An Executive Leadership Development Programme: A Case Study Identifying Key Factors Fostering or Hindering Transformative Learning within a Qatari Organisational Context

Thesis submitted in accordance with the requirements of the University of Liverpool for the degree of Doctor of Education by Frances Maureen Schnepfleitner

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Acknowledgements

Throughout my working career I have hung the same sign over my work desk:

“The smallest deed is worth more than the greatest intention”
(John Burroughs, n.d.).

I have been able to finish this thesis because of many, many small deeds made by several people. I would like to especially acknowledge: the help and support of my thesis supervisor Dr Marco Ferreira. He kept me on track with humour and academic skill: Michelle, my faithful ‘study buddy’, who listened, supported and shared the journey from the first day to the last: my beautiful daughters Nadia, Sonya and Leija, for their unwavering faith that their mother could do this. It gave me the determination to keep going: and Rainer, for the cooking of delicious meals, delivering snacks to my desk, for tackling the dreaded laundry and especially for the sacrifice of weekends and time together.

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I dedicate this research to my parents: one nurtured me and the other inspired me.

“I am still learning”
(Michelangelo, aged 87, 1562)
Abstract

Leadership development has become an issue of paramount importance in Qatar as leaders capable of driving the country forward to achieve the ambitious goals set out in its 2030 Vision are sought in all sectors. Huge resources are being invested in development, but often with minimal results, forcing Qatar to continue its reliance on expatriate expertise. New ideas and concepts are investigated, but only superficially accepted and rarely implemented. What is needed are transformative learning experiences that change the deeply held beliefs, worldviews and frames of reference of what it means to be a twenty-first century leader in Qatar. The purpose of this research was to look at an Executive Leadership Programme through the experiences of its provider, the participants and their managers, in an attempt to identify the key success factors that foster a transformative learning experience or those that inhibit its occurrence. The method used was a single, local knowledge case study with an instrumental approach aiming to inform the design and implementation of future leadership programmes. A case study is a predominantly qualitative research design looking at a unit of study from multiple angles or perspectives. This was done through in-depth, pre- and post-programme interviews conducted within a ten-month period with the three stakeholders. Additional rich data were obtained through access to the participants’ blogs and assignments, the training institutes’ report and my own observations. These sources provided a thick description of the participants’ experiences. Thematic analysis was used to identify several main themes to answer the posed research question. It was found that the presence of these factors was conducive to fostering transformative experiences, while their absence contributed towards inhibiting them. They included identifying the stakeholder expectations, and conducting a respected selection process, which produces participants with the appropriate English, educational and cognitive skills to participate without undue stress. Furthermore, it was found that the absence of time and commitment allocated for the implementation of well-structured, pre- and post-programme stages impacted negatively on both the leadership
programme and its transformative learning outcomes. There should be in-depth awareness of the participants’ professional and cultural contexts during all stages of design and implementation to ensure the right approach is taken regarding autonomous components and personal and cultural interactions. There were indications that the intensity of the programme pushed the participants beyond the required state of disorientation necessary for transformative learning and into one of being overwhelmed and stressed. A balance needs to be achieved for participants to be in a mind-set that is open and receptive to a legitimate lived experience. The group dynamic had a strong and positive influence throughout the implementation stage and this should be encouraged for all stages. The study concludes with recommendations to programme developers and Qatari organisations and suggests the need for more case studies, especially of a longitudinal nature, using both qualitative and quantitative approaches and looking into micro issues such as the role of the group, the balance between stress and disorientation, and maintenance of achieved transformations.
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1 Introduction to the Thesis

It has been a long journey to the writing of this thesis, both literally and figuratively. It is the result of an incremental accumulation of experiences, personal aspirations and circumstances which have led me to the right time and place to be able to tell the short story of one small case study of one small leadership development programme. The study is set in an organisation occupying a tall, glass tower in one of the world’s smallest countries, but with huge aspirations and a specific cultural context. It is being written and submitted to achieve a professional doctorate in education (EdD), which may seem to be stating the obvious, but helps to define the motivation and underpinning context of the entire work, since, as is right and fitting for a professional degree, it is set in and relates to my own professional interests and context. The purpose of this first chapter is to give a brief overview of what to expect within this thesis. It does so by firstly giving some background and professional context, which shows the motivational source of the chosen topic. In the process, it reveals the relevance that topic has to both the professional and wider social contexts. Next, it touches on the focus of the research through the question the thesis aimed to answer and the research methodology and analytical procedures used to arrive at that answer. In a condensed version, it points out the significance of the research and announces its principal findings, while taking into account its assumptions and limitations. It will conclude with an outline of the thesis structure.

In the wider social context, most people are at least aware of leaders of institutions, communities or countries; however, when working in any organisation, it is almost impossible not to be aware of or have an opinion on leadership, either from the perspective of being one yourself or from having a boss or supervisor whose directions you follow. Having personally worked for many years in corporate education, first as a trainer and later as a learning and development (L&D) manager, I have worked with and for leaders in many different industry sectors such as banking, health, postal, telecommunications, sports and luxury fashion, amongst
others. The field may have changed, but issues surrounding leadership essentially remained a constant.

A simmering interest in the topic of leadership was incubated through designing and teaching simple leadership courses and through one-on-one training and coaching many individuals in managerial and executive positions. It was not until I began to live in the Middle Eastern country of Qatar, and was employed in succession by two separate organisations to set up and implement learning and development from zero, that I began to see a strong alignment between the two interests. When first employed in each Qatari organisation, I immediately undertook the required needs analysis to identify where training and development would give the greatest return on investment. The results suggested implementing training for the lower and middle level employees in behavioural or technical skills or pertaining to operations and procedures. It was disconcerting to discover that any effects from interventions were negligible and even small gains were lost over a short period of time. My EdD studies forced me to analyse my organisation from different perspectives, which in turn encouraged me to ask different questions. Feedback from employees began to point repeatedly to the fact that the breakdown in training uptake occurred because there was a lack of consistent, effective or equitable leadership:

“Lots of good ideas but few qualified to put them into action”
(RM, personal communication, 2012).

In other words, any training died almost as soon as the participants left the workshop because there was no buy-in or follow through from their superiors.

“There’s a lack of investment in our people, so there are few to invest in and develop others”
(SS, personal communication, 2012).

I had finally begun to clarify in my mind the conundrum that had faced me during my professional time in Qatar: how do you implement learning and
development in an organisation where effective leadership practices have not already been developed and put in place?

Once my eyes were opened, it was obvious this problem was ubiquitous throughout Qatari organisations, and I could see others had already recognised its significance and relevance to the development of Qatar. Qatar has huge ambitions to raise itself to be the leader of the Middle Eastern region and to play an influential role on the world stage, but without the leaders to realise this dream, it will remain only a dream. Therefore, there has been a proliferation of leadership development programmes in all major corporate sectors and the ruling Emir of Qatar has himself initiated a leadership development centre, running programmes to identify future leaders to work alongside him in Qatar's endeavours.

However, observation of subsequent leadership interventions within my own and other organisations showed me it was not enough to drop a western developed leadership programme into the Qatari context and hope for positive outcomes, as many were doing. Differences in leadership values and cultures mean that what is appropriate in one place is not necessarily good in another (Cerimagic, 2010); nor is simple customisation, that takes into account or shows sensitivity to local customs, fully effective, as that produces adaptation and change from one side but not from the other, resulting in little change on the ground floor of organisations. Another approach was indicated. It was at this point, sparked by a conversation with my EdD supervisor, that I realised a transformative learning experience within leadership development programmes was needed.

As Mezirow (1997, p.11) states:

“The process involves transforming frames of reference through critical reflection of assumptions, validating contested beliefs through discourse, taking action on one’s reflective insight, and critically assessing it.”
Only a transformative learning experience would initiate action and sustain real and positive leadership changes that would be beneficial to Qatari organisations.

The first blurred outline of a thesis idea was formed and serendipity was on my side, as shortly afterwards I discovered my organisation had committed itself to an Executive Leadership Programme (ELP) that would fit in with the time-frame of my thesis work. This presented an opportunity to combine personal interest with professional relevance while researching something of real strategic importance to Qatar.

My instinct was to focus on how I could make transformative learning happen in future leadership programmes, and so the first question that came to mind was - how? Exploring the available literature did not yield the fruit I had expected. The literature clearly shows that transformative learning is an occurring phenomenon and lists the stages a person may go through in the process (Kitchenham, 2008; Mezirow, 1994; Mezirow & Taylor, 2011). It also indicates that the outcome may indeed be exactly what was needed to bring about real change in the mind-set and approach of leaders; but little is said on what encourages it to happen (Carter, 2013; Ciporen, 2010; Lee, 2009; Mezirow, 2000). I am not alone in noticing this gap in the literature, as some more recent articles suggest the identification of facilitating factors should now be the relevant target of research on transformative learning (Snyder, 2008; Taylor & Snyder, 2012). A second criticism - which could also be couched as a gap in previous research - is that the original theory of transformative learning does not take context sufficiently into account (Baumgartner, 2012; Mezirow & Taylor, 2011; Taylor, 2001). This struck a chord with me. As mentioned above, I have witnessed expensive ‘western’ training or leadership interventions being dropped into the Qatari organisational context with no or only superficial relevance to the context and thereby producing no change or results. The programmes tend only to tickle the participants’ interest rather than encourage personal or organisational change. Identifying these two gaps helped the overall structure of my
thesis to become more focused as stronger questions came to mind. Why does transformative learning occur in some instances and not in others? What would encourage transformative learning to occur within the Qatari context? What hinders or stops it happening? The following research question evolved out of these initial musings.

**What are the key success factors and inhibitors of a transformative learning experience in a leadership development programme designed for a Qatari organisational context?**

This question indicates the five underpinning themes within this thesis: leadership; leadership development programmes; the Qatari context; the Qatari organisational context; and, finally, transformative learning theory. The literature review reflects this by first taking a brief look at the historical evolution of humanity’s understanding of leadership, a topic that has occupied minds since the beginning of thought. However, it does not look at leadership best practice or compare one style or theory with another; rather, it helps set the scene for the main focus of the research, which is to better understand the process of transformative learning of leadership by specifically focusing on which factors can either facilitate or hinder its occurrence within a leadership programme, firstly within a Qatari organisational context and, ideally, within leadership programmes in general. The ultimate aim would be to give training programme developers a better understanding of which factors can be manipulated to achieve more consistently transformative outcomes. Therefore, within this study, the leadership programme, seen through the eyes of its participants, became the case study and vehicle for closer scrutiny of potential fostering factors. With this in mind, leadership development programmes also deserved a brief review to clarify both their potential effectiveness and importance in today’s typical organisation. To close the gap of contextualising transformative learning, the literature review gives a background account of both the general Qatari context and, more specifically, the rather unique Qatari organisational context. It will be seen that these two points take on even greater importance during the data
analysis and discussion of the results and fully deserved the space devoted to them within the literature review. Finally, the theme of transformative learning is reviewed from its foundations to its current status and trends. Also discussed are the roles of reflection, dialogue, individual experience and context, and what researchers have until now identified as potential factors to encourage its occurrence.

The research for this thesis is based on a case study of an ELP that drew its eight Qatari national candidates from the employees of the organisation where I am responsible for the learning and development (L&D) function. It is a medium sized, semi-governmental, sports-based organisation of fewer than 300 employees of mixed nationalities, as is typical in the Qatari context. The programme was developed and organised by a Qatari institute that specialises in the sports and events industries. To maintain anonymity of the organisation, the programme provider and the participants, the specific sport will not be named. The programme consisted of a nomination and selection process and then eight weeks of classes, site visits and workshops split between the United Kingdom and the United States. The course work and lectures were on different sports management and leadership themes, while the visits were to some of the most significant sporting venues and clubs throughout England and the East Coast of America.

Because the research is looking at one specific ELP from within my own professional sphere, it lends itself to the use of a single, local knowledge case study approach (Blaxter, Hughes, & Tight, 2006; Thomas, 2011). As concisely described by Simons (2009, p.21), a case study is “an in-depth exploration from multiple perspectives of the complexity and uniqueness of a particular project, policy, institution, programme or system in a ‘real life’ context.” My proximity to all the relevant people and the structure of the programme gave me access to multiple perspectives through the views of the organisers of the programme, the managers of the successful candidates, and through the eyes of the participants themselves, by means of personal interviews, their reflective journals and final
assignments. As I was looking for themes that held some significance towards my research question within the data, rather than recording the frequency with which any specific item or instance occurred, such a qualitative approach was suitable and in keeping with the fundamentally constructivist principles of transformative learning (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011; Cranton & Taylor, 2012; Illeris, 2014; Merriam & Kim, 2012). It also aligns with my personal belief that while it may not be possible to ever fully grasp the truth of any concept or situation, a structured and valid attempt can be made to tease out the participants’ experiences and better understand the relationships between transformative learning, leadership development and the context they are situated within (Baviskar et al., 2009; Bentz & Shapiro, 1998).

The procedure followed to collect data was firstly through semi-structured interviews with seven of the eight successful candidates before they left for the ELP, and with three of their managers and one of the main programme organisers. To add a diachronic, before and after perspective, all these interviews were repeated between four to six months after the participants’ return to full work duties (Gerring, 2004). In keeping with the methodological principles of the research, thematic analysis - which has been described as a foundational, qualitative analysis method (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Gray, 2004) - was used to discover themes related to the posed question within the transcribed interviews, as well as from within the journals which the participants kept during the eight weeks of the programme and their end of programme assignments.

There is value in asking and attempting to answer the research question because the complexity of challenges due to the unpredictability of influences such as globalisation, conflict and technological developments, to name but three, are putting incrementally increasing pressure on leaders to continuously change and transform themselves, each according to his or her context (Charaniya, 2012; Illeris, 2014). The aim was to give a voice, through the participants of an ELP, to just such a transformative experience, which Ciporen (2008) contends has, for the most part, been
missing. Through this dialogue, I have better understood what both helped or hindered the participants in achieving a transformative learning experience that would carry them forward as effective leaders, not only in their present organisational context, but also as potential leaders in the greater scheme of Qatari national development. This makes the study of significance to all organisations and government bodies with an interest in developing their Qatari nationals into leadership positions. It has wider contextual significance by encouraging leadership programme developers to go beyond simple customisation of colour, logo and basic cultural references, and be cognisant of factors that will encourage potential transformative learning to occur and incorporate those factors into their basic course design.

It could be said a single case study involving only twelve participants, in a specific setting such as a Qatari organisation has limitations to its value, especially for generalisation to the wider field; and yet looking at a single entity in its completeness from many angles is good science, because it can penetrate situations and make it possible to paint a rich picture and gain analytical insights from it (Cohen et al., 2011; Thomas, 2011). There is evidence that even a single case study can give valid information that can inform and influence (Thomas, 2011; Yin, 2013).

In summary, this chapter has given a brief overview of the thesis to follow. It will be structured whereby; the second chapter offers a literature review of the five main themes; the third chapter describes the methodology used, including the rationale for using a qualitative, case study approach, an overview of the case, data collection and the analytical procedures used; the fourth chapter describes the analysis process and the findings that were the outcome of that analysis; the fifth chapter discusses the findings in more detail in relation to the theory of transformative learning and summarises the answer to the research question; while the sixth and final chapter gives recommendations for possible future action in leadership development programmes in general and in the Middle Eastern region particularly, while revisiting the limitations of this case study.
Finally, the implications of this research are suggested and some recommendations made for future research.

**Important Terminology**
Transformative learning, case study, leadership, leadership development, qualitative, thematic analysis, group dialogue, critical reflection, individual experience, context
2 Literature Review

2.1 Historical Perspectives on the Concept of Leadership

2.1.1 To Define Leadership
The concept of leadership has been a topic of interest and has occupied many keen minds since the beginning of humanity. The Egyptians, Romans and Greeks recorded it and held it in high esteem. Biblical patriarchs, classical heroes and historical figures from Caesar or Nero to Churchill or Hitler are held up as either good or bad examples of the phenomenon. I am not the first person to ask what that special entity is that made these people stand out from the rest and which helped them claim their place in history, or whether I can replicate it (Den Hartog & Koopman, 2001).

Others before me have produced a vast array of definitions of what constitutes leadership and to make another attempt goes beyond the scope of this small-scale literature review. For instance, from his own search of the literature, Rost (1993) recorded 221 different definitions and concepts of leadership. With such a plethora of choice, the ‘correct’ definition will therefore usually depend on the specific leadership interests of the individual seeking to define it, encouraging Bass (2008) to argue that it is pointless to make the attempt.

Northouse, a contemporary expert on leadership, states: “The bottom line is that leadership is a complex concept for which a determined definition may long be in flux” (2012, p.4); but it is also Northouse who gives us the most commonly cited definition of leadership as being “a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal” (ibid., p.5). I cannot give a better definition, although in the spirit of transparency, at a later point I will discuss my personal stance, which consequently influenced this research project. But first, a short history of man’s understanding of the concept of leadership is appropriate.
2.1.2 Developments in Leadership Theory
When approaching leadership development, the first difficulty you encounter is the ongoing discussion between several schools of thought that have emerged over time. Each should be weighed in the search for a personal understanding. They can be placed along a continuum starting with the Great Man theory, progressing through others such as trait theory, behavioural theory, contingency (with its sub-groups of situational and servant) theory, transactional and transformational theory, and finally newly emerging theories such as new leadership, adaptive and multicultural leadership theories (Gordon, 2010; Persley, 2013; Wu, 2009).
It needs to be understood that the progression of understanding, or development of these theories, has not been linear. The development of a later theory has not made the earlier ones obsolete. Parts of one may build on another, while there is often overlap and a blurring of lines between them. Some key theories will be briefly outlined below.

2.1.3 Leaders are Born: Great Men, Trait and Characteristic Theories
Firstly, is a leader born to be such? Referred to as the Great Man theory (McCleskey, 2014), Aristotle wrote of the concept as early as 335 BCE and Thomas Jefferson was still popularising it in 1813; however, it was Thomas Carlyle who brought the actual phrase into common use in the 1840s (Carlyle & Parr, 1910). Despite counterarguments being formulated by the 1860s, it remained one of the most accepted theories until the middle of the twentieth century. This is not surprising, since history was usually written to highlight or reference the works of such ‘great men’ and mediocrity seldom receives more than a mention in history books. Subsequent research on the concept was not so much about explaining leadership as being able to identify those with “the right stuff” (Kirkpatrick & Locke, 1991). For instance, in 1954 Borgatta, Bales, and Couch came to some rather convincing conclusions that, once selected, the inclusion of a great man will increase the likelihood of a great group, because the productivity and satisfaction of its members will simultaneously increase.
More fashionable counter theories did emerge in the second half of the last century, but the Great Man theory still held its own, with researchers revisiting old data and obtaining new (Cawthon, 1996), which made management scholars and organisational psychologists once again comfortable with the notion that great men (or women) may be born rather than made. This stage of the theory maintains relevance to this case study, because Qatar is a strongly hierarchical, tribal society where leader perception is usually still tied into the power and influence an individual may hold from his family’s position in the social context (Alshawi & Gardner, 2013; Den Hartog & Koopman, 2001). What may have contributed to the comfort of scholars and psychologists was that much of the newer research was couched in identifying specific inborn traits of leaders such as drive, ambition, energy and tenacity, which were tendered as preconditions only: when present, they were more likely to lead to leadership development in individuals (Kirkpatrick & Locke, 1991; Lord, DeVader & Alliger, 1986). Research into leadership traits, or using traits as a benchmark or indicator, has continued to the present time, and in later research articles there seems little dispute that they exist or are important to leadership development (Northouse, 2012; Zaccaro, Kemp & Bader 2004).

2.1.4 Leaders are Made: Skills Theory

A second respected school of thought maintains that leadership can be learnt and it is possible to change an individual’s leadership behaviour (McCleskey, 2014; Zenger & Folkman, 2009). This principle first leapt to the forefront of leadership research with Katz’s (1955) list of skills he claimed could be developed to achieve a more effective administrator. Years of research and refinement later, the skills-based model of leadership was developed by Mumford, Zaccaro, Harding, Jacobs, and Fleishman (2000). This model takes into account the relationship between knowledge, skills and performance, the former capable of being improved by education and the latter by experience over time (Mumford et al., 2000; Northouse, 2012). The skills-based model has had a positive impact on leadership education, firstly because it encompasses many of the
complexities of leadership and yet breaks them down into a framework that aligns well with the curriculum of most leadership programmes (Denton, 2007; Mumford, Zaccaro, Connelly et al., 2000; Yammarino, 2000). Skills such as teamwork, problem solving, social judgement and conflict resolution are now seen as normal items in any leadership course. This theory, which distances leadership from an accident of birth, and creates the positive mind-set that leadership is possible for everyone, has increasing relevancy in Qatar. As the country rapidly develops and the number of expatriate workers grows in relation to the number of Qatari nationals available to take up positions of leadership (Berrebi, Martorell, & Tanner, 2009), it has become imperative to be able to teach leadership skills rather than rely on the birthright of the most elite families.

2.1.5 Leaders are Made: Styles Theory

Another theory is that one can learn or adopt a certain style of leadership. “The style approach focuses exclusively on what leaders do and how they act” (Northouse, 2012, p.75). A distinctive feature of this approach is that it doesn’t only focus on a leader’s behaviour with regard to his daily tasks, but also highlights that his or her behaviour has consequences in relation to subordinates, in what has been described by its developers as concern for production and concern for people (Blake, Mouton, Barnes, & Greiner, 1964; Blanchard & Hodges, 2008; Northouse, 2012).

This theory also has relevance in the Qatari context, where people’s perception of leadership no longer relies entirely on birthright, connections and personality, but must take into account broader outcomes. A solid body of research has shown a significant key to effective leadership is the balance achieved between production and people (Alimo-Metcalfe & Alban-Metcalfe, 2005; Foley, 2013; Mulki, Caemmerer, & Heggde, 2015). It has not, however, shown consistent links between styles and outcomes (Yukl, 2009); nor has it resulted in a ‘one size fits all’ concept that is effective in all cases. While it is clear that behaviour styles matter, it is still unclear which matter the most or when. Despite this lack of clarity, the ease of application of its principles into educational programmes means
the style approach greatly influences leadership development (Foley, 2013). Most leadership development programmes include some features of the style approach, such as questionnaires, 360° or self-assessments that highlight one’s leadership or behaviour style and how it could be altered to improve outcomes, or where one’s strengths lie, which could be developed further (Northouse, 2012). This is true for most Qatari leadership programmes, including the one this case study is based on.

2.1.6 Leaders are Made: Situational Theory
Hersey and Blanchard (1969) built on the style approach by suggesting one style is not sufficient for the effective leader: they should instead alter their style according to the situation in which they find themselves. Each situation must be assessed from two perspectives: firstly, from the requirements of the task in hand; and secondly, from the capabilities, strengths, commitment and motivation of the subordinates involved (Luo & Liu, 2014; Mote, 2014; Ramakanth, 1988). This approach has been utilised so often by programme designers (myself included), organisations and corporations that it has accrued some serious street credentials (Graeff, 1983; Johansen, 1990; Thompson & Vecchio, 2009; Vecchio, 1987). The probable reasons are that it is an easy to learn and apply prescription that seems logical to both leaders and subordinates, and it has a wide range of applications in work, home and school. It does have its critics for being too ambiguous and under researched and its broadness does not take into account the many demographic characteristics, needs or commitment levels of its users (Alimo-Metcalfe & Alban-Metcalfe, 2005; Graeff, 1983; Johansen, 1990; Northouse, 2012; Thompson & Vecchio, 2009; Vecchio, 1987). This is of serious concern in any Qatari organisational context, which may have dozens of different nationalities and educational levels under one roof, with commitments ranging from the extreme of a hierarchical sense of entitlement to what has been referred to as borderline slavery (Kaifi, 2015).

2.1.7 Contingency Theories
With so many differing views it is logical there has been a period of trying to bring the best of all of them together. An example of this is contingency
theory, which is concerned with styles and situations but, unlike situational leadership, from the perspective of how the situation affects the leader rather than the leader constantly adapting to the situation (Armandi, Oppedisano, & Sherman, 2003; da Cruz, Nunes, & Pinheiro, 2011; Fiedler, 1971; Hoffman-Miller, 2013). Now grounded in a long tradition of research, it offers well-founded predictions as to the suitability, or not, of a leader’s style to the role. This takes away the intense pressure for a leader to meet all needs in every situation, but unfortunately does not explain what is to be done with leaders who do not match the situation, other than replace them (Northouse, 2012; Ven, Ganco, & Hinings, 2013). This theory is naturally practised in Qatari organisations as in-demand Qatari nationals tend to move from role to role until they find one that is the best fit for their personality and leadership style, and contractual regulations encourage organisations to hire expats whose leadership skills match a specific role or project in the short term.

2.1.8 New Leadership

From the 1980s, several lesser-known theories, grouped under the banner of new leadership approaches, emerged. Among these are path-goal theory, leader-member exchange theory and transformational leadership. Path-goal theory moves the focus more towards the satisfaction and motivation of subordinates to enhance performance (House, 1971), suggesting this can be achieved by being fully cognisant of their needs and choosing a leadership style that suits those needs and the subordinate’s differing abilities, the goal, the task and its structure, and the needs of the organisation (Alanazi, Alharthey, & Rasli, 2013; Hayyat Malik, 2012; House, 1996). However, this complicated style also requires that subordinates be fully aware of the parameters of their tasks, have confidence in the accuracy of the predicted amount of effort required and transparency regarding the extrinsic rewards of accomplishing defined goals. That would not fit well within the top down, hierarchical structure most common in Qatari organisations, which does not encourage subordinate autonomy or full transparency between managers and
subordinates (Bogdan, Roman, Sobczak, & Svartsevich, 2012; House & Aditya, 1997).

This also holds true for leader-member exchange theory, which both describes and prescribes leadership as an approach that puts relationships with subordinates at its heart (Ariani, 2012; Miller, 2013). However, the norm within Arab companies is that “a clear line is drawn between subordinates and managers” (Cerimagic, 2010).

Transformational leadership has been at the forefront in research and influential in the management field and across multiple disciplines where leadership has consequences. This theory seems to be a child of our times which strives to meet the needs of both leader and subordinates by taking into account their values and ethics and treating them as emotional human beings who need to be both inspired and empowered to reach their full potential. Transformational leadership motivates followers to accomplish more than what is usually expected of them or what they thought possible (Avolio & Bass, 2002; Northouse, 2012; Tracy, 2014). West (2012, p.4) suggests that “dream teams are characterised by transformational leadership” which opens it to criticism of elitism and a harking back to the Great Man, directing subordinates from a pedestal (Alimo-Metcalfe & Alban-Metcalfe, 2005; Antonakis, 2012). However, this could make it more relevant to leadership programmes in the Qatari context, where employees look to charismatic, authoritative managers and organisations to take into account their religious and family values and commitments (Almoharby & Neal, 2013; Bogdan et al., Roman, Sobczak, & Svartsevich, 2012). The general popularity of transformative leadership may be attributed to its intuitive approach. It feels right for a leader to take control of a situation, to develop an attractive and challenging vision, together with the employees, and to motivate the group to realise that vision with a strategy of small planned steps and successes, which may further align it to the Qatari context, which is a collective, group-oriented one (Bass & Riggio, 2006; Rees & Althakhri, 2008). Aspects of transformational leadership are incorporated in most leadership
programmes and advice on practical application is available in multiple publications, although there is always the challenge of implementation and the predominantly US focus of the greater part of the research (Avolio & Bass, 2002; Bryman, 2004; Lavigna, 2012; Sosik & Jung, 2011).

2.1.9 Thesis Stance

Even this short historical review makes clear that a great deal of research has been undertaken on the subject of leadership and much learnt. There are now more clearly identified distinctions between static trait-like characteristics, malleable state-like characteristics and attainable knowledge and skills (Avolio, Sosik & Berson, 2013; Chen, Gully, Whiteman, & Kilcullen, 2000; Zaccaro, 2007). However, the same research results have also created areas of confusion and contradiction, and each leadership theory or framework has its limitations and detractors (Hoffman, Woehr, Maldagen-Youngjohn & Lyons, 2011; Zaccaro, 2007). For the designers of leadership programmes, there is no definitive list of characteristics to target in attempting to create the most effective leader, and while research is producing strong indicators, they are not easily transferable to practical settings (Arnatt & Beyerlein, 2014; House & Aditya, 1997; Park & Leeds, 2013; Stanley, 2014). Any course provider who makes strong claims to the contrary may be stretching the truth beyond current empirical understanding.

While it is obvious there are limitations in theoretical approaches to leadership, it seems equally clear there is some merit in each and the pragmatist within me suggests the best course of action is to remain open minded to what works in each, while being acutely conscious of the context within which one is living, working or studying. The intense and continuous interest in leaders and leadership seems to indicate a basic human need to either lead or be led, thus giving even the great man theory some credit (Higgs, 2003). I agree with the conclusion drawn in the seminal research by Kirkpatrick and Locke (1991, p.56) that, while important, inborn traits “only endow people with the potential for leadership. To actualize this potential, additional factors are necessary.” A
fuller description of a person’s leadership makeup would go beyond personality traits and motivation to include other key elements such as experience, competency, situational forces and knowledge (Berard, 2013; Stogdill, 1974). Additionally, there seem to be clear indicators that characteristics can be learnt and can play a role in increasing leadership effectiveness, and that use of the correct learnt skill or behaviour in the correct situation will also play its part (Hoffman et al., 2011). Therefore, these factors should be considerations when designing leadership development programmes.

In Qatar, as in the rest of the world, technological developments and globalisation are forcing many organisations to become more flexible and to operate in a state of almost constant change. They now look towards approaches where the leader is “viewed as transformer, change master, provider of vision and direction” (Gordon, 2010, n.p.). With organisations also needing to become leaner to be competitive, it is beneficial to draw on the skills and strengths of followers, as much as those of leaders, to reach common goals and mutual benefits to all. This resonates with a recent definition of leadership by Tracy (2014, p.2): “Leadership is the ability to elicit extraordinary performance from ordinary people”. As there now appears to be some better understanding of what we want or need from leaders, the next section of this literature review will look at the part played by leadership development programmes in the realisation of those needs.

