

**ORGANISATIONAL LEARNING AT LAMATA**

**A QUALITATIVE CASE STUDY**

**THESIS SUBMITTED IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF  
BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION (DBA)**

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**FEBRUARY 2019**

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## ABSTRACT

**Title of study:** Organisational Learning at LAMATA – A qualitative case study of a transport agency in Lagos Nigeria.

**Background:** LAMATA is a semi-autonomous public transport regulatory authority created by law by the Lagos State Government with financial and technical assistance from the World Bank and French Development Agency (AFD) to develop an integrated public transport system for a city of over 18 million residents. Organisational learning was a critical strategy to improve institutional capacity to resolve the intractable messy problem of public transportation in Lagos State. LAMATA over its years of existence has implemented several organisational learning strategies aimed at improving individual and organisational capacity to take effective action.

**Aims of the study:** This case study explores organisational learning strategies and practices at LAMATA to uncover how learning occurs amongst organisational members to understand the behaviors, practices and systems that enable effective workplace learning. Furthermore, the case study also explores context specific organisational learning facilitators and barriers to effective learning.

**Methodology:** The research adopts a qualitative case study approach to gain insights into the experiences of organisational members at LAMATA generated from the accounts of 26 participants representing different levels within the hierarchy and departments. The research also relied on various documentary data that provided a time series of organisational learning practices.

**Findings:** The research findings demonstrate that organisational learning and knowledge are positively influenced by a focused organisational learning strategy, a leadership commitment to learning at all levels and effective human resource management practices. The findings also show that ineffective organisational culture, organisational structure and

process of communication were impediments to organisational learning at LAMATA. As a result of its hybridity status, LAMATA is highly influenced by 'international best practice' ideology driven by the World Bank in setting the standard for institutional and sectoral reform. This western-led ideology creates a conflict with Nigeria's prevailing national culture, which is characterised by a high power distance dimension leading members to struggle with organisational identity and process of managing ultimately negatively affecting organisational learning.

**Implications:** The insights gained from the findings provide a basis to generate feasible recommendation within the organisational context to improve the practice of organisational learning at LAMATA from different dimensions of structure, processes and actions. The most profound contribution of this research relates to the impact of national culture on organisational members as they seek to interpret and apply identity and process that conflict with their cultural conditioning. The ability to solving real world problems do not fit nicely into script-driven solutions and processes and a need to recognise the limitations that are driven by the local context of the organisation.

**Limitations:** The case study is not generalizable because of the unique context of the organisations with research findings dependent on the subjective experiences of people within a bonded system and as an interpretive study does not provide objective truth. The research also fell short in completing the action research cycles, as the researcher could not implement the recommendations.

**Word count:** 49,437 (excluding appendices and references)

**Abstract:** 495

**Key words:** organisational learning, qualitative case study

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AFD	French Development Agency
BRT	Bus Rapid Transit
DBA	Doctorate in Business Administration
DFID	Department for International Development
ICB	International Competitive Bids
IDA	International Development Agency
JICA	Japanese International Cooperation Agency
KOTI	Korean Transport Institute



LAMATA	Lagos Metropolitan Area Transport Authority
LASG	Lagos State Government
LBS	Lagos Business School
LSMST	Lagos State Mass Transit Study
LUTP	Lagos Urban Transport Project
MBA	Master's in Business Administration
NCB	National Competitive Bids
NITL	Nigerian Institute of Transportation and Logistics
NPM	New Public Management
PAD	Project Appraisal Document
PSO	Public Sector Organisation
PSO	Public Sector Organisation
QCBS	Quality and Cost Based Selection
STMP	Strategic Transport Master Plan
TfL	Transport for London
TGIF	Thank God It Is Friday
UATP	African Association of Public Transportation
UITP	International Association of Public Transportation

## DECLARATION

*I declare that this thesis, which I submit in consideration of the award of Doctor in Business Administration from the University of Liverpool, is my own personal effort that was completed under the supervision of Dr Ali Rostron. All contents presented from the work of others within existing literature or other related collaborative research is duly acknowledged in the text such that it is possible to ascertain how much of the work is my own. This work in whole or part have not been submitted in any previous application for a degree. Furthermore, I took reasonable care to ensure that the work is original, and, to the best of my knowledge, does not breach copyright law, and has not been taken from other sources except where such work has been cited and acknowledged within the text. The study has been fully self-funded with no direct funding source for the case study.*

## **APPRECIATION AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

The prospect of writing this acknowledgement has always been a source of inspiration and motivation that kept me going during my DBA journey. I begin with profound gratefulness to the Almighty, who makes all things possible in His own time..... There are many people who helped me on my learning journey that I am immensely indebted.

Firstly, my sincere appreciation goes to my primary supervisor (per excellence) Dr Ali Rostron, you were the wind beneath my wings, I would have been stuck in my attempts to

fly if not for your exceptional guidance, mentoring and being my No 1 cheerleader. It was a blessed day for me when you were appointed as my new supervisor over a year ago. You have taught me to see more than I thought was possible and I am inspired to pay it forward and help others on their learning journey. I also wish to thank Prof Sally Sambrook, my secondary supervisor, your prompt, detailed and concise feedback was a confidence booster that helped to push my thesis further.

My thesis journey was that of learning, reflection and discovery. The process enabled a self-questioning making me to confront my personal identity with questions of who am I? what am I learning? how am I learning? why am I learning? who am I becoming? who would I like to be? Profound thanks also goes to my first primary supervisor. Though we were unable to complete this journey together, you challenged the assumptions that I had about my own learning which eventually allowed me to emerge like a butterfly from its cocoon. Our time together was for my pruning and growth.

The writing of a thesis requires help from different sources. I am immensely grateful to Dr Dayo Mobereola, the pioneer Managing Director of LAMATA, who provided me with access to the case organisation as well as the time required for my scholarship pursuits. I am also grateful to the 26 participants who elected to participate in my study; your insights have contributed to my scholarship and improved my quality as a practitioner.

Lastly and by no means the least, I am deeply grateful to my family and friends for their support all through this journey. A special thanks to Abu Sondoko, the love of my life who embodies the 3 p's of partnering, to preserve, protect and provide, you have been my stand-up guy for 23 years and I see you! My most valuable gifts Ayyub and Ramat, you both motivated me to keep on going. How could I ever tell you never to give up on your dreams when the going gets tough if I gave up on mine in the face of challenges?

To Abeke Adebisi - my mother, the most dedicated woman I know, thank you for showing me that giving up is NEVER an option. My siblings Yemi, my prayer warrior, Funmi my proof reader for your unwavering support and assurances that I will complete my program and get my doctorate even when I was feeling despondent. Kay the okanlawon whose words of encouragement were always soothing and finally my Doc T, we are now twins in one other way yippeee!

My sista friends Gbube and Peju, 30 years of friendship is no joke, you both encouraged and gave me the confidence to persevere. Toyin my proofreader and Bukky my sister from another mother your encouragement inspired me to keep on going!

You all continued to believe in me when I needed it most. From the depth of my soul, I thank you all!

## DEDICATION

*For my father – Kamaldeen Olusegun... .. I did it!*

## 1. CHAPTER 1: SETTING THE SCENE

### 1.1. Introduction

This study examines the practice of organisational learning within the context of a Public Sector Organisation (PSO) in Lagos Nigeria. LAMATA is a semi-autonomous transport agency with a mandate to address the messy social problem of public transportation in Lagos. Messy social problems are described as complex, emergent, interdependent problems (Calton and Payne, 2003) that require managers of business to learn how to interact and work with others in new, creative ways (Eisenhardt, 2000).

Organisational learning was a strategic imperative for LAMATA to improve organisational capacity to take effective action in the implementation of public transport infrastructure and services in Lagos. To improve the effectiveness of organisational learning practices at LAMATA, there is a need to explore and examine how learning occurs at LAMATA and uncover the organisational behaviours, practices and systems necessary for effective collective workplace learning.

This chapter begins with a background of the study, introducing the case organisation with an overview of the aim and purpose of the study as it relates to understanding the context and experience of learning in LAMATA. The section will discuss the motivation of the researcher to improve organisational practice in LAMATA using an evidenced-based approach to gain in-depth understanding and provide practical recommendations into how to improve organisational learning practices as a means for improved collective action. The study will also contribute to the body of knowledge in the under-researched public sector in Nigeria.

This chapter also provides a brief discussion on the methodological assumption that guides how this study will examine and explore the experience of organisational learning by members at LAMATA.

### 1.2. Background: The case organisation: LAMATA

Nigeria returned to democratic rule in 1999, and the Government as a matter of priority had to respond to the needs of the electorate to deliver efficient and effective public services. In 2000, the Lagos State Government (LASG) in a bid to address the growing transport

problems in the metropolis defined a sector policy with the overall objective of improving the access to effective transport infrastructure and services, particularly for low-income public transport users. The strategy revolved around developing appropriate institutional mechanisms for managing the public transport sector in Lagos State.

With a population growing rapidly at a significantly high annual rate of 6% the public transport infrastructure and services in Lagos was stretched to almost breaking point. With a poor state of public transport infrastructure and the inherent management weaknesses meant that successive administrations struggled to cope with problems of increasing road congestion, environmental deterioration and the general decline in public transport service delivery.

Taking forward the concepts from earlier transport studies conducted by the World Bank, the Lagos Urban Transport Project (LUTP) was prepared on the basis of building capacity to manage the transport system, identifying the priority actions, investments and enabling measures for its improvement. A multi-modal transport approach was adopted with a recognition of the potential for the development of rail and inland waterways mass-transit to integrate with the road passenger transport network.

The creation of an appropriate authority for this purpose was placed at the heart of Lagos Urban Transport Project (LUTP), together with measures to ensure its financial sustainability through a lien on transport user charges. The strategy was to establish a single agency with the overall responsibility of planning, coordinating and reallocating responsibilities to agencies. LUTP was designed as a special-purpose vehicle focused on implementing the government transport strategy aimed at the development of an adequate, affordable, reliable and safe transport system for Lagos.

LAMATA is the implementing agency of Lagos Urban Transport Project (LUTP) 1 and 2, a multilateral funded program to support the Lagos State government long-term policy and strategy for public transportation. The LUTP was supported with by the World Bank and subsequently by the French development agency with financial and technical assistance of \$440 million.

The project development objective was to develop LAMATA's capacity to manage the transport sector by improving governance through the implementation of a comprehensive

institutional reform, improve the ability to coordinate sector-wide management and decision making, increase accountability, improve sector planning, financing, and investment programming capacity (Project appraisal document, 2002).

LAMATA as a hybrid organisation is required follows the traditional ethos of the Nigerian public sector as well the ethos of the “international best practice” influenced by the World Bank and the French Development Agency (AFD). These conflicting institutional logics creates tensions and ambiguity (Greenwood et al., 2011) for organisational members as they seek to interpret their realities to understand and reconcile different contrasting identities within their cultural context.

LAMATA was designed to formulate and implement programmes and policies for the overall improvement of public transportation systems, through a structured development of an integrated mass transit system implemented from a Strategic Transport Master Plan (STMP) that was launched in 2008. The challenge for LAMATA is how to harness organisational practices that enable members’ to be reflective practitioners such that collectively they can effectively make sense and respond to often conflicting and sometimes unfamiliar phenomena that plague messy problems.

LAMATA has adopted several organisational learning initiatives touted as “international best practices” mostly driven from the New Public Management (NPM) ideology promoted by the multi-lateral agencies of the World Bank and French Development Agency (AFD) as a strategy to manage and respond to the messy problem of public transportation. This study evaluates the process and quality of these organisational learning strategies to provide evidenced based informed judgement for improvement.

### **1.3. Learning and Knowledge in Organisations**

The idea of using learning and knowledge to improve organisations and build competitive advantage to ensure organisational sustainability has increasingly become of significant interest to both practitioners and academicians (Graham and Nafukho, 2008; Beauregard et al., 2015). With the speed of change in the environment largely driven by technological advancement and the impact of the environment (Cho, 2007; Imran and Nisar, 2014) organisations hoping to survive and thrive requires the development of learning and knowledge (Noat et al, 2004).



Organisational learning has been shown to build organisational ability to respond and adapt to both internal and external changes (Lundberg, 1995) and also the key to performance improvement in changing and uncertain environments (Argyris and Schon, 1996). Organisational learning has also been identified as critical to organisational success (Mintzberg et al., 1998), and may be the unique sustaining competitive advantage of a firm (De Geus, 1988) and its fundamental strategic capability (Fiol and Lyles, 1985).

There has been a widespread acceptance of the notion of organisational learning, however; there is no widely accepted consensus on its model or theory (Fiol and Lyles, 1985; Miner and Mezias, 1996 Crossan et al., 1999). There have also been questions related to understanding what it means for an organisation to learn with no convergence on its meaning or an agreed systematic method for researching how organisational learning may contribute to improving organisations (Fiol and Lyles, 1985).

The general focus of research on organisational learning has also been mainly directed at private sector organisations with limited empirical research on how organisational learning unfolds in public sector organisations (Betts and Holden, 2003). There have been questions related to the ability of the public sector to learn (Barrados & Mayne, 2003; Bertucci, 2006) with more thought papers dedicated to why learning matters rather than on how managers can build learning capacity (Ulrich et al., 1993).

The distinctiveness of the public sector in relation to the private sector (Bozeman, 1987, Rainey, 2009) also calls to question the sufficiency of the application of private sector concepts and measures being simply transposed into the public sector with an expectation of achieving the same realities (Gilson et al., 2009). There are also questions on the appropriateness and effectiveness of the application of western private sector “best practice” models applied in the context of a Public sector organisation in Nigeria. The public sector as the driving force for providing the conditions and infrastructure necessary for national competitiveness and development makes it worthy of research attention with an exploration of organisational learning in the public sector providing a wider range of context for an improved understanding of knowledge creation (Rashman et al., 2009).

LAMATA is a hybrid organisation operating in an institutional context that is highly influenced by the political and bureaucratic context of the public sector as well as the

financial and technical controls exerted by multilateral agencies of the World Bank and the French development agency. This study has practical relevance and importance as it provides an opportunity to investigate the effectiveness of the application of international best practices influenced by the new public management approach in a context of a developing economy with a focus on applying private sector assumptions and models to solve public sector problems (Mongkol, 2011).

#### **1.4. Motivation and objective of the study**

Public transport problems have social complexity, and are ill-structured with an evolving set of interlocking issues and constraints that is constantly changing (Calton and Payne, 2003; Conklin, 2006; Sun and Yang, 2016). A traditional approach to problem-solving that follows an orderly linear top-down method becomes ineffective as our understanding of the problem keeps evolving with the real issues of the problem continuously changing (Conklin, 2006).

The study examines how members develop shared understanding while implementing unique and novel projects that do not depend on only experience but more on novelty and creativity in devising potential solutions and responding to unintended consequences of taking action. As a pioneer staff of LAMATA, the researcher's experiences of organisational learning has been influenced and impacted by several contextual organisational factors and conditions. In 2008, the researcher was promoted to the position of Director of Business Systems with a responsibility for learning and development and this provided a platform to achieve an aspiration to bring into focus the contextual issues in existing management practices that constrain members' ability for effective action.

LAMATA has implemented several initiatives aimed at improving organizational learning practices and it is imperative to assess its influence and impact on organizational members to determine its effectiveness. The case study research will contribute to the improvement of management practice beyond the use of rationality, experience or intuition but on an evidenced based approach to assess and analyse organisational learning initiatives to proffer feasible recommendation for its improvement. The study will depend on empirical evidence collected from practice underpinned from organisational learning theory to facilitate improved capacity for collective learning and knowledge creation that is required for addressing the intractable social problem of public transportation in Lagos.

The study applies a process of inquiry to reflect on members' experiences of organisational learning at LAMATA. Raelin, (2001) explicates that reflective practice privileges the process of inquiry that leads to an understanding of experiences that may have been overlooked in practice. The research process through its conversational nature will allow a reflection on content, process and premise (Mezirow, 1991) which is critical to unlocking learning in a project-based environment such as LAMATA. As a leader in my practice, the study offers an opportunity for critical reflection and questioning of own assumptions, thought and action in the process of organising learning practices in LAMATA.

