVEY INVITATION.................................................................120
APPENDIX B: PREAMBLE AND CONSENT (ONLINE SURVEY)...............................121
APPENDIX C: E-MAIL INVITATION LETTER AND POSTCARD (WORLD CAFÉ)........122
APPENDIX D: INVITATION AND CONSENT LETTER (WORLD CAFÉ)......................123
APPENDIX E: WORLD CAFÉ POSTER AND POSTCARD.........................................125
APPENDIX F: INQUIRY TEAM MEMBER LETTER OF AGREEMENT .......................126
APPENDIX G: ONLINE SURVEY QUESTIONS..........................................................127
APPENDIX H: WORLD CAFÉ QUESTIONS..............................................................129
APPENDIX I: REMINDER FOR LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT SURVEY FOR
UW SUPERVISORS AND MANAGERS......................................................................130
APPENDIX J: REMINDER FOR WORLD CAFÉ EVENT..............................................131
APPENDIX K: EMAIL TO WORLD CAFÉ PARTICIPANTS CONFIRMING
ATTENDANCE..............................................................................................................132
APPENDIX L: WORLD CAFÉ DESIGN AND INSTRUCTIONS.................................133
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. The internal and external forces influencing the University of Winnipeg. ..................19
LIST OF TABLES

Table 1 Learning and Development Approaches Leaders Would Like to Access in the Future ..........................................................73

Table 2 Barriers to Learning and Development ......................................................................................................................74
CHAPTER ONE: FOCUS AND FRAMING

In an increasing turbulent and competitive environment the issues of recruiting, keeping and developing people with the capability to lead and manage business strategy are the focus of considerable attention from organizations, academics and government alike. (Bailey & Clarke, 2008, p. 912)

Continuing, complex, and rapid change is the new reality for organizations and individuals. More than ever, higher education institutions are at greater risk and have been facing shrinking resources and rising demands. Government funding for higher education is decreasing, while at the same time there is increasing pressure to stay relevant and competitive. Higher education institutions must find new ways to do business and to maximize existing resources. After years of tightening budgets, retirements, and vacancy management, higher education institutions are also facing a talent gap in the upcoming years and must implement a performance culture that allows them to identify and develop new leaders and become employers of choice (Deloitte Canada, 2011, p. 21).

As is the case for most higher education institutions across Canada, the University of Winnipeg (UW) has been impacted by lessening resources and increasing demands. In this environment in which everyone has to do more with less, UW, like other organizations, needs to increase the skills, knowledge, and abilities of its staff. In her Conference Board of Canada report, Lavis (2011) commented, “Given that Canada is showing signs of lagging competitiveness and capacity for innovation in the global knowledge economy, Canadian organizations must find new ways of developing their most important intangible assets: their employees” (p. i). A survey with global CEOs found that human capital is the number one challenge, globally. Additionally, growing talent internally is the number one challenge for Canadian CEOs (The Conference Board of Canada, 2013). Hodgson and White (2001) wrote,
“The future organization will succeed because its employees will have no barriers to any area of learning and development. They will be able to handle any situation and any learning opportunity” (p. 42). Given that UW’s greatest asset is its people, investing in learning and development (L&D) would improve upon the university’s existing long-term organizational performance and competitive advantages.

UW is Manitoba’s second largest university and is centrally located in downtown Winnipeg. The university offers both undergraduate and postgraduate degrees. UW has over 10,000 students, 390 faculty, 444 support and administrative staff, and 415 temporary and casual staff (University of Winnipeg, n.d.b). UW is noted for its academic excellence, indigenous education, environmental commitment, small class sizes, and improvement of access to postsecondary education for traditionally underrepresented learners (University of Winnipeg, n.d.b). Over the past 10 years UW has experienced significant growth, with a 35% increase in campus size and a 55% increase in enrolment (University of Winnipeg, n.d.b). The President, Dr. Lloyd Axworthy, in his 10th year as President, has had an extensive career in politics, including several cabinet minister posts in the Federal Liberal Government.

I have been at UW for over 20 years, and I am currently the Acting Executive Director at the UW, Professional Applied and Continuing Education (PACE). PACE delivers noncredit programming to early and midcareer professional learners. While PACE delivers professional training to individuals and organizations, few UW staff take advantage of PACE’s management courses and workshops. As I am located in a market-driven unit within the university, I am keenly aware of the importance of aligning business needs with employee development and
organizational learning. This business lens is different than the mainstream university culture, which has been traditionally more focussed on academics.

In the early stages of my organizational analysis, I learned that the Department of Human Resources (HR) wanted to introduce a leadership development strategy for its nonacademic leaders. Throughout this report, these managers and supervisors are referred to as leaders. Leaders at UW have a great deal of responsibility and influence, and there is room for growth in their role. HR recognized that providing L&D opportunities would allow leaders to enhance their current professional skills, grow in their careers, and prepare for future changes. As a leader myself, and as a supervisor of others, I wanted to give staff a voice and help make their professional development a priority for UW senior leaders. I felt immediately that L&D for leaders at UW would be a good topic for this inquiry, as it would benefit both leaders and the university.

In this research I asked the following inquiry question: How can the University of Winnipeg design a learning and development strategy for its leaders that will benefit both the leaders and the university? The following subquestions also helped to guide my research:

1. What are the current learning and development activities for leaders?
2. What are the learning and development needs of leaders?
3. What are the key elements of a learning and development strategy for leaders?
4. How can these key elements be achieved?
Significance of the Inquiry

The UW Director of HR stated, “We want to support our leaders more and provide more opportunities for them to get together” (D. Caldwell, personal communication, April 5, 2013).  

Presently, UW does not have an organized L&D program for staff. Increasing L&D opportunities would have a positive impact on the leaders’ confidence, skills, and abilities. Providing an organized L&D program for staff would enable UW to attract talented staff, as future employees may be looking to work in an organization that has an L&D culture. Lavis (2011) asserted, “A strong learning culture provides an ideal environment for attracting, retaining, and utilizing top talent” (p. 10). In summary, lack of management development leaves both leaders and the university vulnerable to external and internal forces.

HR presented a proposal to Senior Administration to develop and implement a management development strategy for approximately 90 UW leaders—managers and supervisors (D. Caldwell, personal communication, April 5, 2013). The HR proposal was approved in May 2013. The intent of the proposal is to support and develop current and future supervisors, managers, and leaders. The HR proposal stated all training must be cost-effective and contribute toward the long-term goals of the university. As part of this plan, UW HR has set a goal to invest in L&D and make training a priority. HR is also introducing a competency model for all leaders. The HR initiative is directed at both nonunionized and union leaders. While HR ultimately wants to develop all staff, they have selected this group of leaders as a starting point. This inquiry supported HR’s ability to implement the leadership development strategy by exploring the L&D needs of UW leaders. This inquiry also helped to define the methods of learning that would assist

1 All personal communication citations in this report are used with permission.
leaders in order to help UW HR develop a plan to enable leaders achieve their required level of competency. This research also created more awareness within Senior Administration of the need for and benefits of a development strategy for leaders.

My sponsor and I agreed that the change goal or direction of this inquiry was to determine the individual and group development needs of leaders and recommend solutions so organizational effectiveness can be improved (D. Caldwell, personal communication, April 5, 2013). My sponsor also stated a wish to create a community. UW has a diverse, committed, and talented staff who do not currently have ready vehicles for gathering together and building capacity. There are few formal means of collaboration and celebration of staff success. Kouzes and Posner (2007) spoke of celebrating the values and victories and indicated gathering people together at anytime will create a spirit of community (p. 330). Creating a community for leaders to gather and share information and stories may also be a cost-effective method for building capacity.

This inquiry was connected to HR’s stated mission to have UW become an employer of choice by “building a learning and development culture, and providing opportunities for career growth” (University of Winnipeg, n.d.a, Mission section, para. 7). Improving the knowledge and abilities of leaders would ultimately help other staff, faculty, and students. The outcomes from this inquiry may also have a major impact on HR staff by freeing up their time to work on more strategic issues, and it could also improve retention and recruitment of UW staff. While more difficult to measure, this inquiry may enhance the overall performance of UW by improving communication, increasing collaboration, and making staff more ready for change and better able
to deal with increasingly complex and fast-paced work. Overall, I expected the research to be a valuable investment to the institution.

The cost of not developing leaders is significant. Operational ineffectiveness, under performance, silos, low retention rates, lack of succession planning, and an inability to attract and retain quality talent are all potential costs to the institution. Many organizational researchers have indicated the value of a learning culture, particularly in a world of constant change (Schein, 2010; Senge, 2006). Choi and Ruona (2011) wrote, “A learning culture encourages individuals to be engaged in organizational learning and enhances organizational capacity to make successful changes” (p. 65). Kouzes and Posner (2007) said training is critical for building self-confidence and initiative: “People can’t deliver on what they don’t know how to do . . . you have to upgrade capabilities continuously” (p. 171). I believe that the outcomes of this inquiry will help UW HR design a strategy to develop its current and future leaders that meets the needs of both the leaders and the university.

**Organizational Context**

UW is facing many internal and external challenges. Externally, the university’s overall ranking slightly dropped in 2012. In 2011, UW ranked 10th place, and in 2012 the university's ranking dropped to 13th place for undergraduate universities (“2013 Primarily Undergraduate,” 2013). However, *The Globe and Mail* highly ranked UW for quality of teaching and learning, diversity, environmental commitment, small class sizes, and healthy food on campus (“Canadian University Report,” 2012).

At UW, the single largest pressure on the system appears to be financial. The provincial government provides about 59% of the university’s revenues, and although the province had
promised a 5% increase in funding for 2013–2014, they only supplied a 2.5% increase in operating grants (Martin, 2013). UW administration had initially calculated that there would be a gap of $1 million in the next year, as revenues cannot keep up with expenses (University of Winnipeg, 2013a, p. 3), with the reduced provincial income the gap increased to $1.5 million, adding further instability. Manitoba was more fortunate than others, as provincial governments across Canada have cut funding to post-secondary education institutions. For example, in March 2013, the Province of Alberta surprised postsecondary institutions by giving them a 6.8% cut rather than the 2% increase they had been told to expect (Bradshaw, 2013).

These financial pressures have forced UW to reduce costs and find new sources of revenue. Since 2007, UW has reduced its costs and increased revenues by 7% (University of Winnipeg, 2013a, p. 3). This has been a significant undertaking, and it has become increasingly difficult to find new cost savings. In this climate of reduction, including vacancy management, in which open positions are not filled, support staff growth has not kept up with faculty growth and student enrolment increases (University of Winnipeg, 2013a, p. 4).

Internally, staff surveys indicated some signs of discord. According to a general staff survey, only 7–10% of respondents indicated that they were “very knowledgeable” about any of the given UW topics such as the UW strategic direction, the President’s priorities and objectives, policies and procedures, the university’s financial situation, budget planning, and ongoing accomplishments (University of Winnipeg, 2012). Overall, the University of Winnipeg (2012) survey found UW to be “very ineffective” or “ineffective” at providing information about why decisions are made (73%) and how decisions are made (79%). An L&D strategy for leaders could help improve these negative results by making leaders more aware of the organizational
context and strategic direction of the university. With more knowledge and awareness, leaders could contribute more to the university’s mission, strategic direction, and academic plan. Leaders may also be more committed when they see that UW is willing to invest in their professional development.

HR conducted an L&D survey with UW management staff, and the results were summarized in 2012 (D. Caldwell, personal communication, December 1, 2012). The L&D survey found 41% of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed in response to “UW provides adequate ongoing training that I need as my job changes”; 43% of respondents indicated “Disagree” or “Strongly Disagree” in response to the statement, “I have a clearly defined development plan for my current job”; and 40% indicated “Disagree” or “Strongly Disagree” in response to the statement, “I have a clearly defined career path at the UW” (D. Caldwell, personal communication, December 1, 2012). These findings indicated that leaders are interested in career development and in receiving more training. Senior Administration and HR have expressed a concern about these survey results and would like to improve them. While a lack of institutional resources has limited HR’s ability to provide more support for staff in terms of career development and training, the L&D survey has provided an impetus for change.

**Systems Analysis of the Inquiry**

Senge (2006) asserted that systems thinking “forms a rich language for describing a vast array of interrelationships and patterns of change . . . it simplifies life by helping us see the deeper patterns lying behind the events and the details” (p. 73). This inquiry explored how UW’s multilayered internal and external influences have affected the ability to create a learning culture that supports the development of leaders. Coghlan and Brannick (2010) stated, “The process of
moving a change through an organization requires a systematic view of the complex interrelationship and interdependence of the individual, the face-to-face team, the interdepartmental group and the organization” (p. 89). Although my inquiry focused on UW leaders, the effects will be far reaching and may extend to larger internal and external systems. Systems thinking “allows one to see underlying structures and patterns of behaviour that are obscured in the complexity of daily events and activities” (Yeo, 2005, p. 374). Looking through a systems lens helps leaders see how all the pieces of the organization are connected and how they are reliant on each other.

Like most higher education institutions, UW faces many challenges, including financial pressures, increased competition, the need for physical and technological infrastructure renewal, declining perceived value of a university education, globalization, and changing demographics (Usher, 2013). In a 2011 report, Deloitte Canada noted the following top 10 issues facing Canadian higher education institutions in the coming year: funding and resources; increased competition for students; setting strategic priorities; need for technology upgrades; rethinking of infrastructure; linking programs to outcomes; attracting and retaining the best faculty; need for sustainability; tackling diversity, accessibility, and affordability; and improving reporting. The Deloitte Canada report noted that higher education must develop talent management strategies and build a performance culture that can identify and develop top performers (p. 21). The Deloitte report concluded,

To succeed, Canadian higher education institutions must take a good, hard look at their organizing principles. Ultimately, the most successful players will be those who remain open to fundamental changes in management practices and support their decision-making with a sound, forward-looking business case. (p. 32)
UW seems well prepared for the future pressures and is open to new ways of doing business in order to stay relevant. In his 2013 message to alumni, President Lloyd Axworthy (as cited in University of Winnipeg, 2013c) wrote,

> We can no longer rely solely on a traditional model of government funding and tuition fees. We must build our identity around meaningful partnerships that are innovative, collaborative, and independent . . . it is our responsibility to ensure our universities are sustainable for present and future generations. (p. 2)

Like most academic institutions, UW operates on a bicameral system and has two governing bodies. The UW Senate is the academic governing body, and the Board of Regents is responsible for overall strategic direction and finance. The direction for the next 3 years was presented at UW’s Board of Regents (University of Winnipeg, 2013a, p. 5); the university’s focus will be on becoming more efficient and building new revenues. This change in focus “requires a complete rethink of how, when, where increasingly mature, diverse, and demanding student population requires academic programming that is far more flexibly-delivered and innovative in its offerings” (University of Winnipeg, 2013a, p. 5). New revenue sources identified include more online learning, larger classes, increased international enrolment, and more options for noncredit cost recovery.

Using Bolman and Deal’s (2003) system of frames, UW can be viewed through two frames:

The human resource frame emphasizes an understanding of people, with their strengths and foibles, reason and emotion, desires and fears. The political frame sees organizations as competitive arenas characterized by scarce resources, competing interests, and struggles for power and advantage. (p. 18)

In this system, the political frame can overpower the human resource frame. By placing emphasis on the human resources this inquiry may help rebalance the frames.
Figure 1 outlines the internal and external forces influencing UW. In this system, the pressure is equally as great inside as it is outside. The top-left quadrant represents the Senior Administration, who have many pressures and are most impacted by the government (the main funder). While UW’s focus is on student success and faculty excellence, it is the nonacademic staff who work with both students and faculty to ensure their success. Focussing on nonacademic staff in this system demonstrates how a highly motivated and efficient staff could assist UW in reaching its goals.

Figure 1. The internal and external forces influencing the University of Winnipeg.

Chapter Summary

UW faces pressures to become more efficient and effective. As its costs surpass government grants and tuition fees each year, UW must find innovative ways to remain
sustainable and stay relevant. Employee development drives organizational performance and maximizing one of UW’s greatest assets, its leaders, though building an L&D strategy will help UW to better attract, develop, and retain top talent. The professional development of nonacademic staff is vital in order to provide quality services to students and to help UW maintain its competitive edge and institutional effectiveness.

In Chapter 2, a literature review of three areas of academic research that helped provide a foundation for this inquiry will be presented. The topics covered are L&D, organizational culture, and organizational strategy.
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter provides a review of the literature on L&D, organizational culture, and organizational strategy in an effort to inform the design of an L&D strategy for leaders at UW. This literature review addresses the inquiry question: How can the University of Winnipeg design a learning and development strategy for its leaders that will benefit both the leaders and the university? The following subquestions are also addressed in the literature review:

1. What are the current learning and development activities for leaders?
2. What are the learning and development needs of leaders?
3. What are the key elements of a learning and development strategy for leaders?
4. How can these key elements be achieved?

Learning and Development

In an era of shrinking resources, increasing complexity, changes in technology and demographics, and globalization, the ability of universities to survive and thrive depends on having a highly skilled workforce. Lavis (2011) asserted,

The organizations that can embrace, promote, and enable the shift toward a new learning paradigm will see benefits in terms of a highly skilled workforce capable of driving innovation and organizational performance. . . . Those not willing or able to make this kind of commitment to L&D will face a continued decline in their organization’s ability to keep pace in an increasingly competitive business climate. (p. iv)

The theme of L&D was pivotal to this research, and a literature review helped to inform the inquiry question. This section explores definitions of L&D, outlines types of L&D, summarizes trends in L&D, and discusses the benefits of L&D for both organizations and individuals.
Definition of learning and development

Many terms are used in the literature to describe the topic of L&D, including employee development, leadership development, management development, talent development, career development, professional development, workplace learning, and training and development. These various terms are used throughout this report interchangeably to reflect the language used in the literature with the understanding that all of the aforementioned terms fall under the overarching theme of L&D.

Learning is the process of acquiring knowledge and skills, and all development requires learning (Saks & Haccoun, 2013, p. 65). Development is associated with an individual acquiring new capabilities for both present and future jobs (Bryson, Pajo, Ward, & Mallon, 2006; Frost & Wallingford, 2013; Saks & Haccoun, 2013). Workplace learning is the process of gaining job-related knowledge and skills through both formal training programs and informal social interactions between employees (Saks & Haccoun, 2013, p. 49). Jacobs and Park (2009) defined workplace learning as

the process used by individuals when engaged in training programs, education and development courses, or some type of experiential learning activity for the purpose of acquiring the competence necessary to meet current and future work requirements. The definition assumes the need to balance, though not always equally, the needs of organizations, which provide the context for the learning, with the needs of individuals who may undertake the learning to advance their own work-related interests and goals.

(p. 134)

Understanding workplace L&D was central to this inquiry, and more awareness of L&D will help UW design a strategy that meets the current and future needs of its leaders.

Learning must start with the individual, as “organizations learn only through individuals who learn” (Senge, 2006, p. 129). It is commonly understood that there are three levels of
learning: individual, team, and organizational (Saks & Haccoun, 2013; Senge, 2006; Yeo, 2005). In this multilevel systems view of learning, each level acts independently to influence learning but they also interact with each other. Although the concept of organizational learning emerged in the 1960s and 1970s, it was Peter Senge (2006) who made the idea of the learning organization popular (Yeo, 2005, p. 369). Yeo (2005) distinguished between organizational learning and the learning organization, stating the term organizational learning focuses on the process of learning, while the term learning organization refers to a type of an organization (p. 369). Schein (2010) stated that as the world becomes more complex and diverse, organizations, their leaders, and everyone else would have to become learners (p. 365).

The literature seemed to concur that L&D in the workplace is a process an individual goes through to work in his or her current job as well as to prepare for the future. L&D can be attained in many ways, both formal and informal, and it is continuous. In the current workplace, L&D is much more than attending a training session or a course; it is a combination of various types and approaches to learning, which I explore in the next section.