2.2 Leadership Development Programmes

While a general history of leadership, its theories and frameworks, is interesting for its own sake, organisations and their management tend to focus on how those insights can be taught and translated into practical benefits with measurable outcomes. The following section of this literature review will therefore look at the brief history of leadership programmes, examining how they have changed over the last thirty years, where their focus currently tends to be, and the results they are or are not achieving. Finally, I aim to identify the direction in which leadership programmes should perhaps be heading in the future.
2.2.1 The History of Leadership Development Programmes

The above historical overview illustrates that “leadership is one of social science’s most examined phenomena” (Day & Antonakis, 2012, p.4). But it is only in the last 30 years, with the understanding that aspects of leadership may be nurtured or taught, that some research interest has turned towards leadership development as a separate field. As recently stated by Day, Fleenor, Atwater, Sturm, and McKee, “Leadership development is a complex topic that is deserving of scholarly attention … independent of what has been studied more generally in the field of leadership” (2014, p.64).

The earliest programmes in military schools and academies concentrated on identifying the ‘great men’ in their midst and teaching them through examples from the past (Thomas, 2008). Early organisational programmes, aimed only at top tier employees, were intensely skill-focused and more about management development than leadership development. Then, in the early 1980s, interest in transformational and charismatic leadership energised the entire field, resulting in a distinction between the roles and the behaviours invoked by either management or leadership (Conger, 1999; Hunt, 1999). Momentum then built up to the explosion of interest seen in the last two decades as organisations around the world have recognised both the importance and the complexity of leadership development (Hernez-Broome et al., 2012).

2.2.2 The Present State of Leadership Development Programmes

Specific programmes devoted to leadership development are a relatively recent phenomenon. Prominent Georgetown University claims to be a pioneer by offering the first leadership programme in the United States in the autumn of 2000, in what it still defines as a nascent field (GU, School of Continuing Studies, n.d.). A review of other university catalogues shows the trend quickly took off and continues to escalate. The development of such programmes since 2000 has been “at times dizzying in its speed”
(Brundett, 2006, p.484). In some fields, participation has become a rite of passage for aspirant leaders.

There exist incentives and justification for the time and expense imposed on individuals and organisations. As aptly put by Feser, Mayol, and Srinivasan (2015, p.1), “Telling CEOs these days that leadership drives performance is a bit like saying oxygen is necessary to breathe.” They have read the research and statistics showing that leadership is related to profitability and affects the bottom line (Daily & Johnson, 1997); or that organisations that attempt to improve leadership are twice as likely to exceed their financial expectations (Sinclair et al., 2008); or perhaps even that “companies reporting strong leadership development programs are 1.5 times more likely to be found atop Fortune Magazine’s ‘Most Admired Companies’ list” (Kincaid & Gordick, 2003, p.50).

CEOs feel this importance keenly and in multiple reports over the last two decades, they identified leadership as their most pressing organisational issue. In the 2008 Roffey Park Management Agenda survey, 70 per cent of UK managers said it was their number one issue and they reaffirmed this belief in the 2014 survey, with 83 per cent citing developing leadership and management as their current people challenge (Lucy et al., 2014; Sinclair et al., 2008). Of their US counterparts, 65 per cent agreed that leadership development is their top concern at present and for the future (Ray et al., 2012). Finally, Deloitte, in one of the largest global human capital surveys, ranked leadership development as the first of three strategically key and challenging areas for present and future focus “at all levels, in all geographies, and across all functional areas” (2014, p.7).

It is therefore hardly surprising that over 90 per cent of CEOs reported that they are planning yet again to increase leadership development investment (Ray et al., 2012) or that leadership development takes the largest slice of training budgets (Ardichvili & Manderscheid, 2008). The figures are staggering, with yearly expenditure on executive education in the USA standing at $12 billion even in the late 1990s (Fulmer, 1997). By
2012, organisations such as Johnson & Johnson, Shell and GE were spending 20 per cent of their training budget on leadership, management or supervisor training (Johnson, Garrison, Hernez-Broome, Fleenor, and Steed, 2012). That is 20 per cent of $164 billion in the USA alone (Miller, 2013) and, of that 20 per cent, $14 billion is annually being spent specifically on leadership development (Gurdjian, Halbeisen, & Lane, 2014;). To put this into perspective, the total estimated cost of World Health’s 2006 to 2015 immunisation programme for the 72 poorest nations, with an aim to reduce the mortality rate of under 5s by two-thirds, was US $35.5 billion (Wolfson et al., 2008).

### 2.2.3 The Return on Investment from Leadership Development Programmes

However, all that money is not necessarily producing the best results. While the last three decades may have seen an explosion of leadership development, there have also been several crises and some notorious collapses and scandals in public and private institutions. Even sectors viewed as outside the corporate world of big business, and therefore nobler - such as charity, religion, sports or culture - have not escaped what appears to be a decline in leadership credibility (Canals, 2010), with Qatar, also having to weather its share of sporting scandals (Amnesty International, 2016). Reports and articles show the majority of senior managers feel their leaders are not being effectively developed to suit the needs of their organisations and are actually graduating from expensive programmes as part of the problem rather than part of the solution (Buckingham & Vosburgh, 2001; Deloitte, 2014; Gurdjian et al., 2014; Lucy et al., 2014; Saloner, 2010). This is putting pressure on the business schools and leadership programmes churning out our future leaders to create rich developmental experiences, to deliver better quality programmes with better results (Crossan, Mazutis, Seijts, & Gandz, 2013; McCauley, Van Velsor, & Ruderman, 2010; Saloner, 2010). Another pressure is that the millennial generation entering those schools is “a demanding bunch” (Brown, 2010, p.31) who insist on MBAs more in line with their own personal and professional contexts. They are forcing
business schools to accommodate their wish to change the world while maintaining a work-life balance (Canals, 2010; Carroll & Nicholson, 2014).

Currently, within most business schools and leadership programmes, the focus is still on teaching functional leadership and management content over leadership character development, behaviours, relationships or structures (Crossan et al., 2013). This content includes an emphasis on practical skills and disciplines, such as operations, management, strategy, finance and organisational behaviour; measuring of behaviours, assessment and feedback; and conceptual understanding of leadership theories. The former Dean of Stanford University’s Graduate School of Business suggested that these skills have become hygiene factors that everybody should know and are easily available in any standard management course (Saloner, 2010). Less often do they include content that either organisations or the millennial generation crave, such as personal growth, judgement, critical and analytical thinking, and reflective aspects of leadership such as learning through self-awareness and open-mindedness (Crossan, Vera, & Nanjad, 2008; Hart, Conklin, & Allen, 2008; Ireland & Hitt, 2005; Saloner, 2010; Tellis, 2014).

2.2.4 A Different Direction for Leadership Development Programmes

Organisations are facing such rapid change that they need leaders who, rather than try to squeeze a problem into a standardised model, are able to approach it open-mindedly as a unique circumstance and thereby come up with an individual solution. To do this, they should not rely only on their own skills, but be capable of using highly developed social skills to draw on and drive the talent and resources of those around them (de Vries & Korotov, 2010; Saloner, 2010). There are organisations that understand this, but are hard pressed to define exactly what needs developing or how to bring it about (Canals, 2010). This makes them targets for the plethora of leadership programmes being offered at huge expense by the best and the worst educational institutes around the world.
There are signs of movement in a new direction. Some programme designers are taking note of the more recent research and are producing content that encourages a deeper understanding of problem solving and developing social capital or emotional intelligence (Espedal, Gooderham, & Stensaker, 2013; Hernez-Broome & Hughes, 2012; Sadri, 2012; Stearns, Margulus, & Shinsky, 2012). If there is full support and senior leadership involvement, exceptional value is possible from personal growth projects that encourage learning from experience and putting theory into practice by using real-world scenarios and problems or on the job projects that facilitate programme participants in developing a leadership identity (Day, 2000; Gurdjian, Halbeisen et al., 2014; Komives et al., 2005; McKinsey & Company, 2013; Odem et al., 2012; Revans 2011). In addition, hands-on projects contribute towards “deepening self-awareness, building self-confidence, establishing personal efficacy, applying new skills, and expanding motivations” (Komives et al., 2005, p.599). Also of note is the value of programmes developing a collaborative environment and including aspects of teamwork, time management, interpersonal communication and decision-making skills (Burke, Marx, & Lowenstein, 2012; Ogurlu & Emir, 2014; Priest & Donley, 2014).

It is worth mentioning that coaching and mentoring are seen as two of the most efficient ways of developing global leaders (Bass, 1999; Conger, 2014), especially as it involves practical, “goal-focused forms of one-on-one learning and behavioural change” Day (2000, p.590). The Deloitte Human Capital Trends of 2014 (p.4) states that “performance management is broken: replace “rank and yank” with coaching and development.” An added value of coaching or mentoring during leadership training is that individuals will be more likely to ‘give back’ to the organisation’s next generation by becoming coaches or mentors themselves (Priest & Donley, 2014).

Finally, House and Aditya (1997, p.418) stated that “leadership is embedded in a social context”, but research was largely ignoring the kind of organisation or culture leaders were functioning in. At that time, they
claimed that 98 per cent of empirical evidence on leadership was “distinctly American in character” (House & Aditya, 1997, p.409). In general, since that article, the consensus is that there remains insufficient research in relation to the precise effects of context (Bass, 1999; Brundett, 2006; Canals, 2010; Carroll & Nicholson, 2014; Day, 2000). Part of this new emergent approach is therefore a realisation that the focus has to be on more than just the individual being developed, but should be an approach that “embraces local context and embraces the complexity and chaos that is present” (Grandy & Holton, 2012, p.431; Day & Antonakis, 2012; Hernez-Broome & Hughes, 2012). With this in mind, the next section of the literature review will look at the Qatari social and cultural context, and the section following on from that will look briefly at the very specific Qatari organisational context.

2.3 The Qatari Social and Cultural Context

If, as is suggested by Bass (2008), leadership is indeed embedded in the social context within which it is being practised, there is relevance in taking stock of Qatar, the unique, dynamic and sometimes challenging context from which this case study’s participants were drawn. What are its roots, what currently shapes it and where is it hoping to go as a country? In particular, why have those aspirations made leadership a topic of importance and priority at the highest political, educational and corporate levels?

2.3.1 A Place in the Sun and Sand

Qatar is a mainly barren peninsula of flat, desert terrain, which juts out, thumb-like, from the western coastline of Saudi Arabia into the Arabian (Persian) Gulf. Covering an area of 11,627 km², it has a population of just 2,371,457 (Countrymeters, 14 August, 2016) and in many ways is dwarfed by its much larger neighbour. Qatar has one of the world’s lowest levels of rainfall at 80 millimetres per year and summer temperatures that regularly reach over 50°C. This means that agriculture plays a minor role and the indigenous inhabitants have always looked to other sources of revenue, currently predominantly gas and oil. Outside those gas and oil fields, life
and business are concentrated in the vibrant, capital city of Doha, where the vast majority of the population lives and works (Qatar Statistics Authority, 2014).

2.3.2 A Tribal Society

Qatar can be defined as a tribal society with two different branches of *nasab* or origin, divided into hierarchical classes: that of the *Bedouin* and that of the *Hadar*. The concept of tribalism can encompass political affinity or solidarity, a sense of identity, belonging and community through paternal blood connections (Al Muhannadi, 2013; Alshawi & Gardner, 2013; Kamrava, 2009; Rodriguez & Scurry, 2014). These tribal connections can play both overt and covert roles in all aspects of Qatari society through social status and political affinity, although the lines are beginning to blur as the wealth of all nationals has increased, intermarriage has become more common, and they share the same classrooms, workspaces and lifestyles (Al Muhannadi, 2013; Knetz et al., 2014).

Religion adds another binding factor between the families, tribes, and the other GCC countries in general. Islam encompasses all aspects of Qatari life, including the reliance on tribal affiliation for identity. Personal individuality “is not the defining aspect of identity in Islamic culture” (Swartz, 2014, p.31); rather, identity comes from the place within the family and the family’s status and origin within society. Islam gives its adherents the sense of being a chosen society whose role is to live in as close an imitation of their prophet Mohammed as possible. Therefore, as Qatar is a religiously conservative country, how people behave, dress and interact in this attempt reflects on their family and their tribe’s standing and status in general (Kamrava, 2009; Knetz et al., 2014; Nasser, 2014; Swartz, 2014).

2.3.3 Political History

When Qatar declared its independence from being a British protectorate in 1971, it was a nation beginning to feel the changes brought about by the high quality oil found in 1940. From the eighth century onwards, it had
essentially been a fishing and pearl trading centre, contested several times by different tribes or empires (Amiri Diwan, 2012; Fromherz, 2012). For the last 150 years, it has been dominated politically by the ruling Al Thani family who, through a fundamentally autocratic regime, have brought stability and overseen the country’s rise to become one of the fastest developing countries in the world, currently boasting the highest GDP per capita (CIA Factbook, 2015; Forbes, 2012; Kamrava, 2009). Qatar’s immense wealth comes from being in possession of oil and the world’s third largest proven gas reserves: it is the second largest producer of gas at a rate it can maintain for at least the next 100 years, and the world’s largest producer and exporter of liquefied natural gas (BBC, 2014; BP, 2014; Neuhof, 2011; CIA Factbook, 2014).

From when he took power in 1995 to 2013, the former Emir, Sheikh Hamad Bin Khalifa Al Thani, brought about some liberalisation through press freedoms, votes for women and limited democratic reforms. He also set about achieving ‘soft power’ through setting ambitious targets for his country. These are to make Qatar the regional leader as regards, amongst others, e-technology, medical research, a major travel hub, a strong political player, an educational force and a major sports venue (Cheema, 2014; Dorsey, 2015; Heji, 2007; Kamrava, 2009, 2013; Marincola & Sheikh, 2012; Wahl & Baker, 2014; Welling, 2013).

2.3.4 The Qatar 2030 National Vision

Both as a means of consolidating their ‘soft power’ and to fully achieve these hugely ambitious plans, in 2008 the former Emir and Emiri, Sheikha Mozah bint Nasser Al Missned, instituted the Qatar 2030 National Vision containing four pillars of development, three of which involve the development of Qatar’s population (Kamrava, 2009; Ministry of Development & Planning, 2013). Based on that vision, Qatar embarked on an aggressive rebirth of itself through “very visible initiatives of state-branding and the projection of power and influence into context and perspective” (Ulrichsen, 2014, p.1; Nuruzzaman, 2015). Those initiatives have included creating the regional television channel Al Jazeera; the
construction of Education City, which houses satellite campuses of several top foreign universities; the recently opened Hamad International Airport; the soon to open “ultramodern, all-digital academic” Sidra Medical and Research Centre; the currently under construction Qatar Science and Technology Park; and the 37km² ultra-modern city of Lusail (Dorsey, 2015; Gulf Times, 2012; Sidra, 2015, n.p.). In addition, amongst other prestigious athletic, equestrian, golf, tennis and motor sporting events, Qatar will host the 2022 Football World Cup with a planned expenditure of more than US $60 billion on the necessary football infrastructure and projections showing US $229 billion planned or underway on general infrastructure projects (MEED, 2014a; Thompson, 2012; Ulrichsen, 2014). These plans, backed by huge wealth and a sense of stability, have created a climate of opportunity for foreign corporate entities to set up offices in Qatar, of which many of the major, world businesses have taken advantage (Bilateral US-Arab Chamber of Commerce, 2013; MEED, 2014b).

The Qatar 2030 National Vision specifically mentions the need for leadership capable of realising its goals. Therefore, soon after its 2008 announcement, acting on a further Emiri decree, the then Emir Apparent, His Highness, Sheikh Tamim Bin Hamad Al-Thani, inaugurated the Qatar Leadership Centre (QLC). The vision and mission of QLC is to strengthen leadership capacity “in support of the human, social, economic, and environmental pillars of the Qatar National Vision 2030” (QLC, 2014, n.p.). This reference suggests the highest political levels in Qatar have recognised the need to quickly identify and develop Qatari nationals capable of exemplary leadership within diverse fields of expertise. Added to this is the need for leaders adept at holding their own in an international capacity as Qatar spreads its capital through investment in, amongst other things, banking, telecommunications and real estate on a global scale (Baxter, 2011; Gulf Times, 2012; Nield, 2010; Nuruzzaman, 2015).
2.3.5 The Challenges

Change - especially such rapid change as has been experienced in Qatar - does not occur without challenges. Huge investment in health, education and arts, preservation of history and antiquity, and stability in the region can all be seen as positive actions. However, some hold the opinion that Qatar's swiftly gained wealth has brought about complacency and a mindset with a tendency to consume without thought of the future (Aguirre, Cavanaugh, & Sabbagh, 2011).

Observers can become confused when witnessing extravagant outlay on the one hand and saving to the point of misery on some human issues - such as the wages and living or social conditions of many expatriate workers - on the other (Dorsey, 2015; ITUC, 2011; Kaifi, 2015; Wahl & Baker, 2014). The recent arrests, resignations and revelations of corruption in the Federation International de Football Association (FIFA) Governing Body has once again brought this issue of human rights and worker conditions to the attention of the world’s media and questions are being asked about whether Qatar legitimately earned the 2022 Football
World Cup and even if it deserves to host it (Dorsey, 2015; Conway 2015; Crisp, 2015; Kaifi, 2015; 20minuten, 2015). Because of the small local population, Qatar must rely on imported labour to realise its ambitions, resulting in 90 per cent of the local workforce being non-Qatari with non-permanent residency status (Harry, 2007). This creates tension between organisations and the commercial and local labour laws, which encourage - and, in some cases, require - alignment with furthering the National Vision through ‘Qatarisation’, or the full employment and development of all Qatari nationals (Berrebi et al., 2009; Kamrava, 2009; Kirk, 2014; Vora, 2014). While it is understandable that Qatar wants to protect its small national minority and ensure they are the recipients of the greater share of the country’s growth and prosperity, this is being enforced through a system that has led to open criticism and accusations of encouraging aspects of a slave society (ITUC, 2011; Jureidini, 2014; Kaifi, 2015; Winckler, 2015). As the world’s spotlight turns to Qatar, looking for responses that show real solutions, there is an immediate need for clear-sighted, responsible leadership in all its institutions and corporate or governmental entities, capable of aligning the Qatari context with accepted international norms. However, the contextual complexity of those entities is such that it demands clarification in the next section of this literature review.

2.4 The Qatari Organisational Context

The average Qatari organisation is rich in complexities, and pose recognised challenges for either national or international entities to operate successfully within. They include specific human resource laws and regulations, distinctive managerial and leadership practices and strong influences on work practices from cultural, religious and gender norms (Robertson, Al-Khatib, Al-Habib, & Lanoue, 2001; Rodriguez & Scurry, 2014). The culture is deemed fatalistic and collective, with Hofstede’s theory of cultural dimensions scoring Middle Eastern countries as high in power distance, low in individualism, high in masculinity and high in uncertainty avoidance (Al Omari, 2008; Dimmock, 2007; Hofstede,
1980, 1997). In a practical sense, what does this mean for doing business or being a leader in a Qatari organisation?

2.4.1 Influences of Culture on the Workplace

A high power distance score is one of the most important characteristics of Arab countries such as Qatar, as it shows the degree to which an unequal distribution of wealth and power is acceptable or legitimised (Bogdan et al., 2012). It does not encourage upward mobility of all its citizens but rather concentrates power among relatively few. There is a strong perception that seniority comes from connections and ‘who you know’ rather than merit (Agnala, 1998; Bogdan et al., 2012; Dimmock, 2007; Rodriguez & Scurry, 2014). This results in strong hierarchical structures, with power, status and leadership centralised at the top of organisations and decisions often taken without consultation with middle or even top-level managers, thereby reducing their power or authority. Delegation and empowerment are rare (Al Omari, 2008; Dimmock, 2007; Fyock & Brannick, 2002; George, Dahlander, Graffin, & Sim, 2016). Typically, this hierarchical style is physically reflected in organisational layout, with the most powerful positions on the higher floors, in the largest, most prominently placed offices, with gatekeepers to ensure limited access or entry for the lower echelons. Leadership aspirations are often expressed as a right of age, nationality and status, rather than through a planned career path (Berrebi et al., 2009).

Low individualism is typical of a collective or tribal society, where ties and loyalty to each other are tight and binding, relationships are highly structured, and the welfare of the family group holds precedence over individual wants (Almoharby & Neal, 2013; Dimmock, 2007; Rees & Althakhri, 2008). Individuals in this kind of culture prefer to work in harmonious groups and loyalty to the company ‘group’ is as if to the family (Bogdan et al., 2012). Standing out too much as an individual, not helping others or not showing enough respect for age or the advice of the group will quickly erode the Qatari boss’s trust. This is a serious issue, because a collective culture is event-driven, so the outcome of any business
interactions will be determined by the underpinning context and how well the personal relationships harmonise (Al Omari, 2008).

High masculinity “pertains to societies in which social gender roles are clearly distinct” (Hofstede, 1994, pp.82–83). This does not necessarily mean that men are dominant, but refers to the extent that masculine characteristics, such as authority, success and performance, are brought forward and preferred over female traits, such as emotions, service and welfare. Being ambitious and emphasising achievements to receive merit or reward are preferable to discussing emotions (Dimmock, 2007; Jones 2007; Newman & Nollen, 1996; Rees & Althakhri, 2008). The masculine-feminine dimension is commonly seen in the practice of using merit-based goals to gain leadership or rewards. Failure is abhorrent (Newman & Nollen, 1996).

The religion of Islam greatly influences the level of uncertainty avoidance in several ways. Firstly, because Muslims wrestle with the prospect of shame, or bringing dishonour to themselves or their family, “preservation of self-respect is of the highest value” (Cate, 1998, cited in Schwartz, 2014, p.40; Bogdan et al., 2012; Chapman, 2008). Secondly, Muslims believe their God has complete power and has predestined very day of their lives (Schwartz, 2014). This makes for a fatalistic society where “people believe ‘what is meant to be, will be’” (Dimmock 2007, p.290). Therefore Arab society does not, in general, accept quick change, preferring to hang on to what has been traditionally done or accepted. The corporate culture follows the same pattern, wherein replication of the existing structure and procedures is less threatening than generated change. There is low tolerance of uncertainty, which is viewed as uncomfortable and disruptive (Dimmock, 2007; Rees & Althakhri, 2008). These factors mean that Arab managers or leaders tend to be averse to taking any risks and will avoid making any decision if presented with unknown facts or with something new and untried, especially as trying something new and failing would put them at risk of losing face in the eyes of others, with a subsequent loss of power (Al Omari, 2008; Bogdan et al.,
2012). Conversely, once acquired, new information or knowledge can be hoarded as a source of power rather than disseminated to all relevant employees (De Atkine, 1999). Because societal rules and traditions and organisational policies and regulations are important aspects of hierarchy and power, expressing disagreements or doubts to the top levels in any organisation should be done with care, caution and subtlety (Al Omari, 2008; Dimmock, 2007).

To operate successfully, organisations need to take into account the strong relationships between religious values, convictions and work beliefs and incorporate those relationships into organisational rules, work practices and training programmes (Robertson, Al-Khatib, & Al-Habib, 2002). In particular, great sensitivity needs to be shown in all human resource and work practices regarding the role of women (Harry, 2007; Jamali et al., 2010; McKinsey & Company, 2014; Metcalfe, 2007). More and more women are admitting aspirations for leadership and can be seen tentatively stepping outside traditional roles into what is deemed a public male space. They are breaking down barriers and overcoming patriarchal attitudes and expectations by demanding development towards management and leadership and the percentage of Qatari women with post-secondary education has now forged well ahead of that of men (Berrebi et al., 2009; Harry, 2007; Metcalfe, 2007; Ministry of Development Planning & Statistics, 2014; Omair, 2010; Syed, 2010). The result is the appointment of increasing numbers of highly talented women in leadership positions, both in private and public sector organisations, throughout the GCC states (Al Omari, 2008; McKinsey & Company, 2014). However, they remain a largely untapped pool of talent because of gender bias and cultural assumptions regarding women working or women in leadership; infrastructure challenges; lack of HR policy for equal opportunities; and lack of targeted leadership programmes (Aguirre et al., 2011).

2.4.2 Influences of a Diverse Workforce on the Workplace

One of the first things anyone entering any sizable organisation in Qatar will notice is the diversity of its staff, which will probably contain a mixture
of the five distinct cultural groups that make up the majority of the
country’s population. Qatari nationals, in their distinct black or white
national dress, will immediately stand out, but because their numbers are
small, with an estimated total of less than 300,000, the remaining 90 per
cent of the workforce is imported, expatriate labour (Berrebi et al., 2009;
Harry, 2007; Jureidini, 2014). This will include people from all other Arabic
nations and cultures, from the Indian subcontinent, Southeast Asia,
Western and Eastern Europe and representatives of numerous other

Within the general social context of Qatar, there is a great deal of
separation between these groups, much of which is voluntary. While the
groups tend to work quite well together, people tend to mix with others
who share their own language, beliefs and culture (Rodriguez & Scurry,
2014). This is not conducive to the transference of knowledge, change
implementation or learning, as information is more willingly shared within
these cultural silos (De Atkine, 1999; Prowse & Goddard, 2010; Rodriguez
& Scurry, 2014). Another issue is the transient or temporary nature of this
expatriate workforce, which is either attempting to understand and work
within the current organisational environment or endeavouring to change
and develop the organisation in the absence of clear strategies (Rees &
Althakhri, 2008; Snoj, 2013).

2.4.3 Influences of Policy and Politics on the Workplace
Qatari organisations must additionally operate within a complex political
environment that has a direct impact on human resources, organisational
management and standard business practices (Rees & Althakhri, 2008).
There are three practices, which have the greatest impact on employees.
The first, which repeatedly receives international criticism, is the *kafala*,
or visa sponsorship system, which renders all non-national employees
dependent on their employers to enter, leave or remain in the country
(Berrebi et al., 2009; Dorsey, 2015; ITUC, 2011; Jureidini, 2014; Roper &
Barria, 2014). Most contracts are short term and mobility to another
organisation is tightly restricted. Without the required non-objection letter,
an individual may not work for another organisation or even re-enter Qatar for a period of two years. Such letters are rarely given. One of the objectives of the *kafala* system is to regulate the impact of immigration on the national identity, but a side effect is that it increases the transient, outsider feeling of most expatriate workers, with a consequent reduction in personal commitment to their organisation (Gulf Talent, 2015; Rodriguez & Scurry, 2014; Roper & Barria, 2014). I would suggest this lack of belonging is either underestimated or overlooked by Qatari leaders and attention is rarely drawn to the perspective of the expatriate worker in leadership training.

It is not common practice to discuss the *kafala* system or its impact on the working environment, but even less openly spoken about is the practice of *wasta*, which can be understood as “clout”, “pull” or having connections, that can lead to unearned privileges and nepotism (Ellili-Cherif et al., 2012; Harry, 2007; Omair, 2010). Loyalty to connections means that “Nepotism is a way of life” (Al Omari, 2008, p.101), to the point that it is the accepted way to approach issues such as getting a permit, finding a job or having a child accepted into university, rather than just a way of solving a problem. “Networks, nepotism and *wasta* are the ways to get and keep jobs” (Harry, 2007, p.136) so conversely, to have to search for a job and go through the recruitment process deemed normal to western cultures would show a lack of power or connections and a loss of face (Al Omari, 2008; Rees & Althakhri, 2008). Most expatriate employees will have a story of frustration to tell regarding the use of *wasta* to gain undeserved benefits or exceptions to procedure. But that does not mean there are no Qataris who are aware of at least the economic value of practising a harmonious coexistence through diversity management and who are attempting to bring in and enforce more egalitarian policies and procedures regarding recruitment, employee evaluation, remuneration, rewards and discipline (Jamali et al., 2010). They are, however, still few, and unless in a position of real authority, will also experience frustration.
The third influence on Qatari organisations is ‘Qatarisation’ which, through regulation, aims to increase the number of nationals in the workforce (Rodriguez & Scurry, 2014; Williams, Bhanugopan, & Fish, 2011). Additionally, there are restrictions preventing expatriates being employed in specific categories, enforcing that nationals are hired instead (Harry, 2007). Nationalisation of the labour market gives privileges to national men and women in tertiary education, recruitment and selection, continuing education, training and career development, and remuneration (Omair, 2010). Therefore, between them, the kafala system and Qatarisation “effectively guarantee citizens a job in the public sector where employment conditions and benefits are much higher and working hours much shorter than the private sector” (Roper & Barria, 2014, p.36).

There are few who would question the logic or right of a country to give preference to its own citizens, but aspects of Qatarisation pose challenges and create tensions within organisations. There is a shortage of Qatars to fill all the positions the government deems should be filled by nationals. This shortage is brought about by a lack of nationals with the required qualifications and also because many Qatars are reluctant to take up positions in the private sector, preferring to wait for something in the public sector for the above stated benefits (Berrebi et al., 2009; Ennis, 2014; Omair, 2010; Roper & Barria, 2014). As with any scarce or in demand resource, the seller can set the terms, so nationals rarely have to meet, comply or be held to the same qualifications or standards as other employees (Al Omari, 2008; Berrebi et al., 2009; Ellili-Cherif et al., 2012). Scarcity has created the practice of ‘shadow positions’, whereby a national without the necessary experience or skills is recruited into a position to fulfil the obligation to Qatarisation and an expatriate worker is employed, at a much lower salary, as his or her assistant or deputy to produce the required results. This concept of legitimised inequalities, holding jobs without the necessary skills, having access to training that is often not taken advantage of and yet receiving unearned promotions, is not conducive to an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect between the nationals and expatriate workers. It is certainly not optimal for creating
dynamic leaders or building social capital within Qatari organisations (Brennan & Naidoo 2008; Dimmock, 2007; Harry, 2007; Svendsen et al., 2002). Those on the negative receiving end feel there are huge breaches of equity standards and those on the positive side feel it is a reinforcement of cultural norms, creating very specific dynamics and stresses on current HR practices and unique constraints for leaders of all nationalities to contend with (Faris & Parry, 2011; Yaghi & Yaghi, 2014).