### **1.5. Purpose and aim of the study**

The aim of this study is to understand the context and process of learning in a public sector agency in Lagos State, Nigeria. The study seeks to understand how learning occurs amongst organisational members and determine organisational behaviours, practices and systems that enable effective workplace learning at LAMATA.

The research is focused on generating data and conclusions from the following five research questions:

- **How do members at LAMATA understand organisational learning?**
- **How does organisational learning occur at LAMATA?**
- **What facilitates organisational learning at LAMATA?**
- **What inhibits organisational learning at LAMATA?**
- **How can organisational learning be improved at LAMATA?**

This study is an applied research evaluating how the application of “international best practice” methods are contextualised not only within a public sector organisation but also within the context of the Nigerian culture.

### **1.6. Methodological consideration**

This study has an interest in exploring people's experiences as they engage in real life organisational action. It seeks to find practical solutions by examining the real-life events and situations as it relates to organisational learning. This study adopts a social constructionist approach with an assumption that reality is not objective but is socially construed and given meaning by people.

The study uses a qualitative case method using face-to-face semi-structured interviews to explore the particular context of LAMATA and provide a rich description of real-life experiences. Organisational learning theory provides theoretical grounding by adopting concepts established in organisational learning literature with relation to its meaning and attributes; context in terms of who learns, process of learning and knowledge creation, examining what facilitates and inhibits learning within the context of a public sector agency in Lagos Nigeria.

The study is action oriented because it aims to improve learning practices at LAMATA. However, despite the researcher's original intentions it has not been possible to undertake action research through to taking informed action. This was due to some factors which led the researcher to leave LAMATA after the initial data collection to pursue other career paths outside the public sector therefore making it impossible to undertake informed action based on the data and analysis.

However, the research can be characterised as applied research that has generated actionable knowledge as it provides a basis for evidence-informed approach to implementing change in LAMATA in relation to organisational learning practices with the study providing specific evidence-based recommendations for action in LAMATA. Rousseau, (2006) argues that evidenced-based management allows practising managers to develop expertise in making decisions informed by social science and organisational research with professional decisions made from best available evidence rather than from personal preferences and unsystematic experiences.

### **1.7. Contribution of the Study**

This study is a review of organisational learning in LAMATA with an assessment of how learning unfolds for members and how it impacts organisational members' ability to respond effectively in managing the complex social problem of public transportation. The research findings align with literature in terms of generic facilitators and inhibitors of learning. However, the most profound contribution of this research relates to the impact of national culture on organisational members as they seek to interpret and apply an identity and process that conflict with their cultural conditioning.

The findings illustrate that a recognition and understanding of a cultural context is critical to finding the most feasible “rules” to drive social interactions more naturally and organically amongst a culture sharing group with organisational solutions emerging from an iterative process of learning from experimentation and trial and error rather than following a prescriptive top-down focused program of actions. The study has been able to make specific recommendations to better facilitate such emergent learning with a recognition and importance of “working with the cultural grain” to apply changes that are both feasible and sustainable.

The study provides valuable insights to managers and leaders on the dynamics inherent in developing organisational learning practices in the public sector and especially of significance to practitioners in multi-lateral funded public sector agencies in developing economies seeking to reform traditional public sector approaches with western-led “international best practice”.

### **1.8. Thesis design and chapter layout**

This study follows a standard structure with six chapters and begins with an introductory chapter that gives a background of the case organisation with a discussion of the research aims and motivations. The chapter also summarises the methodological considerations adopted for the study as well as contributions for practical relevance. This chapter also provides the thesis outline and chapter layout.

Chapter 2 presents the literature review with a focus on theoretical grounding based on the organisational learning theory that underpins the study. The chapter explores the varied meaning of organisational learning as informed from extant literature, the learning theories, its influences and its relevance to understanding how learning unfolds at LAMATA. The chapter also integrates the main debates in literature to understand what drives learning within the context of an organisation, the question of who learns in an organisation and an assessment of the process of integration of learning at different levels and the relationship between to organisational knowledge. The chapter will also assess organisational learning mechanisms through an analysis of facilitators and inhibitors of learning.

Chapter 3 will discuss the philosophical consideration guiding the research with a review of the methodology and methods adopted to answer the research questions. The chapter

provides an analysis of the research consideration in terms of the selection of study participants, identifying the source of bias in data collection, analysis and interpretation. There is also an examination of the identity of the researcher as an insider researcher with a discussion of the assessment of trustworthiness and the practical relevance of the study.

Chapter 4 provides the findings from the one on one interviews and documentary data classified into five main organising themes. The chapter also provides details on how members at LAMATA experience learning with a presentation of learning dimensions of context, process and outcomes of learning related to the facilitators and inhibitors of organisational learning at LAMATA and its link to the co-creation of knowledge. The data analysis indicates concurrence with literature on many factors that influence learning; however, the impact of national culture on organisational culture was a specific factor that impacted the effectiveness of organisational learning practices at LAMATA.

Chapter 5 relates the findings to the research questions to draw conclusions with the key findings providing actionable recommendations for the improvement in the practice of organisational learning at LAMATA. The chapter will conclude with the implications for practice, limitations and call for further research.

Chapter 6, which is the concluding chapter, discusses the reflection of the researcher on the development as a scholar-practitioner and its influences on the study.

## 2. CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1. Introduction

The literature on organisational learning is not only vast but also divisive without a consensus on basic concepts with the subject studied from several disciplines using different approaches (Fiol and Lyles, 1985; Lahteenmaki et al., 2001; Perez Lopez et al, 2005). In recent years, there has been a rapid increase in research with the growth described as a volcanic activity (Easterby Smith et al., 2000). This has led to a general agreement on some debated issues (Easterby-Smith et al., 2000; Bapuji and Crossan, 2004) with an emergence of a learning perspective that focuses on understanding the processes of organisational learning and its implications for organisational behaviour and its strategy (Bapuji and Crossan, 2004).

This literature review does not aim to be exhaustive but will focus on an analysis of key organisational learning concepts and frameworks that directly provides clarity to answering questions and issues identified for this study. The review will summarise the major theories, themes, and debates that provide insights into the problematic nature of defining organisational learning and knowledge, the multi-level nature of organisational learning; identifying the barriers to and enablers of such learning and analysing the impact of organisational learning practices and processes on organisational behaviour.

The above strands of literature will focus on how these converging themes can help to improve how organisational learning can be better conceptualised and practised in the particular context of LAMATA. The review will begin by exploring the notion of learning with an exploration of how learning occurs with a discussion of classical learning orientations, its dimensions and its influences on how learning develops. The analysis of learning theories will also consider the influence of emerging learning theories driven by recent technological advancement in a digital age.

This review will provide insight into the key debates on how learning occurs with questions related to learning as methodological or emergent, questions related to who is doing the learning and importantly explore the organisational conditions, processes and behaviours

that have implication for workplace learning. The review will also evaluate the relationship between organisational learning and knowledge with the link to knowledge management.

Finally, the review will analyse the facilitators and barriers that affect learning practices to better understand how to improve LAMATA's capacity to continuously learn, create and apply collective knowledge to manage the messy problem of the public transportation in Lagos State.

## **2.2. What is learning?**

Learning is an essential part of human activity that is required for understanding and making meaning of life. Antonacopoulou (2006) argues that learning is an integral part of living and essential to the human condition. Learning is a complex construct that is context specific and defies universality of definition as theorists have had difficulty in establishing a single satisfactory definition of learning which is driven by the different approaches used to assess how learning occurs (Shuell, 1986; De Houwer et al., 2013; Barron et al. 2015).

Most theorists describe learning as a relatively permanent change in behaviour due to experience (Ormrod, 1995; Huitt and Hummel, 2006) or a relatively permanent change in cognition because of practice or experience (Ormrod, 1995). However, some theorists have argued that this basic definition of learning is unsatisfactory, as learning need not lead to a change in behaviour or cognition and not all effects of experiences lead to learning (Lachman, 1997; Ormrod, 1999). Learning has also been described as a process that requires deliberate actions, but (Huber, 1991) asserts that deliberateness is not sacrosanct as learning need not be planned or intended.

Learning has also been described as a persisting change in human performance or the development of performance potential (Lachman, 1997; Ormrod, 1999; Domjan, 2010) cited in (De Houwer et al., 2013) with learning seen as emergent and evolving with learners responding in unplanned and unconscious ways especially in uncertain situations to deal with uncertainty and ambiguity (Vaill, 1996). Learning can therefore, be said to be a complex construct with no single definition able to satisfy its different dimensions that have behavioural, cognitive, social and technical elements required for knowing, and enabling action.



### 2.3. Theories of learning

The understanding of learning theories is useful as their application has implications for how people can learn effectively with the phenomenon of learning essentially influenced by the three major classical learning orientations of behaviourist, cognitive and social perspectives. Recent technological advances and the move to a digital age have brought about discussions on emerging learning theories of connectivism (Siemens, 2004) and generativism (Carneiro, 2010). The development of learning in an organisation will largely depend on its context with the application of any of these theories of learning influencing organisational members' ways of thinking, perceiving and responding with all having implications on the type of strategies required for effective organisational learning practices.

Behaviourist learning orientation has its roots in positivism with the notion that the determinant of learning is based on behaviour linked to conditioning. The behaviourist orientation sees learning as manifested through a change in behaviour and this simple view of learning focuses on the impact of stimuli on overt behaviour based on the environment (Schunk, 2012). Learning occurs through observations and is reinforced through motivation and practice and measured by observable outcomes. Learning from this perspective focus attention on the effect of reinforcement (positive or negative), practice and external motivation on learners' associations and learned behaviour (Fosnot and Perry, 2005; Torre et al., 2006; Kay and Kibble, 2016) with learning driven by observable external conditions.

A learner here is reactive to external environment with this type of learning most useful when stimulus-response associations are required to carry out a specified task, as a deviation from the laid down procedure will be counterproductive. Public sector organisations like LAMATA often have to respond to government directives which are sometimes implemented through operating guidelines that require staff to follow particular ways of doing things with compliance seen as competence in that procedure. The use of behaviourist learning can be ineffective where higher-level learning is required for understanding nor does it also consider unplanned learning that might occur because of practice or engaging with a problem as learners are expected to be passive with learning manifested as a set of mechanical responses to external stimuli.

The cognitive orientation, on the other hand, deemphasises overt behaviour and focuses on learner's beliefs and thought processes with learning seen as a mental process influenced by the external environment but with a focus more on the learner's aptitude and capacity to learn (Badyal and Singh, 2017). The cognitive approach aims to understand how mental mechanisms drive behaviour (Bechtel, 2008) with the learner an active participant in the process (Torre et al., 2006). Learning here is not so much about what learners do but what they know and how they come to know it (Gagne, 1984). The view of reality of the learner depends more on how information is processed (Chiva and Alegre, 2005) without consideration of how the learner's interaction with others may also influence learning. The implication of information processing may lead learners to change their mental models as new understanding challenges the current status quo that may lead to change and innovation (Torre et al., 2006).

LAMATA applies several cognitive strategies in developing staff expertise in technical functions such as transport modelling and simulation, infrastructure design, and geographical information system for route planning etc. with staff training and development leading to an ability to apply this knowledge to different situations and scenarios. Knowledge outcomes in this situation go beyond deterministic actions related to the ability to carry out a task but also involves the ability to apply, analyse, evaluate and use the new knowledge to create new ideas.

The application of cognitive orientation in LAMATA can also be seen from such strategies as the provision of opportunities for on the job experience that enhances skills with managers providing corrective feedback when errors are identified. There are also opportunities to close knowledge gaps through training with understanding seen as being composed of a knowledge base in the form of rules, concepts, and discriminations (Duffy & Jonassen, 1991 cited in Jonasen, 1991). As with behaviourism, cognitive perspective is based on the philosophical assumption that is objectivist with the view of reality real and external to those perceiving it, with both theories targeting learning at the individual level without consideration for the impact of social interactions that exists in everyday organisational life.

The social learning orientation, however, emphasises the importance of context and culture in the construction of knowledge. As such, learning is seen as a social process which does not occur only within an individual but is shaped by external forces as people engage in

social activity with knowledge acquisition situated and grounded in interaction, activity and practice (Visser 2010). Learning from this orientation is an activity of continuous construction of ideas and meanings influenced by old and new knowledge, motivations and social interactions (Torre et al., 2006). The motivation for learning is both intrinsic and extrinsic with learners requiring opportunities for collaboration and dialogue to promote learning rather than control as learning outcomes cannot be predetermined.

The social orientation requires an exploration of the context of the learning process and recognises the complexity inherent in human interaction when learning and knowledge occurring as a collective process driven by both individual and collective emotions (Vince 2001). The social perspective of learning recognises the need to pay attention to the cultural and socialization process in learning (Lave and Wenger, 1990), the political nature of learning (Coopey, 1995) and the processes by which organisations construct and reconstruct their environment to create knowledge (Brown & Duguid, 1991; Lave & Wenger, 1990).

Steffens (2015) in his summation on the different learning theories explains that behaviourism, cognitivism and social orientations can be classified as micro-level theories of learning that do not fully explain learning beyond formal learning, with an exploration of macro levels theories of learning required to facilitate lifelong learning. Two new theories of connectivism (Siemens, 2004) and generativism (Carneiro, 2010) have therefore been proposed to respond to changes brought about by the digital age with learning focused on meaning-making to promote and develop democratic, social, egalitarian, intercultural and environmental aspects of life (Steffens, 2015).

Connectivism has been described from an epistemological framework based on the theory of distributed knowledge (Downes, 2006) with a foundation in chaos theory, complexity, network and self-organisation theories, which recognise that everything is interconnected. Learning from a connectivism perspective is a connection/ network forming process, which begins from the individual who learns by developing a personal knowledge network to connect and feed into a learning community. From this perspective, learners are self-directed with knowledge distributed across an information network that is stored in different digital formats and learning, and knowledge within this orientation lies in the

diversity of opinion with learning occurring in an environment with a continuous shifting of core elements (Siemens 2004).

Carneiro (2010) argues that classical learning theories cannot fully explain the complexity of learning driven by technology but challenges the notion of connectivism because of its focus on the individual and proposes generativism. Learning from this perspective is a meaning-making process based on the assumption that the human brain does not passively observe its environment or the events it experiences, but constructs its perceptions about problems, scenarios, and experiences with new methods of competences developed to enhance social learning as a knowledge-generating activity. Generativism relies on self-monitoring as a vital process leading learners to manage their effort and resources and change their learning strategies to generate meaning. Technology is a driver for learning that increases the capacity for social interaction, knowledge creation and sharing with self-regulated learning, skills and higher order thinking proposed as outcomes of generative learning (Lee et al., 2008).

Some theorists, however, have argued that both connectivism and generativism are built on the social constructionist learning orientation that has the learner at the centre connecting and constructing knowledge in a context that includes both the external context, as well as own understanding and predisposition (Anderson and Dron, 2011). The validity of connectivism as a new theory has been challenged as it can be described from the cognitive learning theory which also has a dependence on learner's ability and capacity to search for the necessary networks and connections (Kop and Hill, 2008; Verhagen, 2006). The dependence of learners on both internal and external knowledge environments can also be explained from social constructionism where individuals learn through their interactions with others.

The idea of connectivism can be compared to learning in communities of practice (Lave and Wenger, 1990) where learners make sense of their environment in a social setting through interaction with others. Kerr (2007) argues that both cognitivism and social constructionism can explain how learning is occurring in today's digital world with connectivism not a new theory but a model of learning that explores the network-like structures that are evident in online interactions. The emerging theories of connectivism and generativism are essentially

social learning theories that help to reflect and interpret the increasingly connected and networked nature of contemporary organisations.