**Types of learning and development**

It is important to understand the types of L&D to help determine what will work most effectively at UW. The type of learning may not be as important as ensuring that learning occurs in a way that meets the needs of both the individual and the organization. Belling, James, and Ladkin (2004) surmised, “All types of management and leadership development programmes, . . . if they are designed and delivered appropriately, have the potential to enable participants to learn and transfer their learning back to their organisations” (p. 252).
There is no agreement in the literature on how individuals learn best or on the effectiveness of various forms of learning. Yukl (2013) said leadership could be developed through formal training, developmental activities, and self-help activities. Developmental activities are usually part of an operational job assignment or can include coaching, mentoring, or special assignments (p. 381). Jacobs and Park (2009) conducted a survey of the literature on workplace learning and reported that learning is comprised of two major components: formal training and informal learning (p. 140). Formal training is made up of planned learning activities that include almost all training and development programs that organizations sponsor or offer (Jacobs & Park, 2009, p. 140). Informal learning occurs in the workplace and involves the gaining of knowledge and skill in the context of practice. Informal learning could include group problem solving, mentoring, coaching, and job shadowing (Jacobs & Park, 2009, p. 141). Billett (2004) disagreed with workplace learning being defined as informal, nonformal, or unstructured, and said this implies that workplace learning is weak, ad hoc, and not as credible as learning in a classroom (p. 313). Billett also asserted that it is important to note that not all learning occurs in educational institutions and the workplace is also a learning environment.

J. Conger (2010) argued that there is still a place for formal leadership development programs, and, when executed properly, these programs can play a large role in developing leaders. J. Conger (2010) said that people often forget about their development soon after a program ends; people need to find new and more lasting ways for after-program development. “This is a great tragedy since we know that development is an ongoing process. It never ends when a program ends” (Conger, 2010, p. 310).
L&D can also be viewed as on-the-job and off-the-job learning (Jacobs & Park, 2009; Saks & Haccoun, 2013). On-the-job learning is mostly informal, while off-the-job learning is formal. Frost and Wallingford (2013) theorized that managerial learning can occur entirely on the job, stating that sending managers away from their jobs is too expensive and the long-term transfer of learning from workshops, courses, and conferences may not occur (p. 759). Instead, Frost and Wallingford recommended a plan that includes assessment of individual competencies, mentoring or coaching, on-the-job experience, creating an individualized learning plan, and providing regular and on-going feedback. This process would include HR, the supervisor, and the manager to create and monitor the manager’s individualized learning plan (Frost & Wallingford, 2013, p. 760). Saks and Haccoun (2013) reported the most common examples of on-the-job development are job rotation, coaching, and mentoring (p. 438). These authors noted one disadvantage to on-the-job learning is the number of distractions than can interfere with learning in the workplace and that a blended approach with a variety of methods seems to be the most effective (Saks & Haccoun, 2013, pp. 217–218).

McDonald and Hite (2005) categorized career development as bounded and boundary-spanning. Bounded programs include training, mentoring, tuition reimbursement, job postings, and career-planning workshops (McDonald & Hite, 2005). McDonald and Hite (2005) also asserted, with the rapid changes in the workplace including reorganizations, downsizing, and evolving job requirements, many organizations do not have the resources or time to offer a formal training program. These authors identified the following four boundary-spanning learning activities as an alternative way of developing employees’ careers: informal learning, networks, community involvement and alternative forms of mentoring (McDonald & Hite, 2005, p. 427).
“These boundary-spanning activities typically require fewer organizational resources than more traditional bounded-development initiatives” (p. 429).

In the literature, researchers agreed that informal learning could take many shapes, including networks, mentoring, coaching, job rotations, job shadowing, and developmental assignments (Jacobs & Park, 2009; McDonald & Hite, 2005; Yukl, 2013). Informal learning is experiential with the premise of having the employee learn on the job, rather than off the job. Networks may be a learning topic that HR could assist in organizing or facilitating, within which employees can meet with others within the organization, the profession and the community (McDonald & Hite, 2005, p. 428). One form of networking is a community of practice, which is a social learning system that refers to groups of people who share common interests or purposes and meet to share their ideas, knowledge, and experiences. Wenger (2000), who developed the term community of practice, said that people have formed communities since the beginning of time, and participating in these communities is essential to people’s learning: “It is at the very core of what makes us human beings capable of meaningful knowing” (p. 229). In the knowledge economy, sharing information through informal systems will become more important (Wenger, 2000, p. 244). Creating networks could be a very effective form of learning for UW staff.

Another type of informal learning is mentoring. Mentors are usually drawn from more experienced managers or senior leaders in the organization. Mentors help less experienced managers; mentoring involves “continuous interventions in which trainees and mentors might get together for years” (Saks & Haccoun, 2013, p. 439). Simonsen (1997) said that when an organization provides mentoring, it indicates they value the institutional knowledge of the
Mentors, and they encourage open communication and sharing of information (p. 157).

Mentoring contributes to a development culture in the following ways: improved performance, cost effectiveness, increased organizational communication and understanding, and development opportunities for senior employees (Simonsen, 1997, p. 158). McDonald and Hite (2005) wrote that alternative forms of peer mentoring are often more available and require fewer organizational resources than traditional forms of mentoring (p. 429).

The term social learning has been noted in the literature as a form of learning that is on the rise (Chartered Institute of Personnel Development, 2013; Lavis, 2011). Social learning can be both informal and formal, and includes classroom group exercises, coaching, mentoring, expertise directories, and communities of practice. Social learning may use, but does not rely on, social media or technology (Lavis, 2011, p. 24). “Social learning approaches emphasize the importance of collaborative processes in enabling learning at the individual level” (Lavis, 2011, p. 24). Group webinars, mentoring, peer-to-peer mentoring, learning on the job, and learning around the water cooler are all considered forms of social learning (Chartered Institute of Personnel Development, 2013, p. 17).

UW has a diverse, committed, and talented staff who do not currently have ready vehicles for getting together and building capacity. Improving knowledge sharing through increased networking, communities of practice, and mentoring could potentially have a low implementation cost, yet effectively support L&D at UW.

Trends in learning and development

The literature indicates that L&D in the workplace is moving away from classroom training towards more flexible methods of learning that occur on the job. As the pace of work
increases and there is less time and money for formal training, organizations may explore more informal learning options (Saks & Haccoun, 2013, p. 50). The rise in informal learning can also be attributed to the increased need for knowledge transfer, increased leadership support for it, and more informal activities initiated by employees (Lavis, 2011, p. 24). There is a shift away from on-the-shelf to customized and personalized learning, from organizationally managed to self-managed, and from the classroom to continuous, just-in-time, and blended forms of delivery; however, a strong focus on the classroom still exists (Garavan, Carbery, & Rock, 2012, p. 15).

Garavan et al. (2012) stated,

Some commentators have suggested a 70:20:10 strategy whereby 70 per cent of talent development takes place through work activities; 20 per cent through relationships and 10 per cent through formal development activities . . . however, it is rarely implemented in a systematic way. The model is largely too high-level and does not offer much in terms of detailed guidance nor does it specify the lessons learned from each experience . . . therefore, in reality the reverse is the case with the majority of talent development activities concentrated in the 10 per cent category. (p. 12)

Lavis’s (2011) Learning and Development Outlook report indicated that most organizations use the 70-20-10 rule, with 70% of work-related learning taking place on the job (a mix of social and personal learning), 20% for informal learning, and 10% for coursework and training (p. 28). Saks and Haccoun (2013) reported that 70% of what employees learn and know about their jobs is learned informally, with only 30% being learned through formal training and development programs (p. 49). Chambers (2013) stated that practitioners in the field estimate that 80% of employee L&D occurs from experience, 10% through coaching and mentoring, and 10% from the classroom. Chambers summarized, “Overall, the prevailing method involves developing supervisors and employees in the context of their ongoing work experience rather than taking
supervisors and employees away from their work environment so that they can develop” (p. 140).

L&D is headed “toward a more collaborative, fluid conceptualization of learning as a process rather than a product” (Lavis, 2011, p. 39). There is still a lot to be learned about the effectiveness of informal methods, even though organizations are using them more often (Garavan et al., 2012, p. 15). Yukl (2013) wrote that although many methods of development are used, the amount of research to evaluate their effectiveness is lacking (p. 402). Evaluating effectiveness will become increasingly important as there is more pressure on HR to implement tailored, business-focused learning, in the face of declining budgets, that align with organizational strategy and can demonstrate a return on investment (Hayward, 2011, p. 29; Lavis, 2011, p. 35). Lavis (2011) asked if evaluation approaches are out of touch and noted that, as organizations move to more innovative approaches to L&D, they also need to find ways to evaluate the impact of these programs (p. 40). L&D systems will be different in different organizations and will succeed based on how they fit with the culture, as what works for one organization may not work in another (Simonsen, 1997; Stahl et al., 2012).

**Benefits of learning and development for the organization**

The literature consistently linked L&D to organizational performance and competitive advantage (Belling et al., 2004; Bryson et al., 2006; Conger, 2002; Govaerts, Kyndt, Dochy, & Baert, 2011; Jacobs & Park, 2009; Schein, 2010; Senge, 2006; Yeo, 2005). The skills, knowledge, and learning capacity of employees are a known asset for competitive success (Bryson et al., 2006, p. 281). Senge (2006) wrote, “The organizations that will truly excel in the future will be the organizations that discover how to tap into people’s commitment and capacity
to learn at all levels of the organization” (p. 4). S. Conger (2002) asserted, “A career development culture helps address productivity, competitiveness, affirmative action, and succession planning. It helps people redefine their talents to realize the full potential of their jobs” (p. 371).

Another benefit for the organization is that L&D can increase employee effectiveness and improve recruitment and retention. Trained employees can do more and better work with fewer errors, have more positive attitudes, and require less supervision (Saks & Haccoun, 2013, p. 8). In addition, employee retention has been linked to learning and the more willing an employee is to learn, the more they are likely to stay in their organization (Govaerts et al., 2011, p. 49). Development cultures can also improve levels of trust and communication, increase collaboration, and encourage risk taking in the organization (Simonsen, 1997).

Linking L&D to organizational strategies so that managers have the skills and knowledge required to help meet organizational goals can lead to organizational success (Saks & Haccoun, 2013, p. 8). The link between strategic directions and employee actions must be clear, and employees must know what the business needs are (Simonsen, 1997, p. 72). Silzer and Dowell (2010) stated talent management must be driven by business strategy, accepted as a core business process, and established as an organizational mindset (p. 23). Yukl (2013) said that while leadership development needs to be aligned with the organization’s competitive strategy, this is not the case in most organizations. This disconnect may reflect a lack of understanding about the interdependencies between the two as well as the level of difficulty in designing developmental systems that will meet organizational needs (Yukl, 2013, p. 400). Given that linking strategy to
learning is complex, UW HR will have to carefully consider how it integrates the daily operational and long-term strategic goals of UW into its program design.

The literature indicated that investing in L&D is important. Jacobs and Park (2009) stressed the importance for organizations to respond to current and future employee competence needs through some form of workplace learning, just as they must manage their physical and financial resources (p. 136). Overall, a systems approach to development is as important for organizational effectiveness as product development, marketing, and customer service (Yukl, 2013, p. 402).

While research indicated positive links between L&D and organizational success, not all organizations invest equally in training. According to the Conference Board of Canada, which tracks L&D trends in Canadian business over time, L&D is not a high priority with Canadian organizations (Lavis, 2011); in 2010, Canada was ranked 25th out of 59 countries when assessing the importance placed on workplace learning (Lavis, 2011, p. 8). Canadian organizations underinvest in training and development, and this has been on a steady decline over the past 10 years (Lavis, 2011). Prior to 2000, Canada was consistently in the top 20 countries for workplace learning (Lavis, 2011, p. 8). Lavis (2011) found one of the reasons is that many organizational leaders tend to view L&D as more of a cost than an investment; as such, it is viewed as something that can be cut in tough times. Ironically, growing talent internally is viewed as the number one HR strategy for Canadian chief executive officers (CEOs) and providing employee training and development is number three (Conference Board of Canada, 2013). Simonsen (1997) affirmed that unless development has a business case for its existence and is seen only as “nice to have” it won’t survive internal or external changes
Lavis (2011) is also concerned that Canadian organizations are not investing enough at the time when skilled employees are becoming more vital to an organization’s success, and this is contributing to Canada’s decline in productivity and innovation. Canada was recently given a grade of “D” for innovation, placing 14th out of 17 countries (Lavis, 2011, p. 9). More research is needed on how senior management view the relative value of business leadership development against other business drivers such as brand, product development, or culture (Bailey & Clarke, 2008, p. 930).

**Benefits of learning and development for the individual**

Understanding what motivates employees to engage in learning is important for organizations to consider. Simonsen (1997) stated, “Management can state the expectations, provide resources and opportunities, and hold people accountable, but development happens inside the individual” (p. 196). Weisbord (2012) said,

> Unless our learning is self-motivated, we are unlikely to use it . . . training needs to be voluntary, jointly entered into by people who work together, and safe in the sense that people will not be compromised by others’ judgements of them. (p. 476)

While there are numerous benefits to individuals, those who decide how and what they learn are usually more committed than those who are told what they are to learn (Teare, 1997, p. 306). Schein (2010) stated,

> Learning and change cannot be imposed on people . . . the more turbulent, ambiguous, and out of control the world becomes, the more the learning process will have to be shared by all the members of the social unit doing the learning. (p. 383)

The literature suggested that successful organizational learning initiatives “begin by encouraging and motivating individuals to learn and to take the initiative in identifying their own learning
needs” (Teare, 1997, p. 304). This research project began this process by directly asking UW employees to describe their learning needs.

Trends in the literature have placed a greater focus on the individual as “the learner, developer and career maker” (Bryson et al., 2006, p. 284). While this could be construed as organizations shifting more risk to individuals in the wake of downsizing and competitive pressures, Bryson et al. (2006) also noted the individual’s empowerment and desire to learn (p. 284). Saks and Haccoun (2013) indicated there are many benefits for individuals who have the opportunity to learn, including increased confidence, a more positive attitude, and increased feelings of usefulness and belonging in the organization (p. 10).

With the shift to the knowledge economy, employees have more responsibility for their learning (Jacobs & Park, 2009; Lavis, 2011; Silzer & Dowell, 2010). Work is becoming more collaborative and less hierarchical, and employee roles are also becoming more complex (Day, 2007; Lavis, 2011). Work content has shorter lifecycles (Jacobs & Park, 2009), and the sheer volume of information employees must process has increased (Lavis, 2011). “Task migration” (Day, 2007, p. 3) is occurring, in which higher-level leadership tasks are transferred to leaders at lower levels as higher-level leaders face increasingly complex challenges (Day, 2007, p. 3). In her Conference of Board of Canada report, Lavis (2011) argued that L&D is moving away from an organizationally driven product to a learner-centred process: “Employees hold primary responsibility for ensuring proficiency in their work . . . they will increasingly look to take learning-related matters into their own hands to ensure continued competence in their roles” (p. 39). With an increased need for knowledge transfer, employees are initiating more informal activities, and leaders are supporting this shift (Lavis, 2011, p. 24).
Garavan et al. (2012) stated the shift toward individuals planning and implementing their development activities requires the learner to be self-aware, self-confident, and persistent. Garavan et al. noted the challenge for the organization is how to link self-directed activities to organizational goals: “There is a major gap in our understanding of individual characteristics that facilitate self-directed learning, the nature of self-development behaviour and the influence of group and organisational factors that facilitate self-development” (p. 15). Individual learning plans, developed by the employee in conjunction with his or her manager are a means of personalizing learning strategies. There is a lack of research on how these customized plans and the types of support required (Garavan et al., 2012, p. 15). Individual learning plans are commonly used in many organizations, including governments and schools, but I was unable to find any literature on their effectiveness.

The literature indicated learning must begin with individuals who want to learn and employees need to be invested in their own development. The more the learner is a part of the process, the more likely he or she will be to invest in the learning. Billett (2004) stated, “Individuals will decide how they will participate in and what they learn from what they experience” (p. 321). Wheatley (2006) surmised change becomes possible when people focus on common issues and problems and when it holds meaning to them:

We don’t accept an organizational redesign because a leader tells us it is necessary. We choose to accept it if and only if, we see how this new design enables us to contribute more to what we’ve defined as meaningful. (p. 196)

The more UW invests in including leaders and understanding their learning needs, the more engaged they will be in the process. As stated earlier, this inquiry project was the first step in this process.
Learning and Organizational Culture

Culture is pervasive and influences the working and learning environment (Schein, 2010). Culture is like the personality of an organization and has been referred to as “the way we do things around here” (Bower, 1966, p. 22). Understanding the relationship between organizational culture and learning as well as the characteristics of supportive and unsupportive cultures is essential for the implementation of this research project’s recommendations. Yukl (2013) stated, “More leadership development is likely when individual learning is regarded as highly important for organizational effectiveness. In such an organization, more resources will be devoted to training, and more effort will be made to explicitly measure and reward learning” (p. 397). Simonsen (1997) noted a development culture needs trust, communication, and commitment (p. 256). Organizational support for learning is critical, and while individuals and their managers must take responsibility for learning, “if senior leaders of organizations want higher performance, then they must support managers at all levels in their efforts to learn and develop” (Longenecker, 2010, p. 10). In this following section, I will discuss the enablers of a supportive learning culture as well as the barriers to L&D.

Enablers of a supportive culture

Many authors have noted the importance of organizational culture to L&D (Schein, 2010; Senge, 2006; Simonsen, 1997). Organizations with strong learning cultures must have support from leadership and score higher on employee engagement, organizational communication, leadership performance, and positive work environments (Lavis, 2011, p. 11). Access and opportunity to learning appear to be two key factors in workplaces that provide positive learning environments for employees (Bryson et al., 2006, p. 283).
Fuller and Unwin (2004) categorized learning environments as expansive and restrictive. The characteristics of expansive environments included supporting employees to attain formal qualifications, employee participation in multiple communities of practice, time off from work for reflection or for learning, promoting learning as a means of career advancement and building organizational capacity, and establishing an easily accessible workplace curriculum (Fuller & Unwin, 2004). Yukl (2013) noted that employers can do many things to promote learning, including making job assignments that allow people to pursue their interests; creating work schedules that allow time to experiment with new methods; providing financial support; and arranging for guest speakers and skills workshops (p. 397).

While there is no one factor that creates a supportive culture, Belling et al. (2004) found a culture of support fell into three basic groups: characteristics of the individual learner, aspects of their workplace, and facets of the learning experience (p. 236). Belling et al. also identified the top three facilitators for enhanced transfer of learning: an individual’s own determination, having awareness of their own strengths and weaknesses, and seeing the benefits of applying their learning (p. 243). S. Conger (2002) added another dimension by stating,

The responsibility for a person’s own career planning must be that of the individual, but the responsibility for the success of a career development culture requires the active support and involvement of three principal actors: top management, supervisors and employees themselves. (p. 371)

Overall, research indicated that creating a supportive learning culture needs commitment from top leadership and the learners themselves as well as a strategic investment in resources. An example of this is the recent corporate learning strategy of the BC Public Service Agency (n.d.). Their report identified some key factors that support the development of a culture of learning, which included strong support from executive, supervisors who empower staff and promote
learning, employees who are personally motivated; and ongoing and strategic investment in resources, training and tools (BC Public Service Agency, n.d., p. 8). In summary, the key drivers of a successful learning culture would involve a program supported by senior leaders that meets organizational goals and is developed with the input of employees.

**Barriers to learning and development**

Longenecker (2010) found, “While it is easy to conclude that managerial learning is critical, it is important to understand the factors that prevent managers from learning and acquiring the skills necessary to function effectively when their organizations are changing all around them” (p. 8). The literature indicated that barriers to learning are driven by organizational culture and structure as well as by employee factors such as lack of time or interest.

Belling et al. (2004) identified seven factors that affect learning: lack of peer support, lack of reinforcement back on the job, time and work pressures, lack of authority and perceived irrelevance of the program, lack of support from the organization, and group resistance to training (p. 236). Fuller and Unwin (2004) described the following characteristics of restrictive learning environments: limited participation in communities of practice, no shared tradition of development, limited learning opportunities, little support for employees to gain formal qualifications, most learning on the job with little time for reflection, and no concrete workplace curriculum.