These stresses should be addressed, because even with full realisation of the Qatarisation policy, there will never come a time when the hiring of expatriate labour can be discontinued, since even sustaining the remarkable development achieved to date makes that impossible. With this in mind, more Qatari leaders need to be adept at leading multicultural organisations within their own unique context, because this is now their reality, if they want either to sustain what they have already achieved, or continue with the vision of increased development. To come to this realisation may take an act of transformative learning in a significant number of Qatari leaders, which is the subject to be addressed in the final section of this literature review.

2.5 Transformative Learning
As the world’s average human life span increases, and people have the opportunity to choose or change their employment direction more often, it makes sense that interest in adult and continuing education is growing and continues to grow. Included in that growth of interest is the concept of transformative learning, a teaching approach based on promoting change and challenging learners to “critically question and assess the integrity of their deeply held assumptions about how they relate to the world around them” (Mezirow & Taylor, 2011, p.xi). Spending even a short time watching international news channels will show how relevant and pertinent understanding this kind of learning is, on levels even beyond education, as not just individuals but whole nations are being thrown into types of chaos that require them to adjust or change their inherent frames of reference.
2.5.1 The Foundations of Transformative Learning

In ‘An Overview on Transformative Learning’, Mezirow (2009) describes how, in 1978, he introduced the concept of transformative learning into the field of adult education with the publication of research findings from a comprehensive study of women returning to community colleges in the USA. In this initial stage, Mezirow’s research was influenced by several concepts such as conscientisation paradigms, consciousness raising, the experiences of his wife, and themes from philosophy and psychiatry (Mezirow, 2009). In this later work, he sums up his understanding of transformative learning as “the process by which we transform problematic frames of reference (mind-sets, habits of mind, meaning perspectives) - sets of assumptions and expectations - to make them more inclusive, discriminating, open, reflective and emotionally able to change” (Mezirow, 2009, p.92).

This differs from informational learning, which increases our skills or existing cognitive structures, giving more of our available resources to an established frame of reference (Kegan, 2009). As a theory with constructivist underpinnings, transformative learning predisposes that a person’s established and taken-for-granted frames of reference are in fact capable of change and are then able to guide a “deep, structural shift in basic premises of thought, feelings, and actions” (Transformative Learning Centre, as cited in Kitchenham, 2008, p.104; Mathis, 2010; Mezirow, 2011). At one extreme, transformations can occur suddenly and be epochal and life-changing, involving profound shifts in a person’s understanding of themselves, of knowledge and of the world (Snyder, 2008). At the other extreme, a transformation can arise from an accumulation of insights that gradually change a point of view or habit of mind. At whichever extreme it occurs, it will involve, to some degree, parts of the three core elements of critical reflection, individual experience and voluntary dialectical discourse (Mezirow, 1997, 2009, 2012). There are also ten identified phases, variations of which the process will include, either fully or in part and not necessarily in sequence (Isopahkala-Bouret, 2008). They are:
1. “A disorientating dilemma
2. Self-examination
3. A critical assessment of assumptions
4. Recognition of a connection between one’s discontent and the process of transformation
5. Exploration of options for new roles, relationships, and action
6. Planning a course of action
7. Acquiring knowledge and skills for implementing one’s plan
8. Provisional trying of new roles
9. Building competence and self-confidence in new roles and relationships
10. A reintegration into one’s life on the basis of conditions dictated by one’s new perspective” (Mezirow, 2011, p.19)

A person undergoing a perspective transformation may therefore encounter disorientation, self-examination, critical assessment of current assumptions, realisation that those assumptions may no longer serve them best, exploration of the options, trying on new ideas or roles, and integration of the new perspective into their lives (Brock, 2010; Kitchenham, 2008; Mezirow, 1994, 1997). This implies that people habitually do and think things that they have intentionally or unintentionally assimilated as part of their context or culture. However, with suitable educational input, transformative learning can begin with people first looking at old things in new ways, then moving through a process of looking at new things in new ways, and finally doing new things in new ways (Nalder, 2010).

2.5.2 The Current Status and Trends
In the almost 40 years since Mezirow’s first publication, a transformative learning movement has evolved, first in North America, but in the last decade spreading through dedicated international conferences and the publication of numerous journal articles and books. Research on
transformative learning is still most prevalent in formal educational settings, but there is growing interdisciplinary interest, with the concept broadening into fields such as teacher, corporate, online, religious or medical education; agriculture, sciences, media and archaeology; into other qualitative studies such as living with HIV/AIDS or breast cancer, the context of suicide, and even into such spaces as emancipation and promoting female empowerment in third world countries (Dirkx, Mezirow, & Cranton, 2006; Dix, 2016; Malkki & Green, 2014; Mezirow & Taylor, 2011; Sands & Tennant, 2010; Taylor & Snyder, 2012; Tisdell, 2012).

This kind of diversity has raised the question of why transformative learning is confined to being an adult theory and why it does not include the whole life span (Kegan, 2009). Such questions and criticisms are in order and a rite of passage for a still-evolving theory (Taylor & Snyder, 2012). For instance, there are those of the opinion that some aspects of transformative learning, such as capturing if the experience has occurred, have been researched to the point of redundancy (Cranton & Taylor, 2012; Malkki & Green, 2014; Taylor & Laros, 2014), and that most doubts and questions should now centre on what is either lacking or is still unknown about the transformative process.

While Mezirow refined and modified his theory over the years and was still active and publishing until his death in 2014, he put little emphasis on the factors that trigger or bring about transformative learning in a consistent way. These have been less clearly identified, and remain elusive and ever-shifting; nor have the challenges that individuals face which cause hindrance, especially as not all adults are self-directed learners capable of bringing about their own transformations just because they are adults (Baumgartner, 2012; Kegan, 2009; Taylor, 2011; Taylor & Laros, 2014). Furthermore, because transformative learning is being explored in so many fields, there are researchers who feel Mezirow’s original theory does not fully capture all the nuances or assumptions on which their research is based. This has led to a strong current trend which sees transformative learning theory becoming more holistic and unified, attempting to integrate
different perspectives under one theoretical umbrella (Baumgartner, 2012; Cranton & Taylor, 2012; Taylor & Snyder, 2012). While there have been some studies using surveys and questionnaires, qualitative researches are still dominant. The shift has been towards greater specificity in their design, with examples of action research, narrative enquiry, collaborative inquiry and case study becoming more common (Cranton & Taylor, 2012; Taylor & Snyder, 2012).

To continue with this more holistic and integrated trend, there are claims that the theory needs to take into account psycho-developmental and psychoanalytical approaches, the sociocultural context, and the importance of spirituality, emotion, general context, intuition, relationships, culture, childhood experiences and socialisation (Baumgartner, 2012; Dirkx et al., 2006; Dix, 2016; Isopahkala-Bouret, 2008). However, Taylor and Snyder (2012) suggest the trend is not without risks if there is a lack of alignment between underlying assumptions about the nature of transformative learning or a lack of acknowledgement of how the theories may either complement each other or contain inherent tensions.

Mezirow himself acknowledged there needs to be greater understanding with respect to what promotes transformative learning and the role played by emotions and imagination, but was less accepting of another major criticism, which is that he created a decontextualized model (Baumgartner, 2012; Mezirow & Taylor, 2011; Taylor, 2001). He suggested that the influence of contextual elements - including “ideology, culture, power and race-class gender differences” - while important, could be rationally assessed and addressed when warranted (Mezirow, 2011, pp.95, 96). His close colleague and fellow author Taylor, in his own writings, suggests that awareness of context is of equal significance to the other core elements of critical reflection, individual experience and dialogue (Taylor, 2011).

2.5.3 The Role of Reflection

Nairn et al. (2012, p. 196) describe how reflective practice “transcends mere doing” and therefore helps to guard against superficial learning, and
especially against making the mind up quickly and without due consideration and thereby stifling development or any transformative change. If reflection is needed for a person to examine personal values or beliefs, and if it can act as a catalyst for transformative learning, it is advocated that one concentrates on critical reflection as the most effective method, as it has the potential to unearth the underlying reasons as to why a value system is being held (Brookfield, 2011, 2012; Fullerton, 2010; Mezirow, 1998b; Nairn et al., 2012).

In the case of transformative learning, Brock (2010 p.123) describes the type of critical reflection Mezirow was referring to as more in keeping with “perspective reflection or reframing”, because it goes beyond the exclusively cognitive functions of critical reflection and includes dimensions of the emotional and spiritual, the context and relationships. Both Taylor and Kitchenham state this is akin to “premise reflection”, which shows an awareness of why we perceive things as we do and examines the “presuppositions underlying our knowledge of the world” (Taylor, 2011, pp.7, 8; Kitchenham, 2006). When we are brought to the edge of our comfort zone regarding challenges to our perspectives (Malkki, 2010), it is in the unconscious human nature to resist this kind of emotional change or reframing of our existing worldview, and we do this by using defence mechanisms such as intellectualisation or denial. However, by using this deepest kind of critical reflection, we can “become more aware of their presence and influence in our lives” (Dirkx, 2012, p.403), which must leave us better informed as to whether we will intentionally change or maintain those frameworks.

It is clear from the literature that critical reflection is one of the core elements of transformative learning. Some even go so far as to say the transformative learning process relies upon the occurrence of critical reflection (Lewis, 2009; Snyder, 2008; Taylor, 1998, 2007). It is therefore essential to instruct students in the process and to encourage or make time available for this first core element to occur within the learning
experience of transformative education (Keeling, 2004). The next core element to be discussed is dialogue.

2.5.4 The Role of Dialogue

Mezirow (1997) posed the interesting question of how we can judge the authenticity, the intent or the meaning behind a statement such as ‘I love you’. He contended that the only way is to “engage in discourse to validate what is being communicated”, because it is through reflective discourse that a person can better examine the evidence, arguments and any alternative points of view (Mezirow, 1997, p.6; Fullerton, 2010; Mezirow, 1994, 2011). Mezirow based his answer on the views of Habermas, who believed that discourse could lead to a consensus and thereby establish a belief’s validity (Mezirow, 2009). While no one truth exists, the more interpretations or points of view we have to dialectically sift through, the greater the likelihood we will discover a better or more dependable interpretation that can be maintained as a worldview or frame of reference - until we encounter yet new evidence, arguments or perspectives (Ciporen, 2008; Mezirow, 2009). This discourse with others is the “safety net for an individual’s newfound or revised assumptions”, because they are reassured of their objectivity, and it becomes the medium to be able to put critical reflection into action (Lewis, 2009, p.9; Taylor, 1998).

Therefore, transformative learning can be based, in addition to critical reflection, on a dialogue that occurs between the conscious and the unconscious, where we better understand or become aware of our internal self and how we project that to the world (Kucukaydin & Cranton, 2012). Because a critically reflective form of either inner or outer dialogue has been identified by modern research as one of the integral components of personal transformation, it can be respected as a useful way to facilitate the potential for personally transformative learning (Fullerton, 2010; Snyder, 2008; Taylor, 2007; Taylor & Laros, 2014). The meaning of a transformative concept becomes significant to a learner through mutual, voluntary discourse with others (Kitchenham, 2008; Morgan, 2011; Taylor
& Laros, 2014). However, there is also a completely individual aspect to any transformation, which will be looked at next.

2.5.5 The Role of Individual Experience

Adventure stories often relate an experience through the eyes of the hero or heroine as they face challenges in new and strange lands, and have also been used to illustrate the journey or transformation from a boy to a man (Malkki & Green, 2014). Understanding the meaning of such experiences is a defining condition of being human (Mezirow, 1997). However, these first-person perspectives of current or previous experiences are conditioned and formed by the lens through which we interpret and make sense and meaning of the world (Malkki & Green, 2014; Mezirow, 2012; Snyder, 2008; Taylor & Laros, 2014). Mezirow (1990) described how we acquire most of our meaning perspectives through cultural assimilation, by which we learn such things as how to differentiate a French person from a British person, or a pretty design from an ugly one, or become familiar with what constitutes liberal, radical or conservative viewpoints in our own culture. Stereotypes such as what it means to be a man or a woman, a leader or a member of a racial group, are usually unintentionally learned, whereas specific stances, such as “positivist, behaviourist, Freudian, or Marxist perspectives, may be intentionally learned” (Mezirow, 1990, p.1; Snyder, 2008).

Perhaps without realising it, we are all trapped within and moulded by our meaning perspectives and therefore we can never make an interpretation of our individual experience free from bias. It is only by exposing our ideas or experiences to critical reflection and dialogue and comparing them to the lived experiences of others that we can begin to uncover those biases or reassure ourselves of their objectivity. This is one of the driving forces of transformative learning (Fullerton, 2010; Lewis, 2009; Mezirow, 1990, 1997). However, it is not as simple as exposing ourselves to new meaning perspectives, such as when travelling to foreign destinations, because not every traveller will “exhibit the same potential for transformation in the same places or on the same journey” (Morgan, 2011, p.256). Exposure is
only half the story; the other half concerns the mind-set of the traveller. If we are only looking to briefly escape our normal experience, new perspectives will only be seen as a temporary novelty and we will not be open to a change in our frame of reference (Biallas, 2002). In this way, it can be seen that none of the core elements of transformative learning stands alone, but each supports and enhances the rest (Taylor & Snyder, 2012). As my personal opinion is that context also plays an integral part in the transformative learning experience, we will now briefly turn our attention to the role of context.

2.5.6 The Role of Context

Mezirow (1994, 2011) did not dismiss the importance of context, but at the same time did not seem to agree heartily with researchers such as Brookfield, whom he aligned with other post-Marxist and postmodern critics who believe that learning theories are dictated by contextual interests. Rather, he stated that the contextual culture enables, inhibits and dictates who learns what, how and when. The work of transformative learning is to get adults to think for themselves and reassess the factors that support that contextual culture.

But this may be underplaying the constraints of diverse social contexts and material constraints on behaviour, especially as there is a paucity of studies focusing on informal or non-formal educational settings (Morrice, 2012; Nairn et al., 2012; Taylor, 2007). For instance, Clark and Wilson (1991), commenting on Mezirow’s initial research study, felt that he took the experiences of the research participants as if they “stood apart from their historical and sociocultural context, thereby limiting our understanding of the full meaning of those experiences.” Morgan (2011, p.253) points out that some contexts are surely more likely to be “efficacious” than others, as they will help to bring about the right mind-set for transformation to occur, so it is not just about what is possible but what is feasible (Nairn et al., 2012). Even the most mundane aspects of context, such as time and temporal constraints, or the place and setting within which learning takes place, may play an influential role in the
transformative learning process or outcome (Taylor, 1998, 2012). This stance is in keeping with the more recent unified view of transformative learning that aims to develop a deeper appreciation of personal and sociocultural factors and an awareness of the emotional, moral, cultural and social aspects of our personal being (Baumgartner, 2012; Dirkx, Mezirow, & Cranton, 2006; Taylor, 2012; Taylor & Cranton, 2012; Tisdell, 2012).

2.5.7 Factors Known to Foster Transformative Learning

Mezirow puts less emphasis on the fostering of transformative learning and describes adult learning as “an organised effort to assist learners who are old enough to be held responsible for their acts to acquire or enhance their understanding, skills, and dispositions” (2012, p.89). However, he and others outline what they consider some ideal conditions for transformative adult learning.

Firstly, the conditions should be learner-centred, participative, interactive or constructivist in nature (Christie, Carey, Robertson, & Grainer, 2015). Secondly, as one of the main requirements for transformative learning is open and voluntary discourse, to examine and validate assumptions, values, beliefs, ideas and feelings, it is logical that ideal conditions would include opportunities for learners to engage in such dialogue and group problem solving. However, this should not be without assistance regarding how to participate in such groups or discussions freely (Mezirow, 1994, 1997, 2012; Taylor & Laros, 2014). Thirdly, opportunity to critically reflect, either individually or as part of facilitated group work, is of paramount importance. There should also be opportunity to make, within reason, more autonomous choices and to take action based on that reasoned, critical reflection, even if the action is only to make a decision. Educators can assist in this by developing authentic relationships with students and helping them overcome situational or knowledge constraints, and by giving emotional support (Mezirow, 1994, 2012; Nairn et al., 2012; Snyder, 2008).
Of the ten precursor steps a person may go through during a transformation, Brock (2010) suggests that the three most effective to bring about a transformative learning experience are disorienting dilemmas, especially about social roles, trying on new roles and critical reflection on assumptions. Taylor and Jarecke (2011) have identified the following list of what they feel are general principles for fostering transformational learning in an educational setting, as long as they are placed in relation to the core elements of critical reflection, group dialogue, individual experience and an awareness of context:

- Purposeful and heuristic process
- Confronting power and engaging difference
- Imaginative process
- Leading learners to the edge
- Fostering reflection
- Modelling (Taylor and Jarecke, 2011)

Finally, Poutiatine (2009) suggests that, as a basic underlying principle, individuals must first be consensual to the process of education and transformation, because lack of assent may be a real hindrance to openness to transformation of any kind.

2.5.8 Implications for Leadership Development

It is argued that leadership development that produces leaders who can drive the accomplishments of a group of people will be the major differentiator for the future success of the twenty-first century organisation, community or country (de Vries & Korotov, 2010). But the modern organisation is a complex, changing kaleidoscope of relationships and contexts that require new approaches and mind-sets to manage and lead. As shown in this literature review, the average Qatari organisation is no exception to this. Therefore, individuals do not just require informational learning and skills development to gain a new mind-set; they also need a transformation of sorts. A principle of transformative learning is to “overcome the fatalistic and the blind following of leaders” (Mezirow, 2003,
cited in Nairn et al., 2012, p.196). Therefore I suggest that it is through transformative learning that leaders who are capable of going beyond standardised models and who are able open-mindedly to come up with unique solutions to new circumstances can be developed. Recent research shows that there are indeed strong indicators that the competencies associated with transformative learning - being receptive to alternative viewpoints, emotionally open, capable of change, being reflectively aware and astute at guiding actions, and being able to motivate others - have the potential to help executives become better leaders (Brock, 2010; Carter, 2013; Ciporen, 2010; Isopahkala-Bouret, 2008; Lee, 2009; Mezirow, 2000).

This has real implications for leadership development, especially in a context such as Qatar that is striving to align tradition with new ways of doing things within organisational contexts, which Hart, Conklin, and Allen (2008) argue does not occur without a transformation of perspective as described by Mezirow (1997). That it can happen is no longer in dispute; rather, it is time, while taking the context into consideration, to turn attention to uncovering and analysing the factors necessary to facilitate or hinder the process, so as to better inform educational instruction (Snyder, 2008).
3 Methodology

3.1 Introduction

The above chapters have related the personal and professional journey, which led me to ask my research question and then, based on that question, to produce a literature review of the main focal points and contextual factors the research needed to bear in mind. The following chapter begins by presenting the rationale for undertaking a qualitative case study and includes my positioning as the researcher. It then gives an overview of the leadership programme that forms the case in question. There follows an overview of the research design, covering the data gathering techniques used and the analytical method and procedure followed, while taking into account the limitations of the research and any ethical considerations.

3.2 Rationale for Qualitative Research Design

It has been said that the correct way to begin any research is to start with the questions, as therein lies the foundation, and the research design chosen will depend on what the researcher wants to know (Cohen et al., 2011; Ritchie, 2003). “Different kinds of questions will lead you to different kinds of projects” (Thomas, 2014 p.1) and so it was with this research. As a reminder, my research question was:

What are the key success factors and inhibitors of a transformative learning experience in a leadership development programme designed for a Qatari organisational context?

My question stemmed from a wish to understand the factors that will either bring about transformative learning within a leadership development programme, specifically within a Qatari organisational context, or that will hinder it from occurring. To do this, I needed to ask people involved in such a programme about their experiences and arrive at an understanding of those experiences as they related to my question. In consequence, I required a research method that validated the thoughts, reasoning and
imaginings of not only the participants, but myself, too. I too brought my thoughts and interpretation to the data, as “it is the researcher’s voice that explains the research” (Drake, 2011, p.33). Additionally, literature reviewed on transformative learning describes it as a theory with constructivist underpinnings, which predisposes a person’s thoughts, feelings and actions are open to changes or shifts and therefore, as a teaching approach, it challenges learners to question those assumptions (Kitchenham, 2008; Mathis, 2010; Mezirow, 2011; Mezirow & Taylor, 2011). Interpreting and understanding a change through personal experience lends itself less to a quantitative research approach, which is more useful for establishing general laws and principles or testing objective theories (Blaxter et al., 2006; Creswell, 2014); whereas, a naturalistic approach that “emphasises the importance of the subjective experience of individuals” using qualitative analytical methods would be more appropriate for answering the question posed (Blaxter et al., 2006, p.64; Snape & Spencer, 2003).

However, I cannot deny I may have initially been drawn to a question with which my conscious and unconscious worldview and positionality felt the most comfortable. Creswell (2014, p.6) supports this stating “I see worldviews as a general philosophical orientation about the world and the nature of research that a researcher brings to a study.” Therefore, if as a researcher I intend to be genuinely reflexive during my research, I need to be open with my readers, regarding my orientation towards the world and research and how it predisposes me to wanting to understand the social world.

Professionally, I am more interested in aspects of education that involve people and their experiences within naturally occurring settings. Having experienced several different contexts during my professional life, I agree with Fox, Martin and Green (2007, p.27) who contend “Professionals do not practice in isolation, but operate within a context”. Being a researcher who is looking to inform practice through better understanding and interpretation of wonderfully messy, human experience makes me
someone more aligned with the social sciences than with the natural sciences epistemology, which from a positivist viewpoint prefers to predict and explain and prove through structured experimentation and quantifiable results (Guba & Lincoln, 2008; Moses & Knutsen, 2007; Thomas, 2014). While I am sympathetic to the idea that there are certain observable laws and truths in the natural world (Moses & Knutsen, 2007), I am less sure when it comes to claims of absolute knowledge stemming from study of the behaviour and actions of humans (Creswell, 2014). So, while I believe a rock, within the laws of the natural world, will stay a rock whether I am there to observe it or not, I also believe in the constructivist principle that individuals develop varied and multiple meanings of experiences, objects or things (Creswell, 2014), and therefore a rock, on different days or by different people, could also be viewed as a tool, a building material, a symbolic representation of an abstract concept, or even as a weapon. In fact, it may not be possible to ever grasp the full truth of any concept, especially if that truth is constructed by the experience of each individual (Guba & Lincoln, 2008; Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba, 2011). The constructivist researcher tends to use open-ended questions to encourage others to share those experiences. “They also focus on the specific contexts in which people live and work in order to understand the historical and cultural setting of the participants”, because we make sense of the world through the culture and contexts we are born into (Creswell, 2014, p.8; Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011). It is for this reason that the cultural and organisational contexts played such an important role in the above literature review and will be a focus in addressing an identified weakness within the transformative learning literature.

These points show that my worldview is more in line with that of constructivism, although with a touch of the pragmatist, which keeps me open to the advantages of other methodological approaches and, as argued above, if my initial research question had been different, I would have been as open to using them as the foundation of a research approach as to that which is now outlined below (Ritchie, 2003; Snape & Spencer, 2003). The above reasoning could equally have applied to other
qualitative research approaches, however the case study design proved to be the best fit, as the following section will show.

3.3 Rationale for Qualitative Case Study Research Design

Because research can take many shapes or forms, the researcher should show they haven’t just picked the closest or most appealing shape on the shelf, but have chosen one that meets the needs of the research question. Thomas illustrates that a case study is a unit of study that is bounded, much as a suitcase bounds the complexity of what it contains, while it also looks at “the set of conditions or a state of affairs” that surround an event or a happening (2011, p.13). The following section will outline the shape and form this particular ‘suitcase’ took by using the criteria of a case study as outlined by Thomas (2011) as subject, purpose, approach and process.

The subject here fits the description of a local knowledge case, because it looks at an example of something within my own professional work environment and experience, of which I have knowledge, but which I would like to increase (Thomas, 2011). I wanted to find out a lot about a little - i.e. an ELP in a Qatari organisation - rather than a little bit about a big thing or a lot - i.e. all leadership programmes. These circumstances lend themselves to a typical case study design frame, which encourages the researcher to look at the complexity of a specific thing from multiple angles or perspectives using many methods or data sources (Simons, 2009).

The fact that I had a clear purpose and a long-term view of improving leadership programmes means the case study was the tool or instrument towards achieving that end and thereby categorises it as an instrumental case study (Stake, 2005; Simons, 2009). It can be further defined as an explanatory case as the intention was to find any causal links or interrelationships between the programme, the context and transformational learning and to build a story with a depth of
understanding about what was happening (Cronin, 2014; Simons, 2009; Thomas, 2011; Yin, 2014).

The approach to this case study can be broken into two parts: testing a theory and illustrative. Firstly, there was no intention to generate a new theory, but rather to use the already existing framework of transformative learning as a lens to identify factors that either facilitated or inhibited its occurrence. I entered the research with my own knowledge and experience gained within the educational field and assumptions based on my understanding of the literature, which have led me to believe that, within certain parameters and conditions, transformative learning can or does occur. According to the literature, finding answers to the what and how questions is a core strength of case study research and the intention of this case was to tease out an explanation of what caused the phenomenon to occur or not occur from the different perspectives of the participants, the managers and the training partner that created the programme (Cronin, 2014; Gerring, 2004; Simons, 2009; Thomas, 2011). Another advantage of a case study is its ability to capture a close-up description of a reality and portray the lived experience of the participants within a narrow focus (Yin, 2009; Cohen et al., 2011). However, it is not enough to draw rich, verbal pictures, there must also be analysis accompanying them because it is in this way the reader can hopefully make sense of the experience and the connections drawn (Cohen et al., 2011; Thomas, 2011; Radely & Chamberlain, 2012).

The process of a case study describes the structure or way in which the researcher approaches it. I found this case could be broken into three process sub-categories. Firstly, it is an example of a single case encompassing the classic definition stated by Merriam (1988, p.16): “The qualitative case study can be defined as an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single entity, phenomenon or social unit”, which in this case was the Executive Leadership Programme. The focus was on that particular example within the broader phenomenon of leadership development, with the view of drawing out possible lines of reasoning and
strands of causality at play (Gerring, 2004; Thomas, 2011). Secondly, the case was studied diachronically, as research was begun two weeks before the participants embarked on the ELP and only concluded ten months later with the final interview. This gave an opportunity to note change in the participants’ actions or attitude over time as a result of some form of transformative learning having taken place, especially for their direct managers, who were interviewed last in the second series of interviews. This was not an experiment where the researcher strove to control all the variables, but in this case a variable, in the form of the ELP, was introduced. The case was then looked at from multiple directions, and when changes were noted (or not), they were analysed by means of the data to address the question of what had facilitated that change (Gerring, 2004; Gomm et al., 2000; Thomas, 2011). Finally, the case study to some extent presents aspects of a nested study, because it looked at the experience of more than one stakeholder, nested within the broader context of the ELP (Gerring, 2004). However, this only became relevant when comparisons were made between the experiences of the different stakeholders to form a picture of the whole within the broader context (Thomas, 2011).

This thesis topic and its subsequent ‘what’ question demanded to be researched using a case study design because, within reasonable limits, they fitted every criteria (See Figure 3.1).
### Figure 3.1 Overview of Case Study Approach (based on Thomas, 2011)

#### Table: Case Study Approach Overview

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SUBJECT</th>
<th>PURPOSE (Object)</th>
<th>APPROACH</th>
<th>PROCESS (The way I went about it)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Local Knowledge Case</td>
<td>Instrumental Testing a Theory Single Case Study</td>
<td>An executive leadership programme in a Qatari organisation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An example of something within my personal experience</td>
<td>With a view to make things better in future</td>
<td>Already an existing framework, Maslow’s theory of TL</td>
<td>Focusing on the characteristics that give it some interest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Something I want to find out more about</td>
<td>Has a purpose in mind</td>
<td>Undertaken to test theory in some way</td>
<td>The case is what is important in itself</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Justification: 1. A US/UK transplant to a Qatari organisation 2. Relevant to local contextual need (Qatar 2030 Vision) 3. Relevant to professional and personal interest 4. Can add to a growing field of inquiry</td>
<td>Explanatory To build a story about what is happening</td>
<td>I will have some assumptions – based on literature / my knowledge/phenomena (own experience of world)</td>
<td>An ELP in a Qatari organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An executive leadership programme in a Qatari organisation</td>
<td>An opportunity to relate one bit to another (from situation/context) and offer explanations on the interrelationships between these bits</td>
<td>Test the theory from different perspectives / settings i.e. participants, training organisation, managers</td>
<td>Shows change over time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Not an experiment where attempt to control all variables</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Illustrative To illustrate phenomenon of TL</td>
<td>A variable has been introduced – the “case” (the ELP)</td>
<td>Looking at variable from a number of directions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Relies to a certain extent on phronesis</td>
<td>Does something occur because of intervention of ELP? – assessment/analysis of process (psychological and social) that contribute or hinder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Presenting pictures “snapshots” enables connections to be made – so readers can share and understand the experience and draw on own to make sense of new image offered</td>
<td>Looking at 3 stakeholders’ experience (subunits) that are embedded (or fit) within the larger case study unit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>An analysis accompanying the pictures</td>
<td>Breakdown the “nests” within the principle unit (the ELP)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Is connected to participants’ own practical learning</td>
<td>Forms part of the broader picture – contrasting units of the wider case</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Metaphors used to get inside the problems</td>
<td>Comparisons are at the heart – but they occur in a wider connected context</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### 3.4 The Case Study Overview

##### 3.4.1 The Programme Provider

Qatari organisations are faced with a multi-faceted challenge, this being the need to comply with the Qatar 2030 National Vision, which sets goals for the country to reach through its governmental, educational and corporate entities. This must be achieved while maximising the inclusion of
Qatari nationals in the workforce as quickly as possible. However, there is a deficit of already skilled Qatari leaders capable of filling all key positions, putting pressure on leadership development programmes, which do not seem to be meeting the challenge adequately. To partly address this issue, my organisation formed an association with a small, specialised training institute, which focuses on the field of sports and sports events management. It was this institute that developed, organised and implemented the ELP on which this case study was based. They state that they hope to “create a lasting legacy of human development” and to “educate, empower and support the talented people who will build outstanding and sustainable sports and events industries in Qatar and throughout the Middle East and North Africa” (Training Partner, official document, 2014). It needs to be clearly stated that I had no involvement or influence on any aspect of the ELP. The conceptualisation, design and planning of the programme were in place before I began working for the sporting entity the participants were drawn from. I was not involved with the selection process of the candidates, and only learnt of the final list of participants at the information meeting at which I was invited to present my research proposal as a first step to elicit their participation in the study. Additionally, due to the duration and high cost of the ELP, the participants were not eligible for further training interventions for a period of one year, meaning that during the research period I had no professional contact with them in the capacity of my L&D role.