LAMATA operating in a developing economy has limited application of the use of technology-based learning approaches. However, technology is used to enable collective access and sharing of tacit organisational knowledge with experts within the organisation expected to develop knowledge assets that are stored in a shared repository for use by other members of LAMATA. The access to the internet also facilitates self-directed learning with members able to use search engines such as Google to gain and share information and knowledge.

Technology also provides opportunities for learners at LAMATA to join the learning community of transport professionals through access to World Bank e-driven platforms with learning and knowledge shared through webinars and podcasts as well as access to knowledge assets created by other transport agencies of World Bank member countries, to provide knowledge of transport solutions from other countries. There is an awareness and access to the use of technology at LAMATA, but learning strategies mainly depend on classical learning orientations with knowledge viewed as a process, product and outcome of organisational learning strategies with technology essentially seen as a driver to aid and facilitate knowledge management activities.

The nature of the problems that LAMATA seek to resolve are wicked problems that require new ways of learning to apply non-traditional, adaptive and networked strategies (Goldsmith and Kettl, 2009) to deal with the inherent divergence in complex value-laden issues associated with social problems. Project implementation and problem solving of public transportation are social in nature and will depend on collaborative skills and collective intelligence (Conklin, 2006), which will require an integration of different learning paradigms and models.

Learning at LAMATA have elements of the three classical learning orientations, reflected in both formal and informal learning strategies in the organisation. Behavioural strategies are used to manage staff behaviour for compliance through the application of guidelines and standard procedural manuals while different staff developmental strategies are implemented to improve cognitive competence. In addition, social learning orientation can

be observed through informal learning practices applied as staff members collaborate in resolving work-related problems and to respond to the demands and requirements of the external environment.

Learning in organisations is a multi-dimensional construct with each learning theory useful to understanding how learning occurs. The three classical learning theories are not exclusive, but they all offer different perspectives underpinning different organisational practices and strategies with the effective application of a learning orientation depending on the situation and context.

As Anderson and Dron (2011) assert, the effectiveness of learning can be enhanced through an understanding of how people learn with each learning theory all playing an important role. At this point, we will examine the meaning of organisational learning beyond the meaning of learning explained above and analyse the relevant perspectives in literature that can further provide a foundation for understanding the development of effective collective learning practices that is relevant in the context of LAMATA.

#### **2.4. What is an organisation so that it may learn?**

In order to understand organisational learning, it is important to understand the context of “an organisation”. Cole, (2004:) explains that there is no universal definition of an organisation, however; there are agreed features, which includes purpose, people and structures. Greenberg & Baron, (2003) describes an organisation as a structured social system consisting of individuals and teams working together to meet some agreed objectives. Stacey, (2011:460) also describes organisations as a “population of persons cooperating and competing with each other in performing some joint activity to accomplish a purpose.”

There has been a primary debate in organisational learning literature about if an organisation a non-human entity can be said to learn with some researchers arguing that organisations cannot learn (Simon, 1991). Stacey, (2011) argues that claiming that an organisation can learn is nothing more than a reification and anthropomorphism as an organisation can only learn through the learning of its members or through the injection of new members (Simon, 1991; Grant, 1996). However, some other theorists argue that

organisations have learning abilities and memories with organisational learning more than the cumulative learning of its members' learning (Shrivastava, 1983; Fiol and Lyles, 1985).

This debate is important to consider as the implicit assumptions about the level(s) of learning determine how organisational learning is researched. The research with the assumption that learning in an organisation refers to individual learning will focus predominately on understanding and improving learning at the individual level. Where the perspective is based on the integration of individual members' learning, then the focus will be on group learning. However, organisational level learning perspective have a focus beyond the integration of learning of its members to also consider organisational level artefacts such as systems, institutional memory, data and information (Easterby-Smith et al., 2000).

### **2.5. What is Organisational learning?**

Organisational learning is a multi-dimensional and multifaceted construct with diversity in meaning and no clear convergence on either the commonalities or differences on the models or characterisations (Fiol and Lyles, 1985; Crossan et al., 1999; Smith, 2004). Templeton et al., (2002) in their review found about 78 explicit definitions in research with different definitions focused on different and sometimes contrasting paradigms. The research on learning in organisations has grown across two disciplines of organisational learning and learning organisation with some theorists use both interchangeably (Nevis et al, 1995; Tsang 1997; Crossan et al, 1999), but recent literature has featured both differently (Easterby-Smith and Araujo, 1999; Robinson, 2001).

Organisational learning refers to the various activities that take place in an organisation and focused on how individuals learn with learning occurring naturally with an implication that all organisations learn, whilst learning organisation refers to an idealised form (Tsang, 1997; Garavan, 1997) or an archetype (Moilanen, 2001). This study will focus on the descriptive theorising of organisational learning to understand the nature of organisations and organising (Robinson, 2001) with an evaluation of the conditions under which organisational members at LAMATA can learn productively.

Organisational learning has been defined from learning theory perspective (Argyris and Schon, 1978; Huber, 1991; Slater and Narver, 1995; Levitt and March, 1996) or as a process

and outcome (Argyris and Schon, 1978; Daft and Weick, 1984; Nevis et al., 1995). Organisational learning has also been described as a deliberate process of organising, which can help an organisation to transform itself through knowledge (Templeton et al., 2002; Perez Lopez et al., 2005). Some emphasise its collective nature expressed from a relational perspective with more attention given to the quality of interactions and relationships that happens in everyday organisational life (Berends et al., 2003; Collinson and Cook, 2006; Stacey 2011). Within the public sector, there is limited research specifically focused on organisational learning but it has been linked to policy learning that relates to learning from a country's own policy history or from more effective flows of information between the contexts of policy and practice (Common, 2004; Gilson et al., 2009).

This study will adopt a working definition of organisational learning as “the process of improving actions through better knowledge and understanding” (Fiol and Lyles 1985:803). This simple definition focuses on the process of improving actions without a specific focus of organisational learning from a particular theory or process of learning nor does it focus on learning just as change or adaptation. The definition has a focus on learning that leads to improved actions (organisational performance) through better knowledge and understanding with a linkage between thought and action.

Organisational learning from this definition is a process for generating valid knowledge that can lead to effective action (Lipshitz et al., 2002). This is particularly important for this study as the objective is to understand how to improve learning practices at LAMATA to generate productive knowledge for improved organisational outcomes in implementing public transport projects and services. The context of the public transport in Lagos is an evolving problem and a focus on organisational learning that improves action allows a flexibility to apply an integrated approach to problem solving, with the application of different processes and strategies depending on the context and action required.

## **2.6. Where does learning occur in an organisation?**

The perspectives of where learning takes place will drive attention towards how we seek to identify, evaluate and promote what makes learning possible in an organisation. Most theorists accept that learning occurs at different levels of analysis of individual, group and organisation (Antonacopoulou, 2006; Argote, 2015) with each level requiring different capabilities and processes (Balbastre et al., 2003). The level of analysis has also been



extended beyond the organisation to recognize inter-organisational learning through relationships with other organisations through partnership or joint ventures (Crossan et al 1995; Crossan and Bapuji, 2003; Kozlowski, et al., 2010) or across countries when alliance partners share relevant insights to problem solving based on their own experiences (Dolowitz and Marsh, 1996).

Inter-organisational learning can be especially relevant for policy learning in the public sector domain because government agencies are known to share learning and knowledge experiences, across sectors and countries. LAMATA as a case in point adopted its current Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) strategies from transmilenio in Bogota after a series of country learning exchanges. LAMATA learning process is also largely influenced by the World Bank as the multilateral organisation providing both financial and technical assistance to the agency influencing learning at the individual, group and organisational level.

### **2.6.1. Individual learning**

There is a popular management saying that people are the most valuable resource of an organisation (Posner et al., 1986). Organisational learning begins from the individual which exemplifies the central importance of individuals in the learning process with individuals acting as the agent of knowledge creation (Friedman, 2002). Individual learning at the basic level is the ability to perceive similarities and differences (Crossan et al. 1999) or the changes in skills, values, insights and attitudes by an individual (Miner and Mezias, 1996). Many theorists argue that organisations can only learn through individuals and thus focus the understanding of organisational learning from the individual level (Kim, 1993; Senge, 1990; Argyris and Schon, 1978).

The proponents of individual learning perspective argue that an individual can learn without the organisation but that organisations can only learn through their members (Simon, 1991; Kim, 1993). Stacey, (2011) aligns with this perspective and argues that individuals learn and not organisations though individuals cannot learn in isolation. Individual-level learning is seen as the most meaningful as individuals are the primary learning entity in organisations that can create organisational forms that enable learning in ways that can facilitate organisational transformations (Dodgson, 1993).

Individual learning is a precondition for organisational learning (Senge, 1990; Simon 1991) and this brings to focus the need to understand how to facilitate changes in individual behaviour and cognition to improve organisational learning capacity. However, there are risks and problems associated to organisational dependence on individual level learning and knowledge as individuals can learn independently of the organisation without diffusion of that knowledge across the organisation (Cummings and Worley, 2014) leading to a tremendous loss of organisational learning capacity when the individuals leave. The effectiveness of individual-level learning is also burdened by problems related to interpreting complex information (Dogson, 1993) bounded rationality (Simon, 1991), bounded awareness (Bazerman and Chugh, 2006) and cognitive biases (Bazerman and Moore, 2008) which provide the basis for a need to understand how to drive learning beyond the autonomous individual.

### **2.6.2. Team or Group learning**

Individuals do not learn in isolation as they inevitably work with others leading to a need to understand how learning occurs through interaction. Group level learning is based on a perspective that learning is a social phenomenon with combined individual learning creating shared understanding and enabling coordinated collective action. Senge (1990) emphasises the importance of team learning rather than individual learning and argues that most decisions are made in sub-units, which is at the team level with team learning one of the five essential characteristics of a learning organisation.

Teams act as the learning agents in an organisation to create and share knowledge through a collaborative process with the learning interaction of a team considered an important learning unit in an organisation. Cook and Yanow, (1993) argue that the team is the primary unit of analysis in an organisation with organisational learning occurring through the accumulated knowledge of its members over time. Team learning is seen as more effective than individual learning (Senge, 1990) as the capability of each member enhances the quality of learning with team engagement providing a platform for creating, sharing and integrating knowledge (March 1991) with teams acting as the link between individual and organizational learning (Murray and Moses, 2005).

An effective learning amongst teams occurs when the dynamics amongst team members provides an opportunity for open communication, discussion, dialogue, and integration of

divergent thinking. Though teams are more effective than individuals, their patterns of interaction can also undermine learning with cognitive biases limiting group capacity in making effective decisions (Bazerman and Chugh, 2006), group think leading to excessive concurrence (Janis, 1973), or abilene paradox leading to a failure to manage agreement (Harvey, 1988). Groups like individuals have their shortcomings, but a group with properly defined roles for members, culture and standard operating procedures that facilitate critical inquiry is more likely to be capable of making better decisions than an individual trying to solve the problem alone (Janis, 1973).

### **2.6.3. Organisational learning**

Organisational learning is a dynamic construct that occurs over time across several levels as the collective use of an organisational learning capability to develop better knowledge and understanding for improved organisational actions (Fiol and Lyles, 1985). Organisational learning is a principal means for achieving strategic renewal through the creation of new skills and knowledge, exploiting current knowledge and developing capacity to respond effectively to uncertainty (Crossan et al. 1999; Balbastre et al., 2003).

An organisation cannot learn without individuals though there is a clear distinction between individual and organisational learning (Fiol and Lyles 1985; Senge, 1990; Coopey, 1995). An organisation's ability to learn is a root metaphor that allows us to describe a non-living entity that can contain the learning and knowledge of its individual and collective members in form of organisational artefacts that produce identities, meaning, material artefacts and collaborative action (Gherardi, 2000).

Learning begins at the individual level, but it does not occur independently of others but gets shared and refined through the complex interactions that occur at the group level with some of the knowledge institutionalised as organisational norms, practices and records, and used long after some members leave the organisation. Crossan et al., (1999) recognises the multi-level nature of organisational learning and uses the 4I model to explain the interaction between the three levels of analysis with the premise that cognition and action are tightly intertwined. The framework also brings into focus the inherent tensions that exist in the dynamic interplay of interactions across the three levels as the organisations seek to manage and balance exploration (feedforward) and exploitation (feedback) of knowledge.

Senge, (1990) argues that it is no longer enough for learning to occur at the individual level as an organisation that seeks to excel in the future must discover how to tap into the commitment and learning of all its members with organisational survival and growth depending on learning at all levels in the organisation. Learning at the organisational level of analysis is an interactive, collective and interdependent process that enables proactive response to both internal and external changes and demands. The success of an organisation depends on its ability to act cohesively with the potential for learning in an organisation requiring the application of appropriate mechanisms (Ghoshal, 1987). The institutionalisation of organisational learning requires appropriate learning mechanisms to enable individual and group level learning to become the products of the organisation with effective implementation of organisational learning mechanisms helps to relate and guide organisational learning leading an organisation into becoming an organisation that is good at learning (Lipshitz et al. 1996).

### **2.7. Organisational learning and its link to Organisational knowledge.**

It is variously acknowledged that we live in a knowledge society with knowledge an important competitive organisational advantage in the modern business environment required to respond to the dynamics and pace of change (Drucker, 1993; Kharbanda & Pinto, 1996; Gold et al., 2001). Organisations seek to solve complex organisational problems by applying knowledge strategically to harness know-how as well as identify relevant sources of learning that is crucial to organisational needs (Kattarwala, 2008). Organisations also use internal and external resources effectively and efficiently to create value with the most useful resources being the knowledge that allows an organisation to take effective action under uncertain and paradoxical situations (Rashman et al., 2009).

Organisational learning has been argued to lead to organisational knowledge (Vera and Crossan, 2002) and some theorist believe that knowledge facilitates organisational learning. Antonacopoulou, (2001:3) defines learning as the “liberation of knowledge through learning and self-question” and learning and knowledge are thus connected as we can only gain knowledge through some form of learning. The definitions of knowledge embody different meanings with a wide range of attributes. Nonaka, (1991) explicates that despite the interest in knowledge management, many do not understand the meaning of knowledge or how to exploit it. Tsoukas and Vladimirov, (2001) also argue that a contributing factor to the limited

definitions of organisational knowledge is that though the concept is much talked about, there is limited understanding of what constitutes knowledge with literature on organisational knowledge varied and confusing.

At the basic level, knowledge is sometimes used synonymously with information though it is important to make a distinction between the two (Edwards et al. 2005; Rashman et al., 2009). Information can be referred to as processed data that contains meaning, however, knowledge takes information further to include recognition (know what) capacity to act (know how) and understanding (know why) Liew, (2007) and is intuitively seen as individual and closely linked and connected to human action. Knowledge has been described as a justified personal belief that increases a person's capacity to take effective action (Nonaka, 1994). Knowledge is also the capacity to exercise judgment by an individual based on an understanding of the context or theory or from both (Bell, 1999). However, organisational knowledge is more than the collective knowledge of its individuals and is distinctive to the firm as a mix of framed experiences, values, contextual information and expert insight (Davenport and Prusak, 1998).

The concept of knowledge like learning begins from the individual, is also embedded through social interaction amongst organisational members and for knowledge to be organisational, it has to be embedded and diffused across all levels of the organisation becoming the essence of the firm (Kay, 1993). Organisational knowledge originates from the minds of individuals, but profoundly a collective pattern that is formed and used by an organisation, embedded in action and can be seen in organisational routines, procedures, rules, norms, values and beliefs.

The literature on organisational knowledge has been framed from different dimensions of objective or subjective; resource or knowledge-based view and from the context of knowledge and knowing. The resource view follows the objective dimension with organisational knowledge objectified as a generic commodity and a strategic source of competitive advantage (Barney, 1999; Halawi et al., 2005). This perspective has fueled the fixation with the externalisation of knowledge and a focus on developing knowledge management systems as a strategy to manage organisational knowledge (McDermott, 1999).