Many researchers have conducted studies on the barriers to learning. Two unrelated qualitative studies were conducted with managers to assess barriers to managerial learning (Belling et al., 2004; Longenecker, 2010). Both studies found some common barriers, including the day-to-day time pressures at work, lack of organizational resources, lack of managerial
support, and lack of time for reflection and planning. Longenecker (2010) identified 10 barriers to managerial learning, with time pressures being the highest at 82% (p. 10); time pressures and priority given to short-term results were also ranked at the top barrier by Belling et al. (2004) at 72% (p. 244). Individuals must also take responsibility for their own learning, and both studies indicated that unawareness of gaps, lack of motivation, or a lack of willingness to learn were also barriers.

Based on these studies, it could be surmised that the barriers will vary within each organization and each individual. Organizations that place high emphasis on short-term results over long-term planning with lack of leadership support or allocation of financial or time resources for L&D have cultures in which learning is difficult.

**Learning in higher education**

The purpose of this inquiry, creating a learning development strategy for leaders, could bring a positive culture change to UW, but culture change is never easy, and the literature indicated it may be more difficult in higher education institutions. Universities are complex systems, and while nonacademic staff are expected to work as a business they must integrate with academic staff who have a different model (Bak, 2012; Watkins, 2005; White & Weathersby, 2005). White and Weathersby (2005) stated,

> Universities, like the military and the church, are historically old, large, and universally common institutions. They have historically been rigidly hierarchical, resistant to change, and structurally stable. They have also usually been led by conventionalists who prefer to wield influence through positional power. (p. 294)

Watkins (2005), who also discussed the culture of educational institutions, explained,

> The culture of higher education has some elements that may mitigate against making system changes . . . effective change leaders will be those who recognize that change is
not a single event but rather a process of learning over time that can be anticipated, led, and managed. (p. 420)

Watkins (2005) and White and Weathersby (2005) concurred that change is difficult in universities as their cultures are traditionally based and structurally bound.

In the process of trying to understand what model may work for UW leaders, several studies on management development programs for academic department chairs were reviewed (Johnson, 2010; Ladyshewsky & Flavell, 2012). Johnson (2010) said, “Leadership within academic settings means gaining influence, loyalty and commitment through an interpersonal, collaborative approach rather than an authoritarian, competitive manner” (p. 11). Both studies indicated internal leadership development programs are important in an increasingly challenging environment; however, not a lot of universities are investing in this kind of development for staff. There were some common challenges in the internal environments at the academic institutions explored in these studies that impacted the leadership programs, such as excessive workload (leading to difficulty to commit to training time), lack of succession planning, and no preexisting training for staff (Ladyshewsky & Flavell, 2012; Johnson, 2010). Both studies made a convincing argument that university leaders require a specially designed program that suits their unique needs. The researchers also stated that while successful leadership development programs are supported from the top, they are employee shaped and driven, and they evolve around real issues the organization faces. Johnson (2010) contended, “Leadership development only carries real meaning when it is effectively embedded in the participants’ real work context” (p. 7). Ladyshewsky and Flavell (2012) found that there was a transfer of training through the leadership development program in their study that produced “enduring changes in learned behaviour” (p. 144).
Bak (2012) shed some light on the obstacles a university can face when striving to develop a learning culture. Bak found there was a difference in approach to organizational learning between academic and nonacademic staff. He learned the administrative staff seemed more aware of the advantages of a shared vision and the benefits of collaboration, as this helped them in their daily operations (Bak, 2012). On the other hand, “the academic staff had predefined tasks and were members of teams, networks or research groups, their highly fragmented roles may have led to more differentiation of specialization and knowledge” (Bak, 2012, p. 170). This may indicate that administrative staff in higher education have different learning needs than academic staff. More research is required on the different and convergent needs of academic and nonacademic staff.

Rose and Kumar (2006) wrote about the increasing need for human resource development at higher education institutions. Their focus was on academic staff, but their findings could also apply to nonacademic staff. Rose and Kumar said that human resources should be involved in training and development, organizational development, and career development. In Rose and Kumar’s opinion, educators in higher education are more concerned with improving students’ knowledge and skills but should be taking more care to improve their own professional development (p. 34). Rose and Kumar argued that the quality of educators and educational leaders would lead to increased educational quality and economic progress. Lewis (2011) commented that while higher education is a resource for the leadership and management of business, “the same institutions neglect the preparation of their own leaders and managers” (p. 3).
Watkins (2005) asked, “What would be different if we structured our colleges and departments in higher education to be learning organizations?” (p. 414). Watkins concluded that although this would be a challenge in the highly structured university setting, the one element of organizational culture that could support this is a passion for learning (p. 420). White and Weathersby (2005) concurred that the culture of academic institutions is not conducive to a learning organization, but to improve their credibility and to practice what they teach to students, “they should endeavor to become known as being as models of learning organizations operating in the ‘knowledge age’” (p. 293).

Bak (2012) stated universities are no longer safe, as they are not prepared for change, and “becoming a learning organization is critical for higher education's wellbeing” (p. 164). Overall, the literature indicated that while universities would benefit from having more of a learning culture, implementing one takes extra care and caution as there are many competing systems at play, such as faculty autonomy, government regulation, a rigid hierarchy, a teaching and research focus, and traditional resistance to change (Bak, 2012; Watkins, 2005; White & Weathersby, 2005). A challenge for universities will be to harness the energy of both nonacademic and academic staff to work toward common goals.

In the literature, more attention is given to the development of faculty, while a less noted group in universities tends to be the development of nonacademic staff. It was difficult to find literature on learning in higher education that did not have a focus on faculty. This gap in literature may indicate a bias in higher education against nonacademic staff, as it could be argued that all levels of learners should be considered when talking about organizational L&D. Lewis (2011) wrote, “The development of nonacademic professional staff is just as important as
faculty” (pp. 9–10). Researchers have noted limited educational research on nonacademic leaders in higher education (Cembrowski & Da Costa, 2001; Henderson, 2009; Lewis, 2011). There is a need for more research in this area as the systems and culture of managing in higher education are different than that of managing in business, schools, healthcare, and other public institutions.

**Organizational Strategy**

Organizational strategy is one of the most important influences on L&D. An L&D approach that is aligned with organizational strategy can help an organization become more competitive. This section describes the relationship between organizational strategy and L&D and the evolving role of human resources as a strategic business partner. It will also describe best practices in L&D programs.

**Strategic role of human resources**

The more that L&D is linked to an organization’s business strategy, the more likely it is to be effective (Dirkx, Gilley, & Gilley, 2004; Saks & Haccoun, 2013; Silzer & Dowell, 2010; Yukl, 2013). Only 56% of the organizations Lavis (2011) surveyed had a strategic plan for L&D. Lavis found the connection between strategic planning and learning culture was evident, as 77% of organizations with a strong learning culture had a strategic learning plan, compared to only 52% of those with moderate learning cultures, and 29% with weak learning cultures. The top goals of respondents were improving organizational performance, developing leaders, and aligning learning with business objectives (Lavis, 2011, p. 33).

There is an increasing expectation that HR play a key role, as strategic business partner as organizations are realizing the value of their people (Nankervis & Ananthram, 2013; Silzer & Dowell, 2010). Silzer and Dowell (2010) stated, “Clear organizational attention has been given
to translating business strategies into human resource and talent strategies” (p. 28). The alignment of HR with an organization’s business strategy is called strategic human resource management, and the alignment of an organization’s training needs with an organization’s strategy and objectives is called strategic training and development (Saks & Haccoun, 2013, p. 19). People within an organization are frequently referred to as human capital. Human capital has been defined as “the knowledge, skills, and abilities of employees” (Saks & Haccoun, 2013, p. 43). Human capital was ranked the number one priority of global leaders, and growing talent internally was viewed as the number one human resources strategy for Canadian CEOs (The Conference Board of Canada, 2013). A North American research study with 30 senior executives with global HR management responsibilities found that most executive managers (both HR and non-HR) in especially the larger companies in Canada and the United States have begun to recognize that their competitive advantages lie primarily in their people, “as such, there is allusion to investment in human capital or human assets as the key to firm survival, success, or ongoing competitiveness” (Nankervis & Ananthram, 2013, p. 293).

Silzer and Dowell (2010) wrote, “Talent management is now more than a desirable HR program: it is a leadership imperative” (p. 8). The term talent management is being increasingly discussed in HR literature. Talent management is often used interchangeably with the term HR management (Silzer & Dowell, 2010) or human capital management (Stahl et al., 2012, p. 26). Garavan et al. (2012) defined talent management as “how organizations attract, select, develop and manage employees in an integrated and strategic way” (p. 5). Talent development is usually highlighted as a part of talent management, which is presented as one of the key challenges facing organizations. While there is some doubt whether talent development differs from L&D,
there is a clear need for it to be integrated with business strategies (Garavan et al., 2012, p. 14).

Silzer and Dowell (2010) wrote,

Financial resources may be the lifeblood of a company, but human resources are the brains. It has long been accepted that sound financial management is critical to business survival. This is especially true in challenging economic times. However, having strong talent and sound talent management is equally critical to business survival. (p. 4)

While there is a lot of discussion on the strategic role of HR, some literature indicated HR leaders may not be as aligned with their organization’s business strategy as they should be. A global survey conducted by The Economist Intelligence Unit (2012) found that 56% of CEOs stated there is not enough talent in their organization and there is a need for HR to demonstrate its people expertise (p. 4). The Economist Intelligence Unit survey said that while over two-thirds of CEOs think their head of HR is doing a good job of managing the HR function, only 55% of CEOs believe that the head of HR is a key player in strategic planning. A total of 50% of CEOs indicated HR does a good job of developing key talent, and 42% reported HR did a good job in succession planning (The Economist Intelligence Unit, 2012, p. 7). Yukl (2013) stated that there is not enough integration between leadership training and development with other HR activities such as the performance appraisals, career counselling, and succession planning (p. 399). In addition, Yukl said the development activities in most organizations are not aligned with strategic business objectives (p. 400). Alagaraja (2013) wrote, “The strategic role in leveraging employee-related skills, abilities, and knowledge as a source of competitive advantage, remains an aspirational goal for many HR departments” (p. 118). Silzer and Dowell (2010) stated that gaining CEO and executive commitment for talent management may be the greatest challenge HR professionals face (p. 44). Overall, organizations are placing a greater emphasis on their people as their primary strategic resource and are looking mostly to HR to
manage the development of their people. The literature is inconclusive on whether or not HR is taking the strategic role it could be.

**Best practices on designing a learning and development strategy**

In both the corporate documents and in the research literature, much has been written about how to design an L&D strategy. Most of the research in this section of the literature review focused on leadership development programs, as these types of programs are most relevant to UW. This section reviews some of the literature on best practices on creating an L&D strategy.

Killian (2010) provided five simple principles for designing a leadership development plan by asking the following questions: (a) why—defining your program aim; (b) who—selecting your target group of participants; (c) what—deciding what they need to learn; (d) how—choosing the right approach to help them learn; and (e) when—scheduling activities for optimal impact (pp. 15–17). Cembrowki and Da Costa (2001) explained that in order for managers to progress to other internal positions and to assist with succession planning in a postsecondary institution, customized career developmental activities would involve identifying organizational goals, establishing a stronger performance review process, utilizing screening processes, developing an inventory of skills for potential management personnel, establishing competencies for management positions, conducting a gap analysis to determine training requirements for each individual, and fitting people’s needs with the needs of the organization. Feedback, support by peers and the culture, and an understanding that people need a balance in life reinforce this process. (p. 6)

Simonsen (1997) summarized the essential elements in an integrated career development system as driven by business needs, having a vision and philosophy of career development, senior management support, communication and education, middle management involvement, employees’ ownership and responsibility for their own growth, and career development resources (p. 182). Buus and Saslow (2005), in a study of best practices in 51 European
organizations, summarized that while there is no one way to manage leadership development, the best practices in leadership development they found were: link development to strategy, use real-time feedback and modifications, use customized action learning, support buddy programs, audit impact, and share results (pp. 29–30). Lavis (2011) identified the following five key organizational drivers in the creation of an L&D culture: “creating and maintaining a strong learning culture, ensuring that learning is a top priority for the organization, offering diverse learning delivery methods, providing learning supports, and aligning learning with organizational strategy” (p. 1). Fulmer and Wagner (1999), in a benchmarking study of best practices in leadership development, described the following eight principles:

- aligning leadership development to business strategy
- developing an HR and business partnership
- using competency frameworks
- developing talent from within
- creating strong links to succession planning
- encouraging action learning
- ensuring high level support for development activity
- comprehensive evaluation of outcomes (pp. 30–32)

A multiyear collaborative research project on global talent management practices and principles examined 33 multinational corporations (Stahl et al., 2012). These companies were selected on merit of their superior business performance and reputations as employers. In terms of attracting and developing the best employees, the research found, “Successful companies adhere to six key principles: alignment with strategy; internal consistency; cultural embeddedness; management involvement; a balance of global and local needs; and, employer branding through differentiation” (Stahl et al., 2012, p. 25). Strategy, culture, and the external environment must all be taken into account, and the best companies adapt talent management practices to suit their own leadership philosophy and value system. Stahl et al. (2012) concluded, “Best practices are only ‘best’ when they’re applied in a given context; what
works for one company may not work in another” (p. 32). Day (2007) authored a report for the Society of Human Resource Management Foundation and found the most effective leadership development systems must be formal, systemic, systematic, tailored, and experientially based (pp. 4–5). The obstacles to effective leadership development were event-based or episodic thinking; no strategy for development, assuming it is only a staff function, overembedding the initiative in a single champion, not connecting with strategic business imperatives, underemphasizing personal accountability, lack of fit with organizational culture, and lack of adequate support for development (Day, 2007, pp. 14–16).

While there is no one-size-fits-all approach to designing an L&D program (Buus & Saslow, 2005; Day, 2007; Garavan et al., 2012; Stahl et al., 2012), some common themes of best practices arose in the literature. Based on an extensive, but not exhaustive, search of the literature, a list of best practices follows:

1. Align L&D with organizational strategies and business objectives.
2. Support from top leadership.
3. Communicate a vision and a plan.
4. Allocate organizational support and resources.
5. Incorporate L&D into business practices and cultural mindsets.
6. High priority on learning across all levels of the organization.
7. Diversify learning delivery methods and programs.
8. Obtain learner commitment and tailor the program to meet learners’ needs.
9. Conduct an evaluation of methods and determine return on investment.
10. Provide ongoing communication, investment, and modification.
Chapter Summary

Overall, the literature indicated that organizations are placing a greater emphasis on their people as their primary strategic resource and are looking mainly to HR to manage the development of their people. Organizations have realized their ability to thrive in a complex and competitive world depends on having a highly skilled workforce. This can be gained by establishing an L&D approach that is aligned with organizational strategy. Frequently, universities do not practice what they teach and do not develop their own staff. In addition, there is a lack of research on L&D for nonacademic staff in higher education.

The literature indicated the nature of workplace learning is changing and both organizations and learners are moving toward more experiential informal methods that occur on the job but the place of formal training should not be ruled out. In addition, with the shift to the knowledge economy learners are taking more responsibility for their own development. While there is no one-size-fits-all L&D program, and each organization must develop their own approach, some key themes have arisen from the literature, including the need to align L&D with organizational strategy and business results, obtain support from top leadership, communicate a vision and a plan, allocate organizational support and resources, and make L&D part of the business practice and cultural mindset.

This chapter has examined concepts described in the literature concerning L&D, organizational culture, and organizational strategy. These concepts set the stage for this inquiry and provide context for Chapter 3, which describes the methods used to conduct the research for this inquiry.
CHAPTER THREE: INQUIRY APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

This chapter outlines the inquiry approach used in this inquiry to answer the question: How can the University of Winnipeg design a learning and development strategy for its leaders that will benefit both the leaders and the university? The following subquestions were used to help guide the inquiry:

1. What are the current learning and development activities for leaders?
2. What are the learning and development needs of leaders?
3. What are the key elements of a learning and development strategy for leaders?
4. How can these key elements be achieved?

In this chapter I describe the use of action research (AR) methodology, the approach to participant selection, the composition of the inquiry team, the study conduct, the choice of data gathering methods, and the data analysis process. I close this chapter with a discussion of ethical considerations.

Inquiry Approach

Using an AR approach, this inquiry asked leaders how an L&D strategy could be created at UW. This approach was designed to promote understanding of the experience and perspective of the participant group, gain a new understanding of the issue, and suggest changes in organizational practice (Stringer, 2007, pp. 182–183). Coghlan and Brannick (2010) defined AR as “a collaborative problem solving relationship between researcher and client which aims at both solving a problem and generating new knowledge” (p. 35). AR engages with people in collaborative relationships, draws on many positions and perspectives, and is a process that is constantly evolving (Reason & Bradbury, 2008, p. 3). It is an approach to research that works
through a cyclical three-step process of look, think, and act (Stringer, 2007, pp. 8-9). In AR, data come from interaction with others in the AR cycles, and data are generated, rather than gathered (Coghlan & Brannick, 2010, p. 74). In AR, the focus is on events that are meaningful for people (Stringer, 2007, p. 204) and the research is “done with the people, not on or about them” (p. 177).

Given AR “is grounded in a qualitative research paradigm” (Stringer, 2007, p. 19), I made primary use of qualitative research, rather than quantitative methods, to guide my inquiry. I used quantitative questions to provide data on participants’ years of service, interest in various learning approaches, barriers to learning, and motivation for learning. These direct questions would not have been suited for the open-ended approach of qualitative questions. Although qualitative methods were my primary research tool, I used quantitative methods to collect general information on learning preferences and individual needs. Tracy (2013) said, “Qualitative data are not only excellent for answering the question ‘What is going on here?’ but are also poised to answer questions of ‘Why’ and ‘How come?’” (p. 219). This approach was well suited for UW, as it created an opportunity for people to engage in conversations they may not have thought possible before about a subject that was important to them. The data collected provided greater insight into leaders’ needs and assisted in developing an approach to address these needs.

In conjunction with AR, I used an appreciative inquiry (AI) stance to direct my inquiry. Bushe (2007) wrote,

It’s another cliché that AI is different because it focuses on the positive instead of on problems but my research (Bushe, in press) shows that’s not correct. Actually, AI is different because it focuses on generativity instead of problem-solving. Without common problems and issues people don’t create transformational change. Instead of trying to
solve the problem, AI generates a collective agreement about what people want to do together and enough structure and energy to mobilize action in the service of those agreements. When that happens, many “problems” get “solved.” (p. 35)

The approach of AR with an AI stance lent a positive framework to the inquiry questions, which enabled me to keep in mind that AI is not meant to be a whitewash of what is not working in the organization; rather, the AI approach is used to generate “spontaneous, unsupervised, individual, group and organizational action toward a better future” (Bushe, 2007, p. 30).

For research methods, I began with an online survey to all participants. Qualitative and quantitative inquiry questions were used to learn more about participants’ needs and the changes they would like to see that could improve L&D at UW. The data collected from the survey helped generate the questions for the world café.

**Project Participants**

The participants were drawn from a group of 90 nonacademic managers and supervisors at UW; as stated earlier, they are defined by HR as leaders, and the term leaders describes this group of managers and supervisors throughout this research. This group was comprised of both nonunionized and unionized staff. My sponsor identified these individuals as the group at UW with whom HR would like to start developing an L&D strategy. As the purpose of the inquiry was to learn as much as possible from this group, no one from the group was excluded from the research. Stringer (2007) emphasized the value of participation by stating, “Unless people come to understand procedures and practices by participating in their development, any program or service is likely to have limited effects on their lives” (p. 33). Including all participants in the process may have increased the complexity of the inquiry but also contributed to a greater richness of data.
As some of the participants report directly to me, an administrative assistant conducted all communication with the participants. This ensured that ethical standards were met and those in a reporting relationship to me did not feel pressured to participate. An invitation to participate in online survey was sent to this entire group via email (see Appendices A and B). All participants were informed that they were not obligated to reply and that everyone would be sent a summary of the survey at a later date regardless of their participation in the survey. The invitation noted that a follow-up event would be held at a later date and that they would also be invited to attend. At this phase in the research, I wanted to generate interest to attend the follow-up event, yet keep the focus on the survey, so I did not ask for a commitment to participate in a follow-up event in the survey invitation. This approach gave participants more time to decide if they wanted to attend the follow-up event. Two weeks after the survey closed, the administrative assistant sent an email invitation to attend the world café event to the same group of participants (see Appendix C). A consent letter that further detailed the world café research method and a postcard invitation were attached (see Appendices D and E).