3.4.2 The Programme Objectives

The stated objectives of the programme were to enhance the participant’s skills and knowledge of the respective sporting field and sharpen their leadership and management skills with a view to directly impacting their “performance and career development prospects” through significant personal and professional development opportunities and exposure to varying international perspectives and cultures (Official ELP Documentation, 2015). This was to be achieved through the intensive programme outlined next.
3.4.3 Programme Curriculum and Activities

The programme, as outlined by the Training Institute’s representative and documentation, began with the participants travelling to London and undertaking two weeks of intensive English training. Mornings were devoted to English classes and afternoons reserved for cultural and sport-related venue visits in the London region. The aim of this section was to increase and practise their English, while exposing them to a broadening sports and cultural experience. Weeks three to five were spent at a UK university participating in a sport management course, including lectures, group work and several sport related site visits. The participants then flew to the USA and were immersed in an intense leadership course of lectures, case studies and group work conducted by a distinguished East Coast university. They then flew to New York for three final days of sport-related meetings and site visits. As part of the programme requirements, the participants were asked to keep daily reflective blogs of 250–300 words, drawing out their key learning and its relevance to their practice or personal development. Additionally, within one month of their return to Qatar, they were required to write a 1500-word proposal outlining an initiative they believed would improve their organisation or field in general.

3.4.4 The Selection Process

My organisation’s managers were asked to nominate Qatari nationals who they felt had the potential to either take on a leadership role or increase their current leadership role. Twenty-eight candidates were nominated to enter into a selection process, which consisted of five stages: 1) an online, psychometric test; 2) a personal, written statement of at least 500 words; 3) an oral English test conducted over the telephone; 4) a personal interview with a panel made up of representatives of the training partner and our organisation’s management and executive level; and 5) a five-minute presentation to the same panel. After discussion and deliberation by the panel, the final participants were chosen based on their overall results, how long they had worked in the organisation and the needs of their current role.
3.4.5 The Participants

Eight participants were chosen to attend the ELP, but due to the need to maintain anonymity, little can be said about them as individuals. Seven were male and one female. At the time of the programme, one was in a more senior leadership position, three were of low to mid-range seniority and the remaining four were not in leadership positions but held various levels of responsibility. All candidates were Qatari nationals. One candidate was aged in their late 20s and one in their late 40s, the rest falling between the two. All but one were married with family responsibilities. To travel to this extent outside Qatar was a new experience for all and none had participated in such a programme previously.

The successful participants were given an information session to which I was invited to give a ten-minute presentation to inform them about my research. My presentation included an outline of my research proposal, why I was undertaking it, why they were being asked to be involved, what that involvement would mean and if there were risks or benefits. I was explicit that involvement was voluntary and ensured them of confidentiality and answered their questions. Research information sheets and participant consent forms were then handed out. The participants were contacted some days later for extra clarification, resulting in all agreeing to participate and seven following through with both their interviews.

Additionally, three of the participants’ direct supervisors were met on an individual basis, using the same information and hand-outs, and they also agreed to be interviewed before and after the programme. At the time of the selection process, two held directorial positions and the third an executive position. Finally, I invited the individual who acted as a bridge between my organisation and the training institute during all stages of the programme to be interviewed and they agreed. This individual was involved in the programme’s development, organisation and implementation, and was also responsible for bringing together all the
feedback and results and writing the final report and recommendations. This brought the total number of research participants to twelve.

3.5 Data Sources and Procedures

Qualitative social research has typically distinctive approaches to collecting data, although there is considerable variation in the extent to which a researcher will rely on any, or all, of these methods. Most have come about from the need to investigate a phenomenon in its natural setting and important distinctions are that the methods are “flexible and sensitive to the social context in which the data are produced” and that the researcher has some contact with the people being studied (Ritchie, 2003; Snape & Spencer, 2003, p.4). The methods that have been identified as aligning with qualitative data collection are in-depth interviews, observations, focus groups, group discussion, narratives and documentary evidence (Cohen et al., 2011; Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007; Ritchie, 2003; Snape & Spencer, 2003). Within this research, I used face-to-face interviews, documentary sources and personal observations. For an overview and timeline of the data gathering process, see Figure 3.2.
3.5.1 Data Source: Interviews

As described by Miller and Glassner (2011, p.137), “interviewing is a particularly useful method for examining the social world from the points of view of research participants”. Once I had made the decision to collect qualitative data using face-to-face interviews, Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) suggest the next critical issue was to decide exactly who to interview. As a good case study attempts to treat phenomena holistically
by collecting data from many sources (Cohen et al., 2011), I entered into the “heartland of social research” and conducted pre- and post-programme interviews with three sets of stakeholders to see the experience of the ELP from three viewpoints (Tight, 2003, p.192). A valid representation of the overall experience was achieved when seven of the eight ELP participants undertook pre- and post-programme interviews. The pre-programme interviews were undertaken during the two weeks before the participants’ departure to London and, on average, lasted between 20 to 30 minutes (see Appendix A). The post-programme interviews were conducted between one and three months after the participants’ return from the USA using a set of questions relevant to the programme and post-programme periods and averaged between 30 to 45 minutes (see Appendix B). The participants showed they were taking the interviews seriously by their body language, intensity and occasionally forthrightly honest answers. The participants’ direct superiors and the training institute representative were interviewed during the first two weeks of the ELP (see Appendices C and E) and a second time approximately seven months later, using post-programme questions (see Appendices D & F).

I maintained flexibility during the interviews by using the questions as prompts and signposts to guide the face-to-face semi-structured, conversational interviews (Blaxter et al., 2006; Holstein & Gubrium, 2004). An advantage to this approach was that the informal, conversational style was more in keeping with the predominantly oral Middle Eastern culture of the participants, making them more comfortable to discuss and to share their thoughts (Al Omari, 2008). Yin (2012, p.12) states that if done properly this flexible format can “reveal how case study participants construct reality and think about situations, not just to provide answers to a researcher’s specific questions” and that “the participants construction of reality provides important insights into the case”. Using a semi-structured approach also made it possible to make on the spot modifications to questions according to the participant’s openness or reluctance, their understanding of concepts because of language constraints or due to the
time available (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). Holstein and Gubrium (2004, p.141) state that an interview is a meaning-making conversation with meaning being “actively and communicatively assembled in the interview encounter.” This was evident when an interviewee posed his or her own question to me or expected a response to a statement made. I was comfortable with taking this more interactional role as required. Interviews were conducted on our organisation’s premises, either in their own office or in a designated meeting room, which increased the interview’s legitimacy in their eyes over any undertaken in a less appropriate, informal setting. With both the written and verbal permission of each interviewee, all interviews were recorded and professionally transcribed for analysis.

3.5.2 Data Source: Documents
Literate societies produce a great number of documentary materials, none of which are neutral but are constructions of individual, organisational or occupational life and are used to self-publicise, compete or justify. Documents can be public or private and include certificates, reports, letters, diaries, photographs and notes. The idea of documents should not be limited to print, but can also include electronic and digital resources, web sites, promotional videos and blogs (Atkinson & Coffey, 2004; Cohen et al., 2011). The training institute represented itself to others through the ELP overview, hand-outs and the final report, whereas the participants presented themselves through their blogs and final assignments.

3.5.3 Data Source: Participants’ Blogs
Recent research into the use of blogs as a learning tool points to them as encouraging critical thinking, reflection on practice, self-regulation and learner autonomy, which in turn encourages self-reflection, decision-making and independent action (Ballan, 2014; Chen, 2014; Dalgarno, Reupert, & Bishop, 2015; Shana & Abdulibdehb, 2015). A blog is a way of encouraging, or even ensuring, that participants reflect on their experiences as they occur rather than afterwards, as is often the case with a learning journal (Dalgarno et al., 2015). Blogs also give a different opportunity for meditative feedback and praise from others such as peers.
or educators and opportunity for shared reflection, analysis and peer support (Chen, 2014; Dalgarno et al., 2015; Shana & Abdulibdehb, 2015). This was possible in the case of the ELP, as all the participants and the training institute had access to the ELP blogs.

The participants were given instructions to maintain a reflective diary of between 250 to 300 words per day in the form of a blog entry. They were assessed on three criteria: 1) how well they synthesised and integrated their learning with their roles within their organisation; 2) how regularly they posted; and 3) the length of their posts. None of the participants completed their blog daily. The fewest number of entries was 18, the most 32, the rest falling between these two. There was also a range in the size of the blogs, some containing only a few lines while others consisted of several hundred words. The blogs produced an additional, unexpected data source in the form of a photo journal of the ELP programme. Several participants included photos from their first blog and this quickly became the standard, to the point where some later blogs were predominantly photographic. The human urge to record our lives is reflected in the billions of photographs taken annually, as we use images to represent our objective world and communicate our deepest feelings (Prosser, 1998).

What is photographed and what is shared reflects choices. The content of the photographs is fundamental to why each “brief moment of exposure” was chosen to be included in a blog posting, because photographs can act as social actors, constructing understandings and influencing those that view them (Hart & Edwards, p.2, 2004; Delden, 2014). For these reasons, the 624 photographs included in the blogs were not overlooked but became another important data source, whereby I could literally ‘see’ the programme and triangulate with the other data sources. Yin (2012, p.13) states, “the most desired convergence occurs when three (or more) independent sources all point to the same set of events, facts, or interpretations.” This proved true when themes such as the importance of the group or an awareness of history and legacy were born out by the number of photographs showing the group or statues and trophy cases that began to emerge in the blogs at the same time as written references
were made to these points. The significant impression made by one of the leadership tutors was apparent not only from the number of mentions of him in the blogs and interviews, but by the disproportionate number of photos that included him over other tutors, proving the benefits of triangulation for making interpretations and claims from the data (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007).

3.5.4 Data Source: Participants’ Final Assignments
To achieve full completion of the ELP, the participants were required to write a final assignment of 1500 words in which they should choose a problem or issue from within their own professional role, analyse it and suggest solutions or measures to overcome it. The assignment was due within four weeks of their return to normal duties; however, most assignments were not handed in until several weeks after this deadline and many reminders from the training institute.

3.5.5 Data Source: Organisational Documentation
The documentation from the training institute was limited to a brochure handed out to all nominees for the selection process, which gave an overview, objectives and timeline of the ELP. However, the training institute kindly made available copies of the above mentioned, participants’ final assignments and their own final report drawn up after the completion of the programme. This document covered all aspects of the programme, including a more detailed outline of its objectives, overall and individual participant assessments by means of the work they accomplished, feedback from their instructors, their blogs and final assignments. It ended with recommendations and conclusions.

3.5.6 Data Source: Personal Observations and Journal
Because I work in the same organisation as the participants, I had the opportunity to work with, observe or hear of them prior to and after the ELP. Occasionally, I took the opportunity to note an occurrence or a personal observation and, because the time lapse between the first and second interviews was so long, this became an important memory tool for when there was time to develop the ideas more fully. Although this was
not a primary source of data, Malacrida (2007) suggests that when studying other people’s lives, journaling encourages qualitative researchers to be more reflexive and develop a means of accounting for one’s research choices.

3.6 Analysis Procedure

Corban and Strauss (1990, p.4) state that qualitative methods “can be systematically evaluated only if their canons and procedure are made explicit”. I have covered what I see as the canons, or criteria of this case study by clarifying what a case study entails and outlined the boundaries of what this particular case encompasses by describing the programme and the sources from which the data was drawn; I will now undertake to make explicit the procedure followed during the analysis of that data.

Just as the research question and the research design are driven by what you would like to discover, so too with the choice of data analysis. Thomas suggests that since a case study takes a holistic view of a phenomenon, it makes sense to choose a method of analysis that “explicitly frames your analysis in a holistic context” as a means of helping your thinking process to see patterns and develop connections (2011, p.170). Rather than striving to preserve all data, typical of quantitative analytical approaches, qualitative approaches tend to “winnow” the data and aggregate it into a limited number of themes on which to focus (Creswell, 2014; Guest, MacQueen, & Namey, 2012). These themes become the fundamental building blocks, the data to think with and use to interpret the meanings being constructed by the participants involved in the case (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007; Thomas, 2011).

For the analysis of the data collected for this case study, I used a six-phase, thematic analysis as defined by Braun and Clarke (2006). It is a foundational method “for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data”, which is compatible with “both essentialist and constructionist paradigms” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.79). While it has the advantage of great flexibility, the authors stress that it can, and should be,
defined within clearly stated guidelines, thereby increasing its methodological and theoretical soundness. I implemented the six phases according to Figure 3.3.

The first phase involved the transcription of all the interviews and a quality controlling of that process; then the entire data set was read and re-read for familiarisation and noting of initial ideas. Secondly, the data set was read again while highlighting, underlining and making note of any interesting features pertaining to the research question or transformative learning. Both these stages included reviewing all the photographs contained within the participant’s blogs, which gave a general visualisation of the programme. Repeated review of those data extracts and photographs elicited the initial codes. Those codes were transferred to an initial code mind-map (see Figure 4.2). The third phase involved reviewing and sorting all extracts and photographs related to those codes and clustering them further into potential themes. The extracts were then transcribed, and together with the photographs, which were used as another means of triangulation of any emerging themes, were sorted into thematic groups and further reviewed to ensure each one related to the theme to which it had been assigned, whereby it was retained, reassigned or discarded. At this stage, a thematic mind-map of the analysis was generated (see Figure 4.3). The fifth phase consisted of further refining the individual themes, generating clear titles and creating a logical way of telling the story the analysis revealed (see Figure 4.4). A fuller account of this process can been seen in the next chapter of this thesis, which covers the analysis and findings of the case study.
Figure 3.3 Thematic Analysis Flow

Adapted from Braun & Clark, 2006, p.87

(1) Become familiar with data
• Transcribe data
• Read and re-read data
• Note down initial ideas

(2) Generate initial codes
• Code interesting features across entire data set
• Collate data relevant to each code

(3) Create a set of candidate themes
• Collate codes into potential themes
• Cluster data extracts relevant to each potential theme

(4a) Is each theme consistent to all its data extracts?

(4c) Generate a thematic map of analysis

(5) Define and name themes
• Further analysis to refine specifics of each theme
• Identify the overall story the analysis tells
• Generate clear names and definitions for each theme

(6) Produce the Report
• Final review of all data
• Select vivid, compelling extract examples of themes
• Final analysis of selected extracts
• Relate the analysis back to research questions and literature review
• Produce report of analysis

Adapted from Braun & Clark, 2006, p.87
3.7 Addressing Limitations

Despite case studies now making up a substantial portion of research in diverse fields such as education, economics, biology, politics and history, Flyvbjerg (2011) laments that they are poorly understood and often held in low regard in relation to theory, reliability and validity.

The five most common misconceptions Flyvbjerg (2011) and others highlight are: 1) general, theoretical knowledge is more valuable than concrete case knowledge, which I personally feel is a subjective argument. One of the strengths of case studies is they are usually more easily understood by multiple audiences and therefore bring a wider awareness of examples of theory in practice (Nisbet & Watt, 1984; Simons, 2009); 2) case studies are more useful for generating hypotheses than testing or theory building. As a good hypothesis is the starting point of much valuable research, this is hardly a weakness. Yin (2009) contends that because case studies can test theory in several empirical cases, they can actually broaden a theory; 3) they contain a bias towards confirming the researcher’s preconceived notions. Flyvbjerg (2011), like other historical researchers, points out that preconceived notions are a fundamental human characteristic. It is true the researcher decides the focus, purpose and questions to research, thereby defining the borders of the case study, but this is true of most social science research and awareness of this limitation should alert the good researcher to be extra diligent in mitigating the effects of preconception and allow the case study to force its own view on them (Thomas, 2011). In a review of case studies, Flyvbjerg (2011) demonstrates it is falsification of preconceptions that is the most common experience of the case study researcher and not verification; 4) it is hard to develop propositions or theories from a specific case study. This is at odds with Simons (2009), who describes both the theory-led and the theory-generating case study approach and mentions developing theoretical propositions as part of prior development to guide the collection of data. Radely and Chamberlain (2012, p.392) suggest that it is important to remember a strength of case studies is that they generalise “to theoretical propositions, rather than to population”, which leads us to the
final and most common critique; 5) it is not possible to generalise from an individual case: therefore, such a study cannot make a valid scientific contribution - no more than can the results of a single experiment. In most instances, the case study does not set out to generalise in the common sense of the term; rather, the role of a case study is not to “extrapolate probabilities (statistical generalisations) but to expand and generalise theories (analytic generalisations)” (Yin, 2014, p.21).

These misconceptions are based on the assumption that all research should be governed by identical rules of sampling, generalisation and induction, whereas a case study is not an experiment and will not give you the same kind of information an experiment will. It would be difficult to demonstrate a positivist view of reliability due to each case study focusing on a unique situation, which is bounded by edges determined either by what is the focus of the case or by the researcher (Cohen et al., 2011; Golafshani, 2003; Thomas, 2011). With their closeness to real-life situations that reveal a multitude of details, case studies are just as valuable as other research designs in that they gain a view of reality showing that human behaviour cannot be understood solely as rules or generalising acts. Case studies, because they do not have to seek frequency of occurrences, can “replace quantity with quality and intensity” (Cohen et al. 2011, p.294).

3.8 Ethical Considerations
During all stages of this thesis, from proposal to completion, I adhered to all requirements specified by Liverpool University’s Ethics Board. For instance, all participants were fully informed, both written and orally, of what their involvement would entail and given the right to refuse involvement or withdraw at any stage without prejudice to themselves, their work role or their involvement in the ELP.

For reasons of anonymity for the participants and their organisations, the specific field of sport in which we all work has not been mentioned in this thesis, nor the names of any entity involved. The participants will be
referred to by number and not by gender or culturally oriented pseudonyms.

There is a reasonable argument that it is ethically dubious to conduct research within one’s own organisation, due to the inherent tensions of being linked with the organisation the participants were drawn from and returned to (Drake, 2011). The up-side is that the researcher can bring their professional knowledge and judgement to the context being researched and such an insider eye can be advantageous if care is taken not to embed personal values into the analysis of the data along with professional insight (Fox et al., 2007; Tight, 2004). Whether an insider or outsider researcher, the same efforts must be made to conform to rigorous standards of ethics, data collection, analysis and writing up to produce an authentic end product.

I felt no unease in pursuing this research within my own organisation for the following reasons. Firstly, I was not involved in the development or implementation of this ELP, which was done by an affiliated organisation. Secondly, I was not involved in the above described nomination or selection process. Additionally, I am not in a superior position to coerce involvement from anyone involved. All the programme participants were Qatari nationals under no obligation to me, an expatriate worker, ensuring any time, information or documents were given willingly. Finally, I gained written approval from all parties, including my own manager and that of our CEO, after the organisation’s lawyer reviewed and cleared my research proposal.

3.9 Summary
This section of the thesis has made explicit the rationale for choosing a qualitative research design due to the nature of the question being asked and the positionality towards the nature of research I bring to the study. It then looked at the reasoning behind choosing a case study approach as the best method to learn as much as possible about one point of interest in my professional sphere, with the aim of better informing future practice. It
has demonstrated that it was also an acceptable way of answering the ‘what’ and ‘how’ aspects of my posed research question and, in so doing, drawing a rich picture of the experience of a leadership programme in a Qatari context. The section then went on to outline the boundaries of the case study, describe the participant sample and the sources from which data were collected, and how and when those data were collected. The next part described thematic analysis, the holistic data analysis method used and how it was implemented on the data set. The last two parts of this section addressed the limitations typically raised when a case study approach is adopted for research and finally addressed how ethical issues were taken into consideration for this thesis undertaking. The next chapter will present the analysis and findings from the case study.
4 Analysis and Findings

4.1 Introduction

It should be stated that analysis of the data teased out clear indications of instances of transformative learning occurring within and as a result of the ELP. However, proving those instances is not the focus of this case study: instead, it attempts to give an answer to the research question in order to recommend the best practice in leadership development programmes in the Qatari organisational context to bring about transformative learning experiences.

Transformative learning is not a uniform event which can be forced, because it is a unique occurrence in the mind of each individual (Illeris, 2014). All an educating entity can do is attempt to create circumstances or opportunities to facilitate its occurrence. Conversely, it is possible the actions of the educators, or other circumstances, may hinder its occurrence. The data from this case study indicated there were several fostering opportunities available from the first inception of this ELP to well after its conclusion, therefore the findings have been presented as a timeline of when those opportunities arose and were either taken advantage of or lost. The time-frames are, firstly, the pre-programme stage, which included the themes of becoming a candidate, the selection process, the pre-programme experience, expectations, and information and preparation given; secondly, the programme implementation stage, which included the themes of the participant learning experience, English levels, travel, personal, cultural and extracurricular interactions, the blog and the group; and thirdly, the post-programme stage, which included the themes of organisational outcomes, participant outcomes, leadership and post-programme follow-up.

As only one interviewee was female, and therefore identifiable, all necessary references to individual interviewees are made using masculine pronouns to maintain anonymity. ‘Participants’ refers to the eight people who attended the ELP, whereas ‘interviewees’ refers to the entire
interview set of participants, managers and the training institute representative. Direct quotations are shown as PI for participant interview, and 1 or 2 to designate pre- or post-programme interview, with the addition of the participant’s designated number. For instance, a quotation from the first interview with the seventh participant is cited as PI17 and a quote from the second interview with the fourth participant is cited as PI24. Quotations from the participants’ blogs are cited as PB and from their final assignments as FA with the designated participant number. Quotes from the managers and the training representative are cited as MTR in the same way. For instance, a quote from the third representative of that group’s second interview is cited as MTR23.

4.2 Analysis

The analysis was based upon the six-stage thematic analysis method, developed by Braun and Clarke (2006), as previously outlined in the Methodology section (see Figure 3.3). During phase (1), I had the data professionally transcribed; I then quality controlled each transcription by listening to the audio while reading the transcription (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Any discrepancies were corrected, but these proved to be minor and mainly involved the occasional use of Arabic words, names or pronunciations, and locally understood acronyms. This was the first time I had access to the entire data set and so this phase was about familiarisation, whereby all the interviews, blogs and their photos, final assignments and the training institute’s documentation and post-programme report were read for a general overview of its “depth and breadth”, with notes added only when an initial idea was strongly generated (Braun & Clark, 2006, p.87). The entire data set was reread and during this reading, I followed the recommendation of Guest, MacQueen, and Namey (2012, p.53): “We notice, tag the text, and make a few excited notes about the potential significance of the text. But, we do not linger; we do not elaborate dragon theories; and we do not code. We keep reading”. Because the human brain is predisposed to look for patterns and for meanings, this approach had the advantage of helping me to avoid looking for anything specific, make personal interpretations or fulfil any
preconceived idea I may have held as to what it should contain. Instead, I wanted to give the data the opportunity to speak in its own voice and push forward points of interest.

For phase (2), the data set was then read again, specifically to highlight any items that captured “something in relation to the research question” or suggested transformative learning had been fostered or hindered, and the context of those occurrences was noted (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.82). During another reading, all the identified features, comments and notes were transferred to a separate notebook under their anonymous identifiers. Reading and rereading the data snippets generated several broad, initial codes of general significance, which were transferred to white board sheets.

The snippets of data, which numbered hundreds, were then transferred to anonymously coded sticky notes and sorted to whichever initial, general code they best matched (see Figure 4.1). The sticky notes consisted of phrases and terms used consistently, or powerful words or comments used with emphasis, short comments and paraphrases, observations and references. Those that did not match a code were not discarded but put aside. Towards the end of the process, this remaining group was sorted again and it was found that two more initial codes emerged.
The final initial data codes to emerge were: the selection; the group; pre-programme factors; implementation factors; the blog; post-programme follow-up; transformative indicators; outcomes; and recommendations (see Figure 4.2).

![Figure 4.1 Example of Initial Coding Process – Phase (2)](image)

![Figure 4.2 Phase (2) Initial Codes Generated](image)
Phase (3) involved reviewing, sorting and making an interpretative analysis of all the sticky notes attached to each initial code in the search for potential themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Using sticky notes made it easier to make connections, form groups and move data snippets from one group to another to consolidate some codes into main themes, while breaking others down into further themes. Once the potential themes were identified, all the data snippets relating to each theme were transferred to separate word files to enable easy printing, reading, further analysis and refinement.

Moving into phase (4a) required that the data extracts relating to each theme were Level 1 reviewed, “at the level of the code’s data extracts”, to check that they were indeed consistent with the theme, then Level 2 reviewed to “consider validity of the individual themes in relation to the data set” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.91), which involved going back to the original transcripts and data set to ensure the extract or noted idea had not been misaligned out of context (Bryman, 2001). With so many data extracts available, and attempting to look at quality, not quantity, any weaker examples, not entirely capturing the essence of the theme, were winnowed out (Crowe et al., 2015; Guest et al., 2012; Thomas, 2011). For phase (4b), a thematic map of the analysis was generated (see Figure 4.3). At this point it was obvious to me that it was not possible to focus on only one or two themes, but that I needed to “provide a rich thematic description” of the entire data set to give a sense of the many interwoven themes that formed the complete picture of the ELP (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.83).
It was interesting to note that while religiously following the analytical phases of Braun and Clarke (2006), in which they first generate many initial codes, which are sorted into potential themes and finally condensed into a few final themes, this data analysis organically deviated slightly. The phase (2) reading and review of the data set resulted in only a few very broad codes, into which it was possible to sort all the hundreds of small points of interest. I thought I had inadvertently skipped a phase and gone directly to the final themes, but upon further review and sorting of the data snippets within each initial code it became apparent that, although several could be condensed, others needed to be broken down into smaller themes. Therefore, phase (3) blended directly and seamlessly into phase (4a).

For phase (5) of the analysis process and using the word files created, each individual theme was first reviewed as a standalone entity to identify what made it specific, how it could be defined, what name best reflected its content and which part of the overall story it would tell (Crowe et al., 2015). As stated by Braun and Clarke (2006, p.92), this was not to “just paraphrase the content of the data extracts presented, but identify what is
of interest about them and why." As the specifics of each theme were further refined and names were solidified, I began to develop concurrently a further mind map that was not only a thematic map of the analysis, but also reflected further refinement, the generated names for each theme, while it additionally helped me to clarify how the themes could be coherently pulled together to tell the overall story contained in the analysis (see Figure 4.4).

**Figure 4.4 Phases (5 and 6) Road Map to Presenting Analysis and Findings**

As can be seen in Figure 4.4, the identified themes seemed to indicate that the most coherent way to present the analysis and findings of the ELP was to divide it into stages and address each theme in the time period in which it had the most relevance. As the aim of an illustrative, explanatory case study is to build a story, show relationships and connections, and suggest meaningful explanations, while accompanying it with some analysis of each ‘snapshot’ of the case portrayed, this seemed both a logical and efficient approach (Thomas, 2011; Yin, 2014). It became the road map for taking the television, documentary approach advocated by Cohen et al. (2011) when moving into phase (6), to produce a report of the analysis, while helping to keep in mind the question which was the driving force behind the research. It follows the build-up and progression of the themes, where much of the pre-programme had some sort of impact on
the programme implementation themes, which in turn affected the post-programme themes. The need to offer some immediate explanation of each theme also justified combining the findings and analysis as one chapter, while moving the case study’s two overall themes of factors fostering and hindering transformative learning, and answering the thesis question, to the Discussion chapter.

4.3 Findings

4.3.1 The Pre-Programme Stage

4.3.1.1 Becoming a Candidate
Controversy would surely arise from attempting deliberately to throw participants into an epochal and life-changing situation to bring about transformative learning. A more acceptable approach for any learning programme would be to bring about an accumulation of insights that could gradually change points of view or habits of mind (Snyder, 2008). In the case of this studied leadership programme, the starting point for that accumulation can be pinpointed to the day the participants were informed their names had been put forward for the ELP selection process, as it was an event that positively affected all interviewed participants in some way. There was a mixture of pride and happiness at being noticed within their organisation, or confidence of success, which in one case was due to having had promises from a key person in his organisation. This type of experience may have been a reason that most interviewees raised questions and doubts as to whether these first selections were purely merit-based. Rather, they expressed concerns that they were made arbitrarily, without reference to character, loyalty, seniority and past or possible future contribution to the organisation or the field of Qatari sports in general. It was also a time of some doubt for the managers, who spoke of having to choose candidates quickly, without having been given what they felt was sufficient information about the programme or selection criteria to better gauge which subordinate would be the most appropriate choice. Having to make such a rapid decision without due consideration of several unknowns did not sit easily on the Qatari managers, whose culture
has a low tolerance of uncertainty (Bogdan et al., 2012; Hofstede, 1994). Doubts as to the honesty of the initial selection process lessened the candidates’ sense of accomplishment and created negative expectations in the coming selection process, which in turn, according to their own statements, influenced the actions some of them took during that stage in a less than honest way. I would suggest that it put the candidates into a negatively competitive mind-set rather than an open, transformative one.

4.3.1.2 The Selection Process

It took several weeks from the announcement of candidates, through implementation of the five evaluations, to the announcement of the successful participants. This section received mixed reviews from the participants, with some parts of the process being uniformly disliked or distrusted and others liked. In the middle was the online psychometric test, with some saying it was useless or easy to manipulate, and others who rather enjoyed the experience, including one who liked it because it made him examine himself. Despite the nerves and fear they engendered, the interview and presentation to the selection committee were the most valued parts of the selection process. The least respected parts of the process were the telephone English test and the personal written statement. I was surprised at how openly and honestly the participants unanimously stated their reason, which was that the telephone interview, and in some cases the psychometric test and the written statements, could be, and were, cheated on, whereas only the face to face encounters were honest and showed the real thoughts, experience and calibre of the actual candidate and not those of a paid writer, translator, editor or telephone stand-in. As one participant explained to me:

“Because I want to go. I will cheat myself so I will go there. Even if it’s wrong, but I want to go there because it’s opportunity to have experience. It’s something good for all of us … everybody is racing to get this opportunity” (PI16).
Another told me about how they were told the exact time they would be called for their telephone English test and how easy it was to forward the call.