The knowledge-based view follows a subjective dimension with knowledge seen as emergent and dynamic, socially complex and situated in practice and perceived as temporal and immaterial (Hoopes and Postrel, 1999; Alavi and Leidner, 2001). It has a focus on the practice of knowing as an active social process whereby the knower and knowledge become inputs of what constitutes action with knowledge creation based on the development of new relationships and the externalisation of knowledge as an act of knowing. Though certain distinctions have been made regarding the content and process of knowledge, Tsoukas, (1996) argues that both are mutually constitutive as knowledge is altered by the manner of its knowing.

Polanyi (1966) cited in Nonaka (1994) categorises the two types of human knowledge as explicit and tacit knowledge with both recognised as important for organisational growth and stability. Explicit also referred to as codifiable knowledge is formal, systematic and easily expressed and shared through manuals and specifications. Explicit knowledge is the “know what” that circulates freely and is easily applicable while tacit knowledge is the “know how” hard to express, personal, difficult to recognise, intangible and context specific. It has been argued that an organisation’s ability to harness its tacit knowledge could lead to transformative breakthrough (Mascitelli, 2000).

March, (1991) delineates that explicit knowledge can be exploited through the effective use of forms, routines and practices and are essential to organisational survival, with the exploration of implicit knowledge required for the generation of new alternative practices that are particularly important in a constantly changing environment. Explicit and Tacit knowledge begins as individual knowledge and transformed to organisational knowledge through a dynamic process of knowledge flows at different levels of learning with intuiting and interpreting occurring at the individual level, integrating at the group level and institutionalisation at the organisational level (Crossan et al., 1999).

The perspective of organisational knowledge as a strategic organisational advantage that can be utilised to take effective action drives the belief that knowledge can be “managed” for organisational use leading to the development of knowledge management strategies. Organisational learning and knowledge management can thus be viewed as interdependent variables for managing both explicit knowledge (embedded as routines based on what is known) and tacit knowledge (to create what is yet to be known). The models of

organisational learning and knowledge management overlap in terms of fundamental concepts such as the process for knowledge creation, storage and transfer with knowledge management applying a prescriptive approach though its use of technology as a driver to facilitate learning at different stages of the learning process.

Organisational learning practices in LAMATA mainly follows an objective perspective with knowledge seen as a product of learning that can be identified, codified, stored and shared for use by members of the organisation. LAMATA adopted a codification strategy for knowledge management in 2015 through the implementation of a learning management system with the process primarily implemented to facilitate the storage of high-value knowledge assets used to document how complex problems encountered during project implementation was resolved. The strategy was to support the process for knowledge capture and re-use across all levels of the organisation such that staff members could apply past knowledge in solving work challenges.

LAMATA's knowledge management strategy also recognises the interactive and social nature of organisational learning and the need to link knowledge with action through the implementation of 'knowledge café' forums and the process of strategic planning providing opportunities for organisational-wide problem solving and knowledge sharing. However, these activities are one-off events with organisational strategy largely focused on generating explicit knowledge that followed a top-down 'expert-led' approach with this having implications on how knowledge is created and shared across different levels of the organisation. Stacey (2003) argues that the concept of organisational learning and knowledge management must also focus on how human actions create patterns of meaning through their interactions. Learning is an activity of interdependent people with knowledge occurring in communicative interaction involving a continuous process of meaning making requires that a close attention is given to the conditions that influence the process of interaction.

In summary, organisational learning is closely linked with the knowledge management strategy at LAMATA. The explicit knowledge that has been generated by LAMATA is an essential part of the knowledge process, but LAMATA's strategy must also focus on enabling new forms of thought for the reconstruction of knowing and knowledge. The objectification of knowledge in LAMATA as an asset that can be rationally determined

disregards the potential of knowing that occurs in the dynamic flux of an unpredictable, chaotic world. As (Clegg et al., 2005) argues organisational learning is not about managing uncertainty or promoting timeless practices, but learning in an organisation must be a journey constituted in the interplay of order and chaos with processes that enable an ability to disrupt and create a new order.

## **2.8. What conditions impact organisational learning and practices?**

Lahteemaki et al., (2001) posit that learning is a prerequisite for organisational survival and for LAMATA to effectively respond and manage the messy social problem of public transportation it has to be able to continuously transform internally as well as adapt to the needs of its operational environment. The implementation of effective learning processes will depend on organisational ability to create favourable conditions to facilitate organisational learning and reduce or eliminate the barriers that limit organisational learning. The organisational ability to create favourable conditions for effective learning determines the extent and nature of learning that can occur (Nakpodia, 2009).

Lipshitz et al. (2002) explicate that for learning to become organisational, structural elements that make up organisational learning mechanisms are necessary but not sufficient condition to generate productive learning, and requires considerations of other facets that include cultural, psychological, policy and contextual factors that influence the development of organisational learning. Organisational learning mechanisms at LAMATA are reflected through different formalised and structured processes that target individual and collective learning that are principally applied through the structural and policy facet. However, effective organisational learning practices require the integration of contextual and cultural factors as well as structural and policy factors for a multifaceted and integrated approach.

This research seeks to analyse organisational learning at LAMATA from a multifaceted approach with considerations of different influencing facets to determine the right conditions that support effective productive, continuous and collective learning at LAMATA with the removal of barriers being the first step to supporting organisational learning (Schilling and Kluge, 2009). Though it is critical to diagnose the barriers or learning disabilities that limit the effectiveness of organisational learning practices, there should be an understanding that an absence of explicit learning intention and development of



appropriate learning mechanisms, may lead to the loss of an organisation's learning potential (Ghoshal, 1987).

### 2.8.1. What facilitates OL?

The literature on organisational learning facilitators is divergent with different research proposing different heterogeneous factors (Chiva-Gomez, 2003) and the implementation of learning facilitators especially in the context of the public sector a not one size fits all (Chinowsky and Carrillo, 2007). The facilitators of organisational learning are not universal, and their application will require that we take into account the context of the organisation in terms of its circumstances, limitations and constraints (DiBella, 2001; Lipshitz et al., 2002).

Organisations are usually challenged by pressures from the ever-changing environment that are commonly out of their control or influence and to improve organisational capacity to take effective action, organisations must identify the internal conditions and interventions that improve an organisation's capacity to effectively adapt, respond, improve and innovate (Balbastre et al., 2003; Barette et al., 2012). Organisational learning facilitators help to identify effective processes for creating, interpreting and sharing knowledge with the quality of organisational learning dependent on an assessment of the variety, and effectiveness of organisational learning mechanisms that are operating across different levels in the organisation (Lipshitz et al. 2002).

Popper and Lipshitz, (2000) describe the concept of organisational learning mechanisms as the institutionalised structural as well as procedural arrangements that allows an organisation to systematically collect, analyse, store, share and use the knowledge that is relevant to the performance of the organisation and its members. They argue that organisational learning mechanisms must include integrated mechanisms using a structural and cultural approach for the exploitation of routines and non-integrated mechanisms that enable learning as a process for continuous improvement for the exploration of new knowledge.

Researchers emphasise different strategies and features to facilitate learning, but there are convergence on many factors (Chiva-Gomez, 2003) necessary for improving cognitive capacity and social structures to improve participation for sustained productive learning. Some researchers focus on the cognitive processes and conceptual structures that can

facilitate organisational learning (Cyert & March 1963; Argyris & Schon, 1978) or targets individuals with a focus on rationalism (Chiva-Gomez, 2003). Some identify the social context required to facilitate and improve learning at all levels of the organisation (Brown and Duguid, 1991; Cook and Yanow 1993, Gherardi et al., 1998; Lave and Wenger, 1990) with a focus on the collective rather than the individual.

Liptshitz et al., (2001) uses a five-facet model to integrate the many organisational learning facilitators in literature that can be applied by researchers and practitioners to identify, study, and build learning organisations. The five facets are contextual, policy, structural cultural and psychological. The contextual facet are external factors that are better managed by the leadership with their commitment to learning crucial to managing all contextual factors. The contextual components include uncertainty in the environment, which in the public sector is driven by political uncertainty influencing learning from change (Schein, 1990). Error criticality which is related to the perceived potential consequences of errors leading learners to pay more attention to learning from mistakes (Herdberg, 1981; Tannenbaun, 1997, Popper and Lipshitz, 2000) learning from failure (Raynor, 2007), learning from crisis (Moynihan, 2009) all facilitates and creates more opportunities for learning with the task structure motivating organisational members to collaborate and learn together. The complex and novel nature of public transport projects implemented by LAMATA drives collaboration and learning amongst staff as most of the problems encountered create new experiences for members.

The policy facet includes processes for knowledge acquisition and transformation and covers process elements that enable the exploration and exploitation of knowledge with a focus on individual ability to access interpret and acquire information and knowledge. Knowledge sharing enables the creation of collective meaning (Dixon, 2000) with a conducive environment critical for the learning transfer process. Organisational support for learning is reflected in the commitment to investment time and resources to support employee's professional development, which includes formal training, coaching and creating a conducive environment that enables continuous learning (Pedler et al., 1993; Goh and Richards, 1997; Nevis et al., 1995).

The structural facet is related to strategic management, which involves the sharing of information on organisational vision, mission, goals, objectives and identifying the gap

between target and current conditions for corrective action (Nevis et al. 1995; Pedler et al., 1991; Goh and Richards, 1997; Tannenbaum, 1997). The understanding of the organisation's strategic direction enables members to know where to focus their learning efforts with the articulation of a clear vision by management can orient the direction of learning and knowledge creation within an organisation (Berthoin Antal et al., 2001). LAMATA annually holds a companywide strategic retreat where all organisational members discuss and review annual objectives and plans such that there is shared understanding and collective buy-in the strategic actions that are to be implemented.

The cultural facet aligns with organisational learning culture factor, which are the set of actions or conditions that guide the behaviour of organisational members. Organisational culture is defined 'as the set of shared, taken-for-granted implicit assumptions that a group holds and that determines how it perceives, thinks about, and reacts to its various environments' (Schein, 1996:236). The culture facet is linked to the psychological facet and includes elements such as experimentation and risk-taking (Herdberg, 1981; Nevis et al. 1995; Ulrich et al., 1993). Leadership that promotes a conducive environment to operationalise learning with elements such as openness, dialogue and teamwork (Nevis et al. 1995; Brown and Deguid, 1991; Weick and Westley, 1996) are all part of the psychological facet. In the context of LAMATA, organisational culture is driven by an identity that seeks to differentiate itself as a different type of public sector organisation with the core values that embodies competence, best practice and standards as an organisational proposition.

The World Bank as the funding and technical partner of LAMATA also influences the application of western-based ideologies of public management through the adoption of new standards for learning and capability development. The Nigerian culture is characterized by a high power distance orientation (Hofstede, 1984) with local culture socialized as hierarchical can potentially improve team or group performance with hierarchical differentiation increasing group performance as clearly defined roles facilitates coordination, integration of information with patterns of deference reducing intragroup conflict (Anicich et al, 2015). However, the cultural disparity between western models and Nigerian local culture can also be a potential source of tension with negative implication on learning in LAMATA.

Organisational learning facilitators cannot be implemented in a vacuum, and as learning and the acquisition of knowledge is not based on simple receptivity (Scott, 2011), organisational leaders have a responsibility for creating a shared sense of need for learning and enabling mechanisms that foster knowledge creation. LAMATA has applied many aspects of the organisational learning facet through the articulation of organisational strategy with clear vision and mission statements shared with members, recognition of task structure leading to a focus on investment on staff development through training programs and a commitment of leadership to learning with managers given responsibility for the development of their associates. Learning is a social construction, and there is a need to recognise that the complexity arising from dynamic interactions of organisational members though can provide opportunities for learning can also be anxiety provoking in the process of meaning making (Stacey, 2011). This requires an evaluation of existing practices and factors that may inhibit the ability of LAMATA from improving their knowledge base for effective action.

### **2.8.2. What inhibits organisational learning?**

There is significant management literature that focuses on the positive impact of organisational learning and its processes. However, it has been identified that given the complexity of an organisation, its inherent structure and processes can significantly inhibit members' ability to learn. Levinthal and March, (1993) assert that organisational learning has its virtues, but learning processes can be fraught with many limitations with the processes of learning and structures that produce intelligent behaviour may also produce negative outcomes such as superstitious learning, competency traps and erroneous inferences (Levitt and March, 1988). It must also be recognized that the same process that produces experiential wisdom can also produce problems that are partly a result of human cognitive habit, the characteristics of the structure of experience and partly from organisational features (Levitt and March, 1988) which are contextual factors that inhibit productive learning in an organisation (Lipshitz et al., 2002)

The barriers to organisational learning are the systems and behaviours that prevent an organisation from adapting to the decision-making challenges they face with the barriers existing at multiple levels in the organisation (Fischbacher-Smith & Fischbacher-Smith, 2012). The diagnosis and recognition of the barriers to organisational learning are a necessary

complement to developing strategies for organisational learning facilitators (Schilling and Kluge, 2009). The barriers to organisational learning are those factors that either prevents or impedes the applicability of learning facilitators with the barriers not limited to problems with organisational structures or processes but also barriers that prevent organisations from changing their cognition and behaviour to take effective action (Schilling and Kluge, 2009).

Organisational learning barriers have technical, structural, human and environmental elements driven by both internal and external influences that can impact all levels of learning within the organisation (Schilling and Kluge, 2009). The research literature has diverse views on factors that impede learning though several elements converge and (Gieskes et al, 2002) classifies several explicitly identified barriers to organisational learning dispersed in literature into three main barriers of interrupted learning processes, psychological and cultural blockages and obstacles related to organisational structure and leadership.

#### 2.8.2.1. Interrupted learning processes

Interrupted learning processes were identified by March and Olsen (1975) to explain the barriers that occur when there is a disruption in the connection between individual belief, action and organisation action with the barriers include role constrained, audience and superstitious learning. Role constrained learning is when an individual is unable to act on their learning because of the constraints in their role definition or a rigid requirement to comply to standard operating procedures that inhibit organisational members' ability to take effective action. LAMATA operates a rigid departmental structure that may potentially create a disconnection between the different departments' thereby stifling information and knowledge flow for effective decision-making.

Audience learning occurs when there is personal behaviour change, but the learner is unable to change the behaviour of others in the organisation leading to an interruption between individual and organisational action, which can be linked to the inability of individual learning diffusing across the organisation. The third barrier to the learning process is superstitious learning, which occurs when an organisation draws wrong inferences and conclusions from the causal link between actions and outcomes. The subjective experiences of an organisation may lead to a wrong evaluation of outcomes misleading the organisations to

reinforce routines that were determined by actions rather than the information from the learning situation. This mainly leads to maintaining status quo with a belief in previous success reinforcing the application of the same strategy without reviewing the current context and situation. LAMATA from inception has applied transport solutions touted as 'international best practice' with learning strategies focused on developing expert specialisation which potentially reinforces the continued use of the same standard processes with an embedded routine leading to a lack of consideration of changing context.

Kim, (1993) added two more barriers identified as situational learning and fragmented learning with situational learning occurring when learning is not codified and shared across the organisation, and it becomes forgotten and cannot be applied for later use with the organisation unable to learn from its history or mistakes. This can happen where learning is targeted mainly at the individual level creating a key man risk such that organisational knowledge is lost when the staff leaves. LAMATA has been impacted by the consequence of dependence on the expert knowledge of project managers leading to project implementation problems when some staff exited suddenly. Fragmented learning occurs when individual learning is not diffused or institutionalised within the organisation and is rampant where organisations are decentralised, or members operate in silos.

Herdberg,(1981) added another barrier of learning process of unlearning which relates to an organisation's inability to discard of obsolete learning to give way to new learning. This barrier can be linked to competency trap (Huber, 1991) which makes it difficult for an organisation to discard pre-existing knowledge or habits and become trapped in past success. LAMATA's focused approach for developing technical specialisation in certain fields may potentially lead members to a narrow view of problem-solving with a tendency for applying the same solutions to all public transport problems.