As all of the participants work at the same central location, the inquiry did not have geographical or physical limitations. To lessen the impact on people’s work, the world café was kept to 2 hours in length and was held over the lunch hour. As some members in the group had reporting relationships with each other, they were instructed at the beginning of the event to not sit together. Due to the fact that, in my role with the organization, some participants report to me, I did not attend the event and members of my inquiry team facilitated the world café. This was done to ensure ethical standards were met.
I invited all leaders to participate in the online survey and the world café. The response rate to the survey was 56%, and the attendance rate for the world café was 19%. I chose the world café method because it could accommodate all participants and I could not anticipate how many people would attend the world café. I did not analyze the proportional distribution of participants from departments at UW, but some departments at UW were not represented; there was a disproportionate rate of attendance from one department, PACE, which represented 18% of the attendees. A balance of new and experienced leaders attended the world café, and leaders with years of service ranging from under one month to over 20 years participated.

**Inquiry team**

The inquiry team for this research involved a total of 15 individuals. The core inquiry team consisted of my organizational sponsor, thesis supervisor, a Royal Roads University Master of Arts in Leadership (MAL) 2013 graduate, and me, the researcher. I enlisted one UW staff member with technical skills to assist me in developing the online survey. A MAL graduate, who was familiar with the world café method, helped design the world café and facilitated the session. The facilitator and a cofacilitator conducted the world café. Four scribes and three table hosts, with the cofacilitator as the fourth table host, were present at the world café. The cofacilitator and the three table hosts were all members of the UW community and not part of the participant pool. The facilitator arranged for scribes to also assist at the world café event. An editor and an administrative assistant completed the inquiry team. All inquiry team members, with the exception of the editor who was not privy to any confidential information, signed a Letter of Agreement (see Appendix F) to agree to uphold confidentiality, responsibilities, and expectations.
Inquiry Methods

This section describes the purpose and rationale for each data gathering method used during this research and provides a brief description of these methods. This inquiry used a multimethod approach in order to validate data through triangulation (Stringer, 2007), or crystallization (Tracy, 2013). Tracy (2013) noted, to assure credibility and construct a complex picture, researchers are encouraged to use multiple types of data gathering at multiple points of time and to work with other researchers (p. 237). The data-gathering tools were carefully selected to fit both the organizational setting and the purpose of the research (Coghlan & Brannick, 2010, p. 75). As stated earlier, the inquiry methods for this project were an online survey and a world café. In the following three sections, I provide details regarding the data collection methods, study conduct, and data analysis.

Data collection tools

As previously stated, two data collection tools were used in this inquiry. The first method was an online survey questionnaire. The second method was a world café. I describe both methods in this section.

Online survey

Although Stringer (2007) advised surveys are better used in the later stages of AR, as they “provide very limited information and are likely to reflect the perspective, interests, and agendas of the researcher(s)” (p. 78), I began my research with a survey (see Appendix G). To ensure effectiveness of the method I engaged in extensive question design and used pilot testing to avoid any researcher bias. I consulted with my inquiry team on the survey questions and then conducted a pilot survey with members of my inquiry team. I also pilot tested the survey with
several UW employees who were not part of my participant pool. I selected these individuals as they had similar characteristics to my participant group, and they provided valuable feedback on both the questions and the usability of the tool.

A survey was an appropriate tool to employ with UW leaders, as it reached all the participants at the same time with the same questions. A survey suited UW culture, as this method took little time to complete and was both inclusive and anonymous. The survey was composed of seven questions, four were quantitative and three were qualitative. The act of sending out the survey, informed staff that I, as the researcher, was interested in knowing what their needs were regarding L&D. Coghlan and Brannick (2010) stated,

> While surveying employees by questionnaire as to their views on some aspects of their work or the organization tends to be seen merely as a method of collecting information, it is more important to see how it is an intervention. (p. 75)

Conversely, Kraut (2009) warned that surveys can raise employee expectations and may hurt more than they help (p. 300). Schein (2010) advised researchers to be strategic in the use of surveys, as they will not always provide the answers people are looking for (pp. 159–163). To counter these potential negatives, I carefully wrote the survey questions to avoid setting employees’ expectations too high and asked questions to assess their current needs and their future wishes. I was clear that this research was not conducted by the university and was a student research project, but noted the results would be shared with HR. This did not raise expectations from the participants that all their feedback would be implemented, but it also provided them with a safe forum to share their opinions. I may have had an advantage, as I was considered an “insider” (Coghlan & Brannick, 2010, p. 102) not an “outsider” (p. 102), and if I had not been conducting the research could have been a part of the participant group itself. In
effect, this research “gave voice to people who have previously been silent” (Stringer, 2007, p. 170). The survey response indicated a great deal of interest in the subject and the response rate was 56%.

With adequate planning and testing, the survey can be a powerful tool for gathering anonymous data from a large group of people. Kraut (2009) observed, “The full magnitude of an organizational survey reveals itself over time; a survey is a process and not an event” (p. 309). The survey data helped me to refine the focus of my inquiry by understanding “the ways in which the primary stakeholders experience and interpret emerging issues” (Stringer, 2007, p. 106). I reviewed the survey data for several weeks, which helped me to develop the questions for the second data-gathering technique, the world café.

I designed the survey questions to learn about individual needs and opinions and the world café to probe group needs and opinions on L&D. The survey questions provided information on the subject areas individual participants’ wanted to learn more about, the barriers they experienced, and some insight into their opinions on L&D. The world café questions provided information on what participants thought their role would be, what UW’s role would be, and what the steps would be to design an L&D strategy. This approach to question design provided both individual and collective perspectives to the inquiry.

**World café**

A world café is a large group method that brings people together in café-like atmosphere where they can share their ideas at tables. In an inviting setting, small groups of people participate in a multitude of table conversations, while still being part of a larger conversation. This method allowed for more in-depth conversation, adding a dimension to the data collection
that the survey method lacked. The café created an environment in which “small, intimate conversations link and build on each other as people move between groups, cross-pollinate ideas, and discover new insights into questions or issues that really matter in their life, work, or community” (Brown & Isaacs, 2005, p. 4). The world café is also suitable for bringing together people of different levels of experience and stature in the organization in a cooperative, mutually beneficial atmosphere. As a world café is unlimited in size, the method lent itself well to this group, as it allowed all stakeholders to be invited.

I chose to employ the world café method because it was new to staff at UW, as they had never experienced a world café. This method fulfilled my and my sponsor’s intent by creating a sense of community that is somewhat lacking at UW, as staff do not have many opportunities to gather together and share their collective knowledge. Community-based AR “seeks to change the social and personal dynamics of the research situation so that the research process enhances the lives of all those who participate” (Stringer, 2007, p. 20). The world café questions were written so the main research question could be answered (see Appendix H). They were appreciative in nature, and asked participants what they could do to improve their L&D, what UW could do to improve L&D, and what steps could be taken to design an L&D program for leaders at UW.

Carson (2011) outlined the following seven design principles of the world café, which I used to design the questions and guide the event (pp. 10–13). To begin, the facilitator set the context and clarified the purpose of the event and everyone’s role in the event. The small round tables in a semiprivate dining room created an inviting and relaxed atmosphere. The questions were important to the participants and thus engaged them in active conversation. The facilitator encouraged all participants to share their opinions and ideas. Participants could move to any
table at the end of each round and were able to interact with others in the room. The table host assured continuity between rounds by briefing the next group on what the previous group had discussed. Participants could pick up on pattern and insights from the previous group while preserving their unique contributions. Scribes documented all participant conversation in points that were both clear and actionable. To close, participants reviewed all the table notes and shared their collective knowledge and insight.

**Study conduct**

The first phase of the study conduct was planning the research and securing all the necessary approvals from my thesis supervisor, sponsor, Royal Roads University ethics review committee, and UW ethics review committee. Once all the approvals were completed, I officially confirmed who would be on my inquiry team and ensured their confidentiality documents were signed.

The second phase of the study included research methods design, data collection, data analysis, vetting themes and conclusions through my core inquiry team, and writing final recommendations. I ensured that my sponsor reviewed all communications prior to sending information to participants to ensure there was no confusion that the research was a student project that I was conducting, and not a project conducted by the university. The data were collected within a 6-week period, with a 4-week window between the closing of the survey and the day of the world café event. FluidSurveys (n.d.) was used for the survey. The administrative assistant sent the survey out via UW’s email system, and participants had 10 days to complete the survey (see Appendix G). A reminder email went out one week before the survey closed to thank those people who had completed the survey and to capture those people who forgot to do
the survey or were too busy to do it the first time (see Appendix I). The survey took an average of under 3 minutes to complete. In total, 51 responses were received, with a response rate of 56%.

The world café took place approximately four weeks after the survey closed. The administrative assistant sent an invitation email to all potential participants 2 weeks after the survey closed. The communication included a brief message with key information about the world café, a consent form, and a postcard invite (see Appendices C, D, and E). The administrative assistant also sent all potential participants a follow-up email 1 week prior to the event (see Appendix J). Several days before the event, the administrative assistant confirmed the time, place, and date of the event with all those who had replied and asked if anyone had dietary restrictions (see Appendix K). To ensure people in a reporting relationship to me did not feel obligated to attend the session, the administrative assistant collected the RSVPs and engaged in all communication with the respondents.

The world café event was held at the University Club on campus, a traditional gathering place for faculty and staff. The inquiry team members arrived 30 minutes before the session start time and were instructed on their roles and led through the plans for the event by the facilitators. The facilitator, with feedback from the inquiry team, prepared a world café design and instruction document that set the tone and framework for the event (see Appendix L). Posters were placed on the door of the University Club (see Appendix E), and the administrative assistant greeted everyone as they arrived and collected their consent forms. In total 22 RSVPs were received and 17 participants attended the event.
Participants had 30 minutes to gather together and eat lunch. The tables were set with fresh flowers and a colourful world café poster, post-it notes, and colourful markers were placed on each table. The facilitator started the event with a brief introduction on the purpose of the research, an introduction to the research method, and an overview of their role for the 2-hour event. They were instructed on the confidentiality of the event and were informed that their names would not be linked to any data collected. Participants were told that the data collected would be included in a published thesis, which would be available for them to see once it was published. As many participants had expected I would be present, the facilitator explained that in accordance with Royal Roads University and UW ethics guidelines, I could not attend or participate in the event. The facilitator then explained how the research activity would be followed.

The participants were invited to sit at four tables in three groups of four and one group of five. Participants were seated at tables with others who they were not in a reporting relationship with. The facilitator outlined the purpose to the world café, reminded participants that they were welcome to leave at any time, and informed them that their names would not be used in any written documents. The world café consisted of three 20-minute rounds of dialogue. As there were three rounds and a total of four world café questions (see Appendix H), each participant did not have a chance to answer each question. There was a scribe and a table host for each table. Table hosts were chosen from within the university community but were not part of the participant pool. Their main role was to integrate the experience, focus discussions, and ensure engagement during the event. Scribes were assigned to capture data generated from the dialogue around the various questions. Participants at each table were asked to explore a question, and the
scribe recorded their responses on a piece of flip chart paper beside the table. Once each 20-minute round was completed, participants were instructed to move to another table and sit with a new table host. The table hosts summarized the notes from the previous group for the new group. At each round participants had the opportunity to expand on the previous group’s comments. At the end of the three rounds the flip chart paper was posted around the room and the participants had time to do a gallery walk and have a brief discussion on the ideas posted. In the gallery walk activity, all data were hung on the wall and participants were able to walk around the room and engage in conversations with others while viewing all the data. As I was unable to attend this event, having members of the inquiry team present ensured the event ran smoothly. Once all the participants had left I met with the facilitators and one of the scribes to debrief the event.

Once all data were collected and analyzed, I shared the findings with my sponsor and other members of the inquiry team. Based on my analysis I wrote the study recommendations and I provided a highlight of the research process, the finding and the conclusions, and the study recommendations to my sponsor and the Vice-President of HR. These recommendations were approved and are included in the final chapter of this thesis.

Data analysis

My data in the survey were both quantitative and qualitative. Stringer (2007) said there is room for quantitative data in AR, as they can provide some useful information (p. 203). My quantitative data were useful, as they provided a percentage measurement on years of service, key motivations for L&D, methods of L&D delivery that participants were interested in, and their barriers to L&D. The FluidSurveys (n.d.) software calculated the total number and percentage response of the replies, and I was able to review the results in tables of information.
The closed-ended questions were more challenging to write, but the data did not require deep analysis and provided an overview of where the participants stood on the questions. The richest data emerged from the three qualitative open-ended questions. The responses to these questions provided me with a “thick description” (Tracy, 2013, p. 250) of the individual participant’s view; the term thick description refers to “in-depth, contextual, and rich accounts of what researchers see . . . in their fieldwork it enables readers to be shown the scene, as it were, with their own eyes” (p. 250).

The act of qualitative data analysis “is an interpretative activity” (Tracy, 2013, p. 185) and “analysis is the essential qualitative act” (Bernard & Ryan, 2010, p. 109). Bernard and Ryan (2010) explained that many tools exist for finding patterns in data, but real analysis requires that these patterns be interpreted (p. 109). Glesne (2011) defined data analysis as “organizing what you have seen, heard, and read so that you can figure out what you have learned and make sense of what you have experienced” (p. 184). Data analysis requires an iterative approach that requires the researcher to visit and revisit the data, connect them to emerging insights, and progressively refine his or her focus and understandings (Tracy, 2013, p. 184).

I began the process of data analysis while I was still gathering the data. Glesne (2011) stated reflecting on the data, organizing data, and even writing about the data will make the study more relevant than viewing collection and analysis as two separate steps (p. 188).

I used coding, which “refers to labeling and systematizing the data” (Tracy, 2013, p. 186) as a means of making sense of the data and organizing them into themes and subthemes. Glesne (2011) advised that “qualitative researchers code to discern themes, patterns, processes, and to make comparisons and build theoretical explanations” (p. 194). Stringer (2007) listed two major
processes of data analysis: (a) categorizing and coding and then (b) selecting key experiences or transformational moments and “unpacking” (p. 98) them. It was important in this process to focus on the meanings of the participants and concentrate the analysis on their terms, concepts, and significance (Stringer, 2007, p. 99).

To find themes, I used highlighters, post-it notes, flow charts, and colour coded and tagged the data in both an Excel spreadsheet and within the FluidSurveys (n.d.) software. I arranged my codes in hierarchies, categories, subcategories, and tried to show the relationships between them (Glesne, 2011, p. 195). Four major themes emerged from the survey data. Once I had transcribed the world café data and placed it in an Excel spreadsheet, I went through the same process of tagging and theming as I did with the survey data. I noticed that the same themes arose in both data methods. I also noticed that the main themes in both methods aligned with the literature review topics I had chosen. I then took the main themes I had found in the survey data and, along with my world café facilitator, coded all the world café data into the same four themes I found in the survey data. When we found outliers and data that did not fit, we marked them and came back to them. It turned out that the data did not “fit” either did not answer the question or the participant who provided the data did not understand the question.

Once I had my main themes, I went back over my notes and engaged in secondary-cycle coding. In this phase of data analysis, the researcher examines the codes already used and “begins to organize, synthesize, and categorize them into interpretative concepts” (Tracy, 2013, p. 194). I then “lumped” (Tracey, 2013, p. 190) my data into a master Excel spreadsheet and “fractured” (Tracey, 2013, p. 190) the data by adding multiple columns so that I could look at my data in various ways. I had 98 units of data from the survey and 250 units of data from the world
café, for a total of 348 data units. With tagging and theming, “nothing in the data is lost” (Bernard & Ryan, 2010, p. 90), and I could retrieve any text I wanted at any time. By placing filters on the data I could view the data in an endless variety of ways, which I found helped make writing my themes very focused and efficient.

Bernard and Ryan (2010) suggested one way of finding themes is by “looking for repetitions, similarities, differences, transitions, transitions, and linguistic connectors that occur frequently in text” (p. 71). I used this method of identifying repeating words and using keyword-in-context analysis (Bernard & Ryan, 2010, p. 71). Glesne (2011) stated that coding and categorizing is not mechanical; rather, it is a time when the researcher thinks with the data, reflects upon what he or she has learned, make new connections, and gain new insights (pp. 197–198). I found new ways of interpreting the data, added new codes, merged codes, divided codes, and renamed codes right until the end of my analysis. Bernard and Ryan said, “As coders find more and more examples of themes, their reliability in marking themes—the actual process of coding—goes up” (p. 79). It was “through the activities of analysis” (Tracy, 2013, p. 195) that I moved “from emergent and descriptive coding to more focused and analytic coding” (p. 195). To assure my project was valid, objective, and reliable, I followed the following eight criteria (or end goals) for qualitative research: worthy topic, rich rigour, sincerity, credibility, resonance, significant contribution, ethical, and meaningful coherence (Tracy, 2013, p. 230).

Coghlan and Brannick (2010) noted, “Reflection is the activity which integrates action and research” (p. 25). I kept a journal of my observations before, during, and after the data-analysis phase. Keeping an open mind was a critical part of my process. Throughout the data analysis, I worked at identifying my assumptions and inferences and checked my ideas with
members of my inquiry team. Bernard and Ryan (2010) wrote, “Researchers must be careful not to find only what they are looking for” (p. 63). At a first read, several key themes popped out at me; by reading the text again and again and allowing time between readings, new and less obvious themes and threads emerged. While reviewing the data, I asked myself what was missing; I also asked if it was missing because I did not ask the question, or if there were things not stated. I concluded that what was missing was mostly because I had not asked the question. Bernard and Ryan explained that discovering themes by looking for what is missing is not appropriate when looking at short responses to open-ended questions (p. 68), and most of my responses were short. Tracey (2013) wrote that researchers should not feel they need to use every bit of data and will have to make tough decisions along the way (p. 185). “The researcher remains the decision-maker and interpreter” (Glesne, 2011, p. 205), and in the end, I used the majority of my data that best answered my main questions.

While theming and coding data were a means of organizing the data, the information needed to transform into some meaning by making connections through reflection and writing the final report (Glesne, 2011; Stringer, 2007; Tracy, 2013). This iterative approach of being attentive to the data, intelligent in the inquiry, reasonable in making judgements, and responsible in making decisions guided me through the process (Coghlan & Brannick, 2010, p. 153). In the end, “it is not just a matter of what your data ‘say’ but what you and your data say” (Glesne, 2011, p. 228). Once I had determined the main themes and conclusions, I linked them with relevant literature; both the inquiry findings and conclusions are discussed in Chapter 4.
**Ethical Issues**

This inquiry adhered to all ethical requirements set by the Royal Roads University (2011) and UW. In addition, the *Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans* (Canadian Institutes of Health Research, Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada, & Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada [TCPS], 2010) governs all research in Canada. Respect for human dignity is at the core of this policy and is expressed through three core principles: respect for persons, concern for welfare, and justice (Royal Roads University, 2011; TCPS, 2010).

**Respect for persons**

The principle of respect for persons requires researchers seek participants’ free, informed, and ongoing consent to participate (TCPS, 2010). Participation in the research should be a matter of informed choice, and the participant must be allowed to withdraw from the research at any point. I provided participants with comprehensive written information about the purpose of the research, the process, and made it clear that they were not required to participate in either the survey or the world café (see Appendices C, D, and E). Participants were informed that if they choose to withdraw during or after the inquiry at any time, it would not be possible to remove their contributions, as they were anonymous and specific comments were not attributable to any one participant. Similarly, participants were told if they choose not to participate in the research project, this information would also be maintained in confidence.

**Concern for welfare**

The principle of concern for welfare means that researchers should provide participants with sufficient information to be able to adequately assess risks and potential benefits associated
with their participation in the research (TCPS, 2010). I ensured that participants were informed of their right to withdraw at any time. Participants were also informed that their confidentiality could not be guaranteed in the world café, as those who attended may share the information with those who did not attend. World café participants were assured that their names would not be associated with any comments, as all the information would be collected on large flip chart papers.