“Why not? Nobody knows. I’m cheating myself also, for example. This can be. I know some people did it … but in the presentation, you are only the one … so it will be equal” (PI17).

The attitude towards the selection process was predominantly negative, which was likely exacerbated by the entire process being completed too close to the time participants were due to leave for the start of the programme. It was generally termed by the participants as long, boring and overly elaborate, much of which they couldn’t see the point of. It was rarely taken as an opportunity in itself to learn or reflect on one’s role, motivations, ambitions or expectations, but was more often viewed as something to manipulate and complete with the highest score possible. Despite the Qatari organisational culture giving priority to the maintenance of personal relationships (Bogdan et al., 2012), even the managers were concerned that the selection process had gone too far in focusing on the immediate personality of the candidates and not enough on their competence and work commitment, which they felt should have been monitored over several organisational evaluation cycles. There was also concern that neither the selection nor the programme was based on any type of leadership competency model so they could be measured against accepted standards. Therefore, the selection process was not a good fit to this Qatari organisational context and did little to foster an inclusive mindset, but rather created a competitive one. Nor did it encourage the participants’ assumptions or expectations to be more open, reflective and emotionally primed for change (Mezirow, 2009).

4.3.1.3 The Pre-Programme Experience
When first interviewed, between being informed of their inclusion as one of the successful eight and leaving Qatar for the UK, there was a definite sense of excitement and pride expressed by all the participants and a realisation they had been given a great opportunity. It is of interest that
rather than the act of being chosen opening their minds to the possibility of being a leader, it instead confirmed and boosted their confidence in self-beliefs they already held. For example:

“I think that I am a good leader who can lead his staff in a fair way to do the work smoothly and in a professional way”
(PI12).

Several participants expressed an element of satisfaction that previously overlooked, innate qualities and potential were now being recognised by their organisation, peers and family.

“I am a good leader … Since before, I know. I’m different. I would be a good leader. No one give me the chance”
(PI15).

There was no doubt in this participant’s mind that he was already a leader, and was now excited to find out how good a leader he could be.

“I want to know what…if I am good. I could be something”
(PI15).

Another stated:

“I’m really happy; maybe they just remember me now”
(PI17).

This was also noticed by the managers and training representative (MTR):

“First of all, I think the whole selection itself was a boost of confidence for individuals. In our organisation, I think the whole element of appreciation for something or someone for good work goes a long way, so that changed the whole perspective for some of the guys and built that confidence that, “if I am selected for this programme, I am definitely able to make some good positive change”
(MTRI2).

In a culture where any title or leadership position brings more wasata, or status, power and the ability to influence, being recognised as either leaders or potential leaders is not a small thing, which was noted by several participants.
“The VIP person or the president of the Qatar [organisation] support me to be in the community. To show my ability there” (PI18).

The MTR noticed the extreme boost in confidence with some concern, in that now too many had taken on an “executive mind-set” (MTRI12), meaning the power and attitude, without yet having the substance to back it up, while another concern was that they were exhibiting over-confidence and they hoped they wouldn’t come back as “know it alls” (MTRI13). This was a legitimate concern, as developing an “inflated view of themselves” is a phenomenon previously noticed in leadership programme participants (Espedal, 2013, p.613). In contrast, the extra recognition and status weighed on some of the participants, who indicated that they now felt more responsibility to improve as leaders, even before they left the country and embarked on their ELP. For example;

“That is why I want to add something. When I get back, I want to add something to my country, to my career, to everybody, to my person. I want to add something. My country is paying a lot of money.” (PI16).

The paradox of the situation was that although being selected affirmed the participants’ belief in their self-worth as leaders, they additionally all expressed doubts about the choice of at least some of their fellow participants. They all questioned if the right choices had been made, or had doubts or concerns about two or three, and one participant worried that some did not seem to be taking it seriously enough.

4.3.1.4 Pre-Programme Expectations
The eight successful candidates were invited to a meeting and given information packs. This interaction raised a variety of expectations in all the participants and the managers of what could be gained from the ELP, some of which were more grounded than others. Perhaps because the participants already saw themselves as leaders, aspects directly related to leadership did not feature in the interviews as strongly as I had anticipated. Most expectations in this respect came from the MTR, who hoped the participants would gain understanding of leadership’s key
aspects, develop skills, would change their approach, mature as leaders and thereby be better decision makers. Of the three participants who mentioned learning about leadership, two discussed it only in respect of gaining knowledge about it quickly, and not skill in producing it. The third discussed wanting to learn how to be a firmer leader and thereby gain more authority.

The organisation’s list of expectations expressed through the MTRs was extensive in comparison to that from the participants, even though one of the managers said he had been given too little information regarding the programme to form an opinion on his hopes or expectations. Another articulated that he wanted to see a deeper, subconscious change rather than just superficial learning. This was in line with other expectations, such as to be more open thinkers, to widen their views or perspectives or be able to think outside the box; to be more creative in their dealings with the local context; and to have more emotional maturity and show personal growth. In a working sense, they were eager to see their participants gain an international perspective and return with hands-on experience that had practical application in the organisation and in the Qatari sports context. An expectation that they would work better with others and cascade their new knowledge and skills down through the organisation was mentioned as a priority by all MTRs. They should think:

“I’m going to come back and make a difference”
(MTR/14).

An increase in teamwork, engagement and activity was a common theme in the MRTs’ expectations, as they wanted the participants to come back more pro-active, eager for responsibility, able to take calculated risks and yet be more accountable for their actions and further self-development. What was lacking at this point was any explanation or knowledge as to how these expectations were going to be achieved.

The participants’ expectations were more cautious and vaguely general than those of the MRTs, especially as they all mentioned that they did not
know enough about the programme. However, they showed openness to new experiences and possible transformation because their expectations included wanting to broaden their outlook, to get ideas and to have their eyes opened to new possibilities and ways of looking at things. One participant wanted to be challenged and another recognised that some of his fellow participants knew more than he did and anticipated needing to change his mentality. Another was eager to become more self-confident. One MTR and one participant were pessimistic regarding the level of the programme’s customisation and connections to their own culture and religion. Almost all interviewees mentioned an anticipated increase in English skills, with an emphasis on being better communicators. As one MTR stated:

“So, it isn’t just a case of spelling and grammar, right?” (MTR3).

4.3.1.5 Pre-Programme Information and Preparation
A strong theme to come out of this pre-programme stage was a lack of pre-programme information and preparation, since all participants and managers referenced this point. The information pack they were given contained five very broad programme objectives, a general overview of class schedules, visits and travel, and a brief outline of the blog and post-programme assignment requirements. This was not deemed enough, and their cultural avoidance of uncertainty, unknowns and risk were inhibiting factors that were not addressed during this time, leaving them wanting more details and clarification (Hofstede, 1994). Lack of clarity naturally raised questions as to the worth of their time and effort in relation to the relevancy of the programme. One participant said he understood they were to learn about leadership, but had no idea what aspects of such a big subject were to be included and whether they would be relevant to his situation. Another admitted he was asked what he would want to see included in the programme, but only during his selection discussion, when the course was already organised and fixed. He rather philosophically commented, with a shrug, “Just we have to wait and see.” In fact, as was pointed out by one manager, the entire pre-programme or preparation stage was missing. There were participants who wanted or asked for pre-
reading materials, but were not given any. They could have initiated some research themselves, but not having a detailed ELP contents list and the short time-frame between confirmation of selection and leaving the country had an impact, making it neither realistically feasible nor possible.

The short time-frame between selection and the participants leaving for the programme was the next identified inhibiting theme. For reasons unclear to the participants, they were informed of their successful inclusion in the programme just two weeks before the date to leave Qatar and travel to Britain. Within that time-frame, they had to organise for their work duties to be covered by a colleague, organise their family commitments, and obtain visas and travel documents. Most participants experienced stress to varying degrees due to this short time-frame. Obtaining travel documents for citizens from Arabic countries is accompanied by quite some bureaucracy, and customs regarding family commitments and women travelling alone had to be taken into account. The stress may have increased the importance of other concerns, such as leaving the family for so long, fear of the travel involved and how they would react to weeks away from their culture in the cold English weather.

While it is accepted that disorientation has been identified as one of the phases that may occur during a transformative learning experience, there should be a clear distinction made between a person experiencing disorientation and one experiencing stress. When transformative learning occurs, it will always be in relation to one or more of the core elements of critical reflection, individual experience and voluntary discourse (Isopahkala-Bouret, 2008; Mezirow, 1997, 2009, 2012). However, these require that participants are “willing to engage in self-exploration and self-experimentation” and in a “safe environment where people can play with cognitions, emotions and behaviour” (Ciporen, 2008, p.200). It can be supposed that more time to create that safe, stress-free environment could have resulted in more willing participants and therefore in one or more of the core elements occurring. The participants could have reflected to a greater degree on what was to come and the possible implications for
themselves and their career. They could have also entered into more
discourse with their fellow participants, managers or trusted acquaintances
to make sense of their current and future experience. Disorientation, with
the medical meaning of being temporarily perplexed or confused regarding
time, place or personal identity (The American Heritage Science
Dictionary, 2002), and the additional transformative learning meaning of
experiencing a degree of disruption to one’s “subjective orientation to the
world (worldview or inner consciousness)” (Morgan, 2011, p.249), would
not necessarily hinder those three elements occurring. In fact, Dix (2016,
p.114) points out that not all life-challenging circumstances are stressful:
“some are exhilarating, even though disorienting and problematic.”
However, stress can be either physical or psychological, and manifests in
bodily responses of a deleterious nature that disturb or interfere with a
normal physiological equilibrium or produce psychological strain or
disequilibrium (Weinberg, Sutherland, & Cooper, 2010). Morgan (2011,
p.261) warns that extreme caution must be exercised “to prevent too much
disequilibrium that could work against transformative growth by causing
extreme emotional and/or intellectual discomfort and distress.” Such a
state would not be conducive to reflection or taking stock of a current
experience. The lack of preparation and pre-programme involvement
negatively raised the uncertainty and stress levels of the participants,
undermining their overall confidence in the programme and its potential
benefits, and I would suggest made them less open to the potential of
gaining a transformative learning experience as a consequence.

4.3.2 The Programme Implementation Stage

4.3.2.1 The Participant Learning Experience
The feedback from interviewees regarding the overall experience of the
programme was generally positive, with participants feeling it had been a
great opportunity which had given them an interesting and significant
learning experience. Some positive aspects included any visit or example
not too dissimilar for them to be able to relate it to their own context or any
scenario or case study that had authenticity and relevance to their job
roles. However, they felt the relevancy factor was rather low on many site
visits, and that specificity for their roles within the organisation was not addressed. During week three, they made it clear to their tutors and the training institute they were not benefitting enough for the time invested. This was a self-empowering act which they all mentioned with pride, and although their concerns were accommodated with an individual meeting with a role-specific peer, they felt it was not enough to offset the misalignment of much of the rest of the programme.

They also felt the programme was heavy on theory and lighter on practical application, and this was especially irritating when the information was repeated several times. They were shown multiple examples of what good practice in the sports business looks like and their blogs were filled with copious notes on what leaders or potential leaders should develop in Qatar, but as previously experience by other Middle Eastern participants (Madsen, 2010), they were frustrated by the lack of information on how to apply what they were hearing and seeing to what they experience in their own culture and context. This goes to the heart of a previously outlined problem: there must be a balance between “academic rigour and business relevance. Research-based insights without application are likely intellectual exercises of limited value, while practical strategies divorced from underlying theory offer only anecdotal, hit-or-miss possibilities. Either without the other is a rudderless ship” (Canals, 2010, p.84).

“I saw the people who was working in the sport, it’s totally their structure and their tradition, their society is totally different from here. We cannot take what they have. The economy there or the people there, the style of their life assist to go through their planning, their strategy, so for that they succeed. Maximum, we can take two or three per cent from their system to work here in Doha” (PI27).

I would suggest that, for several, a compounding factor in their frustration was that their skills sets were not yet developed or mature enough to assimilate or manipulate much of the information they were being given. They were still looking for cut and paste solutions to their professional issues and were instead being given, in a very short space of time, an
overwhelming selection of tools with which to build those solutions. Both participants and MTRs mentioned that in the time available there was too much for them to take in, and at times they felt overwhelmed. Feeling frustrated, overwhelmed and overloaded are different occurrences than having a sense of disorientation, the space for self-reflection, or a critical assessment of assumptions encouraged and nurtured from within a safe and trusting context (Taylor & Snyder, 2012). Rather, if there is not resolution to such a situation, it is more likely to alienate and cause avoidance and withdrawal (Weinberg, Sutherland, & Cooper, 2010), which is visible in numerous photographs showing several of the participants with disengaged body language and their focus on their mobile phones rather than the lecture.

Such disengagement was not apparent in the two components of the ELP, which were directly related to leadership models, theory and their application. These were conducted by tutors whose specialist subject was leadership, using an involved and interactive learning style. Participant comments showed their enthusiasm for what they voted as a limited highlight of the ELP.

“The other part, which was over to the leadership. I think I love that idea. That time was very trusted for me. I get a lot of knowledge I think. Something that I can use even in my work journey or my career” (PI22).

“Maybe that’s what I was missing about the leadership information, about the leadership - how to act; now I got it” (PI27).

“Courses depending on the leaders was fantastic. It was. I learn many, many, many things. I haven't any idea about that before” (PI28).

“One presenter, he was about leadership … this one was the best day for me, best subject. The subject was perfect, presenter was perfect ... I have more skills now” (PI26).
4.3.2.2 English Levels

Because of the high level of theoretical content, the participants’ English levels became an issue. Several felt the content was too complicated, or that the tutors spoke at too high a level. Second language, day to day communication can be acquired in just one to two years, but “academic proficiency takes as long as seven years to acquire” (Snow Andrade, Evans, & Hartshorn, 2014, p.208) and students need a protracted period of time “to adjust their perceptions, reactions, and interpretations in ways that help them function effectively in the new environment” (Senyshyn & Chamberlin-Quinlisk, 2009, p.168). However, these participants, who averaged at lower to upper intermediate levels, spent just two weeks taking English courses in London. Most felt this was not enough to prepare them to sit through hours of higher education level lectures, with underlying cultural references, conducted in what they remarked upon as different and confusing English accents. Just as low second language levels impact higher education outcomes (Snow Andrade et al., 2014), this may have also been one of the most inhibiting factors that prevented a larger number of transformative learning occurrences.

4.3.2.3 Travel

The participants live in an extremely small country where most activity is centred in the environs of the capital city of Doha, so travelling long distances is not a common occurrence and they truly disliked the amount of travel they had to do during the ELP. They felt that the travel time was wasted time, and so when they had to travel several hours to visit a distant sporting venue, they arrived with expectations that the visit and the venue must be very worth their investment. With some exceptions, the visits rarely met those expectations and this had a compounding effect.

“Too much travel, for nothing. For the same, you travel to other cities. It was the same, the same” (PI25).

As the ELP progressed and the participants became more and more fatigued, their openness to make constructive comparisons and their reflectiveness to find application were blunted.
“I am against 100% all these side visits that we have, especially in the UK. It was like a tourist trip for us” (PI22).

4.3.2.4 Personal, Cultural and Extracurricular Interactions
Despite these obstacles in relation to context and circumstance, the participants found several positive aspects on which to comment. Their tutors unanimously impressed them with their level of education and experience. With a strong hierarchical, tribal structure, Qatari society takes account of a person’s position and is also respectful of the age and experience of its elders (Bogdan et al., 2012; Cerimagic, 2010). Throughout history, it has also been a strongly oral culture. “The Arab culture is very anecdotal and idiomatic. Arabs are very keen on telling stories and exchanging experiences” (Al Omari, 2008, p.120). It was therefore noticeable that whenever a new tutor or guide was mentioned in any of the participants’ blogs or interviews, they were respectfully given their full titles and positions, and references were often made to the usefulness of hearing the tutor’s experience related through stories and anecdotes.

“Dr [name] at the end he gave us some his personal experiences with all the [entities] in the world” (B4).

“He told us so many stories about sport cases” (B5).

“We all agreed with Dr [name] that what we actually wanted from these people is their experience. Some practical classes and also tell us about their failures and how they did come back from it!” (B3).

Any interaction with their tutors was mentioned positively, whether in discussions or open and honest conversations which included the sharing of information.
“…everyone was in an interactive discussion with Professor, who has the ability to make everyone in the interactive debate. In fact, it was a wonderful lecture” (B6).

Of particular note were any instances of one to one interaction between the tutors and the participants, to the extent that one began to go to the sessions early explicitly to seek out such contact with each tutor. Another put it very clearly when he stated:

“I think it was very important to sit longer time with these professors. I don’t think it’s about the student and the teacher. It’s not. I think it’s more about you need to start a conversation with them, talk to them, separately email and I was insisting sometimes you know to take even the break time to just go and chat with them” (PI22).

All the blogs and interviews gave consistently positive comments regarding the leadership components of the ELP, but it was the tutors who made leadership come alive for the participants. The lectures and discussions, specifically on the topic of leadership, were deemed a highlight, and there were indications that these brought about instances of the important precursor step of critical reflection, resulting in possible transformation within the participants regarding their leadership style, approach and communication habits (Brock, 2010; Malki & Green, 2014; Snyder, 2008).

“Especially I’m telling you, I think with the leadership part you find me reflecting a lot … thinking on my job, my career for fulfilling… yeah, I tell you, especially in the leader side” (PI22).

In a similar vein, Qatari culture is relationship-driven and puts emphasis on hospitality and spending at least some time in politely getting to know, on a personal level, anyone they are contemplating dealing with (Al Omari, 2008). The participants made particular note of whenever such contact occurred or they were given a warm welcome, and especially when
someone of importance took the time and effort to welcome them to a venue or a campus:

“Hospitality was fantastic from the beginning of our entry into the lobby door”
(B5)

“I was surprised [by the] warm welcome and hospitality unprecedented where we [were] greeted by [the dignitary] at entrance to the meeting room”
(B4).

They felt they were being paid respect and their comments showed they were subsequently more likely to be open to listening and returning respect to those institutions. I would suggest that such occasions put the participants into a more familiar comfort zone and eased their feelings of being overwhelmed by their situation. That the participants felt that “personal interaction is an integral part of the business environment” (Al Omari, 2008, p.55) is shown through comments regarding occasions a tutor or guide joined them for a meal:

“We … spent good times and enjoyed with them”
(PB8).

An official dinner was of particular note to them all:

“After that we went to a restaurant to have an official dinner with Dr [name] and [sports entity] delegation in lovely place and high class. Really I enjoyed this day”
(B4).

It is no surprise that they enjoyed a ‘high class’ restaurant. It is common knowledge that Qatari citizens enjoy an affluent standard of living in a country exhibiting huge wealth (ITUC, 2011), and this was reflected in the participants’ mixed reactions to ‘old’ things and other comments that showed they appreciated examples of the largest, most exclusive, elite or expensive. That their mode of transportation and hotel accommodation was considered adequate was therefore also an important part of reducing their stress levels.
A surprising cultural sub-theme to arise from the data was that of food. It was mentioned with regularity in the blogs and in several of the second interviews, and from those references it could be surmised that the difference in food was initially another source of stress, or perhaps even discontentment:

“Okay, today, let’s go to this restaurant. Don’t need to pressure me to go for restaurant, maybe I don’t like the food” (PI27).

It was not the quality of the food as much as the unfamiliarity of it that disturbed them, and rather than embrace the difference as part of the learning or immersion in another culture, they instead looked for ways of eating familiar food:

“Unlike other days, we decided to make our own lunch arrangements and paid for any extra expenses ourselves” (B7).

In London, that meant finding an Arabic restaurant, which they frequented most days. Later, during the rest of their time in the UK, one of the participants took it upon himself to cook traditional Arabic dishes every day for the whole group. Because a county’s cuisine is such an integral part of its culture and identity (Weller & Turkon, 2015), my first thoughts were that his actions created a missed opportunity for the group to better assimilate and gain a transformative experience within a culture different from their own, but from the reactions and comments regarding his action, it cannot be underestimated how much of a settling and destressing effect it had on the entire group.

“I think the experience got better because their focus towards education then became that much more focused” (MTRI2).

Morgan (2011) discusses the possible different intentions and motivations behind either professional or personal travel to different cultures and cautions that there is a need for sensitivity and wisdom, as there is significant potential for unintentional negative consequences. Therefore,
instead of looking at this point as a factor that may have inhibited a personal transformative learning experience within another culture, it may have contributed to a more relaxed group of people who then felt secure enough to explore and stretch themselves in a less stressful professional direction - for instance, the leadership component, which was proving to be a highly positive aspect of the ELP.

Qatar is striving to preserve its culture but is changing faster than some of the participants would like:

“They are breaking some parts of our culture”
(PI16).

A final theme that was strong throughout the interviews, blogs, assignments, and especially the photographs, was the positive impression and encouragement the participants gained by seeing the preservation of history and heritage in England and the USA:

“I really love how [entity] is all about keeping its heritage and legacy. As soon as you enter the [venue] you can sense the history of this game and place”
(B3).

Although one or two seemed a little confused in their understanding that wealth, prestige and being aristocratic are not necessarily the same things, several seemed truly moved by the pride, respect and honour paid to past sporting accomplishments. They spoke or wrote of wanting to create something similar in Qatar, such as a sports museum, trophy rooms or displays, and dozens of photographs captured what they would like to replicate. The wins and trophies of today will be the Qatari sporting history and heritage of tomorrow. This is evidence of a transformation to a very different perspective and supports the concept that “travel represents a potentially fruitful vehicle for transformative education and learning” (Morgan, 2011, p.247). It is interesting to note this only came about from exposure that occurred during the rather maligned venue visits.
Finally, two activities, extra to the programme, stood out as real highlights for four of the participants. The first occurred when two of the participants took some time-out to attend a large international sports event at their own expense. They considered the experience of great value to themselves and recommended it for future groups. The value may have been because it occurred at the middle stage of the programme and gave the participants a welcome break from the stress of maintaining classroom concentration, or because it gave an opportunity to observe practical application of some aspects of their classroom work. Pleasure may have been additionally derived from taking an independent initiative in seeking out the opportunity.

“I can honestly say that this was one amazing experience. Attending such unique event with such huge media attention and millions of people around the world watching this event makes you very special to be part of it” (PB3).

The second activity was when one of their professors spontaneously invited two of the participants to speak briefly to one of his university classes. This made a profound impression on the participants, who felt great pride in being able to answer questions and clarify some points about their country and felt pride and surprise at being able to teach or impart some knowledge to university students in a university setting.

“He said, just only for two minutes or three minutes I want you talk. About 45 minutes we take the whole class from him because the student is asking and we are answering and we give them more details about what is going to happen and Qatar’s development … and we have fun and we enjoy and he is really satisfied with us and it is wonderful experience” (PI27).

“Students started to ask different questions about lots of things. We were very open and doing our best to answer all of these questions. I believe the students did benefit from their class today! For me this was a unique experience to be in front of Masters’ students from one of the top universities in the world” (PB3).
It is clear from these extracts, from their much fuller accounts of the incident, that this experience had a profound, transformative effect on both the participants because it required them to undertake a premise reflection by examining their own identity and what is operating in their own culture and value system, while additionally overcoming personal limitations (Kitchenham, 2006; Illeris, 2014).

4.3.2.5 The Blog
As discussed above, blogs have been shown to have real value as tools for self-reflection, encouraging critical thinking, decision-making and independent action, which are all things that could foster rather than hinder transformative learning (Ballan, 2014; Chen, 2014; Dalgarno et al., 2015; Shana & Abdulibdehb, 2015). It was therefore somewhat surprising that the analysis showed no instances of possible transformative learning as a result of the blog’s inclusion in the programme’s curriculum. On the contrary, the participants uniformly viewed it as a time-consuming burden of little value.

On average, they were rarely written fully in the participant’s own words, but were created by relying heavily on copying the words or texts presented by their tutors. Most were heavier on photographs over text and this became more pronounced as the programme progressed, which may have been because of the onset of fatigue from a demanding schedule or perhaps due to not receiving corrective feedback. Good examples, scaffolding and comments are important for successful blog outcomes (Shao & Crook, 2015).

Negative comments regarding the blog included how difficult it was and that it was a boring, time consuming task. I would suggest a real lack of understanding of the reason why the blog was a required task was the main reason for this negativity, as in both the pre- and post-programme interviews participants asked why they had to do it. For example:
“I didn’t understand why … It’s like agenda … We wake up at nine o’clock, we went to the blah, blah, blah and we blah blah” (PI27).

One asked me outright, “What is reflection?” (PI22) and others used similar phrasing to express a lack of understanding. One participant clearly stated he did not want to write about his feelings, as if he were being asked to bare his soul rather than share self-reflections. That the blog could have been a means to reflect, and reflection a means to gain deeper understanding of the ELP experience, should have been better understood by both the participants and even those supporting them in the exercise (Dalgarno et al., 2015). With good understanding and support, it may not have been viewed as a burden (Chen, 2014).

Because it was a misunderstood requirement, the participants reported feeling “pushed, like we were in school” (PI25) for a lesson or a chore they were obliged to do. This led to some openly stated tactics to comply, such as writing it during class “just to get it out of the way” (PI25), or writing it in class only as a means of taking notes for later reference. This was clearly visible by the number of cut and paste, bullet pointed entries, which merely listed key points from lectures and classes and made no connection to their own work roles or how the points may affect them personally. Some even skipped making notes, pasting photos of the class whiteboard or PowerPoint slides instead, and when asked about the large number of photographs, the usual answer was that it was easier and quicker than writing. Even so, none of the participants managed to make a daily entry for the entire programme, despite it being one of the requirements for successful completion.

There were indications of some early, limited understanding of the intended use of the blog, but this was undermined by the not uncommon opinions of lack of time available to think, reflect and write, and the value of spending that time (Dalgarno et al., 2015; Harricharan & Bhopal, 2014). One participant spoke of his initial hatred of the blog, but that he slowly
started to see some reason for doing it and another did admit that it forced him to take notes in English and therefore concentrate more and think about what he was learning, both from the content and the English language perspectives (Chen, 2014; Shao & Crook, 2015).

Two positive, transformative highlights were identified within the blog. Firstly, there was conformity within some statements that proved the participants were discussing and interacting with each other over aspects of their programme. Secondly, the participants, showing a growing reliance on each other, often referenced the group in a positive way. However, both of those constructs happened outside the blog and not as a result of the blog.

4.3.2.6 The Group

If the blog is at the negative extreme, the group and its transformative influence is at the other extreme, with every single interviewee mentioning it positively. Even before they left Qatar, the participants had expectations that the group would be important to them and that they would learn, not just from the programme and the visits, but also from each other. Those expectations were more than realised, with several going so far as to say in their second interview that they had learnt the most from their colleagues. The blogs and transcripts show that in the early days of the ELP, when they were feeling overwhelmed by the schedule, the strange food and the overall experience, rather than fragmenting, they began to form a supportive team. In some of their own words:

“There was lots of love”
(PI21).

“We helped each other … we supported each other”
(PI25).

Coming from a culture that puts a strong emphasis on commitment to the extended family and tribal affiliations (Al Omari, 2008; Kamrava, 2009), when they were feeling the most vulnerable, they formed their own ‘family’. One of the participants started to cook Arabic food for them daily:
“So they go for shopping enjoy. Some of them they go for gym and take showers, swimming pool and they just came, “Where is our dinner? I say, “It’s already there. It’s ready’” (PI27).

At this time, the participants’ photographs began to include more and more images of each other on visits, in class or out and about, representing their cultural and social experience together at that moment in time and space (Hart & Edwards, 2004). The managers, the training representative and the ELP tutors noticed the bond that had formed within the group, and since their return to normal duties it has also been obvious to my own personal observations from within the organisation. From the feedback received, the training institute was prompted to report that the group had forged a strong, deep, beneficial work relationship. Two of the managers felt it was the group that brought about the greatest changes in each other, although in the only negative statement regarding the group, one qualified his comment by stating he had noticed his subordinate had also taken on a negative quality of over-confidence. He felt this had come about because his subordinate now felt he was equal to all in the ELP group, whereas he still lacked the experience and skills of some of them.

It may have been a serendipitous occurrence that this particular group, when thrown together, formed a supportive dynamic, especially as there was initially scepticism from members themselves as to the mixed levels, experience and abilities of some of their co-members. Yet that may have been the exact circumstance that created the group dynamic for spontaneous mentorship to occur (Gruber-Page, 2016). Two of the older participants described how the others came to them for advice and support, and one felt he had become an unofficial leader or spokesperson for the group. The tutors noted unofficial leaders and spokespersons appearing, due to having experience in that current situation. These occurrences, and the behaviour of the participants since returning to work, would indicate that informal mentoring was established, which still remains (Mills, 2009).
“I feel like they are committed and they are close to each other. Good group, good teamwork” (MTR23).

The participants agree that because they now understand each other, both on a personal and a professional level, they could work together on any project:

“I discovered these people” (PI27).

The group created something lasting amongst them, as evidenced by their statements that this relationship was the most valuable outcome of the ELP. These are now their colleagues and friends to whom they can talk about anything. One went so far as to say he now feels like he has six more brothers and a sister, which is warm praise in a country that values family so highly. It was with this new ‘family’ that the participants returned home and back to work and entered into the post-programme stage which is addressed next.