#### 2.8.2.2. Psychological and cultural barriers

Individuals and groups are sometimes constrained to learn because of some psychologically related issues in the work environment. There has been significant literature on the impact of counterproductive defensive routines developed by members to protect them from perceived unfavourable view of reality preventing learning at the individual, team and organisational levels with responses to social and psychological factors such as threat, embarrassment, shame, fear and anxiety can all hinder people from committing to learning

(Argyris 1990). Political processes within an organisation can also hinder genuine learning as unequal power bases within the organisation limits the flow of resources and vital information required for decision-making. The hierarchical and top-down orientation in LAMATA may potentially be a significant factor impacting organisational learning practices.

Organisational culture has been identified as integral to the general functioning of an organisation as it forms the basic assumptions that are accepted as valid within an organisation. The basic elements of organisational culture such as shared beliefs, values, and behaviour can create barriers that block learning at all levels (Lipshitz et al., 2002). Some entrenched norms within an organisational culture that creates barriers to productive learning include a lack of integrity that limits the ability to admit errors or provide feedback, lack of transparency that limits open dialogue, and lack of inquiry that limits the ability to challenge status quo.

The context of the Nigeria culture can be described as highly hierarchical where people have high respect for authority, age and experience and categorised by a high power distance orientation. (Hofstede, Hofstede, and Minkov, 2010) delineate that members of organisations with high power distance tend to compare and evaluate one another in terms of social status and regulate their interactions according to hierarchical expectations. This may potentially be a barrier to learning in LAMATA as superiors expect deference and lower ranked members may not share dissenting opinions ultimately affecting learning and knowledge creation process.

### 2.8.2.3. Organisational structure and leadership.

Senge, (1996) argues that leaders are responsible for organisational learning and implementing structures that enhance learning by shaping ways which organisations are socially constituted with inadequate leadership as a barrier to learning. There has also been literature that emphasises the degree of centralisation or hierarchy as well as the degree of standardisation as factors that may inhibit the process of learning. Dilworth et al., (1996) explicate that hierarchy, and an autocratic leadership style can lead to distrust, fear, blocked communication and fragmentation of work effort that all inhibit organisational learning. This is especially significant for LAMATA given the hierarchical and departmental structure and observed inter departmental rivalry that may block the necessary cooperation required for organisational learning across all levels.

## 2.9. Summary

The aim of the literature review was to better understand the theoretical conceptualisation of organisational learning, how it occurs, the processes and practices that shape its development, analysing facilitators and inhibitors and identifying organisational learning mechanisms that enable shared understanding for effective action. It was also essential to recognise and understand relevant contextual factors that influence the interpretation of organisational reality that ultimately impacts the creation and sharing of productive collective learning for effective action.

This review has shown that the literature surrounding organisation learning and the process of knowledge creation is a vast and multi-dimensional construct influenced by diverse perceptions. Organisational learning research has had long standing debates covering different themes that includes the conceptualisations of organisational learning as a rational choice and decision process (Cohen and Sproull, 1996); as an emergent trial and error random process (Rumelt, 1996; Mintzberg, 1996a), based on cognitive (Simon, 1991) or behavioural changes (Levitt and March, 1988), or learning research based on descriptive streams on how does an organisation learn or the prescriptive stream on how should an organisation learn (Ortenblad, 2001). There is however a general agreement that organisational learning is required for survival and growth and that the effectiveness of organisational learning is highly contextual and situated with different strategies required at the multi-level of analysis of individual, group and organisational (Easterby-Smith et al 2000; Argote, 2011).

Organisational learning literature largely provides a general approach for an improved understanding of learning practices in an organisation, however the specific context of LAMATA requires an investigation of the current learning practices to understand what works, what does not work and why in the knowledge creation process with the application of existing literature required to evaluate the effectiveness of learning at LAMATA. The review will also integrate concepts of organisational learning in terms of its definitions and its dimensions, analysing the concept of organisational knowledge, which is perceived as the outcome of organisational learning processes that can occur at different levels of the organisation.



The organisational learning framework proposed by Crossan et al, (1999) is a holistic conceptual theory that enables an understanding of what motivates learning and where it occurs at the different levels in an organisation. The framework also establishes the link between strategy and learning (Vera and Crossan, 2004) with organisational learning viewed as a multilevel (individual, group and Institutional) phenomenon that is linked by four interrelated psychological processes of intuiting, interpretation, integrating and institutionalisation. Intuiting and interpreting occurs at the individual level, with integrating at the group level and institutionalisation and the organisational level with all processes involving both cognitive and behavioural processes of learning.

As organisational learning at LAMATA aims to improve collective understanding (cognition) for improved organisational action (behaviour), there is a need to identify the effective processes for the integration of the different levels of learning at the individual, group and organisation to connect events, thoughts, structures and action with the effective organisational processes required to ensure that rules and procedures in use facilitate rather than impede organisational ability to interpret and respond to its ever changing environment.

Organisational learning at LAMATA is a multilevel dynamic process that begins at the individual level but becomes refined and recreated through interaction amongst organisational members leading to improved cognition, shared meanings and norms for effective collective action which becomes institutionalised over time with a need to improve organisational learning processes for managing what is already known (exploitation) and what is yet unknown (exploration)

The 4I framework by Crossan et al, (1999) provides a theoretical basis for improving the effectiveness of learning processes at LAMATA as it recognises that organisational learning involves the interaction between cognition (understanding, knowledge and beliefs) and action (behaviour); it enables an examination of the relationship between the three levels of learning which are linked by social and psychological processes to effectively integrate them. The framework also recognises the tension between exploration and exploitation of knowledge through the feed forward and feedback mechanisms. The framework incorporates the dynamic multilevel nature of organisational learning through an improved

understanding of the flow and stocks of learning by capturing the rich interplay that exists between organisational processes and different learning levels of the organisation.

Organisational learning processes at LAMATA is essentially driven as a top down prescriptive process with learning and knowledge viewed as a known commodity that can be acquired to be transferred across the organisation. This limited view ignores the processes for the emergent creation of knowledge that is developed as a social construction that evolves through on going practice as organisational members work collectively to solve public transport problems in Lagos. Although organisational learning at LAMATA recognizes learning as a multi-level phenomenon, the top down approach relies heavily on application of 'best practices' creating a gap in managing the feedback and feed forward mechanisms that enables the integration of learning across the different levels in the organisation.

The learning processes at LAMATA rely heavily on expert knowledge with a huge focus on learning at the individual level. The research analysis will seek to identify the processes that improve organisational members' ability to engage in intuiting and enabling interpretation, which leads to refinement and development of intuitive insights. However, Individual learning though a requirement of organisational learning at LAMATA is not sufficient in itself as solving the problem of public transport require members to engage in shared practice with their understanding of the problem evolving through interaction with effective dialogue required for shared understanding and collective coordinated action. The 4I framework highlights how learning moves from the individual to the group with the practice of dialogue critical to uncovering and inquiring into the feedback loop between internal interpretive structures and organisational structures (Isaacs, 1993) with the process of integrating enabling groups to refine new ideas and create new solutions to practice problems.

As organisational learning is more than the sum of the learning of its members, the development of effective structures, processes, procedures, norms, strategy and systems allows an organisation to take advantage of tacit knowledge that becomes formalised enabling prior learning to become embedded in the organisation. LAMATA's strategy relies heavily on the institutionalisation of best practice processes to exploit current

understanding of the business. However this top down approach to learning limits the feed forward process impacting individuals and groups ability to move the process of integrating new knowledge to become institutionalised. LAMATA applies different strategies for organisational learning at the three learning levels and the 41 frameworks provides a recognition of tension that exists between exploiting current knowledge and applying new knowledge. This research will be focused on understanding how to improve the effective integration of learning across all levels at LAMATA to enable better feed forward and feedback mechanisms that is essential for effective coordinated organisational action.

The problem LAMATA seeks to resolve is a wicked social problem that is complex, unpredictable, open-ended, and intractable (Head and Alford, 2015) and for which learning from experience is not always readily available or applicable (Rittel and Webber, 1973). The possible resolutions will require a pragmatic approach to organisational learning that moves the negotiation of meaning and shared understanding from top-down linear focused approaches to practices that effectively link and integrate learning at all levels of the organisation.

### 3. CHAPTER 3 – METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

#### 3.1. Introduction

This case study explores organisational learning strategies and practices at LAMATA to uncover how learning occurs amongst organisational members to understand the behaviours, practices and systems that drive effective workplace learning. In adopting the methodology for this study, the researcher undertook an in-depth review of the literature to decide on an effective research methodology and methods.

The choice of methodology follows a theory-practice approach such that practical relevance is achieved in a methodologically robust manner. The study is action oriented as it aims to improve learning practices at LAMATA, but despite the researcher's original intentions it has not been possible to undertake action research through to taking informed action. The researcher was able to complete the process of conceptualisation, planning, fact-finding, and analysis to generate new knowledge but was unable to implement the recommendations and conduct the evaluation of action taken.

This chapter describes the philosophical worldviews or paradigm that underpins the research design with the framework adopted guiding the rationale for the choice of research methodology, sampling strategy, as well as data collection methods, analysis and interpretation of data and validation. The philosophical assumption for this study follows a subjectivist ontology and a social constructionist epistemology using a qualitative case study approach for generating actionable knowledge to improve organisational learning practices at LAMATA.

The study adopts an interpretive paradigm that accepts that there are multiple realities with knowledge generated from the subjective accounts and the experiences of the participants under study. All types of research must establish rigour in both the process and in the

findings, and this section explains the measures designed to ensure rigour and the assurance of trustworthiness in the process of data collection and analysis.

The study follows an iterative process of inquiry and reflection with a focus on members' opinions, feelings, inner thoughts and experiences of learning as they engage in everyday organisational practice with data emerging from practice. The section will also discuss how the researcher managed the inherent challenges related to the researcher's position as the Director of Business Systems at LAMATA with responsibility for learning and development and the impact of being an insider researcher of the case organisation.

### **3.2. Research Questions**

#### **3.2.1. Primary research question**

**How is organisational learning experienced at LAMATA and how does it impact on everyday work practices?**

The objective and motivation for this study is a desire to improve the practice of learning in LAMATA. The research approach is focused on investigating and evaluating the effectiveness of current organisational practices at LAMATA as a basis for improved organisational learning. The researcher as the Director of Business systems with responsibility for learning and development sought to investigate the impact and effectiveness of the organisational learning initiatives implemented at LAMATA from the perspectives of the people experiencing it. The perspectives of the research participants have direct implications for understanding organisational learning practices at LAMATA for the development of appropriate interventions for improvement.

#### **3.2.2. Secondary research questions**

The study will focus on participants' experiences about how to improve workplace learning by answering the following secondary questions:

**How do members at LAMATA understand organisational learning?**

**How does organisational learning occur at LAMATA?**

**What facilitates organisational learning at LAMATA?**

**What inhibits organisational learning at LAMATA?**

## How can organisational learning be improved at LAMATA?

### 3.3. Philosophical Considerations

Management research has been described as applied research as it is not only concerned with understanding the nature of business but also concerned with solving problems related to managerial practice (Bryman and Bell, 2011). The different research paradigms influences how management research is to be examined with the knowledge of philosophical issues helping a researcher to know which designs will work and to recognise the constraints and limitations of each particular approach (Easterby-Smith et al., 2012).

The design of a research is related to the methods adopted to effectively answer the research questions and is influenced by both the nature and objective of the problem under study. The assumption about the nature of human knowledge and realities shape the methodology adopted to systematically solve the research problem with research methods and techniques closely tied to the methodology adopted. The nature of the research problem is to gain insight into organisational learning at LAMATA and to use empirical evidence to evaluate its current state and develop interventions to improve organisational learning practices to enable organisational ability to respond effectively to the changing needs of public transportation in Lagos.

As this study is concerned with understanding the meaning and interpretations of how members at LAMATA experience learning, it adopts an epistemological stance that is social constructionist in nature with a theoretical perspective grounded in interpretivism. Within this paradigm, people's experiences are considered as unique, with multiple interpretations of events understood from the perspectives of the participants. The design approach is therefore focused on seeing the world through the eyes of the participants to make sense of the meaning they place on their realities with a holistic emphasis on studying the participants in their natural setting.

The interactive process of the research enables the researcher to understand the participants' experiences within a particular context with a recognition of the plurality and diversity of individual experiences, opinions and an acceptance of the evolving nature of human experience and reasoning. The researcher as the main instrument for data collection and analysis is an active participant in the research process and brings into the inquiry,

theories, perspectives, paradigms and beliefs that guide their action Guba, (1990) in the process a circular interlinking of the research process with no clear separation between the phases of data collection and interpretation. As the researcher cannot be neutral, there is an obligation to acknowledge the researcher's role in the research process as well as report participants' experiences accurately and truthfully.

### **3.4. Methodology-Case Study**

This study adopts a qualitative case study methodology to gain deeper insights into the real-life experiences of participants at LAMATA as this allows the “investigator to explore a real-life contemporary bounded system over time through an in-depth data collection from multiple sources of information” (Creswell, 2013:97). A qualitative case study is situated within two popular approaches of social constructivist paradigm proposed by Stake, (1995) and Merriam, (1998).

Stake, (1995) describes a case study as a process of inquiry and the product of that inquiry specific, unique and a bounded system. The most defining characteristic of a case study research is in delimiting the object of study with the case study selected because of its uniqueness and knowledge that can be revealed from the case (Merriam, 1998). According to Stake (1995), a case study draws from the nature of the case, the physical setting, historical background, other contexts such as political, economic, and legal and the informants through which the case can be known. The knowledge derived from a case study is concrete rather than abstract, it is contextual as it is located in a situation and, developed more by the reader's interpretation.

The case under examination is how members at LAMATA collectively experience learning with the unit of analysis focused on individual-level responses to recognise what is common as well as what is particular in participants' experiences of organisational learning. The case study approach provides the researcher with the opportunity to study management in its natural environment and to gain detailed insight into the processes while highlighting aspects of the members' experience, which may not have been previously suspected (Searle, 1999).

Qualitative case study methodology will provide a means for knowledge generation through a better understanding of how learning occurs in LAMATA for improved organisational

learning practices. The qualitative case study adopts an inductive approach with the assumption that human behaviour and experiences cannot be explained only by formal logic but also through a critical thinking approach. Knowledge production will be through pragmatic science (Anderson et al., 2001) following an action research paradigm with a desire to solve a workplace problem with methodological rigour as a basis to initiate and implement purposeful action for improved organisational practice.

Case study approach is relevant to this investigation as it allows the uncovering of contextual conditions of organisational learning practices at LAMATA with an interest in an in-depth understanding of a group of people as they interact and engage in everyday organisational action within a specific context. The understanding of the influence and impact of contextual situations will provide inferences about human behaviour as a basis on how to improve organisational learning practices and processes. This study is an intrinsic case study undertaken because of the researchers' genuine interest to gain a better understanding of the how learning is enacted at LAMATA in all its particularity and ordinariness (Stake, 1995). The intrinsic case was chosen to explore, provide in-depth insight, describe and document participants' context and experiences with their accounts providing meaning, interpretations, thoughts and actions to situations and events.

As a single case, members' experiences of organisational learning at LAMATA is studied in detail with a focus on the nature of the case, the historical background of LAMATA, its physical setting and the context including political, economic, social and legal implications. The approach provides a high level of flexibility and supports the researcher's creative freedom that nurtures creativity, innovation and reflexivity (Morse, 2009). As a single case study, data collection and analysis is logistically manageable for the researcher though the case may be limited regarding the potential for generalisation. However, the study will provide deeper understanding of how organisational learning is enacted within the particular context of a multi-lateral funded government agency in Lagos and provide knowledge that is relevant and relatable to practitioners within such a context.