**Justice**

The principle of justice asserts that everyone is to be treated fairly and equitably (TCPS, 2010). Fairness means treating all people with equal respect and concern (TCPS, 2010). Equity implies that no one segment or people are selected for participation over others or not provided the information generated from the research (TCPS, 2010). I addressed the principle of justice by inviting all people in the leaders group to participate in both the survey and the world café. During the world café, each participant had equal opportunity to contribute to the discussion, and information was captured in an anonymous format. In addition, I made a commitment to share the findings of the research with all participants.

**Conflict of interest**

Although a small number of the participants directly report to me, there was no direct conflict of interest in my role as researcher in this inquiry. The area of the research, overall L&D for leaders, is not directly related to the work they do in their reporting relationship with me. That being said, to assure no implied conflict of interest occurred, I utilized members of my inquiry team to send communications regarding the survey and world café and to facilitate the world café event.
Chapter Summary

This chapter outlined the inquiry approach taken in selecting and designing the research tools and in collecting and analyzing the data. This chapter also discussed the ethical concerns relating to the inquiry. The AR approach helped me to understand the experience and perspective of the participant group and use this information to create study findings, recommendations, and conclusions that answered my main research question. In Chapter 4, which follows, the data collected from the AR methods of online survey and world café are described and presented as six themes and five conclusions and the scope and limitations of the inquiry are discussed.
CHAPTER FOUR: ACTION INQUIRY RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS

In this chapter, the results from the data collected from the survey and world café are reported. The six themes that emerged from the data are presented and supported by comments made by the participants. Five conclusions resulting from this data analysis and supported by relevant literature are also provided. The scope and limitations of the inquiry that impacted this search are detailed at the end of this chapter.

This research was conducted to answer the main inquiry question: How can the University of Winnipeg design a learning and development strategy for its leaders that will benefit both the leaders and the university? The following four subquestions also helped to guide the inquiry:

1. What are the current learning and development activities for leaders?
2. What are the learning and development needs of leaders?
3. What are the key elements of a learning and development strategy for leaders?
4. How can these key elements be achieved?

The participant pool for both research methods involved the same group of UW leaders; therefore, some individuals will have contributed to both research methods. The survey questions focused on the current and future L&D needs and desires of the participants, while the world café questions focused on the key elements required to achieve an L&D strategy. The six themes that emerged in the research were consistently found in the data for both methods. To ensure anonymity, all participant quotations have been coded S for data from the survey and WC for data from the world café.
Study Findings

This inquiry asked UW leaders what their L&D needs were, and then asked them how UW could design an L&D strategy. The study findings reflect the participants’ strong interest in establishing an L&D program at UW and offer their ideas on how such a program could be developed. The following six main findings emerged from the data analysis and were supported by both the survey and world café data collection methods:

1. Leaders require organizational support to develop a culture of learning and development.
2. Leaders desire professional development opportunities.
3. Leaders are impacted by the lack of organizational resources.
4. Participants noted the need for an organizational learning and development strategy.
5. Leaders need universal and equitable access to learning that is aligned to organizational goals.
6. Participants expressed an interest in building internal capacity.

Finding 1: Leaders require organizational support to develop a culture of learning and development

Participant feedback in both research methods supported the finding that organizational support is required if L&D is to be a priority in the institution. The theme of making L&D an organizational priority appeared in 16% of all qualitative data collected. I elected to lead this section with the finding related to organizational support, even though this finding was not the most dominant theme in the data, as participant feedback indicated that without organizational support an L&D program would not be possible. One survey respondent wrote,
It doesn’t seem like there is an accepted culture of development and learning for staff at The University of Winnipeg. While senior management or policies/mission statements, etc. may indicate that this is the case, the reality is these decisions and priorities are implemented by individuals who may not share the same beliefs and goals for their own staff. Perhaps then the ‘one change’ I would like to make is clearer university-wide objectives that are set and communicated for all staff, and a broader agenda and conversation about development across all departments. Therefore, priorities and implementation of learning and development is less biased by the perspectives of each individual manager, and more aligned across the university.

When asked what was the one change participants would like to make to enhance L&D, responses included, “Give learning & development a higher priority within the University at all levels” (S), and “The knowledge that training is supported/prioritized from the top down and that development would lead to greater opportunities within the organization” (S). Overall, data reflected that participants wish to make L&D a priority with senior leaders and linked support for L&D with increased opportunities for both UW and individuals.

When asked what UW could do to address L&D, world café participants expressed UW needed a “vision for the future” and to “create culture of approval.” Participants said it would be “great to have an idea from the institution on how they want management conducted” and “strategic direction dictates program design” (WC). In the world café conversation about what steps could be taken to design an L&D program, participants stated support had to come from President down, and Senior Administration would need to say, “This is how we do business; the institution supports L&D.”

The word support in relation to senior leaders or supervisors was used 20 times in the open-ended qualitative data. An individual stated, “L&D is meaningless without support (Sr. Admin)” (S). Another participant noted a desire to see a “change in attitude toward the importance of L&D. Most companies insist on the completion of training as part of the review
process” (S). In the survey, 24% of respondents selected “lack of support from supervisor” as barrier to their L&D. Not all survey respondents were displeased with the support they received, and participants shared the following positive comments: “I am very pleased with the support that is provided to attend courses at PACE” (S) and “I’m lucky to work in a department where my boss gives me the authority to make decisions and backs me up 100%” (S). Another survey participant observed, “I, personally, have been supported in my learning efforts by our department. However, the larger university administration is just now recognizing that it must be committed to investing in Human Resources for the betterment of the whole enterprise.”

One participant commented on the disconnection between UW as a learning institution and a lack of opportunities for staff to learn (S). In the world café dialogue, participants noted a paradox, as UW is “a great place to work” and to “help people grow and develop,” but there was not enough support to help staff grow. They also commented that “targeted development PD [professional development] structure lacking for a university—irony” (WC). World café participants also noted that UW’s vision is student centred and employees do not benefit from any professional development (PD). World café participants suggested that Senior Administration have goodwill but have not placed more of a focus on L&D because the current “strategy” is “working,” people accept the PD situation, and those who do not tolerate it “look after their own PD” (WC). Overall, not all participants were displeased with the level of support they personally received, but wished L&D was more of an institutional priority at UW.

Finding 2: Leaders desire professional development opportunities

The desire for PD opportunities was the most dominant theme in the data from both the survey and the world café. This theme appeared in 40% of all qualitative data collected. Survey
results substantiated participants’ interest in L&D opportunities. When asked what L&D approaches they would like to access in future, as shown in Table 1, participants were overwhelmingly interested in all the methods listed.

Table 1

*Learning and Development Approaches Leaders Would Like to Access in the Future*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning and Development Approaches</th>
<th>Very Interested</th>
<th>Somewhat Interested</th>
<th>Not Interested</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>External instructor-led classroom training</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal instructor-led classroom training</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online learning</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentorship: Formal or informal mentoring relationships with a senior manager</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job rotation: Acquire new knowledge and skills through different positions</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job shadow: Work with another manager to expand knowledge and skills</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal or external knowledge sharing groups (communities of practice)</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional development plans: Employee works on own or with supervisor to build plan</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As demonstrated in Table 1, 96% of leaders are interested in internal instructor-led classroom training, and 94% of leaders are interested in each of the following L&D approaches: (a) internal instructor-led classroom training, (b) online learning, and (c) mentorship. Participant feedback indicated as much interest some informal learning approaches such as mentoring as in
formal learning approaches such as classroom training. Data from both research methods indicated leaders wanted more L&D opportunities and were open to diversified delivery methods and programs.

**Barriers to L&D**

On the survey, participants were asked about their barriers to L&D and were able to select as many barriers as they wished. Table 2 demonstrates that participants face multiple barriers to L&D.

**Table 2**

*Barriers to Learning and Development*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Barriers</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lack of awareness of opportunities</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of awareness of competency gaps</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of support from supervisor</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of time due to personal or family factors</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of time due to work demands</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited advancement opportunities</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of financial support</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No clear career path</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal motivation</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (please specify)*</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Responses</strong></td>
<td><strong>51</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* *(1) Budget cuts – cannot afford professional development; (2) Limited financial support; and (3) Lack of relevant opportunities.*
Table 2 revealed that “Lack of time due to work demands” was the most selected barrier to L&D (chosen by 76% of respondents), with “Lack of awareness of opportunities” and “Limited advancement opportunities” following at 49%. As demonstrated in Table 2, while participants indicated they had many barriers, it is important to note that personal motivation was chosen by only 4% of survey participants as a barrier to L&D. The survey did not directly ask participants what enabled their L&D, so factors that enable L&D were not completely explored in the research.

**L&D needs**

The survey was designed to specifically answer the research subquestion: What are the learning and development needs of leaders? Question 5 on the survey asked participants to identify their top three L&D needs in their current job. Not all participants listed three needs, and interpretation of needs varied widely depending on the individual response. In total, 61% of participant needs directly related to PD training, 10% related to technology related training, and another 17% related to organizational supports, plans, and resources. The remaining 12% of needs related to internal and external networking opportunities. In regards to professional learning, leaders were interested in the following topics: supervisory management, team building, project management, conflict management, performance management, and financial management. Interest in technology training related to Microsoft Excel and the UW registration system software. A thread that arose in the data related to the demands of serving a diverse student body, and from this crisis management and mental health arose as a skill required to work in the UW environment. For example, survey responses included a need for “crisis
management – students often have personal issues/situations that go beyond my area of expertise” (S) and “training for working with those with mental health challenges” (S).

As some leaders hold professional designations or require training in specialized areas, participants stated desire to keep current with trends in their sector. One participant noted the importance of “keeping current with Accounting Standards” (S). Similarly, another participant explained the need to uphold “required for professional designations” (S). Another survey respondent wished to “stay current with legislations” (S), and lastly one participant highlighted the need for “professional development as it relates to my specific field” (S). For new leaders, L&D was another thread in the data. Participants suggested that UW communicate “who are the new managers” (WC) and create a training or buddy program for new managers (WC). Overall, participants indicated new leaders were “left to figure it out on own” (WC) and some had risen into management positions and lacked training and support.

Participants were very interested in learning new skills to improve themselves and their work experiences. On the survey, participants were asked, “What motivates you most to learn at work?” A total of 39% of survey respondents choose “ Develop new skills for current and/or future use” as their first choice, and 27% choose “Enriched work experiences and broaden professional perspective” as their first choice. One individual wrote, “I’m really happy that you are looking into this topic, as I think it’s so important, and an area that could really be developed here at The University of Winnipeg” (S). Overall, the data indicated that UW leaders want increased access to L&D, have diverse learning needs, and are very interested in workplace PD.
Benefits of L&D for both the individual and the organization

Participants consistently framed the topic of L&D positively and the word opportunity was used 21 times in the 98 open-ended responses collected in the survey. The following positive terms were also found in participants’ responses: share ideas, benefit, capitalize on, more encouragement, start a conversation, bring together, reach out, and discuss challenges (S, WC). One leader desired the “opportunity for the development to happen—whether it is in the form of supervisory support or from mentorship or just general professional development” (S). Another participant stated, “It would be fantastic if every staff member at UW was allowed to participate in some form of Professional Development each year” (S). In the following comment, one participant highlighted the difference between the organizational focus on students, not staff: “I think we offer an amazing array of opportunities and supports to students here, and it would be great if relevant opportunities could be offered to staff as well” (S).

Some participants linked L&D with improved organizational performance through happier employees. One respondent stated, “People are happier when they are valued and giving staff the opportunity to participate in PD makes them feel appreciated and respected. It is something we need to see more of” (S). This theme was also echoed in the world café, as participants linked L&D to improved confidence, retention, ability to contribute, and consistency. World café participants also drew a connection between their own learning and supporting their staff. For example, one table group commented “if we aren’t managed properly then we won’t manage properly” (WC). Similarly, one survey respondent said,

There needs to be more of an understanding that PD opportunities create job satisfaction and that employees would be happier and more productive if given the opportunity to participate in such opportunities. More specifically, I desire the opportunity to
continually develop my skills so I can serve staff and students better. I would be much better at my job if given more opportunities to grow and learn. (S)

This participant indicated a connection between PD, happiness, and workplace productivity. This comment also illustrated the participant’s desire for self-improvement through learning, which was an overall theme in the data. Overall, participants linked support for L&D with increased job satisfaction, improved working relationships, and better customer service to students.

**Finding 3: Leaders are impacted by the lack of organizational resources**

Lack of organizational resources, defined in this context as both time and money, was a pervasive theme throughout the survey and world café data. This theme appeared in 11% of all qualitative data collected.

**Lack of financial resources**

A financial resource-related term such as money, finance, or tuition appeared in 25% of the survey open-ended responses. Of the survey respondents, 41% selected “Lack of financial support” as a barrier (see Table 2). One participant noted the need to “provide our department with a commitment to be provided with regular financial support for ongoing professional development opportunities in order to keep up with an ever-changing field that has a significant impact on student success” (S). Another participant stated, “There seems to be little to no funding at the University of Winnipeg for Professional Development. Even going to workshops for conferences doesn’t seem to be an option” (S). Participants in both research methods noted that L&D was one of the first items to be cut when the university reduced costs to address financial restraints (S, WC). One survey respondent wished to get “past the lack of funds,” while noting the need to work “within our means.”
During the world café, one stream of conversation emerged around budgets, and participants observed that an economic model is overriding everything and taking over without a conversation. World café participants asserted, “Only telling us about economic constraints is not a strategy.” World café participants said they often had to self-fund training, and some participants asserted that when they “put forward PD requests . . . [they must] be prepared to push back with justification, don’t back down too fast.”

**Lack of time**

Lack of time for L&D arose as a major barrier in both research methods, with 76% of survey respondents selecting “Lack of time due to work demands” as a barrier to L&D, while 37% of participants selected “Lack of time due to personal or family factors” (see Table 2). Time resource terms such as time or busy arose in 9% of the survey open-ended responses. One participant reported his or her department was short on staff, and even if funding for PD was available, time away from work would be difficult (S). Another leader stated, “Time—[we are] so busy just keeping up with regular office duties, have no time for special projects/advancement. Additional tech support and/or staff would alleviate this issue” (S). World café participants suggested UW offer “a commitment to managers [to supply] resources . . . [and] factor in [resources such as] time [and] cost.” It would be ideal if the university could give managers the time needed to address needs for L&D and ensure that it not be pushed aside (WC). Participants also suggested leadership’s view on time be switched from short term, there is “no time,” to “long-term, [it is] ‘worth the time’” (WC). Lack of time was a significant barrier, and participants in this study requested UW factor this issue into any future L&D strategy.
Finding 4: Participants noted the need for an organizational learning and development strategy

The need to create and communicate an organizational L&D strategy was another major theme that arose from the survey and world café data. The theme of developing an L&D strategy appeared in 33% of all qualitative data collected. One survey respondent asked for “clarity” and noted the need to “advise the campus of the direction. [We need] more individual department meetings, [and] less town hall meetings. [We need to] develop strategies for areas, have consultation, [and] get the buy in” (S). This participant stressed the need for leaders to be provided with more information on UW’s direction and increased opportunity to participate in strategic planning through two-way discussion.

Inquiry results indicated the need for a strategic plan, defined by UW leadership and implemented by HR, to set the direction for L&D. World café participants suggested UW “start at the strategic plan” and “clearly define department goals and collective goals of the university.”

One participant linked L&D strategy and mentorship to retention:

There doesn’t seem to be any overall strategy (yet). I think implementing one would help keep the “good ones” from being absconded or going to other institutions. With other bigger universities offering higher salaries, that is our only retention tool at this point. For example, the mentorship I’m receiving and potential for advancement are what have kept me here, despite being offered positions at a higher wage elsewhere. (S)

World café participants placed the responsibility of L&D with UW and stated the “university should be the force to direct management PD.”

World café data suggested that, when developing an L&D strategy, UW should begin with a needs assessment of what L&D supports and initiatives departments and individuals require. Participants suggested that UW “bring in managers [and] supervisors across all
departments to scope out needs—create wish list, identify learning goals for coming year” (WC).

Data indicated that developing a strategy would be a long-term process and would involve linking L&D to business process and organizational objectives (WC).

**The role of HR**

The critical role of HR in creating and sustaining an L&D strategy emerged within this theme. Inquiry participants viewed HR as leading the design of a formalized and systemic L&D strategy. World café conversations indicated that an HR specialist was needed to specify PD resources. Participants suggested that HR organize PD groups based on position so people could share ideas with each other in a small group setting (WC). As well, participants stated an HR lead was needed “to keep [the] group going so it doesn’t fizzle out” (WC) after the initial excitement stage. Data gathered from both methods indicated a desire to make PD a required part of performance reviews and to “place encouragement and recognition in the performance review” (WC). Participants viewed L&D as an integral part of the HR processes at UW (S, WC).

Participants also stated that they would like HR to communicate L&D opportunities, information, and policies through action and writing. Leaders emphasized the need for more discussion and dialogue regarding supports and resources required for leaders to learn. One participant requested “better communication on what is wanted/needed” (S). Participants noted a general lack of awareness of what was currently available as well as the skills UW required from its leaders (S, WC). Participants also declared they wanted a “greater understanding of personal goals related to the whole institution” (WC). On the survey, 49% of respondents chose “Lack of awareness of opportunities” as a barrier to L&D, and 22% of survey participants said they had
“no clear career path” (see Table 2). World café participants stated, “People don’t know what kind of resources are available, so [they] go outside of the university.”

Participants suggested improving communication by placing information on the website in a central location (WC). Information would include documents for frequently asked questions, procedures, check lists, as well as lists of internal experts, what L&D resources were available internally, and key contracts in each department (WC). In the participants’ view, everyone was busy and did not have time to seek out information, so placing this information in one central location would improve communication. Overall, participants viewed HR as the lead in designing, communicating, and sustaining an L&D strategy at UW.

**Finding 5: Leaders need universal and equitable access to learning that is aligned to organizational goals**

Data gathered from both research methods revealed how strongly participants believed that UW’s approach to learning should be universal, equitable, and aligned with organizational goals. Participants reported that individuals and departments often work alone, as there is lack of a clearly defined L&D strategy for the entire organization (S, WC). Participant feedback indicated that L&D was inconsistent throughout the organization and should be available for all UW employees (S, WC). One participant suggested the university “create a fairer and more universal system for education leave” (S). Similarly, another participant noted the need to “discuss [PD] more broadly because some areas have greater opportunities for PD” (WC). In the world café, participants noted PD “should be [available] throughout the institution (not departmental, individual)” and expressed the need for “transparency and consistency between
departments on seeking outside training, [as] the inequality between departments demoralizes” (WC).

**Mandatory L&D**

Data collected indicated that L&D should be required to ensure equal and consistent access to opportunities (S, WC). One participant stated, “Make some development/continuing education mandatory, then we would feel more justified in fitting it in, not like we were taking time away from the other things we are obligated to do and spend resources on” (S). Another participant wrote,

> It would be fantastic if every staff member at UW was allowed to participate in some form of Professional Development each year. It would also be ideal if these opportunities were more fairly distributed. It seems that departments with more can participate in PD opportunities while others cannot participate at all. More [of] a level playing field would be great, and I feel that employees would be happier because of it and the UW would also benefit from this happiness. (S)

Data indicated that requiring employees to participate in L&D would create more equal access, as some departments have more opportunities than others, and would allow more consistency across all areas. Additionally, participants indicated that setting L&D as a job requirement “depersonalizes ‘skill development’” (WC). Required training would also reduce the barriers of lack of time, financial, and supervisor support. Overall, making L&D mandatory was viewed as a positive for both individuals and the organization.