4.3.3 The Post-Programme Stage

4.3.3.1 Organisational Outcomes

To make a decision as to whether this ELP was successful in terms of skills learned or return on investment for the organisation is not the focus of this thesis, but a successful programme would be one more inclined to influence the participants in a positive way and therefore have more likelihood of eliciting positive transformative learning outcomes. The final report from the training institute stated that all objectives had been successfully achieved and leadership potential had been both identified and enhanced in the participants. I would partially agree with both statements. However, in respect to showing their stated leadership potential and feelings of increased responsibility, the participants let themselves down with the quality of their assignments. The final report noted that they were all handed in well past the agreed deadline and most contained copied and pasted content, or had clearly been edited by someone else. So, although they may have contained their thoughts, they
were not in their own words or at the true level of their English ability. However, they did show awareness of the strengths and limitations of their organisation and made some interesting observations and valid suggestions for the application of changes and improvements that took into account their own situations and context. There was clear evidence they were drawing on concepts and learning gained in the ELP, such as creating a legacy and taking care of Qatar’s sporting history. Additionally, most drew attention to the lack of communication in their organisation, and especially with regard to the relationship between the higher management and the average employee:

“Now I think the high management are in the second level, and there is no elevator between us. I will be very clear on that one” (PI22).

A change in their mind-set or worldview had occurred, and the participants took this personal revelation seriously and made changes in their communication habits and how they worked with others that were noticeable to all the MTRs. They noted that many of the participants communicated better with their colleagues, were less argumentative and defensive, and were more open to listening and willing to admit mistakes. This brought about real, positive change in how they interacted and worked with both superiors and subordinates. Combined with an increase in enthusiasm and commitment to the organisation, at least initially, the participants were more likely to be proactive towards issues and problems, to strive to solve those problems as team players rather than alone, and to look for opportunities to help others. One manager noted:

“If he sees that I'm overworked, he'll always walk into the office, ask me, "How's everything going, man? Is everything okay? Can I do anything for you?" which he never did before. It shows you that now he's more self-aware or more aware of other people, which is something that I think most employers strive to pull out of their employees” (MTRI23).
This example could also be viewed as an instance of both the increase in leadership and overall attitude, which was noticeable by the participants becoming more accountable for their work and more willing to take on and even request more responsibility and challenges.

“I have less people coming to me knocking on my door … which is a good sign to me that [name] is slowly becoming a leader” (MTR21).

“I feel that sometimes [name] was not so committed, but after giving him a bigger role, he shows that he now has more commitment in his attendance and his tasks and responsibility” (MTRI22).

The MTRs could not always identify exactly what had changed in their participants or what in the programme had brought it about, just that a maturing in some professional and personal aspects had occurred, a positive and yet more realistic change in outlook or attitude towards their organisation, their work ethic and their inner self-confidence. There were unmet expectations. The managers had hoped for more open-mindedness and more examples of out of the box thinking as a result of the participants’ increased exposure: however, they felt the participants had moved forward and, while still lacking many leadership skills, some had put their foot firmly on the first rungs of the leadership ladder. Therefore, in general, the managers had a positive impression of the ELP and its effects on their subordinates and rated that their expectations were met somewhere between 30 to 80 per cent. If the programme were repeated, they would all send a participant and felt their ratings would increase if their suggested improvements were made. However, before moving to another group, it would be more important to reinforce and consolidate transformative and leadership gains already made and to facilitate continuing improvement for the current batch of participants (McCauley et al., 2010; Pugh, 2002).
4.3.3.2 Participant Outcomes

The ELP’s final report stated that all English levels were up, which did not align with the participants’ own judgement - they stressed that the short, two-week duration of training had, in their view, been ineffective and a waste of time. Their managers were equally disappointed by the lack of English language improvement they saw in their participants. Of interest is that three participants were so sceptical and distrusting of the high English results that they even suggested something was ‘wrong’ with the grading.

Interviewee: “From five we get to seven at least.
Interviewer: You’re laughing.
Interviewee: True, I have my certificate. Yeah, and getting from five to seven.”
(PI22)

Interviewee: “Unless they are cheating. Because when we, before we went, we was on level 3. Two weeks they move up to level 7.
Interviewer: Not possible?
Interviewee: Not possible, no.”
(PI26)

Despite the hindrance of the language, the participants identified several positive outcomes for themselves, such as increased confidence, awareness of history and better leadership practices. They considered the leadership-centred aspects - such as learning about leadership models or how to undertake a SWOT analysis - as highlights of the ELP, but they are examples of an increase in knowledge or skills and therefore of less interest to this study. Of more interest are changes in the participants’ behaviour, or signs of a different way of thinking about their self-identity, their context or work approach, thereby indicating a more transformative form of learning (Illeris, 2014; Kitchenham, 2006; Mezirow, 2009).

4.3.3.3 Leadership

With regard to leadership, they all spoke of a new confidence in themselves in terms of where they currently stood and where they felt they needed to be. They had been measured and had made comparisons, and several had come to the realisation neither they nor their organisation nor Qatari sport is as accomplished, elite or advanced in the larger world
context as they had previously believed. They discovered that sport is an entertainment business and a source of revenue, and to realise the same in Qatar, while reducing the drain on government resources, will require radical changes. The concepts of corporate transparency and social responsibility came somewhat as revelations to at least two participants.

There is much to learn and other ways of accomplishing things, but they feel they can be part of the advancement towards realising the Qatari 2030 Vision. First, the mind-set of the organisation needs to change, because it isn’t just about having a title and a high salary, but instead good leadership, relationships, education and skills, and how you adapt and use those resources in your own context. Lacking those resources, or not using them smartly, has consequences. They now understand that leadership is the key, because there are clear connections between levels of management, leadership and success, so their responsibilities became clearer and most now feel more accountable, either as a leader or potential leader within their organisation. One strongly feels the change within him:

“I feel I have to be more professionally for myself”
(PI21).

This has manifested in different ways, such as changes in their way of working with their teams or revising their peer/friend versus boss relationship with their subordinates:

“Because sometimes I think I'm very kind, and sometimes I'm not very tough in like deadlines. I'm dealing with them like friends sometimes. Brothers sometimes. Now I'm just changing even sometimes my tone with them. I think they need to see the other side of [name] as I am”
(PI22).

Changes in communication comprised a common theme, with most participants realising they needed to change their way of communicating with others and having attempted to put that into practice since their return. One participant spoke about how he no longer picks up the phone when he thinks of something, but instead writes an email before or after, which has improved his communication style and clarity with his team and
created the necessary organisational accountability. Another is consciously trying to speak in specifics to aid clarity with his team, and yet another is taking more time before reacting to colleagues:

“Before, I was listening to people, but now more. I want to know, even I don't give them the impression from the first time, so I calm down. I collect the whole information. Understand what I mean?”

(PI25)

4.3.3.4 Post-Programme Follow-Up

Once the participants returned and settled into their normal work and routines, they entered the follow-up phase of the ELP. There is little doubt they came back with new or changed views and expectations of what they wanted to contribute to their organisation and what they expected in return. However, transformative learning is defined as “any type of learning that has a lasting impact on how individuals interact with others, frame problems and view themselves” (Ciporen, 2010, p.177), so the important question to ask is if those changes were sustained and expectations met. Only then would the ELP have proved itself a good fit to bring about transformative development within this Qatari organisational context. With their new feelings of accountability, most of the participants had become aware of the need to give a lasting return on its investment to the organisation, so first and foremost they expected and wanted to be looked upon as leaders by their organisation, then challenged and given opportunities to prove themselves by putting what they had learnt and some new ideas into action. As two stated:

“I don't want to be just a programme. We need income coming for that programme. I think for any leader, for any potential leader, he needs to be sometimes tested in our position to just give him the time to discover his skills capability as a leader. Not only knowledge that he know”

(PI22).

“At least now after this group … I believe I can do something if they give the chance”

(PI27).
Were they given this chance? Initially, when they came back full of enthusiasm, energy and new ideas, the answer was no and the follow-up from the written assignments is a good example of why the participants felt some frustration. On their return to Qatar, they were expected to write an assignment in which they were to:

“outline an initiative that they believe could improve their organisation or [sport] in Qatar more widely. Proposals should … detail the concept, its rationale, and outline plans to develop, execute and evaluate the activity/programme” (Training Institute, ELP Report, 2015).

As previously mentioned, all the assignments were handed in late and many showed indications of cut and paste from organisational materials, help in editing the language, and duplication between two of them. However, the training institute’s final report rightly suggested that three of the assignments:

“stood out, and should be read in full by the [organisation] executive, as these individuals put together good cases and are of the calibre to successfully lead such change. That said, all submitted proposals had merit and it could be beneficial for the executives to have participants present their concepts” (Training Institute, ELP Report, 2015).

However, there seems to have been a disconnection between the training institute’s suggestions and the organisation, because more than six months after the end of the ELP, the training representative was still waiting for feedback on the suggestion that the group be given the resources and support to undertake one of their suggested projects, while the three interviewed managers claimed not to have seen their participants’ assignments: one was not even aware they existed. Up to the time of writing, no assignment projects had been followed through and no presentations made to the participants’ departments or to the executive level. This caused frustration for some, as did the lack of increased responsibility or change in work allocation:

“For example, for me, I am a leader. I want to do something, what can I do? There is nothing handed to me to do. There is
nothing the project they give it to me so I can lead. There is nothing. Just I took the course, I just came, sit in the office. Okay, what is your plan?" (PI27).

The participants had seen the advantage of forging good working relationships through communication and sharing of skills and strengths and wanted to continue that mode of working with internal and external stakeholders. Part of that sharing could have included presenting their assignments or giving reports or feedback to their departments. Unfortunately, they were not formally given that opportunity and the managers interviewed felt at a disadvantage to follow up due to not having had the assignments or the training institute’s final report shared with them.

“This is the negative, this is the disadvantage thing that we, as a line manager, we did not read the assignment and we did not evaluate them” (MTRI23).

After the enormous financial and personal investment in the ELP, the participants certainly came back with the mind-set to bring about changes, to take on more or new responsibilities, and to step up as leaders. However, dissemination or maintenance of their new knowledge or mind-set was not fostered but instead hindered by the lack of a formal follow up programme and the chance for the participants to share their experience with their colleagues, superiors or the organisation in general. One manager spoke prophetic words:

“It absolutely is all about follow-up and it's about keeping certain key messages top of mind. You gradually just forget things. It's like a dream. You know what I mean? If you don’t remind people or give people actions in their daily life to try, then it's just simply going to be lost” (MTRI23)

However, as a postscript, after the passing of more than one year since the ELP, there have been gradual changes for the participants, with promotions being given to at least half of them and some have managed
to drive and implement small changes within the organisation. According to the MTR, one took the initiative to correct something that had been causing delayed outcomes; another took ownership of an issue that had been hanging and pushed forward until a solution was found. Most participants came back more open to the possibilities offered through education, but one embraced it to the point that by the end of the same year, he had organised his work and life to enable him to leave the country to pursue a Master's degree. These initiatives were brought about by the transformative changes that had occurred within the individuals and were driven by their own inner enthusiasm and personalities. Since return on leadership development can be enhanced from within an organisation (Yip & Wilson, 2010), how much more may have been realised if the initial transformations that had occurred in all the participants had been fostered and encouraged by their organisation on their return?

Finally, despite the disadvantage their English levels had imposed upon them, and having continuing English lessons organised and paid for on their return, only two participants completed their next English level. By personal choice, English improvement has now completely fallen by the wayside. For this, the participants must share in the responsibility, although a general lack of follow-up about the programme from the organisation, and several participants being promoted without further requirements, may have made the lessons seem less worthwhile or less necessary to pursue.

4.3.3.5 Summary
This chapter showed the analysis of the research data and took an explanatory approach to tell the story that analysis revealed of the ELP as it was seen through the eyes of its participants, their managers and training representative. It has covered the findings and outcomes of the main themes which emerged during the pre-programme, implementation and post-programme stages of the ELP, while touching upon the factors that may have fostered or inhibited the occurrence or maintenance of
transformative learning within those themes. The next section will summarise only those factors and discuss them in relation to the theory of transformative learning.
5 Discussion

5.1 Introduction

Illeris (2014) points out that changes and transformations may occur in many situations, “but the expression of transformative learning does not in itself indicate what is transformed and how this transformation takes place” (p.5). Therefore, at best, I can make conjectures while discussing which factors within the pre-programme, implementation and post-programme stages fostered transformative learning and why. What could have been done at each of those stages to better foster a transformative learning experience for the participants will be touched upon but addressed more fully in the recommendations. In one of the most recent respected accounts of the progress of research into transformative learning by Mezirow, Taylor and associates (2011), Taylor and Jarecke (2011) outline a number of principles which, when placed in relation to the known core elements of transformative learning, create some general principles for fostering transformations to occur in an educational setting. They are:

- Purposeful and heuristic process
- Confronting power and engaging difference
- Imaginative process
- Leading learners to the edge
- Fostering reflection
- Modelling (Taylor & Jarecke, 2011)

These principles, in addition to the previously discussed basic core elements of group dialogue, critical reflection, individual experience and awareness of context, will form a basis for the summary discussion below. That will be followed by an overview of key success factors and inhibitors in answer to this case study’s research question.
5.2 Factors Fostering Possible Transformative Learning

5.2.1 The Pre-Programme Stage

The main themes that stood out as fostering transformative learning during the pre-programme stage of the ELP were parts of the selection process, being selected and the raising of expectations.

5.2.1.1 The Selection Process

Within the selection process, the sections that were consistently ranked as more valued were the interviews and the presentations. The psychometric test had middling reviews. The reason the presentation gave such a sense of accomplishment and brought about an attitude change in some of the participants is because it most closely aligned with the above general principles and core elements (Brock, 2010; Taylor & Jarecke, 2011). It was a purposeful exercise, where what was expected from the participants was clearly defined. Because they presented to the highest level of the organisational hierarchy, they were confronting power to make their case to be included in the programme. Creating a presentation about their own role and individual experience made them aware of their context, and to do so with complimentary PowerPoint slides was either a new or seldom used skill for most. This stretched their imaginative processes and led them to the edge of their comfort zone, while forcing them to reflect on their roles and why they wanted to be included in the programme (Malkki, 2010). The interviews had similar elements, in that they were purposeful, they had to confront power in a group dialogue - which can be uncomfortable for individuals from a hierarchical society - and the participants had to reflect on themselves, their experiences and context to give adequate answers. The validity and worth of the psychometric test may have been in question (Coffield, Moseley, Hall, & Ecclestone, 2004), but it did have value for those participants who understood its purpose as only one evaluation tool amongst several and who took the time to reflect on themselves, their individual experience and their personal context while undertaking it.
5.2.1.2 Being Selected

Being selected had an impact on all the participants initially, because it raised their reputation and increased their status and potential wasted within their organisation. This is not to be underestimated in a strongly hierarchical social context such as Qatar. Koski, Xie, and Olson (2015, p.529) state that “social ranking can occur on a small or large scale” and “is often the product of group consensus, or reputation”, especially in the distribution of limited resources, which in this case were the eight places on the ELP. The authors also describe how “individuals demonstrating prestige attain status by demonstrating their competence, knowledge, or skills” (Koski, Xie, & Olson, 2015, p.531). After selection, others noticed the inner change in the way the participants viewed themselves by the immediate change in their behaviour. They were suddenly more inclined to speak up and, because they were more confident that they were leaders or had leadership potential, were more likely to walk and talk in a way they felt leaders should. This was taken to the extreme in one case, causing his manager to speak out about his overconfidence. Hysom (2009) explains this behaviour in his research on reward expectations theory, whereby a person given a prestigious reward will evaluate themselves as “more capable, knowledgeable and effective than their less rewarded partners” and will immediately become more resistant to being influenced by others less rewarded (p.1638).

5.2.1.3 The Raising of Expectations

During the pre-programme meeting the participants were congratulated on being selected because their organisation had recognised them as people with ability and potential. They were given an overview of the ELP and told they would be attending courses taught by professors from two of the world’s highest ranked universities. They would be visiting the top sporting venues in Britain and the East Coast of the USA and coming back with knowledge that would help them advance as leaders in their organisation. It would be hard for such recognition not to have effected a change of some sort, because it again set them apart from those not chosen and thereby reinforced the increase in their status and reputation, both in their
own eyes and in the eyes of others (George et al., 2016). However, the change was based on words alone. It created a model or image of themselves in their minds, which was like filling a balloon that was easily pricked. What might have been the positive difference if the participants had had the luxury of time and been provided with a detailed overview, materials and pre-exercises to adequately prepare for the ELP? With such an overview and more time, they could have been encouraged to undergo some basic research covering, for instance, the principles of the leadership theories and models they were to encounter. There would have been opportunity to craft and adjust their expectations by weighing what they already knew against what they still had to learn (Buckingham & Vosburgh, 2001). They could have formulated questions they wanted answered and pinpointed areas where practical application would bring about the most change. So, while a transformation was fostered from this contact, most gains from it were lost when the balloon was pricked and the reality of the course work became overwhelming.

5.2.2 The Implementation Stage
The themes that emerged during the implementation stage that fostered transformative learning were aspects of the participant learning experience, personal, extracurricular and cultural interactions, and the group.

5.2.2.1 The Participant Learning Experience
Because of the expectations, which had been built in the participants regarding their own worth as current or potential leaders, it is no surprise that they were open to and showed particular interest in anything related to the theme of leadership. In the competitive, hierarchical landscape of the Qatari corporate world, recognisable leadership qualities stand out as prestigious and powerful assets (Den Hartog & Koopman, 2001; Hoffman et al., 2011; Williams et al., 2011). The above cited exemplars of the participants’ enthusiasm for the leadership components all show there had been some reflection on the content, an awareness that knowledge had been added, an opening of the eyes to new possibilities and - of particular importance to them - skills that could be personally modelled or emulated.
in their own roles had been given. That high status tutors, whom they
could respect, had imparted the knowledge in a way that challenged and
encouraged discussions, described by one as “conversations to learning”
(B6), that drew on their own experiences and culture, really fulfilled almost
all the criteria that are suggested as fostering factors. Even if the
participants did not understand why, that this was deemed as the most
successful and believable component confirms that it was a transforming
experience for them and I would suggest shows that the necessary
underlying factors identified by Taylor and Jarecke (2011) are indeed
important in bringing about such a transformative experience.

Within the ELP leadership learning experience, all participants gave
positive feedback regarding the case study exercises, scenario planning
and group work to solve real life issues, but were left wanting more, more
and more of them. It was here they felt at their best, when asking or being
asked “very real questions” (FA3) and when they were able to discuss and
engage with each other, especially if it was in Arabic (Prowse & Goddard,
2010). This was supported by the tutor’s report that “Some of the quieter
group members in this were much more engaged when the group was
discussing in Arabic”; “I could see [name] and [name] being very animated
and engaged, which was nice to see” (Training Institute Report, 2015).
There are many references in the literature to the fact that the core
element of open and honest discussions, such as occurred due to being
put into case study scenarios or being asked to identify problematic ideas
and to undertake scenario planning, has an efficacious impact on
participants’ ability to critically examine assumptions through rationale
discourse (Taylor & Laros, 2014; Mezirow, 2003). From their comments,
there are clear indications that when the style of learning was interactive
and social and the context was more in line with what the participants may
have encountered in Qatar, they were more open to a transformative
experience. When those interactions were purposeful and based on
activities that stretched the participants to confront organisational
problems, the power constructs behind them and their own frames of
reference, and when they then challenged them to use their imaginations
to come up with solutions outside their normal range, they fostered critical
tinking that, with or without the addition of self-reflection, encouraged a
transformation of assumptions, beliefs and views (Dix, 2016; Mezirow,
2003; Saloner, 2010). However, the participants felt there were not
enough of these experiences during the ELP and while this left several
more open minded and thirsty to seek further such learning experiences, it
also left several feeling negative and frustrated.

5.2.2.2 Personal, Extracurricular and Cultural Interactions
The participants' blogs recorded their amazement at the preservation of
the history of the towns, cities and venues they were visiting and the
realisation that the meaning behind that preservation was to create a
heritage for the upcoming generations. A desire to replicate or model this
in Qatar was awakened in several. This transformation was primarily
brought about by being constantly exposed to and confronted by examples
of history being maintained, respected and revered.

Coming down from the loftiness of the creation of a legacy, a stronger
theme in this section was the personal, individual contacts that were
fostered through the ELP. As members of a high context, collective, oral
culture, these interactions were of huge importance to the participants and
were a means by which to create fostering circumstances for
transformative learning (Cerimagic, 2010; Hamas Elmasry et al., 2014;
Hofstede, 1998; Kaur & Noman, 2015). While they expressed or enacted
detachment with regard to written assignments and even their own blogs,
the act of individual oral communication with their peers or their tutors had
a profound effect on them and was sought out when opportunities were
not offered by the ELP curriculum. For most people of Arab culture, there
are few circumstances where any conversation could be deemed a total
waste of time. At the very least, it is purposeful in fostering a relationship
between the parties and furthering the individual experience of each, but
when it is enacted between individuals of differing power and status, the
use of soft power can be a game-changing experience for the less
powerful individual (Ulrichsen, 2014). Because the participants routinely
mentioned the qualifications, the prestige and the experience of their tutors and the universities they represented, they took their words and ideas seriously as models to emulate and incorporate into their own worldviews.

When those interactions took place in an environment where respect and hospitality were being shown, they triggered the participants’ engagement with the situation. Showing respect for elders or those in authority is ingrained in Qatars from childhood, as is showing hospitality to guests (Al Omari, 2008; Cerimagic, 2010). Therefore, when changes or new ideas were introduced within these familiar, nurturing constructs, they were more comfortable engaging with them (Aggirre et al., 2011; Bogdan et al., 2012). Analogous to this would be the difference between being introduced to an unknown dish when seated in a strange restaurant or environment as opposed to being asked to taste something new that a family member had cooked and was serving on familiar dishes at your own table.

In the literal sense, this was especially true as regards the food the participants were asked to eat during their extended stay in the UK and the USA. As was reported in the institute’s final report, some of the foreign concepts challenged the participants too much and, in the case of the food, it may have been one step too far into the realms of discomfort. Fullerton (2010, p.38) states; “Too much challenge in the absence of appropriate support … can drive the insecure student into retreat, forcing a rigid epistemology to replace the promise of a more fluid and complex worldview.” “The way to a man’s heart is through his stomach’ may also hold true to fostering a transformative environment when a person has reached their limit of disorientation. Weller and Turkon (2015, p.58) state that “food is a primary symbol used to maintain group solidarity and personal identity” and, through food, individuals can maintain connections to their homeland in spite of physical separation. It was noticed that the participants felt more comfortable in their English course when they found a nearby Arabic restaurant to frequent and later, once one of the
participants started to cook for them daily, they settled into the educational experience and became more focused. Having familiar food did not bring about a transformation but helped to create a healthier balance between challenge and a ‘safe’, consensual environment that could nurture transformations (Fullerton, 2010; Omair, 2010; Poutiatine, 2009).

Sourcing their own food was one example of when the participants exerted their self-will over their experience. Another such occasion was when the participants took it upon themselves to meet with the tutors to request more work-specific interactions. They were empowered by this action, which supports the proposal that transformation may be shared when a group works together to question conditions through collective reflection and action (Fullerton, 2010). A third occasion was when two of the participants took the initiative to attend a sporting event, which they reported as having had a real effect on them, giving insights into their professional field. The final occasion was when two of the participants volunteered to speak to a group of university Master’s level students regarding sports, their country and their culture, which proved to be a deeply transformative experience for both of them. These incidences demonstrate a potential transformative fostering change to be made to future programmes, whereby some autonomy and empowerment is built into the curriculum in order for participants to follow their instincts and pursue avenues of their own choosing (Deloitte, 2014; Keeling, 2004; Kitchenham, 2006; Mezirow, 2012; Pearce & Wassenaar, 2014; Snyder, 2008). For participants “to discover for themselves the powerful truths of their own lived experience” is often more profound than being shown or having them imposed upon them (Revans, 2011, p.66).

5.2.2.3 The Group
An example of this was seen in the way the participants “discovered” each other and became a cohesive group. According to almost all interviewees, the group dynamic was of more importance to the outcomes than even the content of the ELP, and it was this social construct that fostered the most transformative aspects of the programme. Lewis (2009) describes how our
need for membership of a group becomes stronger when we are faced with any extreme situation that threatens our personal identity or performance. Therefore, it was a natural occurrence for the participants to pull together when the overwhelming nature of the ELP programme, being immersed in a foreign culture and context and being bombarded with new ideas and concepts, put a strain on each individual’s personal identity (Conger, 2014). However, such group togetherness is not enough to create an environment conducive to fostering transformative learning, as there is the possibility that the group takes on the collective need and so puts up walls and builds a fortress against any change in the group view. In this case, there was the added danger of the participants coming from a collective culture wherein the individual owes stronger allegiance to the group than to any change in their own assumptions or views (Prowse & Goddard, 2010; Taylor, 1998). To avoid that outcome, it is essential to create inclusive engagement with the group, where each person’s experiences are valued and the individual is encouraged to think for himself while participating in group discourse and problem solving (Kitchenham, 2006; Mathis, 2010; Mezirow, 1997). There is evidence of this occurring in the group projects, role plays, case studies and debates used in the leadership components: it was less visible in the venue visits and lectures, which did not engage discourse or critical thinking skills either at the individual or group level. In the first instance, the group was allowed “to live with some discomfort while on the edge of knowing, in the process of gaining new insights and understandings” (Taylor, 2007, p.187), whereas during the many visits, it was essentially only shared fatigue and travel discomfort that brought the group together.

5.2.3 The Post-Programme Stage

Finally, the themes that became apparent for fostering transformative learning during the post-programme stage were any aspects that encouraged a continuation of the organisational and participant outcomes and the group dynamic.
5.2.3.1 Encouraging a Continuation of Outcomes

Up to the time of writing, the change in the participants’ communication habits at the organisational level was one of the most pronounced and maintained transformative outcomes. This was entirely driven by the individuals, and the reasons for this maintenance seemed to lie in the feedback they got from others, their superiors and their subordinates, and the success their new communication approach created. There was a new “spirit of respect” (FA6), an aspect of which was showing real engagement with others and listening to their stories and experiences as part of good communication and collaboration (Langan, Sheese, & Davidson, 2011; Tyler, 2011).

The change in their attitude, their enthusiasm towards their roles and the more realistic approach to problems in their organisation lasted to differing degrees in most, and not at all in at least two. Because “creating spaces for critical engagement and dialogue” and opportunities for “greater engagement and empowerment” (Snyder, 2008, pp.163, 171) are basic concepts in fostering transformative learning, it seems logical that they would also contribute to maintaining the effects of any transformation. Therefore, it follows that the participants who returned to higher authority positions, in which they were empowered to create spaces for more engagement and dialogue with their subordinates, fared better in maintaining their attitude and enthusiasm than those who did not. This was partially true for those promoted within six months of their return and for whom levels of frustration had slowly replaced their enthusiasm, and true in the negative sense for those who were not promoted to higher authority within six months of their return from the ELP. Pugh (2002) suggests that there is a relationship between the level of engagement in the transformative experience and how enduring the conceptual understanding of the experience is. I am not suggesting that in order to maintain a high level of engagement all participants in an ELP should either come from positions of authority or be promoted immediately on their return; however, what can be seen in this case is that the absence of other transformative fostering factors - such as maintaining engagement
through continued group work, the dissemination and practice of new concepts and competencies in their own contexts, being challenged with stretch assignments or gaining greater authority - played a disproportionate part in the non-maturation of their transformations and loss of enthusiasm (Brock, 2010; Revans, 2011; Taylor & Jarecke, 2011; Yip & Wilson, 2010).

5.2.3.2 Encouraging The Group
As happens after any intense period spent with others - there were promises to stay close and this started well with the participants visiting each other’s offices. They expressed the desire to work together on projects but since there was no formal follow-up of any activities that involved the group the close contact slowly dissipated as the experience faded to a memory and normal life again took over. Proximity of working in the same organisation has helped to maintain a closer work connection between several but two seem to have faded from contact, and at the beginning of 2016, one left for two years of further education overseas.

5.3 Factors Hindering Possible Transformative Learning
Conversely, the next step is to discuss which factors within the pre-programme, implementation and post-programme stages hindered transformative learning within this Qatari case. What could have been done at each of those stages to better foster a transformative learning experience for the participants will be more fully addressed in the recommendations.

5.3.1 The Pre-Programme Stage
The themes that stood out as hindering transformative learning during the pre-programme stage of the ELP were lack of faith in the selection process and lack of information and preparation, leading to misalignment between the ELP objectives, actual content, and the expectations of the organisation and the participants.
5.3.1.1 Lack of Faith in the Selection Process

While it is understood that in the Arab culture “merit is rarely rewarded or is a criterion for selection, success or recognition … and it is not what you know but who you know” (Al Omari, 2008, p. 187), it seems the participants craved something different from the selection process for this ELP. Perhaps it was the programme’s connection to two world-renowned universities that raised their expectations for the different experience of being selected according to merit and measured against recognised, reputable leadership criteria. When this did not happen, they lost faith in the quality of the process and were compelled to default into their usual cultural patterns in order to determine the best outcome for themselves; transformative incubation was therefore stifled (Brundett, 2006; Taylor, 2007). The stage was set without enough awareness of the organisational context and it lacked the basic core elements needed for a transformative experience (Brock, 2010; Taylor & Jarecke, 2011; Mezirow, 2011; Taylor, 2011). Much better would have been to create, not only a testing and selection phase, but also a learning and possibly transformative period for all. This could have been achieved if more time had been taken to measure candidates against a leadership competency model that was based upon the culture and needs or required outcomes of the organisation (Buckingham & Vosburgh, 2001; Pearce & Wassenaar, 2014); if there had been purposeful activities that created opportunities for group discussion and evaluation of critical thinking skills; and if, instead of the easy to manipulate psychometric test, a 360-degree survey had been used to measure not only their estimation of themselves, but also others’ perceptions (Canals, 2010; Chappelow, 2004).

5.3.1.2 Lack of Information and Preparation

I have previously argued that the short time-frame between selection and leaving Qatar did not take into account personal needs or cultural inclinations and unnecessarily raised the participants’ uncertainty and stress levels. One of the most important contextual conditions needed for successful transformations is “the time available, because the democratic process, the possibility of taking up all relevant issues, endeavours of
coming to agreement, critical reflection and dialogue are all time consuming processes” (Illeris, 2014, p.9) that require opportunities for “relaxed alertness” (Keeling, 2004, p.12). But even if the participants had had more time, what issues would they have discussed, and what would they have reflected or come to agreement upon? That they were given only superficial, logistical information goes against one of the principles Mezirow initially insisted upon: in order to promote ideal conditions for rational and transformative discourse to occur, accurate and complete information is needed (Mezirow, 1994).