### **3.5. Research methods**

The methods adopted for the study was focused on generating answers for the research questions through a process of inquiry that places the participants as the main object of the inquiry. A case study allows data collection from various sources with multiple sources of



data used to clarify meaning and interpretation and to identify multiple realities (Stake, 2005). The method for collecting data for this study included face-to-face interviews, and the review of several internal and external documentary data that included project implementation reports, staff handbook, departmental manuals and archival records, previous research and studies conducted on LAMATA, and researcher notes. A comprehensive list of documentary data analysed is in (Appendix 2)

### **3.5.1. Interviews**

The main source of data for the study was through semi-structured one on one interviews. Yin, (1994) explicates that semi-structured interviews are an important source of data for the case study as it provides an in-depth understanding of the case with an opportunity to collect and describe data in a real-life environment. Interviews provided an opportunity to focus on the empirical study of human activity to gain insight into the experience of members at LAMATA from a context of public sector transport agency. The use of interviews provided an opportunity to gather rich descriptions of participants experiences which would have been limited if questionnaires as a data collection technique had been used. Interviews are more powerful in generating narrative data and allow the researcher to probe deeply into accounts of an event to secure vivid accounts of respondent's personal experiences (Kvale, 1996), and to explore and capture the construction and negotiation of meaning in a natural setting (Cohen et al., 2007).

The interview specifically involved face-to-face semi-structured interviews of twenty-six (26) participants representing different groups in terms of their grade, years of experience, and department (sample selection addressed in 3.5.4). As the goal was to get a rich and detailed description, the researcher followed a standard interview guide with a flexibility to adjust the questioning based on significant issues that emerged during the interviews (Appendix 1: interview guide). To explore and understand the nature of organisational learning in LAMATA, participants were asked many descriptive questions to get details of the nature of learning by the participants, how they learned to do their job and how their learning became organisational. These questions were to gain an understanding of how organisational learning was experienced by different people at LAMATA.

Research participants were also required to give indicators of how they perceived that learning had occurred with participants asked about what factors facilitated learning as well

as what they believed were factors that hindered learning at LAMATA. The interview protocol also considered prescriptive questions that gave participants' opportunities to provide opinions and recommendations on perceptions of practices, systems, policies or processes that can improve the experience of organisational learning in LAMATA.

All interviews were conducted within six weeks on a one to one basis using a private office that allowed the interview to be done without interruption. The time allocated for each interview was planned at 60 minutes, but some interviews went longer to up to over 100 minutes. All interviews were audio recorded with permission from the participant and later transcribed with each transcribed data indexed into a unique three-letter code, which began with the participants unit and two other random letters to protect the identity of each participant.

The main list identifying each code to a participant is password protected on the researcher's computer and staff names mentioned during the interview were allocated pronouns to protect their identities. The researcher also took notes of important points of interest during the interview. The conduct of a successful interview demands that the researcher creates an atmosphere of trust that encourages participants to be comfortable in sharing their opinions and expressing their views truthfully to achieve an outcome based on informed choice and judgement. The different steps applied by the researcher to achieve this is addressed under researcher's positionality in section 3.5.7.

### **3.5.2. Documentary Data**

The documentary data which were both from internal and external sources provided valuable historical and current data that was used to supplement data generated from the interviews. LAMATA over the years have generated different types of records and files and the researcher analysed different relevant records to both support and strengthen the data generated from the interviews. Internal documentary data consisted of information and data that was already available at LAMATA such as current information on the website and archival documents that provided historical information on trends in organisational learning at LAMATA to explore how organisational learning strategy has evolved over time.

External documentary data were from external sources and were mostly public documents which included the World Bank website with information related to LAMATA's developmental plans and information on implementation assessments, the Lagos state government annual budgets., newspaper publications and articles related to LAMATA's public transport initiatives, and the review of case studies written by researchers from the World Bank and educational institutions providing additional third party information and perspectives on LAMATA's activities and actions.

As an insider researcher, there was familiarity with the different categories of documentary data available at LAMATA and the researcher was able to identify relevant data that could provide background information as well as track LAMATA's organisational learning strategy development overtime. The documentary data included deliberate sources related to organizational learning such learning and knowledge management documents and training plans and inadvertent sources such as annual budgets, completion reports, annual reports, case studies, and newspaper articles etc. that were produced for other uses but provided relevant research information.

The researcher also identified relevant documentary data based on references by participants with the content analysis of the data related to answering the central research questions. The summary list of documents that most contributed to the data analysis is presented in (Table 1) with the full listing of documentary data in (Appendix 2).

### **3.5.3. Sample Selection**

The total staff strength of LAMATA at the start of the study was one hundred and seven (107) with the eligible sample size of eighty-five (85). The eligibility criteria required that a participant must be a full staff member of LAMATA. Twenty-two (22) members were excluded as they were ad-hoc staff whose work characteristics and content will not offer relevant information on organisational learning practices in LAMATA. The excluded staff included drivers, office cleaners, kitchen assistants and equipment maintenance staff.

**Table 1 Summary of documentary data**

Type of document	Category	Number of documents
Case studies	external	4
Report	external	1
minutes of meetings	internal	several
User manuals	internal	several
Staff handbook	internal	1
Training needs form	internal	1
Performance appraisal	internal	several
Knowledge assets	internal	several
Newspaper articles	external	several
Knowledge assets	internal	several
KS implementation guide	internal	1
LASG annual budget	external	7

### 3.5.4. Interview location and participants

The interviews were conducted at the LAMATA head office that is housed on two floors of a four-storey building. The technical staff (Public transport, Roads and Traffic Management and Rail department) are on the third floor while the operations teams (Finance and Accounts, Procurement, Information Technology, Human Resources, and Administration) are on the second floor. The office was designed as an open plan work environment with all staff sitting in open cubicles except for the Managing Director who used a closed office. The number of participants for the interview was 26 made up of management staff (6) senior managers (6), specialist (8) and junior (6). The summary sample was 14 staff from the technical unit and 12 staff from operations. The description of the grade level of participants are as follows:

**Management** staff are referred to as Directors and are the most senior ranking officers. Directors manage a department that usually comprises of two or more units. The Management team report to the Managing Director and the Board Members.

**Senior Managers** are either on the Associate or Deputy Director rank and are heads of a unit under a Department. They report to a Director and are responsible for managing the unit budget, implementing tactical decisions and developing skills and competence of their associates.

**Specialists** are usually function based experienced staff who are seen as a subject matter expert in a particular area of expertise. They work as part of a project team and report to a senior manager and always have information on what is going on in the field and on projects.

**Junior** specialists are the staff with the least technical experience and are being developed to become subject matter experts. They are always part of a project team and generally do the ‘heavy lifting’ such as collecting and collating data, reading and summarising reports and taking minutes of meetings etc. They report to a specialist who is responsible for their coaching and training.

**Table 2 : Summary of Participants**

Grade Category	Number	Gender distribution	Range of work experience
Management	6	5males; 1 Female	7-12 years
Senior Manager	6	6 males	5-11 years
Specialist	8	5males; 3 females	6-14 years
Junior	6	5 males; 1 female	2-10years

### 3.5.5. Selection of Participants

All members in this study are more than research subjects but are participants in the research process as their experiences are critical to understanding and defining the issues related to workplace learning that influence and affect them. As a member of LAMATA, there was no barrier to gaining access, which only required gaining the approval of the Managing Director. There was also an overall interest by the management of LAMATA to understand how to improve organisational learning practices.

The outcome of research largely depends on the quality of data that is collected and analysed and the data collection strategy adopted must be able to answer the research questions. As the goal of the research is to gain insights into the experiences of a particular group of people, the sample selection strategy adopted the use of non-probability sampling techniques, with a combination of purposive and self-selection sampling strategy to gain an improved understanding of complex human issues (Marshall, 1996) in a target population.

#### 3.5.5.1. Purposive selection strategy

The purposive selection strategy also called judgment sampling, is the deliberate non-random sampling that allowed the researcher to apply a subjective judgement in targeting a group within a population because of the relevant and important insight they have about the case with the choice of informants due to the qualities they possess (Tongco, 2007). Using this approach, all the six management staff in charge of directorates and eight senior managers that are deputy or assistant directors in charge of units were targeted. This group was targeted because of their position and their responsibilities in LAMATA as they had the responsibility for developing, managing and the assessment of organisational strategies. Both groups also had the responsibility for capacity building for members in their departments or units. The importance of this group is that their role in LAMATA gives them a unique perspective on learning practices, processes and its perceived impact on work in LAMATA. As senior members of staff, their rank and hierarchy within LAMATA, allowed them to talk more freely to the researcher without the burdens or tension that may be related to issues of power relations that may be experienced by other staff members that are at a lower rank to the researcher.

This group was especially important to the study as they help to illuminate key themes related to the concept of organisational learning, practices and how it is facilitated from a management/leadership team perspective others. They also provided insight on how they determined what is critical for LAMATA regarding what must be learnt, how it is deployed, how such learning can occur and if the learning occurs. The participants targeted for the purposive sampling were approached informally to discuss the purpose of the research and why they were chosen for the study. A formal request for voluntary participation with the consent form was then sent to participants. The researcher received fourteen responses for voluntary participation. However, twelve participants were eventually interviewed as one member of the team sadly passed away, and another one left the agency before the interview could be conducted.

#### 3.5.5.2. Self-selection sampling strategy

To gain access to diverse perspectives, a self-selection strategy was also adopted for the recruitment of members in the specialist and junior grade. Self-selection required that members volunteer to be part of the study on their own accord. The researcher enlisted the

assistance of a part-time staff (who was not eligible to participate) to send an email for solicitation of voluntary participation with only interested participants required to respond to the researcher directly.

The process for applying the self-selection strategy was adopted to reduce the potential risk of researcher bias and to manage perceived exercise of power over the participants who were of lower grade to the researcher. All interested participants were advised to respond by sending a mail for participation directly to the researcher to ensure confidentiality and anonymity. Twenty responses with representation across different grades and departments was received, however; the researcher could only interview fourteen participants, as some respondents were not available for their scheduled time because of factors such as time constraints or vacation. The researcher purposefully ensured that the fourteen interviewed represented all the grade levels to ensure that different slice of the realities of members was captured.

Twenty-six (26) staff representing different departments, units, grade cadre, gender, and length of time at LAMATA were interviewed. All departments/units had at least one participant representation except the finance department and audit that has no participant. The gender classification of five females and twenty-one males is consistent with the 20% female to male gender distribution in LAMATA. A summary list of participants is attached in (Table 2)

### **3.5.6. Researcher's Positionality and Ethical Considerations**

A researcher must make an effort to ensure that the study is done with both moral and ethical considerations, which pertains to doing good and avoiding harm towards the participants. It is pertinent that researchers recognise that participants are autonomous people who will share information willingly with a balanced research relationship encourages disclosure, trust, and awareness of potential ethical issues (Orb et al., 2001). The research followed ethical principles that included ensuring informed consent, confidentiality and anonymity of participants to protect their identities, honesty and transparency in communicating information on the research and avoiding misrepresentation in reporting the study.

At the time of data collection, the researcher was a full member of LAMATA and an insider researcher who is a manager that undertakes a research project as a complete member (Coghlan and Brannick, 2014). The insider status provides several advantages to the researcher such as having a deep insight and greater understanding of the culture under study, having an established familiarity that promotes the telling and judging of truth and the non-altering of the flow of social interaction unnaturally (Bonner and Tolhurst, 2002). However being an insider undertaking research in and on LAMATA while a "complete member" (Adler & Adler, 1987) also presents some inherent issues related to "preunderstanding", "role duality" and "organisational politics" that must be effectively managed.

'Preunderstanding refers to such things as people's knowledge, insights and experience before they engage in a research programme' (Gummesson, 2000:57). The knowledge of norms, practice, culture, traditions and understanding of both the formal and informal life can be a valuable advantage to the researcher in mediating the dynamics inherent in the research process. As a member of LAMATA, the researcher can see beyond the surface as a result of personal experience to dig further to get participants to discuss part of organisational life that may not be open to an external researcher. However, preunderstanding also presents the researcher with challenges related to being too close to the data which can negatively impact on the quality of inquiry as the researcher may assume too much or do not subject their perceptions to alternative reframing. Marshall, (1999) advocates a process of self-reflective sensemaking by living life as a process of inquiry such that nothing is treated as fixed or clear-cut, but understanding occurs by engaging in a conversation through continuous questioning.

In order to improve the process of inquiry the researcher explained to all participants that they should not assume that as the researcher is also a member of LAMATA, some stories need not be explained in detail. The participants were told during the interview that it was important to hear their unique perspective of events at LAMATA as the researcher could have experienced the same issues differently. Ahern, (1999) posits that total objectivity is not possible and not necessarily desirable in qualitative research, but the researcher must constantly reflect on the research process such that the knowledge developed stays faithful to the case.



The researcher constantly engaged in continuous reflection in practice (Schon, 1992) in the process of the research to question ingrained views and assumptions, embedded power relations and agendas that promote and maintain existing power structures or limits and marginalises other voices and opinions in order to provide space for alternative perspectives.

The use of "journaling" (Coghlan & Brannick, 2014) also provided a process of reflection as the recordings of on-going feelings, and perceptions helped the researcher to make distinct her voice and experiences from that of the participants. The researcher engaged in reflection by documenting personal thoughts after each interview and after listening and reading the transcripts to remain conscious of personal biases and keep the commitment of accurately representing the experiences of research participants.

Role duality and impact of organisational politics were dilemmas experienced by the researcher, as there was sometimes role conflict in the different hats that the researcher had to wear during the process of the research. As an insider researcher, there was a need to constantly manage a mix of roles of being a manager, colleague, management staff, researcher and change agent with conflicting purposes that. During the data gathering stage of the study, some participants made assumptions about the knowledge of the researcher because of the researcher's role and position in LAMATA with the belief that the researcher had more access to information. There were responses such as:

*"You know how these things work in LAMATA",*

*"You know what I mean."*

*"I am sure you heard about that issue and how it got resolved."*

*"I am a junior staff; you have more information about that more than I do."*

The researcher had to probe further in spite of these perceptions and assumptions to gain insight into participants' thoughts on how they saw the event. There was a continuous need to reiterate to participants that regardless of the assumed knowledge of the researcher, there was an interest to understand how they experienced and perceived the events.

The position of the researcher in LAMATA also presented another challenge related to the potential for participants to report socially desirable responses and to present events in a

positive light with some interviews becoming quite long with digression to other issues unrelated to the discussion on organisational learning. Organisational politics was also observed as some participants may have consented to the interview as a way to further personal agendas, which they believed the researcher was in a position to influence. The researcher had to manage the expectations of participation about possible research outcomes as some participants' proffered suggestions for quick changes to some processes. However, the researcher could only provide assurances that the study recommendation would be presented to management for review and subsequent implementation.

The researcher also has a personal interest in the subject with an objective to facilitate the emancipatory potential of learning to enable people challenge and critique practices that negatively affect workplace learning. As a "boundary spanner and a tempered radical" (Meyerson & Scully, 1995:589), the outcome of the research will provide an opportunity to act as an "outsider within" by gaining subjective knowledge and experience as an insider whilst having enough objective detachment to recognize organisational learning issues of LAMATA like an outsider. The end goal is to improve learning practices at LAMATA as a strategy for improved organisational response to the complex problem of public transportation.

In summary, as the only member of management promoted into the role, (other members joined LAMATA as a management staff) the researcher also comes with a unique perspective and experience of issues from both the "swampy lowland and high ground" (Schon, 1992:54). This was an advantage as some participants saw the researcher as one of their own which established trust and rapport that was critical to the process of inquiry. The insider researcher status requires that the researcher manage participants' expectations in a way that creates a balance in people's expectation and the objective of the research.

### **3.6. Data Analysis**

The analysis of data in a qualitative case study can be difficult as there is no standard defined strategy or technique. Yin, (2009) delineates that there is no fixed formula to guide an analysis of data in a case study, but the analytical result will largely depend on the researcher's style of rigorous empirical thinking, presentation of sufficient evidence and a careful consideration of alternative interpretation.

The analysis of a qualitative case study requires reflecting participants' experiences and the researcher's interpretation to provide a thick description of the case through a sound methodological process. The process of analysis is a continuous iterative process of weaving between data collection and analysis to generate meaning from the accounts of how learning is experienced in LAMATA. The analysis of data involved the examination and categorisation of qualitative evidence which included both interview transcripts and documentary data in search of patterns to move from description and account of events to the interpretation of meaning to construct a conclusion of how learning is experienced at LAMATA.