Conversations in the world café revealed that both individuals and departments often work alone and are not sufficiently interconnected. Data provided evidence that supported this concept, with one participant stating, “L&D is currently independent” (WC), and another participant noted that “areas work in bubbles.” For example, information was not always shared between departments, and departments would not know what other departments were doing
Table participants in the world café expressed a desire to know more about other departments and to “see if resources exist and ask for information support before just doing something ourselves.” One world café participant reported people are “taking [their] own responsibilities because there is no work plan.” World café conversations indicated that departments work in silos instead of obtaining collective insight. As well, individuals often set their own PD plan, self-fund PD, and use vacation time for PD (WC). Participants revealed that people who are committed to L&D and “do not tolerate the current PD situation throw up their hands [and go] above and beyond to look after their own PD (and it becomes tiring)” (WC). Overall, participants commented more information sharing between individuals and departments is needed and most L&D opportunities are not centrally directed.

**Finding 6: Participants expressed an interested in building internal capacity**

Participant feedback indicated a significant interest in building internal capacity through increased information sharing, networking, roundtables, group work, and team building. A total of 22% of all qualitative data collected related directly to this theme. Learning from external colleagues, professional associations, conferences, and communities of practice only represented a total of 4% of all qualitative data collected; therefore, I chose not to discuss these topics further in this study.

Both data sets reflected the theme of internal capacity building, although it was much more prevalent in the world café. This may be because the world café itself was viewed as a form of internal information sharing, and thus generated more ideas on the value of gathering together than the survey. Comments about the world café were favourable, and participants indicated a desire to hold several world cafés per year, stating, “The world café model is great,
just to know who we are on campus” (WC). Participants in the world café ranged from staff who had worked at UW for less than one month to those with over 20 years of experience, and many participants noted in casual conversation following the event with the world café research team that they had never met each other.

**Desire to meet other leaders and work with other departments to learn from each other**

Leaders expressed a desire to get together with other leaders and suggested several options such as “knowledge networking in manager groups—round tables” (WC) and “opportunities to meet each other, bringing managers together and sharing ideas common ‘hot topics’, morning breakfasts” (WC). Informal discussion, round tables, and group sessions were also suggested as means of information sharing (WC). The term network or networking appeared 16 times in the qualitative data. In addition, the terms collective, community, collaboration, and conversation also appeared in the data relating to group gatherings.

Not being able to get together was frequently commented on, and world café participants noted, “There’s a lack of opportunities to meet/discuss with other managers” (WC) and “there’s no social hub within the university for managers” (WC). World café participants also noted the need to “recognize disconnect [of] UW building community but not recognition of our internal communities” (WC). One participant noted a desire to “get to know other leaders at my ‘level’ throughout the university to learn together as well as learn from each other” (S), and participants wanted to “pair with another senior manager [and have] someone to turn to, not a direct supervisor” (WC).

In addition, participants also communicated the need for information to be shared amongst departments, as they did not know what other departments were doing.
café, participants discussed the need to “reach out to network to see if resources exist and ask for info support before just doing something ourselves” (WC). One participant noted, “It’s difficult to find out if other departments have resources you’re looking for, need process to share” (WC). In summary, world café participants wanted “more open conversation to air opinions and issues, get advice, get help, acknowledgement of strategies, and [to be able to] learn from management.”

Internal learning viewed as efficient and cost-effective

Participants noted learning from each other as a valuable way to increase L&D without incurring a direct cost on the university. In the world café, participants suggested the university “capitalize on management skills [that are] available internally [and are] cost-effective [as] staff have historically gone away for sessions” (WC). Participants also urged UW to explore “other resources besides money that can actualize L&D” (WC) and to tap “into SMEs [subject matter experts] to train each other . . . [in order to] offer decreased costs” (WC). Participants suggested collective training with internal subject matter experts rather than more expensive external training (WC). The data also revealed that leaders believed a vast amount of institutional knowledge could be shared and declared UW should “take advantage of in-house intellectual capital” (WC). Participants also stated they could “learn from each other, [as there is] lots of experience and inexperience” (WC).

Summary of study findings

In conclusion, the study findings affirmed that inquiry participants would be committed to an L&D strategy for leaders at UW. Insights reflected a desire to improve and learn new skills that would benefit individuals and the university as a whole. Participants observed that L&D was not currently a priority at UW and expressed a desire to have HR design and communicate a
formalized L&D strategy that was supported by senior leadership. Having a strategy that ensured equal access to opportunities for all staff was a shared value. Participants indicated sensitivity toward UW’s lack of organizational resources to support L&D and offered multiple solutions, such as increasing internal capacity through information sharing and networking as a means of addressing the need for further PD.

**Study Conclusions**

Based on the study findings, and supported by relevant literature, I drew the following five conclusions in response to the main research question:

1. **Senior management support is critical.**
2. **Leaders have a desire to learn new skills and improve themselves now and in the future.**
3. **Resource issues are a factor, and any strategy must take this into consideration.**
4. **A learning and development strategy must be created and communicated to formalize professional learning for leaders.**
5. **UW could build its capacity through increased internal knowledge sharing and networking.**

**Conclusion 1: Senior management support is critical**

Participant data provided ample evidence that senior management support is the first step required for the design of an L&D strategy at UW. In response to the main inquiry question, the data indicated that making L&D a priority at UW would benefit both the organization and employees. Support from senior leadership as a key factor in developing an L&D culture is a consistent theme in the literature. In a report for the Conference Board of Canada, Lavis (2011)
found organizations that placed high priority on learning across the enterprise had strong leadership support for L&D. Fulmer and Wagner (1999) stated that top-level support is key to developing leaders, and successful leadership development will ensure continued high-level support (p. 31). Similarly, Simonsen (1997) wrote, “Visible support from senior management is essential to a comprehensive, sustained development process” (p. 186). Furthermore, Longenecker (2010) stated, “If senior leaders of organizations want higher performance, then they must support managers at all levels in their efforts to learn and develop” (p. 10). Silzer and Dowell (2010) stated that the creation of a talent mindset needs to start at the top with the CEO’s commitment, and this is often the greatest obstacle for HR, as many CEOs do not understand the value of their people (p. 43). Silzer and Dowell added that while this mindset needs to start from the top, managers and leaders at all levels must be committed to learning across the organization. Kouzes and Posner (2007) wrote that exemplary leaders strengthen others by creating a climate where people can develop new skills and develop existing talents (pp. 250–251).

**Conclusion 2: Leaders have a desire to learn new skills and improve themselves now and in the future**

It was evident through the course of this inquiry that UW leaders are keenly interested in learning new skills and improving themselves for the betterment of themselves, their departments, and UW as a whole. This interest in lifelong learning was reflected in Senge’s (2006) work when he wrote, “Learning organizations are possible, because, deep down, we are all learners” (p. 4). Schein (2010) stated that in a learning culture “members must hold the shared assumption that learning is a good thing worth investing in” (p. 366). The data indicated that gaining learner commitment would not be an issue at UW and would be improved the more
learners were involved in the design. The literature supported the need for stakeholder involvement and indicated that L&D cannot be imposed upon people—gaining learner commitment is important (Senge, 2006; Simonsen, 1997). Additionally, people are more motivated and effective when their needs and interests are taken into account in organizational decisions (Kouzes & Posner, 2007; Silzer & Dowell, 2010).

While authors have stated that individuals must take responsibility for their own learning (Garavan et al., 2012; Longenecker, 2010; Simonsen, 1997), it cannot be assumed that all employees have the confidence to taking learning into their own hands, particularly those in organizations with limited career progression opportunities (Bryson et al., 2006). Participants corroborated this need for support in their feedback when they suggested L&D be made mandatory so that all staff could have equal access to PD opportunities. More recent literature indicated a shift in that employees are taking more control of their own careers and their own development (Garavan et al., 2012; Lavis, 2011; Silzer & Dowell, 2010). Garavan et al. (2012) reported employees are increasingly responsible for managing their own careers, but affirmed this does not imply that organizations do not have a role in developing employees (p. 9). Due to changes in the workplace, including the rise of the knowledge-based economy (Jacobs & Park, 2009; Lavis, 2011), globalization, products going to market faster, technological and demographic shifts, and more intense competition (Yukl, 2013), employees have to be more prepared for changes in their current positions and for future jobs. Employees hold the primary responsibility for ensuring they are proficient at their work, regardless of the PD their employer provides; therefore, employees “will increasingly look to take learning-related matters into their own hands to ensure continued competence in their roles” (Lavis, 2011, p. 39). The literature
suggested that employees are becoming more interested in their own PD and organizations can gain learner commitment by including them in the program content and design.

**Conclusion 3: Resource issues are a factor, and any strategy must take this into consideration**

Evident in the study findings and the literature reviewed was the importance of allocation of organizational support and resources for L&D. UW’s budget situation continues to be tight, as salary costs increase faster than revenue, putting constant pressure on UW to streamline operations (University of Winnipeg, 2013b, p. 6). The gap between revenue and expenditures for 2014–2015 is anticipated to be $2 million (University of Winnipeg, 2013b, p. 2). As UW must remain competitive and continue to support and develop staff, the university must find innovative ways to foster and support L&D. Participants were aware of UW’s financial situation and provided low-cost solutions to enhance L&D at UW.

In addition to budget constraints, the data revealed the issue of work overload, as participants expressed that they did not have time to attend to learning. While organizational commitment to L&D resources is a strong factor in learning organizations, when times are tough, learning budgets are often the first to be cut (Lavis, 2011). The average spent on L&D has dropped 13% from 2008 to 2010 and almost 40% since the 1990s (Lavis, 2011). Lack of resources was a noted barrier to L&D (Belling et al., 2004; Ladyshewsky & Flavell, 2012; Lavis, 2011; Longenecker, 2010). Belling et al. (2004) found the strongest barriers to L&D were “pressure to give priority to short-term, financial targets; day-to-day pressures of work; and lack of time for planning” (p. 243). Time pressures were also barrier, as managers’ workloads increased and learning was pushed aside (Ladyshewsky & Flavell, 2012; Longenecker, 2010).
Despite these barriers, Lavis (2011) asserted, “Organizations need to ensure that they have sufficient internal resources to enable employees to apply the knowledge, skills, and abilities acquired through learning activities in their job” (p. 31). Similarly, Kouzes and Posner (2007) observed organizations that invested in L&D “enjoy higher levels of employee involvement and commitment and better levels of customer service, along with a greater understanding of and alignment with company visions and values” (p. 261). In summary, UW is not alone, as many organizations face the barriers of lack of time and financial resources, but finding solutions to overcome these barriers will payoff in terms of employee commitment and productivity.

**Conclusion 4: A learning and development strategy must be created and communicated to formalize professional learning for leaders**

The inquiry data indicated that an L&D plan needed to “start at the strategic plan” (WC). Participants said UW required “better communication on what is wanted/needed” (S) to define what leaders should learn, and then to provide a clear and formalized L&D plan so everyone would know what was expected of them (S, WC). Organizations that have superior performance align their L&D with their business strategy, as this helps them achieve their goals and objectives (Buus & Saslow, 2005; Fulmer & Wagner, 1999; Saks & Haccoun, 2013). Strategy is often a key factor in defining the need for and type of L&D in organizations (Saks & Haccoun, 2013). Similarly, Chambers (2013) wrote, “The design of a supervisor–employee development program must be grounded in succession planning, anchored in the company’s strategy, and feasible given the size and resources of the organization” (p. 139). While resources and supports are important,
“they cannot be implemented effectively without a larger strategic vision within an organization” (Lavis, 2011, p. 43).

Participants stressed the importance of aligning an L&D strategy with the organizational vision and culture (S, WC). Wenger (2000) noted the need to ensure employees’ individual activities are aligned with other processes so they can be effective beyond their own engagement and this will assure a “mutual process of coordinating perspectives, interpretations, and actions so they realize higher goals” (p. 228). Participant feedback emphasized a need for a formalized L&D plan that was mandatory, centralized, consistent, and helped meet institutional goals (S, WC). Participants requested UW “clearly define department goals and collective goals of the university” (WC). The data from this inquiry were consistent with Day’s (2007) findings that an effective leadership development program plan must be formal, systemic, systematic, tailored, and experientially based. Participants indicated that UW needed a “formal learning process” (S), in which L&D would be a required part of people’s job and tied in with performance reviews. In an informal system, the responsibility of L&D falls upon individuals and the process is unplanned and not standardized throughout the organization (Chambers, 2013, p. 140). While a formal system requires organizational discipline to design, implement, and maintain, it may be a source of competitive advantage (Day, 2007, p. 4).

Simonsen (1997) offered the following eight steps to designing a development plan: (a) identify the organization’s and the individuals’ needs, (b) envision desirable outcomes, (c) obtain buy-in from stakeholders, (d) determine design elements and the process, (e) design or purchase components, (f) communicate and educate, (g) implement the process, and (h) evaluate and keep the process alive (p. 228). Participant feedback reflected many of Simonsen’s steps,
including conducting a needs assessment, gaining top management’s support, and improving communication.

There are two approaches to L&D, broad or narrow inclusion (Silzer & Dowell, 2010). Some organizations focus only on their identified high-potential talent, while others try to raise the level of all employees (Silzer & Dowell, 2010). Inquiry data strongly indicated that narrow inclusion would not be effective at UW. Concentrating on a select group of people could be demotivating and feel exclusionary to those not included (Silzer & Dowell, 2010).

**Conclusion 5: UW could build its capacity through increased internal knowledge sharing and networking**

The appetite for increased internal information sharing and networking experiences amongst leaders and between departments was a powerful theme that arose from world café data. Participant contributions reported a collective wisdom at UW that was not being accessed, and leaders expressed a desire to continue to meet and share experiences through conversations, collaboration, presentations, and group sessions. Participants clearly articulated and expressed the need for increased internal networking, and meeting this need could be one of the key elements in creating an L&D strategy for UW leaders.

Wenger (2000) argued that the success of organizations was based on their ability to design themselves as social learning systems and stated communities of practice “are the basic building blocks of a social learning system” (p. 229). He went on to say that members of the community of practice are linked by their collectively developed understanding of what their community is about, and they also contribute to it (Wenger, 2000). Members build their community by engaging with each other. They also have a shared understanding of communal
resources such as language, tools, and stories (Wenger, 2000). Communities of practice are synergistic, offering collective principles of trust, belonging, and chances to gather that reflect the wishes of the inquiry participants. In the community “engagement is enriched by the awareness that others share the same beliefs and follow the same guidelines” (Wenger, 2000, p. 242). Communities of practice encourage informal learning and place meaning on participation (p. 244). Fuller and Unwin (2004) suggested participation in multiple communities of practice was an integral part of an expansive learning environment.

The literature revealed that learning delivery is shifting away from the classroom to more collaborative forms of learning in which employees want to contribute to what they learn and can generate content, taking pressure off L&D staff (Lavis, 2011). This shift represents a move from individual to social learning, in which employees have more power over what and how they learn and “collaboration and team-based work are now the norm, because of the increased complexity and sheer volume of information employees must process” (Lavis, 2011, p. 6). Social learning involves learning with others and takes place though collaborative work and employee knowledge sharing (p. 23). Garavan et al. (2012) also noted the shift to informal and self-directed learning and highlighted the value of communities of practice; such development is “organized through the practices by which employees’ structure conversations” (p. 15).

Research data reflected participants’ desire to build a greater sense of community at UW through increased collaboration. On this topic, Kouzes and Posner (2007) discussed fostering collaboration, strengthening others, and creating a spirit of community and asserted, “Social interaction increases people’s commitments to the standards of the group and has a profound effect on people’s well-being” (p. 329). In summary, creating the opportunity to build internal
communities through networking and informal methods of learning at UW could benefit both leaders and the university.

Scope and Limitations of the Research Inquiry

As is the case with all research, this inquiry had limitations that must be discussed. When discussing research limitations, Stringer (2007) stressed the need to acknowledge that human inquiry is both complex and incomplete (p. 179). To address inquiry limitations, Tracey (2013) wrote of the importance of self-reflexivity and the researcher’s values and beliefs shape the way they approach and conduct research (p. 3). For example, the development of research questions and the subsequent formation of themes and allocation of data to particular themes are all decisions made by the researcher. Another researcher asking the same question could have selected different methods and may have found different themes and proposed different conclusions.

There were several limitations to this study. The first limitation was that the same pool of participants was invited for both research methods, and all the participants were invited to answer the same questions. Had I divided participants into various groups according to their level in the organization, the inquiry may have gathered different data. Another limitation was that, as participation was voluntary, the responses gathered might not have been representative of the group as a whole. Those who were not interested in L&D may have elected to not participate in the research, thus skewing the sample only with those interested in L&D. Another limitation was that, due to the limited timeframe for conducting this study, I chose to employ only two methods of data collection, and another research method, such as interviews, may have provided divergent or additional data. Interviews may have provided more in-depth information on learner
needs that could not be captured through a brief online survey or the large group format of the world café.

Chapter Summary

I conducted this research with UW leaders and employed a survey and a world café to answer the main inquiry question: How can the University of Winnipeg design a learning and development strategy for its leaders that will benefit both the leaders and the university? Analysis of the data resulted in six findings and five conclusions, each of which was discussed in this chapter. The scope and limitations that impacted this inquiry were also discussed. In Chapter 5 I present the final recommendations that will help UW design an L&D strategy for leaders. I also discuss the organizational implications and implications for future inquiry.
CHAPTER FIVE: INQUIRY IMPLICATIONS

In this final chapter, I have synthesized the literature, research findings, and conclusions to provide recommendations that will help answer the research question: How can the University of Winnipeg design a learning and development strategy for its leaders that will benefit both the leaders and the university? The following four subquestions also helped to guide the inquiry:

1. What are the current learning and development activities for leaders?
2. What are the learning and development needs of leaders?
3. What are the key elements of a learning and development strategy for leaders?
4. How can these key elements be achieved?

Following the recommendations, I outline the potential organizational implications for UW resulting from the implementation of these recommendations and the impact of not implementing the recommendations. Finally, I discuss the limitations of this research study and the implications for future academic research in this area.

Study Recommendations

The following three recommendations are based on the research findings, conclusions, and relevant literature provided in the previous chapters. These recommendations provide a description of three areas where UW could address the inquiry question and design an L&D strategy for its leaders. All three recommendations take into consideration the unique university culture and acknowledge that resources will be an issue, but need not be a barrier, for implementation of an L&D strategy for leaders. The three recommendations are as follows:
1. Develop and communicate a formalized L&D strategy that is supported by senior leadership, aligned with organizational goals, customized to the unique university environment, and values learner needs.

2. Provide diverse PD opportunities for leaders.

3. Create an environment that improves communication, fosters collaboration, develops competence, and values community.

In the sections below I discuss each recommendation in turn. When detailing recommendations I first list the relevant findings and conclusions, which I discussed in depth in Chapter 4. All the recommendations relate to Finding 3 (leaders are impacted by the lack of organizational resources) and to Conclusion 3 (resource issues are a factor, and any strategy must take this into consideration). I then relate the recommendation to Killian’s (2010) model for “designing leadership development initiatives” (p. 15). Killian stated many HR and L&D professionals do not use a systematic approach to design their programs and he suggested the use of “five timeless principles – the why, who, what, how and when of program design” (p. 15). I applied the principles why, what, and how in the development of the three recommendations.

**Recommendation 1: Develop and communicate a formalized learning and development strategy that is supported by senior leadership, aligned with organizational goals, customized to the unique university environment, and values learner needs**

This recommendation relates to three of the study findings: Finding 1 (leaders require organizational support to develop a culture of L&D), Finding 4 (participants noted the need for an organizational L&D strategy), and Finding 5 (leaders need universal and equitable access to learning that is aligned to organizational goals). This recommendation also corresponds to two
study conclusions: Conclusion 1 (senior management support is critical) and Conclusion 4 (a L&D strategy must be created and communicated to formalize professional learning for leaders). Regarding Killian’s (2010) model for designing leadership development initiatives, this recommendation answered the question “why: defining your program aim” (p. 15), as programs work best when they target a specific organization need (p. 15).

This inquiry centred on learning how UW HR could design an L&D strategy for leaders. HR expressed a desire to design an L&D strategy for leaders, and in doing so help reach its stated mission of being an employer of choice by “building a learning and development culture, and providing opportunities for career growth” (University of Winnipeg, n.d.a, Mission section, para. 7). The literature supported the concept of senior leaders investing in strengthening the capacity of everyone in the organization (Kouzes & Posner, 2007, p. 260) and of developing leaders from within (Fulmer & Wagner, 1999, p. 31). Inquiry findings demonstrated that participants value L&D and want senior leaders to make L&D a priority at UW. Findings also indicated that participants desired a clearly communicated and well-defined L&D strategy that explains how their individual and department goals relate to the whole institution. Strong leadership support and alignment of L&D to business strategy is a common theme in the literature on best practices in establishing an L&D culture (Fulmer & Wagner, 1999; Lavis, 2011; Stahl et al., 2012).