The opportunity to lay the groundwork for fostering a transformative learning experience was lost resulting in a measure of uncertainty and mistrust in the worth of the programme because the participants’ cultural norm of avoidance of risk and uncertainty was not addressed (Cerimagic, 2010; Dimmock, 2007). Part of developing authentic educational practice is to foster a trusting relationship between the learner, the educator and the educational process (Mathis, 2010; Malkki & Green, 2014; Taylor, 2011). That relationship then “provides the safe environment for learners to engage in critical reflection, ultimately allowing transformative learning to take place” (Taylor, 2011, p.4). Most previous transformative learning research has taken place within higher education (Mathis, 2010), where the educator has at least a semester to create a trusting environment and an “authentic relationship” (Taylor, 2011, p.13), whereas - typical of most short-term ELP programmes - the tutors in this case had from one day to one week of contact with the participants in which to develop both the trusting, authentic relationship and the safe environment. That situation could have been mitigated if some pre-work contact with the tutors had been organised.

5.3.1.3 Misalignment of ELP Objectives, Content and Stakeholder Expectations

The art of leadership development is “crafting each employee’s expectations so that each is encouraged to deploy and hone his or her natural talents” (Buckingham & Vosburgh, 2001), so the vacuum of pre-programme preparation also influenced the type of expectations the
participants held when they boarded the aeroplane to the UK. The expectations expressed by the participants lacked concrete shape and structure and were mostly framed in vague hopes of increasing knowledge or being ‘better’ in some way:

Interviewee: “I hope this will give me something, add something to my personality.
Interviewer: Something specific?
Interviewee: Anything.” (PI16)

“I want to improve myself from any parts, from any course. I want now to improve everything” (PI18).

In a transformative sense, such expectations are not purposeful and thereby lack the heuristic quality of openly seeking possible answers or solutions to fulfil them (Taylor & Jarecke, 2011). To illustrate this point, when we look into our refrigerator for a solution to a vague, undefined hunger, rarely do we find something to tempt us. We are much more successful when we have a specific expectation, such as a salad: we look into the refrigerator for a solution to that desire and, by stretching the concept of what defines a salad, find one can be realised from the most eclectic of ingredients. Disorienting dilemmas “usually occur when people have experiences that do not fit their expectations or make sense to them” and, in consequence, resolution cannot come without a change in their worldview (Kitchenham, 2006, p.207) or, simply, a redefining in their mind of what can constitute a salad in order to fulfil their expectation of eating one.

The managers’ expectations were more extensive and specific, and although hopeful and open minded about their expectations being met, they all expressed a degree of scepticism of the ELP’s ultimate success and practical application to the organisation. They did so because they had been neither consulted nor given sufficient information regarding the ELP’s content. No ‘crafting’ of their expectations had occurred. At a stage
when so much time and expense had been invested by all concerned and was still to be invested by the participants, there was already a fatalistic ‘let’s see’ and ‘hope for the best’ attitude being expressed by the managers and many of the participants.

5.3.2 The Implementation Stage
The themes that emerged during the implementation stage that hindered transformative learning were misalignment of the ELP content to the participants’ context, experience and needs; their English levels; the amount of travel; and incorrect implementation of the blog.

5.3.2.1 Misalignment to Context, Experience and Needs
The participants often experienced a complete disconnection between what they were learning and their daily experience in their own Qatari context. While the participants needed to be led to the edge and encouraged to engage with difference, Carroll and Nicholson (2014, p.1418) state that successful leadership programmes establish “legitimacy by ensuring coherence between programme and organisation and between facilitators and participants”: when this does not exist, resistance can be the result. If properly nurtured with caution, resistance can be viewed as positive and can lead to a good transformative result because it at least shows that the participant is emotionally present and engaged (Illeris, 2014). However, a balance needs to be found between being led to the edge to engage with difference and feeling you are being pushed into an abyss, with resistance being the natural result. Purely resistant participants are less reflective, open to dialogue or willing to model their actions on what they are seeing or hearing. Therefore, differences in the programme content needed to be either realistic or demonstrated in such a way that the participants were challenged to see their relationship or application to their own context rather than in a contextual vacuum (Day & Antonakis, 2012; Morrice, 2012; Snyder, 2008). More often, the participants reported looking for application or local comparisons for concepts and, when not finding them, rather than critically reflecting on how to adapt or modify the ideas to their own context - perhaps compounded by a lack of skill or encouragement in this regard - they
instead tended immediately to resist or discount the concept and both educational and transformative learning potential suffered (Prowse & Goddard, 2010).

“Yeah, there is a different way. The way they are dealing with their work. But we can’t just do it here on this whole region because [it is] different in culture, but there is some point we can’t take it on” (PI26)

If learning is to be “a purposeful and heuristic process” (Taylor & Jarecke, 2011, p.276), then it is important that both the content and the process are in agreement with the interests of the participants, and that they are about teaching for change and awakening a desire within learners to act on their own worlds rather than teaching only for cognitive insight. Yet all interviewees mentioned, to some degree, the disconnection between the ELP content and either the level of the participants, the roles and interests of the participants, or of their organisation.

These findings support the more recent literature on transformative learning, giving the personal and socio-cultural context an importance equal to that of the other core elements of group dialogue, critical reflection and individual experience. Taylor (2011, p.11) describes the context as including more than the immediate surroundings of the learning event, incorporating “the personal and professional situation of the learners at the time, and the background context that is shaping society.” I would suggest that this case study gives a good example of how awareness of contextual implications needs to go beyond that of the physical context: it shows that if a person cannot in any way make sense of a new concept or worldview in relation to their own personal, professional or societal context, it fosters no awakening to bring about change within them. It is as if they are trying to capture smoke in their hands. The concept cannot be pinned down, clearly visualised, practised or turned into an experienced reality which can be justified to guide future actions (Mezirow, 2011). One has to ask, therefore, can it truly be
categorised as a transformative learning experience or is it rather only superficial insights into an idea at the cognitive level?

The lack of contextual awareness and application was not the only source of disconnect. One unmet transformational expectation from all the managers was to see more evidence of critical thinking skills in their participants. Indeed, instead of focusing on imparting knowledge to the participants, it may have been much more advantageous to go a step back and teach the skills of learning, especially critical thinking skills, since the potential to foster transformative learning is not only dependent on context, content and good teaching skills, but also on the readiness of the learners (Cranton & Taylor, 2012; Saloner, 2010). This would have formed a more solid basis on which the participants could stand when introduced to the huge quantity of new information and experiences they were expected to take in, assimilate and translate to their own context. It was particularly evident that the university-level leadership component, referred to by the participants as “heavy information” (PI25), was above the level of what most of the participants had formerly been exposed to. Comments suggested that the professors taught or lectured at a level that was “too big a leap for some” (Training Institute, ELP Report, 2015). Several even seemed ill equipped to immerse themselves in the core element of group dialogue. The tutors pointed out the lack of critical thinking skills and also identified that some were not able to challenge the status quo in discussions, while others had not learnt the difference between argument and discussion, that debate is not necessarily negative, that assessment is not criticism. They suggested that when foreign concepts challenged a participant beyond their comfort zone, outright rejection of change was much easier (Training Institute, ELP Report, 2015). It is true that all learning situations, especially demanding ones, must often overcome defence or resistance barriers from the learners, who are protecting themselves from being destabilised by too much transformative learning (Illeris, 2014). In this case, this seems to have been extreme for the participants as they reported feeling overwhelmed, overloaded and ill equipped for the level of learning they were exposed to. The word ‘lots’
featured heavily in their interviews - lots of knowledge, lots of information, lots of experiences, lots of travel, lots of new things. Resistance, rejection and self-protection seemed the natural consequence.

These hindering factors could have been addressed in both the selection and pre-programme stages with the programme being designed to fit the critical thinking skill level of the participants, or the selection process sifting out only those capable of such an undertaking as this ELP proved to be. Alternatively, participants could have been better prepared through pre-programme courses to fill in any learning skills gaps, especially that of critical thinking. Stanford University has addressed the issue of low critical thinking skills by including more experientially focused work, where the students are put in groups, given leadership tasks and shown how to work through them (Saloner, 2010). This type of task also has the advantage of being more fostering of transformative learning, because it encourages group dialogue and challenges students’ already held beliefs at the edge, but still within their comfort zones (Malkki, 2010; Malkki & Green, 2014). The implementation stage of the ELP did include some such tasks and the participants were quick to comment on how much they enjoyed learning this way, because it helped them think about things differently; however, they complained that there just weren’t enough of them, which meant any gains were not consolidated. So, while the ELP was definitely on the right track to foster critical thinking skills, this was not its primary focus: rather, it sought to give a lot of information, quickly. The outcome was a combination of too much content given to unskilled learners, resulting in overwhelmed participants and few true transformations of learning.

The participants had a sense of this lost opportunity, because several mentioned that they had desired to take things a step beyond the theory and engage in practical experience of the management and leadership models and theories they were learning. The managers agreed that this would have been a beneficial addition to the ELP. “Individuals undergo transformative experiences when they actively use a concept, find that it allows them to see aspects of the world in a new way, and personally
value this way of seeing” (Pugh, 2002, p.1104). However, this ELP’s full schedule did not allow the time needed for such practical application and, as McCauley et al. (2010) suggest, only in the rarest of cases will a single leadership development experience lead to any substantial growth or change. It is more likely to come about when one experience is reinforced by another and another over time. The follow-up stage of the programme would have been an appropriate time and place for those practical experiences to be accumulated.

5.3.2.2 The Participant’s English Level
The next difficulty that hindered a transformative learning experience was the English level of many of the participants. Prowse and Goddard (2010) have shown that Arabic students prefer to seek support and help from their colleagues in their own language rather than from their teacher, which would have lessened the language barrier when working in groups or in situations where one could translate for a lesser skilled colleague. However, as several of the participants admitted struggling with the language and understanding their tutors, it is problematic that participants understood all the content or its subtleties during the tours or hours of lectures. Fullerton (2010) suggests that new language, and the way it is used, helps to shape any vision of reality we create, so I would propose that understanding the language being used to describe new concepts or constructs becomes an important factor in how new frames of reference or worldviews are shaped. Additionally, if transformative learning requires discourse to assess beliefs, feelings and values (Mezirow, 2003), the speakers need to be sociolinguistically competent enough to express, defend and justify those beliefs and articulate any adjustments to them, thereby making them real to themselves and others. It appears this was not the case.

5.3.2.3 The Amount of Travel
Regarding the travel involved in this ELP, Morgan (2011, p.247) states that it “represents a potentially fruitful vehicle for transformative education and learning” but points out that there is a vast difference between travel which represents “actual physical movement through space over time” and
an inner journey of “psychological movement or growth” (ibid). Morgan suggests the latter can occur when the travel involves “profound engagement with unfamiliar places and experiences” (Morgan, 2011, p.249) which causes some disruption to a person’s subjective orientation to the world - in other words, the disorienting dilemma referred to by Mezirow (2011), or being led to the edge of our comfort zones as defined by Malkki (2010) and Taylor and Jarecke (2011). Morgan (2011) also states that some forms of travel are more efficacious for transformation than others, and while travelling from Qatar to two different countries and cultures rates highly as a means to facilitate a transformation of the worldview, forms of mass tourism - such as joining tourist groups for site visits and spending long hours on a tour bus purely as a means to move from one location to another - do not. That the travel involved in this ELP programme was so often mentioned negatively leads me to believe it represented more to the participants than just their physical movement from place to place. I would suggest that it became a resented and resisted manifestation of the misalignment of the programme to their expectations and organisational needs and their lack of control over the time spent away from their families being wasted (Carroll and Nicholson, 2014; Prowse & Goddard, 2010).

5.3.2.4 Incorrect Implementation of Blog
The other most negatively regarded component to be discussed is the blog. What were the factors that turned a potentially useful transformative tool into a stressful burden for the participants? I would suggest the first hindrance could be attributed to the short time-frame between the participants being informed of their inclusion in the ELP and their leaving Qatar. My understanding is that they were given superficial clarification regarding the blog, but they had more pressing issues on their minds than trying to clarify or understand one small component of the programme which, at that stage, they would not have been aware would impact on them to such a degree on a daily basis. Secondly, there was no follow-up to make sure they understood what a reflective blog or journal entails, or the possible advantages or outcomes it could give them (Chen, 2014;
Kreber, 2004). No examples were given, and the participants were not asked to start the blog before leaving Qatar to give time for practice and corrective feedback. A continuing lack of feedback is possibly the third - and I would suggest the most significant - hindrance to the blog’s effectiveness as a transformative tool. The blog gave the opportunity for constructive feedback, praise and support from the participants’ superiors or the training organisers and shared peer reflection, analysis and support (Chen, 2014; Dalgarno et al., 2015; Shana & Abdulibdehb, 2015). However, a very limited number of people were invited or given access to the blogs and, from those that were, there was negligible interaction. I found only five brief comments across all the blogs during the entire programme. The lack of feedback and interaction did not go unnoticed by the participants, with one saying he wanted the blog “corrected faster” (PI21) and it was to the participant group that they turned for feedback and advice and to their tutors for praise and encouragement. One participant said he knew at the time that lists and bullets points were probably the wrong approach, but he was getting ‘likes’ from the training institute, which he felt was “false feedback” (PI27); however, since he hated the blog he continued to take the easiest possible approach to it. This raises the question of why, when the blogs were not being written in such a way as to gain the stated outcomes, there was no corrective or constructive feedback to guide the participants. These three factors created a lost opportunity to turn the blog into a facilitating tool for transformative learning.

5.3.3 The Post-Programme Stage - Lack of Post-Programme Follow-up

Finally, the theme that became apparent for hindering transformative learning during the post-programme stage were unmet expectations due to the lack of programme follow-up by both the training institute and the organisation.

I have shown that the participants came back with the mind-set to take on more responsibility, make changes, and share rather than hoard
prestigious knowledge, but they were met with an organisational ennui (De Atkine, 1999). Suddenly, hardly over their jet lag, the participants were deemed the leadership ‘experts’ and left to get on with it, without support to instigate any practical application of what they had learnt. There was no opportunity to reflect critically on their experience through continued authentic relationships and meaningful dialogue with their tutors or fellow participants (Baumgartner, 2001); nor were they assigned a mentor from within the organisation to take on that role and become a model for them to emulate in what is recognised as a potentially transformative fostering relationship (Fullerton, 2010; Kitchenham, 2008; Malki & Green, 2014; Taylor, 1998). There was no opportunity to confront power and engage with the differences in their organisation of which they were now more aware, nor to validate their experience through recognition from their organisation, because they were not given the chance to speak out or to disseminate their new views, understandings or beliefs (Ciporen, 2010; Taylor & Jarecke, 2011; Yip & Wilson, 2010). This compounded their unmet expectations in relation to the Qatari organisational context, the personal outcomes of the participants and the transformative learning perspective.

To reiterate from the literature review, Mezirow (2011) identified ten phases of learning that form the transformative learning process, either fully or in part, and not necessarily in sequence. I would suggest that when transformative learning was fostered within the ELP, it included some or all of points 1 to 7, but points 8 to 10 were not brought about.

During the post-programme stage and onwards, there was the optimum opportunity for:

8. “Provisional trying of new roles
9. Building competence and self-confidence in new roles and relationships
10. A reintegration into one’s life on the basis of conditions dictated by one’s new perspective”

(Mezirow, 2011, p.19).

However, as previously reported, any post-programme activity was limited to ensuring the participants handed in their final assignments. To some degree, the assignments encouraged point 6 of the phases - i.e. “Planning a course of action” (ibid) - but the further lack of follow-up was frustrating and demoralising for the participants. Not only was the post-programme stage devoid of factors to foster a continuation of transformative learning, but it may have contributed to stunting some of the embryotic transformations that had already occurred. The after-programme environment is important “to continue the transformation process, particularly exploring ways to build on their personal growth and to put into practice the leadership skills and strategies focusing on sustainable development in their own society” (Bushell & Goto, 2011, p.1249). It is possible for a full epochal transformation to occur, but the literature shows it is more common for it to happen through accretion; more recent longitudinal studies have shown that in college graduates at least, the last stage, termed “contextual knowing”, “rarely occurs until after graduation” and takes place in the subsequent work and organisational life (Brock, 2010, p.124). A lack of follow-up does not automatically determine that all previous transformative learning is lost and that the participants cannot, on their own terms, reach a state of contextual knowing. However, Brock (2010) also states that the strength of development of the previous stages - especially engagement of critical thinking skills - predicts the success of the latter. Therefore, as previously discussed, the weak foundation of little preparation, insufficient language and critical thinking skills put these participants at greater risk of being unable to sustain or bring to culmination changes in their perspectives or worldviews. They would have greatly benefitted from the scaffolding effect of follow-up activities, repetitions, reinforcements and recognition during a protracted, post-programme follow-up period. Such input would have encouraged the development of their transformations to the cumulative state of fully
absorbing and acting upon their new perspectives as a matter of course within their daily, contextual lives, and as a result there would have been greater benefits to the larger organisational context. When people are given the “motivation, the means and the knowledge necessary to critically assess, challenge and change their assumptions they will have the chance to become lifelong learners capable of acting for the best in a rapidly changing world” (Christie et al., 2015, p.22).

5.4 Answers to the Research Question

This case study set out to answer a question which encompassed the underlying concepts of leadership, a leadership development programme and the Qatari cultural and organisational contexts and what, when those concepts are brought together, either fostered or inhibited a transformative learning experience. The above findings and discussion show that the specific cultural and organisational contexts are both of extreme importance. The discussion and findings also present how the presence or absence of several key success factors were identified as either fostering or inhibiting potential transformative learning experiences in this specific Qatari organisational context. The research question is now addressed from a positive standpoint, wherein all factors are presented from their positive implication and it can be supposed that their absence equates to an inhibiting factor (see Figure 5.1). For example, rather than negatively present the lack of a pre-programme stage as an inhibiting factor (which it was identified as), it is of more value to the reader, and any developer of a future ELP, to see a condensed version of the rationale of why the inclusion of such a stage would be a success factor for fostering transformative learning experiences.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Success Factors (Absence of which indicates Key Inhibitors)</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
<th>Potential Transformative Learning (TL) Benefits Resulting (Potential TL benefits lost when factor missing)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Identified stakeholder expectations to:                       | • Accommodate, address or adjust  
• Increase buy-in from all stakeholders  
• Create accountability of participants  
• Establish accountability of organisation  
• Establish accountability of training institute | • Identifies potential personal/cognitive areas for TL  
• Grounds potential transformations in reality  
• Identifies areas to potentially challenge  
• Potentially aligns TL with own context, experience and needs  
• Reduces resistance to potential transformations  
• Gives a yardstick to measure potential TL points against |
| A respected selection process that:                            | • Cannot be manipulated or cheated  
• Focuses more on role competency (in addition to personality)  
• Aligns with organisational needs through respected leadership competency model  
• Adds legitimacy/prestige to programme  
• Gives legitimacy/prestige to participants | • Challenges – leading to the edge  
• Confronts power  
• Uses imagination  
• Purposeful activity  
• Opportunity for reflection on own context  
• Legitimacy encourages receptive/open participants  
• Legitimacy/prestige raises self-confidence |
| Appropriate English levels through:                           | • Stringent testing OR  
• Increase of participant English ability to meet level of curriculum to avoid risk of failure OR  
• Decrease of content level to meet level of participants to avoid risk of failure | • Provides medium for transference and shaping of ideas and concepts that challenge  
• For group discussion  
• To justify and defend new beliefs, values and feelings |
<table>
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</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Inclusion of sufficiently time-framed, designed, pre-programme stage to: | • Address cultural norm of risk and uncertainty avoidance  
• Accurately inform on all aspects, address issues and decrease participant and organisational stress  
• Add legitimacy/prestige to programme  
• Increase buy-in from all stakeholders and create a support system  
• Build on pride and prestige of being ‘chosen’, while tempering overconfidence  
• Structure pre-work exercises  
• Give opportunity to build a group dynamic  
• Understand and practise blog to increase comfort of use and wider buy-in | • Introduces challenges and being led to the edge  
• Establishes safety zones  
• Establishes group dialogue  
• Calmer participants more open to potential TL  
• Willing participants more open to TL  
• Establishes a reflective medium in blog  
• Reinforces legitimacy of the lived experience |
| Awareness of participants’ professional / cultural context to: | • Target preparation and design to address cultural and organisational context specific to Qatar and Qatari organisations  
• Increase engagement of participants by alignment of content to their professional context  
• Address awareness of status and power through ELP delivery by high status tutors and recognised by leading educational organisations  
• Address cultural issues of respect and recognition of participants before, during and after programme | • Purposeful and heuristic  
• Increase engagement and thereby possible TL  
• Challenges and engages with difference through dialogue  
• Legitimate tutors create increased receptiveness towards challenging messages/views  
• Confronts power  
• Offers possible roles and models for modelling |
| Personal and cultural exchanges to create: | • Exposure of participants to foreign culture and concepts  
• Opportunity to represent own culture | • Creates individual and group lived experiences  
• Encourages critical reflection on own culture and context |
<table>
<thead>
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<th>Explanation</th>
<th>Potential Transformative Learning (TL) Benefits Resulting (Potential TL benefits lost when factor missing)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Opportunity to show mutual respect</td>
<td>• Encourages engagement with difference</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Engagement with others' experience</td>
<td>• Opportunities to confront power</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Alignment with Arabic culture (oral / hospitable / relationship driven)</td>
<td>• Offers possible role models for modelling</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Alignment with respect of history / own culture</td>
<td>• Opportunities for group dialogue</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autonomous components to give:</td>
<td>• Opportunity to be challenged to edge of comfort zone</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Opportunity to represent own culture</td>
<td>• Encourages lived experiences owned by the individuals</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• One to one interaction / dialogue</td>
<td>• May require premise reflection</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Personal individual experience</td>
<td>• Encourages imaginative process</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Empowerment over experiences of own choosing</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acceptable levels and balance of travel, stress, uncertainty and course intensity to:</td>
<td>• Give opportunity to make some contact with own culture or context if required (i.e. food / language)</td>
<td>• Reduces resistance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Encourage greater depth of understanding of a few new contexts / concepts as opposed to many, superficially</td>
<td>• Increases willingness and openness to TL</td>
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<tr>
<td>Inclusion of designed and implemented post-programme stage to:</td>
<td>• Creates relaxed alertness</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Build on participant enthusiasm</td>
<td>• Encourages premise reflection or deeper critical reflection on differences between own and new context</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Increase or continue stakeholder buy-in</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Instigate organisational recognition and respect of participants as soon as possible after return</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Disseminate participant learning, final assignment proposals and training institute’s final report to organisation</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Create accountability of participants through dissemination and/or project realisation</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Brings incomplete or new transformations to maturity</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Creates further spaces for critical dialogue</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Opportunity to confront existing power structures</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Gives engagement and empowerment to sustain transformations</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Challenges new views and frameworks</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Requires justification of TL through dialogue and dissemination</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Practical application brings TL into lived experience of own context</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Scaffold translation of theory into action</td>
<td>• Purposeful and heuristic</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Maintain group dynamic and support with follow-up group work or a group project</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Establish or reinforce mentoring of participants for continued support</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appropriate cognitive skills and educational level for content which:</td>
<td>• Increases engagement of participants by alignment of content to their cognitive and educational abilities</td>
<td>• Disorientation without distress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Creates a supportive entity</td>
<td>• Challenges within safety zone</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Becomes a safe, consensual environment</td>
<td>• Encourages heuristic process</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Lessens threat to personal identity</td>
<td>• Reduces resistance</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 5.1 Key Success Factors Fostering Transformative Learning
There is no attempt on my part to put forward this answer to the research question as complete or definitive. It is merely the essence of what was teased out of this specific case study, based on one specific ELP. What it does indicate is that creating a successful transformative learning experience does not rest on a single factor, which could be cherry-picked from the above list. Rather, it is an interweaving of several factors. It would be of no use to give the participants the luxury of more time if they were not additionally given suitable, transformative-fostering ways of filling it; nor would it be useful to give them suitable tools with which to fill it, such as the blog, and not give them an understanding of how to use it. It would also be of little value to create a comfort zone to keep the participants’ stress levels at relaxed alertness, but not challenge and disorientate them by taking them to the edge of that comfort zone.

5.5 Summary

This chapter has discussed the findings of this case study research, focusing on the main themes that either promoted or hindered transformative learning during the three stages of an ELP being run for Qatari nationals from a Qatari organisational context. It attempted to offer a plausible explanation as to how and why transformative learning was either fostered or hindered in relation to previous research, while taking into account the uniqueness of this case study’s individuality and context.

In the pre-programme stage, it was seen that becoming a candidate was a momentous enough occurrence to foster a change in the participants’ view of themselves; however, the selection process was structured in such a way that rather than build on this effect, it created a dynamic of doubt over the value of the ELP programme. The pre-programme experience was devoid of time for preparation and the information needed to foster realistic expectations of the ELP, which in turn unnecessarily stressed the participants and hindered the pre-fostering of a transformative learning experience. The programme implementation stage contained several positive educational experiences that encouraged the core transformative elements of discourse, lived experience and a degree of reflection. When
these occurred in conjunction with any of the general principles identified by Taylor and Jarecke (2011) and either aligned with the interests and context of the participants or occurred through familiar cultural, group or personal interactions, some transformative learning was fostered. However, the range and depth of those transformations was limited due to the participants being overwhelmed by the scope, content and demands of the programme and because the participants’ own cultural and professional context and their educational and language levels had not been taken sufficiently into account and addressed in either the ELP design or the pre-programme stage. It was shown, through the themes of organisational and participant outcomes, that the absence of any structured post-programme stage was a significant lost opportunity, because it hindered both the maintenance of fostered transformations and the bringing to completion of those not yet fully formed or matured.

Finally, based on both the findings and the discussion, the study presented an answer to the posed research question by way of a compilation of the key factors that either fostered or inhibited the occurrence of transformative learning experiences within this specific ELP, designed for participants from a Qatari cultural and organisational context. The next and concluding chapter will look at the implications these findings may have for fostering transformative learning and will make recommendations for future leadership programmes based on those implications.
6 Recommendations and Conclusion

6.1 Introduction
This case study examined a Qatari ELP through the experiences of its main stakeholders in order to identify factors that may have fostered or hindered the occurrence of transformative learning. In this concluding chapter, I will be readdressing the case study’s limitations; making recommendations for future leadership programmes and the possible research of them; suggesting the implications of this research for future leadership programmes and transformative learning in general; and, finally, drawing together the threads of the case study in a concluding summary.

6.2 Readdressing Limitations of the Research
In the methodology section of this thesis, I discussed the five most common points highlighted by Flyvbjerg (2011) as limitations levelled against case study research. It would be prudent in this concluding section to look again at those limitations and either defend this case study or to admit its weaknesses bearing in mind there is only so much a single explanatory case study can address. It can do no more than attempt to tell the story through the eyes of the participants and give some explanation of how and why it happened in the way that it did (Yin, 2012).

Firstly, I feel some authentic general knowledge has been gained and some justifiable reasoning given as to what may have fostered or inhibited transformational learning experiences occurring within an ELP for Qatari participants (Nisbet & Watt, 1984; Simons, 2009). In line with a case study format, the information has been presented in a way that can be understood by multiple audiences, including the developers of such programmes and the organisations that, in good faith, send their employees to participate for their own and their organisation’s betterment.

Secondly, in agreement with Yin (2009), this case has both tested and broadened some aspects of the theory of transformative learning. It has
done so by showing that when the three core elements, in addition to any of the transformative principles set out by Taylor and Jarecke (2011), were present and the participants’ own cultural and contextual factors were taken into account, a transformative experience was more likely to occur.

Thirdly, it did prove true that this case study confirmed the researcher’s preconceived notions. From personal experience I had come to the conclusion that cut and paste, western programmes were predominantly ineffective in this region and I had the preconceived notion that the culture and context of the participants was having a real impact on their transformative learning and take-away value. After allowing this study to force its own view upon the results (Thomas, 2011), it seems my notion was supported, which also justified the recent discussion and call for more research on the impact of context by leaders in the field of transformative learning (Dirkx, 2012; Mezirow, 2011; Taylor, 2011). A preconceived notion is not necessarily wrong, especially if it is based on years of practice and observation, and if the results of this research had shown otherwise, I would be reporting as such, understanding that a negative outcome can be as valuable a learning experience as a positive one.

Fourthly, this case study did not attempt to develop a new proposition or theory, but rather conformed to one of the greatest strengths of a case study (Radely & Chamberlain, 2012; Simons, 2009), which was to give a generalised overview, including examples and explanations of the theoretical proposition that certain factors need to be in place to foster transformative learning and that culture and context do matter in both leadership development and transformative learning scenarios.

The fifth suggested limitation is that it is impossible to generalise from an individual case study and therefore it makes no valid scientific contribution. However, typical of most, this case study attempted to replace quantity with quality and offered a unique opportunity to focus on a real-life situation which revealed, in a multitude of details of human behaviour, the reality of conducting an ELP for a Qatari organisational context (Cohen et
al., 2011). It should be remembered that the role of a case study is not to make statistical generalisations, but to expand and generalise on a theory (Yin, 2014). The findings, discussion and subsequent summary table of key fostering factors show fulfilment of this task by outlining several observations and outcomes that, with thought and adaptation, raise a possibility of generalisation to leadership programmes being developed or conducted in this or other culturally specific contexts. Practical suggestions for the application of those key factors will be addressed in the recommendations to follow.