The researcher adopted the general analytical strategies for analysing case study evidence by relying on theoretical propositions, employing analytic techniques, exploring rival explanations, and the display of data apart from interpretations (Yin, 2009). The use of theoretical propositions relied on established organisational learning theory literature to link extracted themes with the themes in literature.

The researcher also paid close attention to similarities and distinction amongst themes, patterns, constructs and interpretations expressed by multiple participants to establish consistency or uniqueness of findings. The analysis of data followed the six steps process by Braun and Clark, (2006) as a framework for thematic analysis. The steps are not linear but an interactive recursive process that involves moving back and forth between the steps.

Step 1: Familiarisation with the data and this involved reviewing the audio tapes, reading and re-reading the transcripts to get the general sense of the information conveyed by the participants.

Step 2: Generating initial codes which involved organising the data into meaningful groups by segmenting the data into categories using the actual words used by participants.

Step 3: Combine or split relevant data groups into overarching themes that are characterised by its significance by gathering together the data relevant to the theme.

Step 4: Review themes to decide to combine, separate, refine or discard identified themes and generate clear and distinguishable themes.

Step 5: Refining the themes to identify the essence of what each theme is about and allow findings to emerge from participants' responses.

Step 6: Write up the report by portraying the analysis with empirical evidence that answers the questions.

### **3.6.1. Analysing interview data**

Data analysis involves a process of making sense of the data (Merriam, 1998) with the transcribed data and audio recording reviewed several times. The transcribed interviews were manually coded which was cumbersome but enabled the researcher to immerse in the data. The data was first categorised by the sampling strategy of purposive and self-selective to classify narrative of leaders as distinct to other members in the hierarchy. A spreadsheet was used to group all responses to the individual question, and common codes were extracted with dissimilarities and outliers recognised.

The codes were classified into sub-themes, which were the key discourses of the experiences of participants and were critical to pattern matching into coherent major organising themes. The explanations distilled from the questions asked was then interpreted within the history and context of LAMATA to gain a thick description of how learning occurs, what facilitate or inhibit learning and the processes and actions that will promote learning and knowledge sharing amongst members forming the basis for the findings section of chapter 4. An example of how the various subthemes were categorised into key organising theme with an analysis of the process of identifying the core element with different quotations that was representative of the main themes is shown in (Table 3) below.

### 3.6.2. Analysis of documentary data

Documentary data was analysed simultaneously during the process of data collection and provided a snapshot of the actions and intentions of LAMATA related to organisational learning practices over a period of time. The analysis of documentary data also enabled data triangulation to clarify meaning and interpretation (Stake, 2005) as well as provide thick descriptions of the case (Merriam, 2002). The analysis of different documents also followed the thematic analysis similar to the review of the interview transcripts with initial coding of the different documentary data and grouping of core elements to themes.

Qualitative inquiry requires a careful selection of the most meaningful and significant parts of the data to organise into coherent themes (Beuving and DeVries, 2015). The different content derived from the data was organized into different categories to be integrated with the themes generated from the interviews. The researcher also applied the use of NVivo software for storing the transcripts, categorisation of the data as well as extracting applicable sentiments represented as participants' quotes to provide subjective experiences, intentions and motivations of the participants.

The approach to data analysis in this study is also guided by the researcher's theoretical assumptions, methodological paradigm, as well as researchers, own background and experiences which influence meaning-making. However, the study places the accounts and experiences of research participants at the core of the investigation with the study unfolding from the data collected with codes, categories, patterns and themes.

### 3.7. Ensuring Trustworthiness and Rigour

The practice of research requires that it be executed with intellectual rigour, accuracy and ethics. Merriam, (1998:99) explicates that the study must provide the reader with a depiction in enough detail to show that the author's conclusion makes sense to give credence to the interpretation of findings. This case study adopts the typology proposed by Lincoln and Guba, (1985) which are credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability and different strategies as advised by Stake, (1995) and Merriam, (2002) to demonstrate quality, trustworthiness and rigour.

Credibility of the study was demonstrated by the representativeness of the data with a focus on the diversity of research participants such that the data collected represented multiple

perspectives and opinions. The participants interviewed were diverse with their experiences contextual to each person's experiences, and this allowed the researcher to identify different ways that the case is seen. Multiple sources of data collection methods (Merriam, 2002) was also used a to gain rich thick descriptions, which enhances rigour (Brink, 1991) and ensures the "completeness" of the data with each of the information providing parts of a jigsaw puzzle (Knafl & Breitmayer, 1989).

As the process of the interview documented the thoughts and understanding of participants, it was important that these views were represented without ambiguity or misrepresentation and this was done by sharing the transcripts of the interview with participants for confirmation and validity. Member checking provided an opportunity for participants to clarify interpretations of the interview, which contributed new and additional perspectives on the matter (Merriam 2002). Two (2) out of the twenty-six (26) participants interviewed made some updates on the transcribed document.

Transferability was achieved by providing a dense description of participants with details of context, which include demographic data, examples of raw data to enable readers to consider their interpretations and rich and rigorous presentations of findings that include participants' quotations was presented. The provision of a rich description of the study was to enable readers to be able to contextualise the extent to which the situation matches the research context. Creswell and Miller, (2000) argue that rich descriptions also enable readers to make decisions on the applicability of findings to other settings. This is quite important to this context as research accounts from LAMATA can provide knowledge to readers as what is known about this case may well be true in another case. Stake, (2000) contends that thick description provides opportunities for vicarious experience that can lead to naturalistic generalisation.

The test for dependability is the ability of another researcher to follow a decision trail used by the researcher in the data analysis. As it is usually difficult to replicate research within a social inquiry perspective, it was important to document a detailed description of the process for data collection, methods of analysis and the interpretation of findings to provide a rich, thick description (Merriam, 2002).

Confirmability seeks to demonstrate to what extent the findings of a study are shaped by the respondents and not researcher bias, motivation, or interest and ensuring that the risks of subjectivity and misinterpretation are reduced in data collection. The research design used both a purposive sampling, which targeted management staff and heads of units as well as a self-selection strategy, which allowed a random selection strategy to provide diverse realities and reduce interview selection bias on the part of the researcher.

The collection and comparison of multiple perspectives enhanced the quality of data as the diversity of opinion helps to reduce the risk of social desirability in responses by participants and the different sources of data collected enhances rigour. Along with the twenty-six (26) individual interviews, other types of data collected were notes during interviews, minutes of management meetings, and previous case studies on LAMATA, video recording on different activities of LAMATA, knowledge assets, and reports submitted by management consultants, which were all used to gain different insights into the experience of organisational learning in LAMATA.

### **3.8. Summary**

This chapter articulates the research framework adopted for the study by outlining the philosophical assumptions and its influence on the choice of how to examine and explore specifically how organisational members at LAMATA experience learning and its impact on their work practices. The chapter also articulates the research design and strategy with a discussion on the process of data collection and analysis. The research objective seeks to find practical solutions for a real life situation with the methodology section showing how the research strategy adopted was relevant to the questions under examination.

The choice of the qualitative case study as the research methodology was to enable the researcher to explore and evaluate organisational learning practices in LAMATA from the experiences of the members and uncover what practices and systems can enable effective organisational learning for improved organisational actions and performance. The research follows an action research process with the inquiry generating 'new knowledge within a specific and practical context' (Koshy, 2005:3) and enables the researcher to study aspects of practice with a view for improvement. The chapter also documents the process of data collection and the assessment of relevance and rigour in the study with a consideration of the positionality and ethical considerations by the researcher.

Key organizing theme	Key discourse/Sub themes	Quotes/References
<b>A different type of organization</b>	Semi-autonomous/Quasi Government	LAMATA is a semi-autonomous agency with private sector operations and remuneration (World Bank Project Appraisal Document 2002) LAMATA was established as a semi-autonomous corporate body with perpetual succession and an independent board responsible for formulation, coordination and implementation of urban transport policies and programmes in the Lagos metropolitan area. (Gazette LAMATA law)
	Structural and financial autonomy	The LAMATA law of 2007 gives legitimacy to the creation of the transport fund which is a dedicated funding mechanism to ensure LAMATA's financial autonomy and sustainability (ICR 2009)
	Brand identity	LAMATA is perceived as an agency that trains their staff which is different from the mainstream public sector. Staff are well equipped. That is what I heard before joining and I have also experienced this as a staff (SIO) When you enter our office, from the interaction with our front desk officer we want people to see that we are different (OKT).
	Different from the public sector	What LAMATA seeks to achieve is new, it is different. The way we work is not like the public sector and we want people to see the difference in the way to carry out our activities (EKO) My interactions with the public sector since I joined LAMATA shows that there is a clear distinction in what we do and what they do. It is completely different; our approach is different ...if possible we should not call ourselves a public sector agency because we are something else. I just don't know what it is... (IOK)
	Accountability and performance management	LAMATA is not run like a civil service entity, so people here feel they are accountable and responsible for their work, punctuality and commitment to your work is central to how we achieve the stated goals." (BAO)
	World Bank guidelines	The terms of the World Bank financial agreement with LAMATA mandates that we follow their guidelines on procurement. This differentiates us from the public sector as LAMATA uses competitive procurement process which is a transparent and internationally recognized process. (ROE)
<b>Who are we</b>	Not Government/ Not Private	It is sometimes difficult to describe what type of organization that we are. We are not really a public sector organization as we are not covered under the civil service rules, we are not also a private sector organization because we are created by the law and empowered by the act (EKO)
	Public –Private Partnership	LAMATA started for the first time in Nigeria, the design and execution of maintenance works with participation of the private sector using local consultants and contractors (Implementation Completion report, 2017)
	Knowledge driven organization	The knowledge that we have in LAMATA is critical to managing and addressing the problem of public transportation. We have developed our knowledge base and other organizations are learning from us. We have trained staff from Kano Transport agency, also some people from Ghana. We pride ourselves for the knowledge of our staff (PAD)
	First of a kind	LAMATA is the first of its kind in the Nigerian Public sector in terms of structure and mandate and its difference gives it an edge over other government institutions (ICR. 2017) At LAMATA we dare to dream, when we first broached the subject of developing a modern rail system for Lagos, a commissioner in Lagos replied, "come back to the earth because you guys are always in the clouds". For us we want to create value to make Lagos a liveable city in a way that has not been done before (PAD)
<b>Being the best</b>	Clear mandate	We had a clear, bold vision from the onset and everybody knew what that vision was all about. We established what LAMATA is, what it should do, and how to go about it...You start by making a statement, and it is fine that your aim and purpose are to make a difference to Lagos, to the institutions, as well as to civilization (LAMATA MD)
	Making a difference	we are focused on being the best within the transport sector, and we have a brand of how we do things here, and this sets us apart from the public sector" (FOD).
	Highly skilled and competent workforce	We were able to get the right personnel in all the key positions, which is something that we could regard as a challenge in this part of the world. I was given free a hand to choose whoever I deemed fit and suitable for each position. I went for merit and capable, competent human beings (MD LAMATA: Case study)
	Transforming public transport	We are focused on being the best within the transport sector, and we have a brand of how we do things here, and this sets us apart from the public sector" (FOD).
	High brand value	LAMATA staff is paid well, the working environment is excellent, the managing director has a vision, and creates a very good team spirit. So LAMATA has the money, the independence, and they are doing good work for the people... In the World Bank, there's a very great appreciation for what LAMATA has done (cited from Case study on LAMATA)
	Solutions driven organization	When I was employed, I was told that my role was to deliver results as I was hired because of my experience. The MD said, you role is provide solutions and develop others to achieve results (PDA)

Table 3: Summary of theme 1: The perceptions of the organisation



## **4. CHAPTER 4: ORGANISATIONAL LEARNING IN LAMATA**

### **4.1. Introduction**

The purpose of this study is to examine how staff members at LAMATA experience organisational learning and how it impacts their ability to respond effectively in resolving the problem of public transportation in Lagos state. This chapter provides an overview of the findings of the case study based on several data sources: semi-structured interviews, internal and external documents comprising internal memos, minutes of meetings, management reports, evaluation reports, case studies, training manuals and reports, newsletters, publications and notes by the researcher.

This chapter will provide a review and analysis of LAMATA's development of its organisational learning strategy from its inception in 2003 up to the time of the study in 2017. This chapter then goes on to present the detailed analysis of the interview participants and their perception categorised as the key organising themes that emerged from the study. This chapter will conclude with a summary of the main takeaways from the findings in the case study.

### **4.2. Organisational learning strategy at LAMATA**

The project appraisal document for LAMATA identified four reform areas with the institutional capacity building as the first core component with a total allocated budget of \$27million for phase one from 2004-2008 and \$35m for phase 2 from 2010 to 2015. At the time of the creation of LAMATA, the public transport sector had been identified as lacking in adequate and experienced personnel in areas of transport planning of bus, water and rail systems, urban planning, transport modelling and public transport design, implementation, operations planning and regulation (PAD, 2002).

#### **4.2.1. Early years at LAMATA**

In 2003, LAMATA began operations with fourteen (14) professionals who had been competitively recruited through a newspaper advertisement using a recruitment agency. As at the time of the data collection in 2016, LAMATA had employed 107 staff. The structure of LAMATA was designed as a lean bureaucracy with few hierarchical levels comprising of a function-based structure with Directors managing the five departments and all reporting to

the Managing Director. The adoption of a functional structure was to promote effective coordination and control with departmental leaders operating as strategic business managers in their area of expertise.

The Lagos State Public Transport Reform Strategy document (2000) had identified the lack of skill and expertise as one of the main challenges that plagued the public transport sector. To address this problem, the recruits for LAMATA were people with demonstrated knowledge, skills and experience that would help to transform the Lagos public transport sector. Out of the 14 pioneer staff, six were Nigerians hired from the United Kingdom.

The Managing Director was recruited from British Petroleum where he had been in charge of logistics planning and management, while three members of the management and leadership team were recruited from Transport for London (TfL). Two assistant Directors were recruited from the Department of Transport in London and a rail consultancy company respectively. They were to apply their knowledge and experiences to develop an institution that had at its core professionalism and high competence.

LAMATA's institutional capacity building objectives were aimed at developing organisational capacity and strengthening to provide adequate policy, regulatory and institutional framework for the management of the policy strategy for public transportation in Lagos state. The initial five years project compass (2004-2008) corporate plan developed by LAMATA was focused on achieving the following:

- Develop staff capacity through training
- Provide study tours opportunities for staff and other stakeholders in the transport sector to benchmark organisations such as Transport for London and Transmillineo (both organisations were identified as model transport agencies with the same objectives as LAMATA)
- Increase staff access to relevant information through the use of information technology
- Facilitate collaboration & knowledge sharing amongst organisational members
- Develop and retain institutional knowledge & contribute to the intellectual capital of the organisation

- Overcome organisational & geographical boundaries through learning collaborations with transport-related organisations such as Transport for London, Japanese International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and Department for International Development (DIFD) United Kingdom
- Create processes that encourage staff engagement by streamlining operations, discouraging bureaucracy and promoting staff collaboration and involvement in decision making
- Encourage the free flow of ideas which leads to insight and innovation
- Develop organisational practices to facilitate better and more informed decisions.

The analysis of LAMATA's archival documents shows that there was a deliberate intention to promote organisational learning as a strategy for developing organisational capacity through a multi-method approach that applied predominantly behavioural and cognitive orientations with different strategies adopted to influence staff behaviour and mental mechanisms with a social orientation focused on facilitating staff collaboration. LAMATA was an agency that was to be different from existing public sector agencies in terms of quality and experience of personnel, and thus all staff were recruited from the private sector though none had any experience working on projects financed by multi-lateral agencies such as the World Bank.