I recommend that UW HR design a formalized L&D strategy and communicate to UW leaders the value of L&D, what is needed, and how and when it will be delivered. This recommendation should be the first phase of implementing the recommendations in this inquiry.
A formalized strategy would ensure the long-term viability of L&D at UW. In his Society for Human Resource Development report, Day (2007) wrote,

> A formal process is one in which the key pieces are standardized throughout an organization. An informal process occurs in an unplanned and ad-hoc manner. There is a risk of succumbing to informal, ad-hoc development approaches that place the entire burden of development onto the individual employee. (p. 140)

In addition, communication, both in writing and in action, must be an important part of launching an L&D strategy (Simonsen, 1997).

UW HR is planning to introduce a competency model for all leaders. Competency frameworks are frequently used in the design of best practice L&D programs (Cembrowski & Da Costa, 2001; Day, 2007; Fulmer & Wagner, 1999). As a first step in creating an L&D program, I recommend that HR establish required training to help leaders reach the desired level of competency, support the strategy with the participant feedback gathered in this inquiry, and continue to build excitement and awareness for L&D.

This will not be a short-term process; rather, this action will require institutional and learner commitment and will evolve over time. Senior leadership support for and communication of a formalized L&D strategy at UW will help leaders gain access to development in a planned, centralized, and systematic manner. In summary, data gathered and evidence from the literature indicated that creating and communicating a formalized L&D strategy would benefit both leaders and the university, resulting in increased opportunities for individuals, their departments, and the entire organization.
Recommendation 2: Provide diverse professional development opportunities for leaders

This recommendation relates to Finding 2 (leaders desire PD opportunities) and to Conclusion 2 (leaders have a desire to learn new skills and improve themselves now and in the future). In relation to Killian’s (2010) model, this recommendation answered the question “what: deciding what they need to learn” (p. 16) as most successful L&D initiatives have clear program objectives that inform participants of the skills and information they need to learn (p. 16). This recommendation also answered the question “how: choosing the right approach to help them learn” (p. 17), as most successful L&D initiatives choose which approaches will best support their program objectives (p. 17).

This inquiry found that leaders at UW are keenly interested in PD opportunities and desire both formal and informal methods of learning. Leaders’ open and flexible attitudes toward learning will benefit HR in the design of an L&D strategy, as gaining learner commitment is a critical factor in best practice L&D approaches (Lavis, 2011; Simonsen, 1997). Participants are eager for increased L&D; as one participant reflected, “I desire the opportunity to continually develop my skills so I can serve staff and students better. I would be much better at my job if given more opportunities to grow and learn” (S).

Participant feedback indicated a strong interest in a multitude of PD topics, such as budgeting, supervisory management, team building, strategic planning, project management, conflict management, performance management, and technology training. Leaders indicated learning needs in areas related to the university environment, such as managing in the collective agreement, mental health issues concerning students, the UW registration system, and
understanding UW’s budget and HR processes. Participants expressed interest in various approaches to L&D, including classroom training, mentoring, and communities of practice.

To meet the diverse level of learner needs and interests in this leadership group, I recommend that UW HR adopt a flexible and tailored approach to L&D that integrates both formal and informal learning. Leaders could learn from formal classes, from other people, and from on-the-job experiences. The formal training could be externally or internally led, and informal methods could include internal networking, mentorship, and PD plans. Enabling diverse learning delivery methods and programming is a key factor in organizations with strong learning cultures (Lavis, 2011, p. ii). This diverse learning approach views “learning as a fluid, employee-driven process, rather than a static, content-driven product” (Lavis, 2011, p. 6).

The purpose of PD is not to create programs via a series of courses or seminars, but to design and implement practices, processes, and developmental systems “that capitalize on work-related experiences to help achieve the organization’s strategy” (Day, 2007, p. 18). As such, I recommend that HR include experiential-based learning as part of its L&D strategy, because learning from work-related experience can be a powerful addition to an L&D strategy (Buus & Saslow, 2005; Day, 2007; Frost & Wallingford, 2013; Fulmer & Wagner, 1999; Jacobs & Park, 2009). In summary, data gathered and evidence from the literature indicated that creating an L&D strategy that provides diverse PD opportunities would benefit both leaders and the university, resulting in increased opportunities for individuals, their departments, and the entire organization.
Recommendation 3: Create an environment that improves communication, fosters collaboration, develops competence, and values community

This recommendation relates to Finding 6 (participants expressed an interested in building internal capacity) and to Conclusion 5 (UW could maximize its capacity through increased internal knowledge sharing and networking). In relation to Killian’s (2010) model, this recommendation answered the question “how: choosing the right approach to help them learn” (p. 17), as most successful L&D initiatives choose which approaches will best support their program objectives (p. 17).

Creating an environment that improves communication, fosters collaboration, develops competence, and values community is a critical factor in the successful implementation of this inquiry. Participants used keywords such as networking, community, collaboration, and conversation when they referred to group gatherings. Building an internal community would maximize the capacity of this diverse group of leaders and assist UW HR in the goal of developing a cost-effective L&D program. This recommendation is related to two of Kouzes and Posner’s (2007) five practices of leadership (p. 26); namely, “enable others to act: foster collaboration . . . strengthen others . . . and developing competence” (p. 26) and “encourage the heart: recognize contributions by showing appreciation for individual excellence; celebrate the values and victories by creating a spirit of community” (p. 26). This approach would suit UW well, as “leadership within academic settings means gaining influence, loyalty and commitment through an interpersonal, collaborative approach rather than an authoritarian, competitive manner” (Johnson, 2010, p. 11).
Providing leaders with increased opportunities to share internal knowledge and build community was a strong theme in the world café. Leaders shared that the “intellectual capital” (WC) and “collective insight” (WC) of UW staff were not being used to full capacity. Participants also commented that UW was focused on “building community” (WC), but had not recognized “our internal communities” (WC). Leaders reported many supports and opportunities available for students, but few are available for staff. Leaders commented that both those who report to them and the customers they serve, namely the students, would benefit from their development. Given this desire for recognition of internal community, I recommend that UW extend its community of learners to include students, faculty, and staff. While the focus of this recommendation was on internal community, and the external community was outside of the scope of this inquiry, I want to note that it is important that UW leaders are also connected with the external community.

Participants expressed a wish to have a “social hub” (WC) for leaders and increased opportunities to get together and share information. The literature indicated that a collaborative, social, and collective approach to learning is more effective than individual learning (Lavis, 2011; Senge, 2006). As such, L&D plans should “should encourage and expand opportunities for informal, unscripted learning” (Lavis, 2011, p. 24). Weisbord (2012) wrote that people want to find dignity, meaning and community in the workplace and “those who find it are happier and more productive” (p. xxxvii). Social interaction improves people’s well-being and increases their commitments to the standards of the group (Kouzes & Posner, 2007, p. 329). While a need for formal instructor-led classroom learning still exists, expanding programs to include a more collaborative, social, and learner-driven approach to development could be very effective at UW.
I recommend that UW establish an environment that values collaboration and community by creating more opportunities for internal information sharing and for leaders to get together. The university could also celebrate individual and departmental success through employee and department recognition, via written communication, and through formal or informal gatherings. In addition, UW could celebrate its unique culture and reputation in all development efforts, as organizations can attract and develop the best employees and build new capacity by considering “their corporate culture as a source of sustainable competitive advantage” (Stahl et al., 2012, p. 280) and by “stressing their corporate social responsibility activities” (p. 31). This approach could also create more linkages between faculty and staff, as some UW faculty could be engaged in sharing their knowledge with the leadership group.

Reinforcing UW’s existing internal strengths could help build a stronger learning community for all faculty and staff at UW. To meet these goals, HR needs to communicate frequently and consistently with the leadership group about the L&D strategy and create a centralized hub for information sharing. In summary, the data gathered and the literature evidence reviewed indicated that building a collaborative internal community would benefit both leaders and the university, resulting in increased opportunities for individuals, their departments, and the entire organization.

**Summary of recommendations**

These three recommendations address the six findings and five conclusions of this inquiry project. While each recommendation could be implemented individually, they are interrelated, as each recommendation relies upon the other in order to achieve the goal of this inquiry, designing an L&D strategy for leaders at UW. The next section suggests how these
recommendations could be implemented and describes the potential implications if the recommendations are not carried out.

**Organizational Implications**

The three recommendations detailed in the previous section could actualize an L&D strategy for leaders at UW and have the potential to benefit both leaders and the university. In order for this research to have lasting value, this section discusses the actions required to implement these recommendations. I also touched on what would occur if the recommendations are not followed.

To ensure my inquiry aligned with organizational goals, I consulted with my sponsor throughout the research and writing process. My sponsor provided regular and ongoing feedback and approved the inquiry conclusions and recommendations. Development and implementation of an L&D program will not happen overnight; as such, I recommend UW employ a phased approach to implementation. Once this final report has been submitted, my next step will be to present the project findings, conclusions, and recommendations to senior leaders. Using an appreciative approach, I will focus on the advantages of implementing these recommendations.

Following the presentation with senior leaders, I recommend HR create an advisory committee, composed of a representative group from the leaders group whom the L&D program is intended for. The advisory group could help inform and guide the L&D strategy. Under HR’s guidance, the leaders could self-organize and set learning goals. Participants stated UW HR could “bring in managers [and] supervisors across all departments to scope out needs—create wish list [to] identify learning goals for coming year” (WC). Information session for leaders about the L&D strategy could also be organized to ensure consistent messaging and open and
clear communication. Other resources could be added at a later stage to help HR implement the strategy, beginning with a student assistant or student intern to develop communications material and organize events. Once budgets allow, a dedicated L&D specialist who is located in HR could manage and implement the L&D strategy.

HR will need to communicate the strategy in writing to all staff and establish required training to help leaders reach the desired level of competency. Establishing some training as mandatory ensures all leaders have equal access to L&D and are clear on what they need to learn. Required training also removes some barriers and reduces the pressure from individuals to find the time, secure funding, and seek departmental approval for L&D. Participants stated that the process must be “forced” (WC) at the beginning to ensure it doesn’t “fizz out” (WC), as L&D will not happen on its own. I recommend the learning could take place through a variety of methods, including a “boot camp for managers” (WC) or “bite-sized workshops” (S) using both internal and external resources. HR could also approach UW’s PD training department, PACE, and could promote PACE courses and seminars to leaders; to keep costs down, HR could request that PACE sponsor a set amount of seats at minimal cost in their courses and seminars, and then have leaders apply through HR for these seats. To help share existing internal knowledge, HR could coordinate in-house courses using internal subject matter experts from specific departments, such as HR and Financial Services, or invite faculty members as guest lecturers.

Gaining individual commitment is a critical piece in ensuring the L&D strategy is successful. I recommend the strategy take into account diverse individual and departmental interests. This could be done by having each leader develop personal learning plans in conjunction with their manager and be held accountable for making progress on it each year.
Leaders were very interested in this method, and 90% of survey participants were very interested in or somewhat interested in developing PD plans. Assessment tools, such as personality inventories and 360-degree feedback, could also be used as part of the L&D strategy, as they could help improve leaders’ self-awareness and awareness of how others view them (Day, 2007, p. 26).

Facilitating a more informal and experiential-based approach to L&D is a significant part of the recommendations set out in this inquiry. I recommend that HR set up more opportunities for leaders to gather together, such as lunch-and-learn sessions, group workshops, and round tables. HR could arrange for groups of leaders, at the same level and from different departments, to meet to share issues and ideas. Each group could elect one designate to report back their feedback to senior leaders. The world café session that was conducted for this research was well received by participants. Organizing several world café sessions per year around specific topics could help leaders “build a supportive network of collaborative relationships that provides them with an ongoing resource” (Stringer, 2007, p. 21). HR could also explore peer mentoring, as 94% of survey participants were very interested or somewhat interested in mentoring. Mentoring does not need to be formalized to be effective (Day, 2007, p. 27) and peer mentoring requires less organizational resources than traditional forms of mentoring (McDonald & Hite, 2005, p. 429). Mentoring at UW could start with the pairing up of a new leader with an existing leader; this approach need not be complicated.

Another cost-effective way to enhance collaboration and build community would be to celebrate and recognize when leaders have helped others, met learning goals, or completed stretch assignments. Kouzes and Posner (2007) emphasized the enduring value of recognition
and celebration in the workplace: “Once you help others to succeed, acknowledge their accomplishments, and help them shine, especially in front of others, they will never forget it” (p. 237). UW currently has an annual recognition event for long-standing employees and retirees that is highly effective for building community. Adding more informal and formal recognition and celebration events similar to this annual event could do a great deal to increase a sense of community at UW.

Simonsen (1997) asserted, “It is not possible to over communicate” (p. 191); communication begins at the planning and design stage and never stops (Simonsen, 1997). I recommend that HR communicate in both writing and action as the L&D strategy is designed and implemented. UW’s Communications department could assist in writing key messages and posting them on the UW website. Participants suggested that HR create a communications hub that includes a frequently asked questions page, a question and answer page, links to internal subject matter experts, as well as links to sources of information on particular topics (WC). This could take the form of a dedicated section on the UW website that could include information about available courses and upcoming events as well as information on L&D policies and processes. Increased communication is required to share existing information that is not always readily available and would be required to announce the new L&D strategy.

If these recommendations are implemented and L&D becomes a part of business practice, learning plans would be integrated into leaders’ development plans; leaders would have access to multiple PD opportunities, know what is required of them in meeting organizational goals, and have increased chances to share information and network with other staff. An L&D strategy is not a light undertaking and could be introduced in stages. UW’s L&D strategy must be
customized to its environment as every successful L&D strategy is unique to its organization (Buus & Saslow, 2005; Day, 2007; Garavan et al., 2012; Stahl et al., 2012). Once implemented, UW’s L&D strategy would require ongoing evaluation, communication, investment, and modification (Buus & Saslow, 2005; Fulmer & Wagner, 1999; Hayward, 2011; Simonsen, 1997).

If UW chose not to move forward with these recommendations, the current state of L&D at UW would remain unchanged. Currently, UW provides little direction over the development of its leaders. What people learn is not consistently aligned to organizational goals, some departments have more access to L&D than others, leaders have few opportunities to gather together, and learning is mainly self-directed. By not developing its leaders, UW will be less ready to deal with increased change and competition, and may find it more difficult to attract and retain top talent.

**Implications for Future Inquiry**

This research focused on a group of nonacademic leaders, and these methods could be applied to other groups of staff at UW. When conducting this inquiry, I discovered a lack of research on how universities approach the development of their nonacademic leaders and other researchers concurred (Cembrowksi & Da Costa, 2001; Henderson, 2009; Lewis, 2011). I would be interested to learn how other universities approach the development of their nonacademic leaders. In addition, future research could explore what emphasis leaders in higher education are taking toward maximizing the capacity of their human capital and compare them to other sectors. Another area of future research is why senior leaders often fail to invest in developing their people, as it so often linked to competitive advantage. I also found a gap in the literature
regarding how academic and nonacademic staff could work together to create a learning organization within the university environment. Is there a divide between the two, and if so, how can it be corrected?

The literature also implied the university culture is resistant to change (Watkins, 2005; White & Weathersby, 2005). More research could be conducted to study if this is true, and if so, how this impacts the ability of universities to innovate and survive in a changing environment. Another topic worth exploring more would be why universities that teach about leadership, change, and innovation, do not always apply these same principles within their own institutions.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter I proposed three recommendations for designing an L&D strategy at UW. Implementation of all three recommendations could start immediately, with the first recommendation (to develop and communicate a formalized L&D strategy) leading the way. This chapter also discussed the organizational implications and implications for future inquiries.

Report Summary

In this inquiry participants provided a clear vision for what an L&D strategy would look like at UW. This indicated to me that solutions to a question or a problem can come from within. Short (1998) stated, “To learn from others, much of what you need to know is among you right here and right now” (p. 59). Inquiry participants indicated a desire to improve themselves, each other, and the university through a formalized and flexible approach to L&D that builds a sense of community.

I found L&D was worthy topic that captured leaders’ attention and interest. Leverage of one of its greatest assets, its nonacademic leaders, could help UW become more innovative,
competitive, and relevant in a complex and rapidly changing environment. The improved knowledge, skills, and confidence of leaders at UW could lead to increased attraction, retention, and succession planning as demand for top talent increases. I conducted this research in an effort to assist UW in developing an L&D strategy for its leaders that will benefit both the leaders and the university. It is my hope that this research project marks the beginning of future research at UW into the learning needs of all staff.
REFERENCES


APPENDIX A: ONLINE SURVEY INVITATION

Good Afternoon,

As someone who supervises staff at The University of Winnipeg (UW), you have been selected to participate in a research survey being conducted by Kim Loeb. This research is part of the requirement for Kim’s Masters of Arts in Leadership thesis at Royal Roads University and is not being conducted by the University. The title of the thesis is “Creating a Learning and Development Strategy for Managers at The University of Winnipeg”. Kim and I work together at Professional Applied and Continuing Education (PACE) at UW and I have been asked to assist in facilitating the research.

The link to the survey is: [survey link]

The survey consists of 7 questions and should take between 5 and 10 minutes to complete. The survey questions are intended to learn more about your learning and development needs as a UW manager or supervisor. Complete confidentiality is ensured and your responses will be anonymous.

The survey will be open for 10 days and will close at 4:30 pm on November 1, 2013.

We hope you will take this time to share your thoughts regarding your learning and development needs at UW. Everyone who receives this invitation, whether or not they complete this survey, will receive an e-mail update of the compiled, analyzed and summarized findings. A follow-up event will be held in November that you will also be invited to attend.

Your participation and support in this research is much appreciated. If you should have any questions regarding this research and its outcomes, please feel free to contact myself or Kim at any time.

Email:[email address] Telephone: [telephone number]

Email:[email address] Telephone: [telephone number]
APPENDIX B: PREAMBLE AND CONSENT (ONLINE SURVEY)

Creating a Learning and Development Strategy for Managers at The University

You are receiving this survey because I am contacting all University of Winnipeg (UW) supervisors and managers as part of a research project that I am conducting. This research project is part of the requirement for a Master of Arts in Leadership (MAL) at Royal Roads University. My name is Kim Loeb and I work in Professional, Applied and Continuing Education at UW. My credentials with Royal Roads University (RRU) can be established by telephoning Dr. Brigitte Harris, Director, School of Leadership Studies at [telephone number]. This survey should take less than 10 minutes to complete.

The questions are intended to learn more about your needs as a UW manager and help identify what you feel would make for a positive learning and development environment. The title of the research is “Creating a Learning and Development Strategy for Managers at The University of Winnipeg”. In addition to submitting a final report to RRU in partial fulfillment for a MAL, I will also be sharing my research findings with Human Resources at UW. A copy of the final report will be published and archived in the RRU Library, as well as in the Thesis Canada Portal of Library and Archives Canada, and ProQuest/UMI. I may also submit an abstract to a leadership conference or article for publication to a journal. The information you provide will be summarized, in anonymous format, in the body of the final report. At no time will any specific comments be attributed to any individual unless your specific agreement has been obtained beforehand. All documentation will be kept strictly confidential. You are not compelled to participate in this research project. If you choose to withdraw during or after the inquiry at any time, it will not be possible to remove your contributions as they are anonymous and specific comments are not attributable to any one participant. Similarly, if you choose not to participate in this research project, this information will also be maintained in confidence. Subsequent to the thesis being published, the data will be destroyed.

As some participants may be staff who report to me and to mitigate any conflict of interest, I have asked a fellow UW staff member, Nancy Stokes, to be involved in gathering consent and facilitating the research methods. Completing this survey indicates your consent to participate in this research.