6.3 Recommendations for Overcoming Hindrances and for Fostering Transformative Learning

6.3.1 Identified Stakeholder Expectations

The first recommended step towards fostering a transformative learning experience in any leadership programme is to identify the stakeholders’ needs and expectations, which could be done through a needs assessment at both the organisational and individual levels. A needs assessment is an instrument that will separate the leadership developmental ‘needs’ from the developmental ‘wants’, and further defines whether the needs can indeed be addressed through a leadership development programme or rather through general skills training (Ciporen, 2008). It generates a firm basis from which to develop an ELP that has “legitimacy by ensuring coherence between programme and organisation and between facilitators and participants” (Carroll & Nicholson, 2014, p.1418) and thereby potentially greater management buy-in and maintenance of commitment, as they see their expectations accommodated and met in the design and implementation of the ELP. It also makes it possible to listen to and address unrealistic expectations at their immediate source and adjust them accordingly. Realistic and attainable expectations create accountability for all stakeholders: for the ELP provider to design and deliver what has been agreed; for the managers to follow up on what they asked for; and for the participants to reach attainable stretch goals. This creates an environment that is more
conducive to a transformative experience, because rather than initiating stress and resistance in the participants, it instead creates anticipation to overcome identified challenges that are grounded in their own real contexts.

6.3.2 Awareness of Participants’ Contexts

This research has put forward that contextual awareness of the individual, the group and the organisation is an important fostering factor which the better programmes address at the earliest planning stages by explicitly tailoring “from-to paths” for the participants (Gurdjian et al., 2014, p.3), in conjunction with identifying and shaping the stakeholder expectations. From the point of view of the Qatari organisational and cultural context, the ELP should firstly create learning situations that align with the interests and needs of the participants and their organisation; secondly, wherever possible, it should use group work that engages the participants in realistic scenarios which they can relate to their own experience and context. This takes into account the collective nature of the Qatari culture and thereby creates the most ideal conditions for cognitive engagement, relevant dialogue and reflection, and most closely fulfils the general principles for fostering transformation as outlined by Taylor and Jarecke (2011).

Whereas some cultures may thrive on being exposed and challenged by diversity, in general, the Qatari Arab culture is much more about maintaining the status quo, respecting tradition, respecting the word of elders, respecting the values imposed by Islam, and attempting never to cause yourself, your family, your tribe or an individual of higher status to lose face (Alshawi & Gardner, 2013; Bogdan et al., 2012; Schwartz, 2014). With this in mind, I would therefore recommend continuing using only recognised organisations and tutors who can elicit the respect of the participants and, in consequence, enhance their openness to either gently confront their status and power or become models to emulate.

Qataris can be challenged as individuals, as can their worldviews and beliefs, but I would suggest in smaller increments than may be attempted in the average western curriculum, and extreme care must be taken if the
challenge is towards any of the above cultural constructs. Any programme designer would do well to remember “collective cultures are traditional cultures which respect tradition and resist sudden change, especially if it is imposed” (Al Omari, 2008).

6.3.3 A Respected Selection Process
An additional contextual component would be to create a selection process that the participants, the managers and the organisation can respect and have confidence in. There should be a focus on role competency over an extended time-frame, rather than resting exclusively on personality and presentation skills, and there needs to be a sense of authority by basing the design on a recognised leadership competency model. A suitable replacement for the less respected psychometric component may be either 180- or 360-degree appraisals, especially as these could be repeated a suitable time after completion of the ELP for comparative purposes (Bolden, 2005). If the selection process is one that cannot be manipulated or cheated, it will add to the prestige of being selected, raising the status and potential wasta of both the participants and the ELP (Koski et al., 2015) and consequently the commitment of all the stakeholders. An increase in confidence and engagement would reduce the possibility of participants feeling stress and uncertainty and thereby allow the benefit of an increase in their reflective openness to a transformative experience (Mezirow, 2009).

6.3.4 Appropriate English Levels
Although the negative impact was felt in the implementation stage, addressing the effects of low and insufficient English ability can only be done in the pre-programme stage. A first option would be to conduct the ELP fully in Arabic, which, while being the easiest solution, may not be the right one. Having tutors from the ‘right’ colleges, and being capable of taking such a programme in English is a source of pride and empowerment (Madsen, 2010). Although language is a key component of identity (Morrice, 2012), having a good level of English is recognised as a legitimate competence and creates high levels of cultural and linguistic capital (Lueg & Lueg, 2015). Therefore, to have the ELP in Arabic would
reduce its elite value and overall worth in the eyes of the participants and thus reduce their commitment to a transformative experience. Brock (2010) reports that the perception of empowerment students experienced from using English as a second language actually facilitated transformative learning.

Rather than reduce the value of the ELP, a better approach would be to make passing a stringent English test a first prerequisite for entering into the selection process. This would ensure that all the subsequent steps of selection pre- and post-programme work and programme participation would be within the language capabilities of the participants. A recommendation made by several interviewees was to remove the English component from within the ELP and instead send potential participants on individual language immersion courses well in advance of any future ELP. This would indicate that language testing of Qatari nationals should occur on a more regular basis within their organisations to identify potential candidates early.

6.3.5 Appropriate Cognitive Skills and Educational Level

In addition to participant frustration caused by misalignment between the relevance of the ELP content to themselves and their context, the data suggested further frustration due to a second misalignment between the academic rigour of the ELP content and the participants’ educational maturity. There were signs they were overwhelmed by the selection of theories, tools, solutions and leadership strategies they were asked to take in, take home and attempt to assimilate, relate to and apply in their own context. There are two obvious ways to approach this issue: either ensure the course content better matches the abilities and skills of the participants, or screen the participants to better match the demands of the content.

Alhadeff-Jones (2012) states that the favouring of “ready-made tools” and “standardised methods” to frame training (p.182) makes it a challenge to take in the transformative learning approach of including “the micro and
macro historical contexts of the training (for example, individuals, group, institution, and country’s history)”. I would therefore recommend that while tools and models are part of best practice in leadership programmes, the number should be limited first to those best suited to the organisational context within which the participants will be attempting to apply them and then to a smaller selection, which could be looked at in more depth in the time available, with the addition of the examples and case study exercises the participants found so useful and engaging. There is still uncertainty as to which teaching practices can be defined as fostering transformative learning and which are just “good teaching”, but Cranton and Taylor (2012, p.15) suggest it may be that “good teaching always has the potential to foster transformative learning and transformation is dependent on the readiness of the learners [and] the context in which the teaching is taking place”. I agree that there is always a place for good teaching, which will cause less stress for non-native speakers struggling with new concepts, will break down barriers and resistance to accept those concepts, and will reduce avoidance and withdrawal (Weinberg et al., 2010). These can only be seen as factors encouraging a heuristic learning process conducive to the occurrence of transformative learning.

6.3.6 Inclusion of sufficiently Time-Framed, Designed, Pre-Programme Stage
A pre-programme stage of sufficient duration would take into consideration all the above-mentioned recommendations, such as addressing the stakeholders’ expectations and generating greater participation, buy-in and accountability from the participants and their organisation, thereby creating a stronger support system for the before, during and return stages. It would take into account the participants’ cultural norm of risk and uncertainty avoidance by undertaking targeted preparation and setting the participants up for success rather than risking failure, and ensuring their English, educational and cognitive skills are sufficient to cope with the planned curriculum. It would take into account that, within the Qatari context, leadership, and even leadership potential, have status attached (George et al., 2016) and due consideration would be given to the prestige
of being ‘chosen’ in two ways: firstly, by using the increase in the participants’ confidence and pride as a catalyst to engage them as fully as possible in a meaningful, challenging preparation phase; and secondly, tempering overconfidence through heuristic pre-work which creates within the participants a realistic view of their current leadership competencies and realistic, safe expectation zones of what could be addressed and strengthened in the time available (Buckingham & Vosburgh, 2001). An added advantage of including pre-work recommendations would be to start the building of a strong group dynamic rather than hoping for the serendipitous success that occurred during this case study’s ELP.

Taylor (2007, drawing on work by Kreber, 2004) found that critical reflection was most likely when motivation played a key role, especially when the motivation was an interest in why something should be done rather than in how or what. Therefore, a final recommendation for this stage of the programme would be to give the participants real understanding as to why daily blog entries are to their benefit, as well as a practical introduction to how to use them. Any increase in critical reflection is more likely to foster a transformative learning experience. Inclusion of the above points means the lived experience of the ELP begins well before embarking on the implementation stage, which further increases the legitimacy of the entire experience and its outcomes.

6.3.7 Personal and Cultural Exchanges

Given that the participants mentioned any chance for verbal interaction or exchanges of anecdotes and personal experience so positively, it is recommended to include more opportunity for such occurrences, especially more of the one-to-one “conversations to learning” (B6) that showed powerful effects in encouraging critical self-reflection on their own leadership styles. By following a principle of quality over quantity and reducing the number of topics and leadership models covered on the theory side of the programme, more time could be allocated to focus on each theme through case studies and/or group work and chances offered to discuss and share ideas and experiences from both the tutors’ and the
participants’ contexts. Those specific themes could also be a focus of the site visits - to see practical applications and to have further discussion or work experience with on-the-ground practitioners about how they implement the theories. This necessary engagement with difference and repetition to consolidate is more likely to bring about a transformative experience (McCauley et al., 2010; Pugh, 2002). If, in addition, interactions can be with tutors or relevant people with a credible academic reputation or topic-specific qualification, it would encourage more open and receptive interaction from participants who culturally respect qualifications, titles and the authority of experience in others.

Because food is such an important aspect of any cultural or national identity, it is recommended to discuss its implications with future participants in an effort to encourage them to encounter a more diverse lived experience through the culinary culture of their host country. However, this should not be imposed to the point where it impinges on the autonomous aspect of the programme, as that may tilt the disorientation factor from transformative to impeding. Food is also intertwined with the Arabic culture of hospitality and socialising. More opportunities should be included for the participants to interact on a personal or cultural level through dining or socialising with people other than those within their group. If some of the interactions were with role-specific peers, mutually beneficial interactions may occur and professional relationships be formed that would give the participants an opportunity for reciprocity of their knowledge and hospitality.

Regarding the more cultural visits included in the ELP, any complaints were more often in relation to the amount of travel involved, their frequency and their repetitive nature. These complaints were completely at odds with their many positive statements revealing a real transformative learning experience regarding the cultural and historical legacy they encountered. I would therefore recommend a continued inclusion of these opportunities, but perhaps fewer, involving less travel.
6.3.8 Autonomous Components

A further recommendation to increase engagement, beyond reducing the number of excursions, could be to include opportunities for the participants to make small independent explorations and have their own individual experiences. These would be brought back to the group or just absorbed into their own lived experience. Morgan (2011) confirms this when he states that transformations can be encouraged while travelling in small groups, but especially so when there are many opportunities for solo experiences without the distraction of others.

One recommendation regarding the theme of food has been discussed above, but, as mentioned, this should not be imposed to the detriment of allowing the participants some autonomy over their eating habits. When participants are put into stressful, disorientating and even physically demanding situations, it is natural they will seek to reinforce their own and their group’s identity and solidarity by consuming food they associate with their homes and culture (Weller & Turkon, 2015). In this ELP, one member began to cook for the others, producing beneficial feelings of independence and of having taken control of the situation, but such a circumstance cannot be counted on in future ELPs. Alternative options, such as lists of local Arabic style restaurants and periodically consulting with the participants as to where they would like to eat, may suffice.

If a blog is to be included as a semi-autonomous component in a future programme, all participants need to have full understanding of its value as a beneficial, well-founded concept and be made comfortable with its use before leaving Qatar. Involvement of a wider audience and buy-in from the organisation would add to its transformative learning potential and give valuable, real-time information regarding progress, expectations, difficulties and successes.

During the eight weeks of this ELP, the mostly mid-level, mature professionals were put into the role of students and obliged to adhere to an ELP schedule into which they had little input. This caused frustration,
resistance and withdrawal. Two creative additions to future ELPs as suggested by this case study would be firstly, during the pre-programme stage, to require the participants to organise at least one individual activity, sanctioned by the training institute and organisation as relevant to their work role or developmental needs. Secondly, as possible future leaders, facilitating an opportunity for the participants to present or teach an aspect of their cultural and organisational context showing how Qatar and its 2030 Vision have a role to play outside the GCC and the Middle Eastern region. Such an undertaking would require powerful use of premise reflection and imagination, and the challenge would induce ownership of a true lived experience, all of which have been identified as transformative-fostering factors (Brock, 2010; Malkki, 2010; Taylor, 2011; Taylor & Jarecke, 2011).

6.3.9 Encourage a Group Dynamic

The group proved to be of cultural and contextual importance, had a major stabilising effect that enhanced the lived experience of the participants and increased the likelihood of transformative learning occurring. Any future participants should be given every opportunity to form a strong, supportive dynamic before they leave Qatar. With so many variables, replicating the same dynamic exhibited by this particular ELP cohort would be difficult; however, to facilitate a transformative group experience, not all should be left to chance. Firstly, I would recommend that opportunities for the candidates to work together be built into the selection stage rather than all assessments being made on an individual basis. This would give the assessors an opportunity to gauge which candidates best facilitate team rather than individual outcomes. Secondly, the mixture of age and work experience within this ELP had the unexpected outcome of creating a mentoring mentality between the more and less experienced participants, something which has produced a lasting, beneficial effect within the organisation. Rather than aiming for a more homogenous group, such a mix could be taken into account and replicated.
6.3.10 Inclusion of Designed and Implemented Post-Programme Stage

Recommendations for the post-programme stage, which could last anything from three months to one year, all touch on the need for rigorous follow-up and continued engagement from the training institute, the participants’ managers and their organisation. The participants claimed to have learnt a lot about themselves as leaders and to have made changes in their attitudes, working styles and communication habits with peers and subordinates. If a 360-degree feedback had been conducted in the pre-programme stage, a second one conducted some months after their return would show if those changes had actually occurred, and if they were deep transformational ones or merely temporary and superficial (Chappelow, 2004). In the same way, asking them to write a second personal statement describing how they now saw themselves, as current or potential leaders, would be a critically reflective undertaking that would give them the chance to think through, understand and verbalise those changes and any new view they may have of themselves.

In general, the participants require opportunity and support in order to either complete or bring to maturity the full cycle of the transformative learning experience as outlined by Mezirow (2011). This could be achieved in several ways. Firstly, through opportunity to implement at least one of the projects or changes the group put forward in their assignments. Mathis, (2010), for instance, suggests an action research approach as a good transformative learning experience. Secondly, a chance to disseminate aspects of the ELP, their assignments and their experience, not just through the written medium, but through their cultural oral tradition of dialogue. This would also give them the recognition necessary to validate their experience in the eyes of their peers, subordinates, managers and the organisation. Thirdly, support and engagement from the organisation could come in the form of a mentoring scheme, either internally or through continued contact with their tutors (Conger, 2014). This would allow them to continue critical reflection and dialogue through an authentic relationship (Kitchenham, 2008; Malki & Green, 2014).
Finally, scaffolding of their return to work through some further assignments, case studies and group work would give opportunities to reinforce or sustain their personal growth and maintain the supportive group dynamic for as long as possible (Baumgartner, 2001).

6.3.11 Balance between Programme Components and Intensity

The concept of balance should be applied to the above recommendations and the general components of future ELPs. To repeat Taylor (2007, p. 187), we need to “live with some discomfort on the edge of knowing, in the process of gaining new insights and understandings”. Stress and discomfort have been mentioned multiple times in the findings of this research, and when you are too often “on the edge”, the edge may begin to feel like a knife instead. A balance needs to be found between fully engaging, stretching and challenging the participants at the limit of their comfort zones and yet within environments where they feel safe enough to play with their emotions, behaviour and frames of reference (Ciporen, 2008; Malki, 2010). I would not recommend or advocate a completely watered-down version of this ELP, but perhaps a little less would gain a lot more in relation to transformative learning outcomes. In addition to the above recommendations, this could be accomplished by challenging participants, but with more hands-on support, such as individual or group coaching (Fullerton, 2010); reducing the length of the programme; or by breaking it into several segments over the course of a year. This would be less stressful in terms of family and work commitments and would allow time for reflection, assimilation, practical application, and ongoing support and feedback. Finally, consider conducting at least part of the programme in the participants’ cultural or organisational context of Qatar.

6.4 Implications for Leadership Development Programmes

Organising the findings according to the three stages of the ELP highlighted that fostering transformative learning is not confined to the implementation stage of a leadership programme, but can be fostered on a continuum that begins well before the structured, educational phase and
can be brought to maturity in an extended time period after the implementation stage. It also became clear that if the final stage is missing, embryotic transformative learning gained within the implementation stage could be stunted or abandoned (Bushell & Goto, 2011).

This has real implications for leadership development programmes, which in my experience put the greatest emphasis on the content and delivery stage. There are training institutes that undertake rigorous needs analysis for both the potential participants and the organisation to ensure alignment of their stated needs and the programme content. There are some that undertake a rigorous pre-programme stage of preparation through reading and assignments. There are also those that endeavour to follow-up the implementation stage by offering ongoing coaching sessions, establishing mentoring, or making themselves available through online recommended reading and question and answer platforms. However, these are, in my professional experience, a minority: examples of programmes, diligent in all those aspects are very rare. The majority still ignore the contextual implications and offer ‘cut and paste’ distinctly American in character solutions rather than embracing the complexity and chaos that is Qatar (Grandy & Holten, 2012; House & Aditya, 1997). Too often the participants are left with an impressive programme file, a certificate, and few or no transformative learning experiences; their organisations are left financially poorer and with unmet leadership expectations.

However, this case study has also shown that Qatari organisations must work harder to share the responsibility of developing Qatar’s leaders. They can do this by working more closely with ELP developers; making their expectations, context and organisational culture transparent; choosing the right participants to send on programmes; being fully engaged throughout the programme; and, especially, by giving opportunities for their participants’ transformative learning experiences to mature into real leadership change on their return.
6.5 Implications for Transformative Learning

If the reader takes one implication from this study, it should be that when attempting to facilitate a transformative learning experience, context matters. With targeted preparation that takes into account participants’ cultural or organisational context, there will be an increase in the engagement of the participants and more openness to the challenges and differences that need be faced for a transformative experience to occur, as well as greater acceptance of the validity of it as a genuine lived experience.

This study has attempted to address the criticism that Mezirow put little emphasis on those factors that trigger or bring about transformative learning in a consistent way (Baumgartner, 2012). It has taken into account the challenges the participants faced and that contributed to inhibiting transformative learning experiences. The results supported the claims by Kegan (2009) and Taylor and Laros (2014) that not all adults are self-directed learners who are capable of bringing about their own transformations, and such experiences in ELP programmes are rarely spontaneous. Therefore, ELP designers and educators cannot leave it to chance, but must make every effort to build in transformative learning opportunities. The results showed that when the recognised core elements were in place, a transformative experience was possible; but the higher the number of general principles of application - as outlined by Taylor and Jarecke (2011) - present, the higher the likelihood of transformative learning experiences occurring.

The ten phases of transformative learning and its three basic core elements have been well researched and documented, resulting in a better understanding of how to recognise them, the reason for their inclusion, and the possible intensity and sequencing of each. However, the results of this study also showed that the principles put forward by Taylor and Jarecke (2011) may play their own powerful part. Could it be that one or more may play an equal part in bringing about transformational learning? Could being led to the edge of your comfort zone be as
important as having the opportunity to engage in dialogue? Do we only engage in critical reflection if first we see it as a purposeful and heuristic process? These are questions that have implications for future research and the direction of transformative learning theory generally, but before addressing that point in the next section, it is also appropriate to briefly address the personal outcomes and their implications for my own professional practice.

6.6 Personal Implications for Professional Practice

An unexpected consequence of conducting this research was that I too embarked on a transformative learning experience. As someone well versed in designing and teaching courses in several countries and fields, I felt I was fully competent in taking cross-cultural and contextual elements into consideration. But the findings of this research made me realise I need to be even more consequential in considering contextual implications and the effects they may have on the participant's transformative experience. In my mind, the idea of context has gone well beyond cultural implications, but now incorporates the willingness and cognitive capacity of the participants, their lived experiences and especially the possibility of them being able to integrate any transformed concepts into their own future lived experiences enacted within their own contexts. Seeing this ELP, through the eyes of its participants, has left me with a more sympathetic understanding of their feelings regarding being overwhelmed and outside of their English and cognitive comfort zones. That further leads me to believe I could address Kegan’s (2009) question asking why transformative learning is confined to being an adult theory. It is as Taylor (2011) outlines; it is having experience and awareness of context to draw on and the ability to critically reflect and engage in dialogue that encourage transformative learning experiences. If that were a challenge for these adult participants, how much more so it would be for the immature to achieve.

I fully agree with Cranton and Taylor (2012) that good teaching gives a greater potential for transformative learning and the outcomes of this
research have me strongly leaning towards agreeing with Taylor’s suggestion that “awareness of context” may be of equal significance to the other core elements of critical reflection, individual experience and dialectical discourse (2011, p.47). However, I now feel it may not be enough for only the course designer and facilitators to have awareness of context within their programme design and strive for good teaching practices. This may be too one sided. Part of encouraging an ethical transformative experience may to be to first make programme participants more aware of their own frames of reference and the implications they have on their professional practice before attempting to bring about a change in those frames of reference. This gives the participants the opportunity to choose if, or what they may change and an awareness of the consequences of incorporating those changes into their own contexts.

The impact of these conclusions on my professional practice and conduct can be felt on a daily basis, as I look deeper for contextual implications and strive to incorporate the principles put forward by Taylor and Jarecke (2011) in my course designs. It has also affected the way I listen to and analyse my organisation’s employees training needs, and even their daily interactions and conversations that occur around me. And finally, I have become aware of the personal and professional satisfaction and value to be gained from one well designed and implemented case study, which enables the researcher to view a phenomenon from perspectives other than just their own. This encourages me to continue to research and look deeper into educational circumstances and strive to find greater understanding that can be disseminated with others through whatever means may be available, whether by writing articles or speaking publically.

6.7 Recommendations for Future Research

6.7.1 Multiple Case Studies

Yin (cited in Cohen, et al. 2011, p.292) states, “the more subtle is the issue under investigation, the more cases may be required”. With its many stages, multiple core elements and its ability to occur either instantly or
over a protracted period, transformative learning is a research topic subject to a multitude of subtle variations. This study proposes that factors such as the participants’ cultural and organisational contexts, group dynamics and the programme design can also subtly influence the fostering or hindering of transformative learning experiences. Continued research needs to take place outside the traditional, formal, educational settings, because only by studying it in many interdisciplinary forms can the true essence of what shapes the transformative process be clearly identified. Therefore, I would fully advocate the need to conduct further case studies, based on leadership programmes, both in Qatar and in the Middle Eastern region, to gain a fuller picture.

6.7.2 Micro Issues
Within further case studies, there are several micro issues that could become the specific focus. I would suggest these could include the balance between disorientation and stress for the participants. How much disorientation is too much? At what stage does the introduction of new and disorienting experiences and worldviews become counterproductive to transformative learning occurring? Mezirow (2003) states that transformative learning can occur either in a group or independently, so another approach could look at the role the group plays in fostering its occurrence. As ELPs are predominantly group-oriented, this could be an important factor to understand. Related to this theme would be a study to understand the role played by scaffolding or outside support in fostering, bringing to maturity and maintaining transformative learning. Finally, further research could focus on the general principles put forward by Taylor and Jarecke (2011) to identify which play the greatest part and why.

6.7.3 Comparative Research
This was a small, single case study based on an ELP that was conducted outside Qatar. There are multiple other permutations that could be studied, such as an ELP conducted within Qatar, a larger group, one with more women included or a programme of shorter duration. Such studies would give a broader database and more validity from which to make generalisations for the region and beyond.
6.7.4 Include both Qualitative and Quantitative Data
Inclusion of pre- and post-programme 360-degree feedback and/or survey style questionnaires would enable future researchers to gather rich quantifiable data. Such data could be extremely useful for bringing clarity to the role of micro issues such as duration of the study, inclusion of specific activities and the influence of the group in each case.

6.7.5 Extended Time-Frame
This case study collected data over a ten-month period, with some additional, personal observations made up to the time of writing. It has been noticed that there appears to be some backsliding in the participants’ attitude and behaviour, suggesting that future studies could extend the research period to better understand the longevity of transformations and what factors hinder or bring about the maintenance of them.

6.8 Concluding Comments
For this case study, I was privileged to follow the words of Cohen et al. (2011, p.290) and present this ELP as “akin to the television documentary” through the eyes of those who were fortunate enough to experience it. By doing so, I gained insights into some key factors for either fostering or inhibiting a transformative learning experience within the Qatari organisational context. It cannot be a definitive list because each context may produce its own factors. However, it has shown that within any context there needs first to be an opportunity for genuine, lived experience to happen and safe spaces for an individual to use the core elements to progress, in their own way, through the phases of a transformative learning experience. It has also shown that, in an educational setting, there are some general principles that can be applied to increase the likelihood of a legitimate experience.

This case study has shown that it is not enough to design and implement an academically sound ELP and leave transformative learning to chance. When an organisation sends participants on an ELP, all involved stakeholders have a shared responsibility to create the optimal conditions
for legitimate, purposeful experiences. This means buy-in and support during all stages. Sufficient time, and the development of pre- and post-programme activities, should not be considered as extras to the programme, but indeed as integral, equally important stages which will affect both the ELP and its transformative learning outcomes. As a learning and development professional, I welcome the insight that by being more aware of key success factors, taking into consideration the cultural and organisational context, using some general principles and creating opportunities to challenge in a realistic way, legitimate transformative experiences can occur in a Qatari organisational context and can contribute to developing the future leaders that Qatar needs in order to realise its vision.

(50,642 words, excluding references)
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Annex I  Participant Interview 1

Prompt questions used as basis for semi-structured interview:

1. Tell me about your selection process.
2. What kind of experience was this process for you?
3. Does anything in the process stand?
4. Tell me about how it felt to be selected.
5. Do you feel now differently about yourself after having been selected? How?
6. Do others now treat you differently after your selection? How?
7. How do you see yourself, at this moment, as a leader?
8. Qatar is changing rapidly, have you ever experienced any uncertainty about yourself or about what it means to be a Qatari, working in (...)? What were the circumstances?
9. What kind of changes do you hope the ELP will bring about in you?
10. How do you think it is going to accomplish that?
11. Is there anything else about the programme, or your experience so far you would like to share with me?
Annex II  Participant Interview 2

Prompt questions:

1. Firstly, tell me about your experience on the ELP.
2. During the time you were away, did you experience any moments where you thought deeply about what it means, to be a Qatari in the modern business world? If so, in what circumstances?
3. Did have any feelings of doubt or uncertainty about anything you were doing or your own knowledge? Circumstances?
4. Do you believe you now have views, which are different than those you used to have? Examples?
5. Which aspects of your time in class work were the most worthwhile experiences?
6. Which aspect of your venue visits or excursions were the most worthwhile experiences?
7. Tell me about your experience writing your blog.
8. Has this experience influenced or changed the way you see yourself? In what way?
9. Would you characterise these changes as small, gradual, or fundamental? Example?
10. How did the ELP accomplish that?
11. Has the ELP prepared you to be a more effective leader? How?
12. How do you see yourself, at this moment, as a leader?
13. Have you noticed anything different about the way you work or deal with other people? Example?
14. Tell me about your experience since you returned to work.
15. What one thing in the programme stood out above the rest as the most worthwhile?
16. Please give your overall impression of the programme. Would you recommend it?
17. Do have any suggestions how the next one could be improved to develop good leaders for Qatar?
18. Is there anything else about the programme or your experience you would like to share with me?
Annex III  Manager Interview 1

Prompt questions:

1. Why did you select your candidate(s)?
   - What qualified them from a work perspective?
   - From a character perspective?
2. What was your impression of the selection process?
   - Was there anything you would have changed?
3. From what you know about the ELP, what kind of experience do you anticipate your participant(s) will have on the programme?
4. When your participant(s) come back, what changes or development do you hope to see in them?
   - From a work perspective?
   - A character or behavioural perspective?
5. How will you know there have been changes? What will be the indicators?
6. Will your management style towards your participant(s) change in any way? (Will you do anything differently with this participant than you have previously?).
7. Are there any other insights or thoughts you would like to share regarding either your experience of this programme so far, or about these programmes in general?
Annex IV  Manager Interview 2

Prompt questions:

1) When your participant(s) came back, what were your first impressions of:
   – Their feedback regarding their experience during the programme? Examples?
   – Their attitude towards the programme? Examples?
2) Were there any immediate noticeable changes you could detect in:
   – Their attitude to their work. Examples?
   – Their attitude to the organisation. Examples?
   – To Qatar in general. Examples?
3) When (x) came back, did you notice any behavioural changes? Examples?
4) What aspects of the ELP do you feel most likely brought about those changes?
5) (x) has been back at work for (x) months. Have the noticed changes in attitude or behaviour been increasing, decreasing or maintained? Examples?
6) When (x) came back he/she had to submit an assignment.
   – Did he/she base it on their job role?
   – Discuss it with you?
   – Will it be possible for them to implement their project?
7) From your experience with your participant, what %/100 were your expectations met?
   – Examples to justify your %?
8) Could you recommendation any changes that would increase the outcomes regarding your expectations?
9) If the exact same course is run again next year – what %/100 would you be willing to send another participant?
Annex V  Training Institute Representative
Interview 1

Prompt questions:

1. Could you give me a brief overview of the ELP?
2. Why was it designed and structured in that particular way?
3. What kinds of leadership objectives have been built into the programme?
4. What kind of changes do you hope to see in the participants on their return?
5. In your opinion, what factors do you think will bring about those changes?
6. Are there aspects of the programme experience you feel might foster personal change within the participants? For example their view of themselves or of Qatar and its place in the world context?
7. Was there anything about the participant’s experience of the selection process that stood out for you?
8. Is there anything else about the programme, which I haven’t asked you about, that you would like to share with me?
Annex VI  Training Institute Representative
Interview 2

Prompt questions:

1. Please tell me about how you saw the participant’s experience of the programme?
2. In your opinion, what has been their experience since their return and the aftermath of the ELP?
3. Were the programme’s leadership goals, realised to your satisfaction?
4. You shared changes you hoped to see in the participants. Have you observed any of those changes?
   - Yes. What factors in the programme most likely brought about those changes?
   - No. What factors most likely hindered change occurring?
5. Have those changes been sustained in the months since their return?
   - Yes. What facilitated that?
   - No. What do you think has hindered that?
6. Which elements of the programme would you fight to retain in any future programme. Why?
7. Are there any changes you would want to implement in the next programme? Why?
8. As you look back at the experience, was there anything that stands out in your mind as special or unique, whether positive or negative?
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