This is a unique opportunity to share your thoughts regarding your learning and development needs as a manager at the University of Winnipeg. Once the survey results are compiled and analyzed I will share the findings with you via e-mail communication. Your participation and support in this research is much appreciated. If you have any questions about this research, please contact me at [telephone number] or [email address].
APPENDIX C: E-MAIL INVITATION LETTER AND POSTCARD (WORLD CAFÉ)

Good Afternoon,

As a manager or supervisor at The University of Winnipeg (UW), you are invited to participate in a World Café on November 27 from 12:00 noon to 2:00 pm at [location].

A World Café is a creative process for facilitating conversations about issues that matter. Small groups of people participate in a multitude of table conversations, while still being part of a larger conversation. At the end of the process the main ideas are summarised and follow up opportunities are discussed. The World Café is the second part of a research project being conducted by Kim Loeb. The first part of the research was an on-line survey. Thanks to all of you who participated in the survey, the response rate was a very impressive 55%. Your comments have helped inform the questions at the World Café.

This research is part of the requirement for Kim’s Masters of Arts in Leadership thesis at Royal Roads University and is not being conducted by the University. The title of the research is “Creating a learning and development strategy for managers”. The results of this research will be shared with Human Resources. Kim and I work together at Professional Applied and Continuing Education (PACE) at UW and she has asked me to assist in facilitating the research. Please see the attached consent letter for more complete details about the research.

We hope you will take advantage of this opportunity to engage in a facilitated conversation with other UW managers and supervisors to provide input into creating a learning and development strategy at UW by attending this event.

Date: November 27, 2013
Time: 12:00-2:00 pm
Location: [Location]
Lunch will be provided
Please RSVP to [email address] no later than November 22.
http://www.theworldcafe.com/
APPENDIX D: INVITATION AND CONSENT LETTER (WORLD CAFÉ)

Dear Colleagues,

I would like to invite you to be part of a research project that I am conducting. This research project is part of the requirement for a Master of Arts in Leadership (MAL) at Royal Roads University. The title of the research is “Creating a learning and development strategy for managers.” My name is Kim Loeb and I work in Professional, Applied and Continuing Education (PACE) at The University of Winnipeg. My credentials with Royal Roads University can be established by telephoning Dr. Brigitte Harris, Director, School of Leadership Studies at [telephone number].

My research consists of an on-line survey, already completed, and a World Café. The World Café will be held on November 27 between 12:00 noon and 2:00 pm at [location]. A World Café is a method that brings people together where they can share their ideas at tables. Small groups of people participate in a multitude of table conversations, while still being part of a larger conversation. The World Café will consist of four rounds of 20 minute long conversations during which groups of six to eight people will provide input on the learning and development needs of UW managers and supervisors.

In addition to submitting my final report to Royal Roads University in partial fulfillment for a MAL, I will also be sharing my research findings with Human Resources at The University of Winnipeg. A copy of the final report will be published and archived in the RRU Library, as well as in the Thesis Canada Portal of Library and Archives Canada, and ProQuest/UMI. I may also submit an abstract to a leadership conference or article for publication to a journal.

The information collected in the World Café will be recorded on flip charts and supplemented with hand written notes. The information you provide will be summarized, in anonymous format, in the body of the final report. At no time will any specific comments be attributed to any individual unless your specific agreement has been obtained beforehand. All documentation will be kept strictly confidential. Subsequent to the thesis being published, the data will be destroyed.

You are not compelled to participate in this World Café. If you do choose to withdraw, information gathered during the event will be difficult, if not impossible to remove. Given the nature of this event, no names are attributed to information gathered during this activity. Information when summarized does not contain participant names and once completed it would be impossible to remove what comments you have contributed. Similarly, if you choose not to participate in this research project, this information will also be maintained in confidence.

As some participants may be staff who report to me and to mitigate any conflict of interest, I have asked a fellow UW staff member, Nancy Stokes, who works at PACE with me, to be involved in gathering consent and facilitating research methods.

By signing this letter, you give free and informed consent to participate in this World Café, as described.
If you have any questions about this research, please contact me at [telephone number] or [email address].

Name: (Please Print): ________________________

Signed: _______________________________       Date: _________________________

Sincerely,

Kim Loeb
APPENDIX E: WORLD CAFÉ POSTER AND POSTCARD

NOVEMBER 27, 2013
12:00-2:00PM
[Location]

www.theworldcafe.com

* This World Café is a student research project. It is part of a requirement for Kim Loeb’s Master of Arts in Leadership thesis at Royal Roads University and is not being conducted by the University.
APPENDIX F: INQUIRY TEAM MEMBER LETTER OF AGREEMENT

In partial fulfillment of the requirement for a Master of Arts in Leadership Degree at Royal Roads University, Kim Loeb (the Student) will be conducting an inquiry research study to ask how the University of Winnipeg can create a learning and development strategy for managers. The title of the research is “creating a learning and development strategy for managers” The Student’s credentials with Royal Roads University can be established by calling Dr. Brigitte Harris, Director, School of Leadership Studies at [telephone number].

Inquiry Team Member Role Description:

As a volunteer Inquiry Team Member assisting the Student with this project, your role may include one or more of the following: providing advice on the relevance and wording of questions and letters of invitation, supporting the logistics of the data-gathering methods, including observing, assisting, or facilitating an interview or focus group, taking notes, transcribing, translating, or analyzing data, to assist the Student and the University of Winnipeg organizational change process. In the course of this activity, you may be privy to confidential inquiry data.

Confidentiality of Inquiry Data:

In compliance with the Royal Roads University Research Ethics Policy, under which this inquiry project is being conducted, all personal identifiers and any other confidential information generated or accessed by the inquiry team advisor will only be used in the performance of the functions of this project, and must not be disclosed to anyone other than persons authorized to receive it, both during the inquiry period and beyond it. Recorded information in all formats is covered by this agreement. Personal identifiers include participant names, contact information, personally identifying turns of phrase or comments, and any other personally identifying information.

Personal information will be collected, recorded, corrected, accessed, altered, used, disclosed, retained, secured and destroyed as directed by the Student, under direction of the Royal Roads Academic Supervisor.

Inquiry Team Members who are uncertain whether any information they may wish to share about the project they are working on is personal or confidential will verify this with Kim Loeb, the student.

Statement of Informed Consent:

I have read and understand this agreement:

Name: ___________________________ Date: ___________________________
APPENDIX G: ONLINE SURVEY QUESTIONS

1. How long have you worked at The University of Winnipeg:
   
a. 0 to less than 5 years  
b. 5 years to less than 10 years  
c. 10 years to less than 15 years  
d. 15 years to less than 20 years  
e. 20 + years

2. What motivates you most to learn at work

Consider what you value most about professional learning and development for yourself. Please rank each of the following from most important (score of 1) to least important (score of 5). Assign each value only once.

1. Develop new skills for current and/or future use  
2. Enhance existing skills  
3. Enriched work experiences and broaden professional perspective  
4. Potential job advancement  
5. Increased confidence and productivity

3. Learning and development approaches

Which of the following learning and development approaches you would like to access in the future? Please rate each approach.

a. External instructor-led classroom training:  
b. Internal instructor-led classroom training  
c. On-line learning  
d. Mentorship: formal or informal mentoring relationships with a senior manager  
e. Job rotation: acquire new knowledge and skills through different positions  
f. Job shadow: Work with another manager to expand knowledge and skills  
g. Internal or external knowledge sharing groups (communities of practice)  
h. Professional development plans: employee works on own or with supervisor to build plan

4. Barriers to learning and development

Consider the following potential barriers to learning and development and your experience at The University of Winnipeg. Please check all that apply.

___ Lack of awareness of opportunities  
___ Lack of awareness of competency gaps  
___ Lack of support from supervisor  
___ Lack of time due to personal or family factors  
___ Lack of time due to work demands  
___ Limited advancement opportunities
____ Lack of financial support
____ No clear career path
____ Personal motivation
____ other (please specify)

5. Please identify your top THREE learning and development needs in your current job.

6. If you could make ONE change to enhance your learning and development at The University of Winnipeg what would it be?

7. Is there anything you would like to add with respect to your learning and development at The University of Winnipeg? If so, please provide your comments below.
APPENDIX H: WORLD CAFÉ QUESTIONS

1. In what ways is ongoing learning and development important to you in your job at UWinnipeg and how would a learning and development strategy benefit you and UW?

2. What can UWinnipeg supervisors and managers do to address their own learning and development and how can you support each other in this endeavour?

3. What can the University do to address learning and development for its supervisors and managers?

4. What are the steps that can be taken to design a learning and development program for managers and supervisors at UWinnipeg?
Good Afternoon,

This is a reminder that the Learning and Development Survey will close on Friday, November 1. It has been designed to learn more about your professional development needs as a UW Supervisor or Manager.

The link to the survey is: [link]

The survey consists of 7 questions. To date, we’ve had a 40% response and the survey is taking participants on average less than 5 minutes to complete. Complete confidentiality is ensured and your responses will be anonymous. The results will be shared with all who have been sent the survey.

Thanks to all of you who have already completed the survey, your participation is much appreciated.

If you did not see the first e-mail, please read below for background information on this survey.

Background information:

This research is part of the requirement for Kim Loeb’s Masters of Arts in Leadership thesis at Royal Roads University and is not being conducted by the University. The title of the thesis is “Creating a Learning and Development Strategy for Managers at The University of Winnipeg”. Kim and I work together at Professional Applied and Continuing Education (PACE) at UW and I have been asked to assist in facilitating the research.

The survey will be open for 10 days and will close at 4:30 pm on November 1, 2013.

We hope you will take this time to share your thoughts regarding your learning and development needs at UW. Everyone who receives this invitation, whether or not they complete this survey, will receive an e-mail update of the compiled, analyzed and summarized findings. A follow-up event will be held in November that you will also be invited to attend.

Your participation and support in this research is much appreciated. If you should have any questions regarding this research and its outcomes, please feel free to contact myself or Kim at any time.

Email: [email address] Telephone: [telephone number]

Sincerely,

[Administrative Assistant’s Name]
APPENDIX J: REMINDER FOR WORLD CAFÉ EVENT

YOU ARE INVITED TO ATTEND:

NOVEMBER 27, 2013
12:00-2:00PM lunch provided
THE UNIVERSITY OF WINNIPEG CLUB
(4TH FLOOR, WESLEY HALL)

www.theworldcafe.com
RSVP your attendance to [email address] or [phone number] by November 22, 2013.
APPENDIX K: EMAIL TO WORLD CAFÉ PARTICIPANTS CONFIRMING ATTENDANCE

Good Morning,

Thank you for agreeing to participate in the World Café on Wednesday, November 27th. This event will begin at 12:00 noon at [world café location].

We will be ordering lunch and would like to know if you have any dietary restrictions. Please advise me by return email by the end of today.

Thank you.
APPENDIX L: WORLD CAFÉ DESIGN AND INSTRUCTIONS

Instructions for Participants

The intent of this session is to collect feedback on factors that affect the design of a learning and development strategy for managers at the University of Winnipeg. This is a student research project in fulfilment of the requirements for Kim Loeb following a Masters of Arts in Leadership and Training. Kim truly appreciates your time and effort in participating in the World Café. In accordance with the ethics guidelines for both Royal Roads University and the University of Winnipeg, Kim can neither attend nor participate in the World Café.

Participants for this World Café include staff with teaching, managing, and systems-level experience. Table hosts have been specifically chosen as subject matter experts from your community of practice. Their main role is to integrate the experience, focus discussions, and ensure engagement during the event. Scribes have been assigned to capture data generated from the dialogue around the various questions. Confidentiality is critical in this process; scribes will not be capturing who made comments. Participants are the critical component to the World Café. There is an intrinsic link between your level of engagement in this World Café and the quality of the data that will be gathered. Data collected will be included in a published Thesis that will be available following the completion of Kim’s MA program.

Coordinating Instructions

Location – Faculty Club, Wesley Hall, 4th Floor

Timings (further details in Annex A):

- Scribes and Hosts arrive 1130hrs
- Participants arrive for lunch at 1200hrs

Parking is available on campus at various pay-parking areas including one behind the Buhler Centre

Design ([Inquiry Team Member’s Name])

The session will consist of two parts.

Part 1:

Lunch will be served in the Faculty Lounge in Wesley Hall (4th Floor). During this time, you will receive an in-brief on the design of a World Café, expectations for participants, and share a meal with others in your community. After lunch, we will move into the World Café format.
Part 2:

Participants will contribute to a World Café. You will divide into small groups of four per table and begin a series of 20 minute dialogue “rounds” on the following topics:

1. In what ways is ongoing learning and development important to you in your job at UWinnipeg and how would a learning and development strategy benefit you and UW?

2. How would a learning and development strategy for UW’s supervisors and managers benefit you as a member of these groups and UWinnipeg?

3. What can UWinnipeg supervisors and managers do to address their own learning and development and how can you support each other in this endeavour?

4. What can the University do to address learning and development for its supervisors and managers?

5. What are the steps that can be taken to design a learning and development program for managers and supervisors at UWinnipeg?

**Norms of Engagement (NOE) ([Inquiry Team Member’s Name])**

Listen to understand;

Everyone should get equal air-time;

Respect is paramount;

Encourage honest and open dialogue;

To ensure confidentiality and anonymity, please keep descriptions of conversations during this event to generalities, not specifics (what, where, when, why, and how, but not who);

Be mindful of time – at the completion of the round of dialogue, move to next table quickly;

People should not sit in the rounds with those they supervise, either directly or indirectly;

Move between rounds as an individual. “Cross pollination” of ideas, perspectives, and experience is crucial for developing as robust an outcome as possible;

Doodle! The paper on the table has been provided so that you can take full advantage of the communication process. Draw pictures; write ideas down; pose questions; design diagrams that capture your thoughts or your impressions of the dialogue around the table; make lists, etc.; and

Get creative!
Annex A – World Café Design and Instructions

Schedule of Events

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TIMING</th>
<th>FORMAT</th>
<th>TOPIC/EVENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1130–1200hrs</td>
<td>Scribes and</td>
<td>Intro/explanation of the day/review roles &amp; responsibilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Table Hosts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1200–1230hrs</td>
<td>Small groups</td>
<td>Lunch/explanation of the Café process including</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Design</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- NOE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Difference between dialogue and discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Icebreaker: W.A.I.T.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>World Café Commences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1230–1250hrs</td>
<td>Small groups</td>
<td>Dialogue Round 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1255–1315hrs</td>
<td>Small groups</td>
<td>Dialogue Round 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1320–1340hrs</td>
<td>Small groups</td>
<td>Dialogue Round 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1340–1345hrs</td>
<td>Scribes and</td>
<td>Post data collection on the walls; table sheets remain on tables</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hosts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1345–1355hrs</td>
<td>Individual</td>
<td>Gallery walk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1355–1400hrs</td>
<td>Large Group</td>
<td>Close out</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Based on timing and the efficiency of transitions, we may be able to fit in one additional dialogue round**
Annex B – World Café Design and Instructions

Instructions for Hosts ([Inquiry Team Member’s Name])

Hosts are responsible for monitoring and regulating the pace of the conversation. Effort should be made to ensure high levels of engagement around the table, ask reflective questions to gain greater clarity/depth of conversation, and paraphrase/capture themes for the scribes. Hosts should not be active participants in the conversation around the table. They should not voice their opinions nor provide any inputs to the conversation. Rather, they are there to engage, reframe, and allow for the capture of topics.

Instructions to Scribes ([Inquiry Team Member’s Name])

Scribes capture the flow of conversation and, when possible/apparent, themes in discussions. They should ask questions only to the host and should not have a participative role in the conversation. Their main focus is to capture data and themes in the flow of dialogue.

At the top left corner of each data sheet (on the easel), identify the following:

- The question
- The Round of dialogue and the page sequence (e.g. Round 1, Page 1 of 3)
- Your name

Instructions to Participants ([Inquiry Team Member’s Name])

The working group has been specifically designed to encourage participation. Honest and open collaboration is a critical component of a successful World Café experience. We encourage all members to participate fully because you are the critical component of each group. Success in the process will be dependent on the level of engagement of members.

The post-it notes have been provided to capture key insights, important messages, or “ah-ha” moments you have during the Café process. Please stick them to your table for collection and inclusion.

The “gallery walk” at the end of the session is an important part of the Café process. If you feel strongly about a topic and are willing to commit time and effort in the pursuit of an initiative or idea, you are heartily encouraged to write your name by that idea on the posted sheet.
Annex C – World Café Design and Instructions

World Café Resources

List of Materials:

- 5 X Easels or white boards to capture conversations
- Flip chart paper for easels for participant drawing/notes/doodles
- 5 X Small basket of treats (1 per table)
- One or more sheets of easel paper on each table to encourage doodling
- 5 X Markers- thin or medium felt tip water based pens in a variety of darker colours for each table
- Artist or painter tape (sticks but easily comes off without tearing the paper)
- 5 X large Index cards to label table #
- 5 X tent cards with “Norms of Engagement” on them – double sided so that all members at the table can view them
- One question per table, printed in large bold font, landscape, on 8 ½ X 11 sheet of paper
- Coffee, tea, water
- Variety of sizes of post-it notes (especially 3 x 5 or 4 x 6 unlined)
Annex D – World Café Design and Instructions

Dialogue vs. discussion – different outcomes ([Inquiry Team Member’s Name])

DISCUSSION - Discussion is the way that most people communicate. During discussion we present our ideas and everyone analyzes and dissects them from their different points of view. The purpose of discussion, though, it to make sure you win, or that your point of view is the one that is accepted. During the discussion you will support your idea and give your points more strongly until, eventually, others agree with you. You want to prove that you are right, and the most knowledgeable, as does everyone else in the discussion. Great! With everyone trying to win the argument, no decision is ever made and we eventually need to form a sub-committee to decide. Or the CEO, or team leader, uses his or her divine autocratic right and decides for the team.

DIALOGUE - Dialogue on the other hand is an exploration of ideas. It is not a new form of communication but is the way the ancient Greeks and many so called 'primitive' societies are seen to explore ideas. During dialogue everyone works together contributing towards the idea. Remember the team is greater than the sum of the parts; therefore more is achieved from the dialogue as each person’s ideas add to the last. In a dialogue no one is trying to win. They are trying to learn and create. They suspend their individual assumptions and explore ideas and issues. It is a free flow of ideas where participants continue to think and watch themselves think. The great physicists Heisenberg, Pauli, Einstein and Bohr described the conversations they had with each other. As we know from history their conversations (dialogue) changed traditional physics because what they could achieve as a group exceeded what each could do as individuals.

3 required conditions for dialogue:

- Everyone must suspend their assumptions. Dialogue comes to a grinding halt when someone digs in their heels and says "this is the way". They need to suspend their assumptions to really see where the truth lies. Suspending ones assumptions is not easy, as often they are so deep seated that we don't even know that they are assumptions! Instead, we take them for being the truth.

- Team members must be thought of as colleagues and equals. If you manage to think of others as colleagues you will interact as colleagues. Team members will feel less vulnerable and less likely to either want to dominate the discussion or not say anything at all. Thinking of everyone as colleagues can be difficult in a hierarchical workplace environment. Can an individual in authority come down from their lofty position and talk to everyone else as an equal or do they like their elevated position and pontificate wildly?

- There should be a facilitator. A facilitator can help ensure that ALL assumptions are suspended. This means questioning statements and beliefs as they are mentioned. They
are also important in keeping the dialogue moving. As a team gets better at dialogue the needs for a facilitator is reduced.

**ICEBREAKER – W.A.I.T. ([Inquiry Team Member’s Name])**

Designed as a precursor to the World Café, exchange ideas about how communication styles differ in introverts and extroverts. The acronym W.A.I.T. is a question that both types of people should ask themselves in the course of any dialogue.

For extroverts, it represents the question “Why am I talking?”

For introverts, it represents the question “Why am I thinking?”

**Fall-back for reduction of table #s**

**Option 1 - Combine Question 1 & 2:**

In what ways is ongoing learning and development important in your job and how would a learning and development strategy benefit you and UWinnipeg?

**Option 2 – Alternate Questions at one table:**

Round 1/Table 1/Question 1;

Round 2/Table 1/Question 2;

Round 3/Table 1/Question (which ever question needs more meat)