As an International Development Agency (IDA) donor-funded agency, LAMATA had to adhere to the procurement, financial management and project-monitoring guidelines for World Bank assisted projects. This requirement led to the dominance in the use and the application of several procedural manuals, guidebooks, and strategy documents to regulate staff behaviour with some organisational activities completed in a predetermined and prescribed format. Organisational members were required to attend many World Bank trainings all year round to ensure competence in the use of these standards with the performance management processes used to reward staff that were able to apply these standards correctly.

LAMATA can also be said to depend on cognitive learning orientations with reliance on organisational members' knowledge and what they had the capacity know through the processing of information and their interaction with the environment. LAMATA employed highly skilled professionals with demonstrated skills and experiences from the private

sector. With the recruitment process focused on staff with perceived cognitive abilities, recruitment was assessed using a guideline that required a minimum level of educational qualifications, a rigorous interview process for all staff, and application of a competency-based test for all junior staff. All senior members of staff were required to have a minimum of a master's degree, and two management staff had doctorate degrees in transportation. A review of the recruitment framework showed that LAMATA was very particular about the education of their staff with a focused approach to training which was a mixture of classroom and on the job training. All the junior staff were also required to sit for certification exams related to their roles to demonstrate the improvement of understanding, skills, and knowledge with learning processes involving the reorganisation of experiences and gaining new knowledge.

#### **4.2.2. A crisis**

In 2007, LAMATA experienced a sudden exit of five key personnel in the Public Transport and Procurement unit. With a project-centric work model, there was a high dependence on the competence and knowledge of team leaders and project managers and as such the exit of these key personnel negatively impacted on organisational ability to effectively manage ongoing projects.

The management of LAMATA responded to the sudden departure of these key staff by initiating a strategic review of the human resource planning and management strategy and identified measures to mitigate such problems that may arise from the exit of critical staff. As a quick response, the management developed a process for talent retention as well as succession planning by hiring new associates that were to be trained and developed for a talent pipeline at LAMATA. A document management system was also implemented in order create a repository for essential organisational documents and reports which could be accessed for use by members of the organisation.

The approach of democratic elections in 2007 also brought new concerns about the sustainability of the agency given that the ministries were not favourably disposed to the autonomous status of LAMATA which allowed it to be self-accounting and not subject to ministry approval which at that time was required for all other Government organisations in

Lagos State. There was a fear that the incoming Government could be pressured to change the structure of LAMATA as well as the management team.

To ensure that LAMATA could effectively continue its vision, a strategy for the institutionalisation of knowledge was seen as critical for organisational sustainability and LAMATA launched the LAMATA knowledge management initiative. The strategy was focused on knowledge mining, storage and sharing across the organisation through a centralised data management information system to facilitate the promotion of knowledge capture and sharing across the organisation. Knowledge in this context was understood as an asset that could be extracted from individuals to be stocked and mined and reused by the collective in the organisation. Knowledge management followed a systems approach with an emphasis on using technology to promote the creation of tacit knowledge from problem solving.

#### **4.2.3. Success brings new challenges**

In 2008, LAMATA launched a Bus Rapid Transit System (BRT). The pilot scheme was a regulated bus-based transit system that operates on a dedicated lane to deliver a fast, comfortable and cost-effective service on a 27 km corridor. It was the first of its kind not only in Nigeria but in Sub-Saharan Africa. The adoption of the scheme was an instant success leading to political and social pressures on LAMATA to scale up the reform and transport infrastructure agenda.

The operations of the Bus Rapid System (BRT) which was integrated to the launch of three water transport routes brought about new challenges related to managing the operations of the bus and water systems, maintaining adequate regulatory processes and ensuring high-quality service delivery. LAMATA had to develop organisational learning capacity to address the more complex challenges of public transport operations, service delivery and regulation in contrast to the linear project planning and implementation challenges of the pre-Bus Rapid Transit era.

LAMATA, until the launch of the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT), had focused mostly on behavioural and cognitive learning strategies which relied on the expert knowledge of staff and 'best practice' strategies influenced by the World Bank guidelines to address project implementation problems. However, context-specific localised problems brought about by

the demands and needs of public transport users and stakeholders required more collaborative learning approaches. A social learning orientation can be observed as LAMATA began to adopt strategies that enabled more knowledge flow between the organisation, its varied stakeholders and the environment. Learning processes followed a spiral of action, review, and revised action as the organisation was learning from the activities on the field to adequately respond to the needs and requests from public transport users with learning, knowledge creation and acquisition becoming more situated, and grounded in interaction, activity, and practice.

LAMATA created different platforms to facilitate the exchange of new information and ideas from the environment using a customer relationship management platform (CRM) to enable real-time information exchange between the agency and the transport users. LAMATA also hosted a monthly public transport town hall forum which was used as a consultative forum that was open to the public as well as the sponsorship of a live television show called LAMATA half hour to provide transport information with a segment that allowed viewers to call into the show to ask questions or give feedback.

In summary, the development of organisational learning and knowledge at LAMATA can, therefore, be seen to be evolving with the complexity of learning evident in the use of different learning orientations at different times. In the early years of LAMATA, organisational learning can be said to follow a deliberate top-down strategy influenced by the need to develop skills and capacity to deliver its mandate as well adopting processes and initiatives influenced by the multilateral agencies that were touted as "best practice" processes for control and compliance to project agreement. However, over time as LAMATA's activities expanded into service delivery, a social learning orientation was also applied with organisational learning developed as a more reactive and opportunity driven response to ongoing work activities with new knowledge generated from engaging with practice problems.

Organisational learning and knowledge as key components of LAMATA's strategy are influenced at different times by the three main learning orientations of behavioural, cognitive and social with learning embodied as personal and collective level constructs with knowledge creation deterministic and as well as an evolving and changing phenomena that is situated, contextual and social. However, the analysis of the timeline of events at

LAMATA which is supported by organisational archival documents and artefacts suggests that the organisational learning strategy at LAMATA has a strong orientation towards behavioural and cognitive-based approaches.

At inception, there was a huge focus on repetitive practice required for complying to World Bank processes and regulations with different behavioural learning strategies observed in the application of standardised manuals and guidebook. The application of cognitive learning orientation can also be seen from the focus on the skills, experience and information processing capability of organisational experts. The view was based on the orientation that what needs to be learned is known, is determinable and can be achieved through various forms of staff development programs for the creation of tacit knowledge which is codified for wider organisational use.

On the launch of the Bus rapid transit, LAMATA's activities evolved from infrastructure planning, and implementation to service delivery which influenced the application of social learning orientations to respond to new challenges and new experiences brought about by the nature of more complex organisational activities with emergent learning occurring from the continuous and active influences of its environment. The review of organisational documents, identifies that LAMATA had a clear knowledge management strategy. However, participants' accounts confirmed that there was no clearly defined meaning for organisational learning nor a process or strategy for harnessing emergent learning that is inadvertently generated through the complex interactions of organisational members as they engage with everyday practice.

### **4.3. Interview Findings.**

The findings of the interview of twenty-six members at LAMATA (Table 2 for the summary of participants) are presented as organising themes arising from the supporting data of the interviews of the management staff and other cadres of staff at LAMATA. The findings of the case study are based on the account from the experiences of participants at LAMATA to gain an insight and understanding into participants' experience of organisational learning at LAMATA. The participants were asked several questions which were analysed for content themes and categorised into consistent organising themes. As a result of the nature of the study, there were some overlaps in the answers to some of the questions. For example, the

responses to the question ‘how do you learn at work’ had responses related to ‘what is your experience of organisational learning in LAMATA’.

The analysis of the data was focused on providing a coherent account that effectively answered the research questions as well as achieving the objective of the study which is to understand how people experience learning in LAMATA. The themes headings were generated based on the how they featured as the most salient account by the participants. The five overarching perceptions from the data are as follows:

- The perceptions of the organisation
- The perception of the conceptions of organisational learning
- The perception of the role of organisational learning within LAMATA
- The perception of the influences of organisational learning
- The perception of the effective process of organisational learning

#### **4.3.1. The perception of the organisation**

LAMATA is a quasi-government agency, which is the first of its kind in the Lagos State public sector. The agency has financial and structural autonomy and adheres to a distinct set of values and mode of operations that is atypical of public sector bureaucracy in Nigeria. The World Bank in their project appraisal document (PAD, 2002) described LAMATA as a semi-autonomous agency with private sector operations and remuneration. LAMATA’s distinctive structure and the tensions related to this identity was a central theme in the account of participants with sub-themes related to ‘being a different type of government organisation’, questions of ‘who are we’ and identifying as ‘being the best in public transport’.

##### **4.3.1.1. Being a different type of government organisation**

All of the participants expressed that the identity of LAMATA as a different type of government organisation was an important consideration for accepting employment at the agency. Participants used words such as “quasi-government” and “autonomous agency” with high frequency to express their perception of LAMATA as different from other government organisations. Participants also confirmed that they would have never have



joined the mainstream civil service as it did not align with what they wanted from a job or career.

As a result of its structural autonomy, LAMATA developed operational standards, recruitment processes, compensation standards and performance measurement systems that was different from the public sector thereby able to attract highly qualified professionals that would not have been interested in working for a public sector organisation. The general perception of the public sector in Nigeria was that it was a place for unskilled and unmotivated employees who wanted guaranteed jobs with unclear mandates offered through political connections (Lienert and Modi, 1997) rather than as a result of competence, adequateness or performance. LAMATA's recruitment process was through a competitive selection process with remuneration structure placed at par with private sector organisations, which meant that employees were expected to be highly qualified with good work ethics. A respondent remarked:

***“LAMATA is not run like a civil service entity, so people here feel they are accountable and responsible for their work, punctuality and commitment to your work is central to how we achieve the stated goals.” (BAO)***

The motivation for joining LAMATA was similar across the grades with many citing the autonomous mandate of the agency and funding arrangement with multilateral agencies (World Bank and French development agency) as a critical factor in job acceptance. The location and the ambience of the office, the experience and qualification of the management team and staff, the competitive pay, the recruitment process, and the brand value were all factors that informed their decision to join the agency. A respondent (PFO) commented that the office environment, management team, and the financial structure gave him the confidence to leave the United Kingdom where he had worked for 20 years to join LAMATA.

Respondents all admitted that they had a negative perception of the public sector and were ‘shocked’ (BKA), ‘surprised and blown away’ (RAA) when they discovered that LAMATA was

a government agency. A senior manager commented that he would not have responded to the job advert if he had known that LAMATA was a public sector organisation (ITO).

All the respondents expressed that the particular context of LAMATA which by law had financial and structural autonomy was critical to how they were able to work as the mode of operations were not determined by the rules of civil service by which other government organisations in Lagos state were managed. Participants commented that they would never have considered working for a government agency because of their lack of ‘professionalism’ (BKA), ‘high bureaucracy that was not performance driven’ (BPF) another respondent described the horror stories as well as the frustrations that people faced while working for the public sector in Nigeria (PFO).

#### 4.3.1.2. Who are we?

The law establishing LAMATA provided it with a hybrid status that allowed the agency to perform in the context of government as well as an organisation with private sector ideals. The structure and mandate of LAMATA are influenced by the New Public Management (NPM) ideology which was seen by some officials in the public sector as an aberration and a design of the multi-lateral agencies pushing an anti-public sector agenda in the guise of modernising and reforming the public sector.

The LAMATA law had provided that all public transport policy, investment and regulatory decisions were under the purview of LAMATA which was difficult to accept by ministries with overlapping functions leading to constant friction, resistance to adapt to the new organisational context and structure of LAMATA by the Ministry officials. A management staff commented that when going to meetings with ministry officials, they had to carry with them the LAMATA law to show that the actions of the agency were within its mandate and not over-stepping its reach.

As a semi-autonomous government organisation, LAMATA had the mandate for the implementation and enforcement of new laws related to the regulation for public transport in Lagos. Its financial autonomy also allowed it to enter into commercial agreements with the private sector to implement public transport infrastructure projects without seeking approval through the ministries as it was the norm for other public sector agencies. LAMATA

was only required to request for an assent from the executive Governor to carry out its activities. A senior manager described the context of LAMATA status thus:

***“as an autonomous agent of the government, we have the power to regulate public transport services as well as enter into commercial agreements with the private sector (ABK)”.***

LAMATA operates within competing and conflicting features of the public and private sector identities. The tensions generated by this multiple institutional logics requires that organisational members have to continually rationalise and reconcile the varied interpretations of their organisational identities which was potentially a double-edged sword for LAMATA. These tensions meant that staff had to walk a tightrope while navigating how to get work done on the one hand as an agent of the government and as an autonomous entity with a burden of a different approach and structure for work processes and developing collaborative relationships. The problem of identity was a recurring theme with many organisational participants having difficulty in describing what type of organisation LAMATA was. The business environment within which LAMATA operated also had a challenge in establishing on which part of the business spectrum that LAMATA could fit in. A senior manager remarked:

***“It is sometimes difficult to describe what type of organisation that we are. We are not really a public sector organisation as we are not covered under the civil service rules, we are not also a private sector organisation because we are created by the law and empowered by the act but some people still see us only as a public sector agency with the negative baggage that comes from that” (EKO).***

LAMATA promoted a public-private partnership (PPP) based business model with the agency responsible for the infrastructure development and regulatory framework for public transport operations while the private sector was expected to bid for the operations of the transport services. However, a lack of clarity the identity of LAMATA was challenging for investors especially those that did not trust government processes. LAMATA had to demonstrate best practice by adopting World Bank procurement and financial guidelines as

a strategy to gain credibility, trust and to assure investors that processes will be transparent and competitive.

All respondents in the management grade gave account about the lack of support of LAMATA by other government ministries because of the autonomous identity of LAMATA. The ministries did not have a clear understanding of why the agency did not operate like other government agencies and was uncooperative regarding the operationalisation of the LAMATA law with LAMATA finding collaboration easier with the private sector. A management staff narrated that in the early life of LAMATA, the ministry of transport would not provide LAMATA with the much-needed baseline data even after sending multiple requests. He remarked:

***“It seemed that we were an experiment that they wanted to make sure failed” (BOA).***

The structure of LAMATA provided that the Managing Director had direct reporting lines to the Governor to avoid the problems associated with complex bureaucracy, hierarchy and interference from other ministries to enable prompt decision making processes for LAMATA’s project activities. However, this also became a source of conflict and tension as ministry officials believed that the agency should report through the formal hierarchy of the civil service rather than directly to the Governor of Lagos. Participants recognised the tension generated from multiple identities as a factor that also created strength for the organisation. LAMATA responded to the intra-organisational rivalry by improving internal competence and self-sufficiency capacity. One respondent commented:

***“getting data with the ministry was difficult... Over the years we have developed a database which even the ministry now depends on.” (BAA)***

In summary, the hybrid nature of LAMATA provided LAMATA with several advantages, which include access to different sources of funding, structural autonomy and a limited bureaucracy facilitating quick decision making in the planning and implementation of

infrastructure projects. However, there were also several downsides to multiple institutional identities which included a lack of acceptance by the public sector which made necessary collaboration with other ministries difficult, lack of clarity in identity creating uncertainty for organisational members and difficulty in developing a consistent brand value message that can effectively express the multiple identities of LAMATA.

In summary, all participants recognised that LAMATA was different, but there was a challenge in understanding the organisational identity. The context of hybridity as framed by the researcher was not identified as such by either the management or the participants though the law creating LAMATA clearly describes it as a semi-autonomous agency of the Lagos state government, but as the first of its kind, it had no precedent. As such, participants at LAMATA engaged in a continuous process of negotiating what it means to be autonomous or quasi-government in terms of knowing the scope of the organisation ultimately impacting on learning processes.

#### 4.3.1.3. Being the best

There was an overall positive perception about working at LAMATA with staff expressing their pride and passion for trying to make a difference in the transport sector. Many expressed that they were pioneers who wanted to prove that things can be done well within the seemingly impossible public sector environment. A senior manager expressed this sentiment in the quote:

***"we are not civil servants but public servants because we are trying to make a difference in the transport sector" (RFF).***

LAMATA's structure was focused on developing a brand related to high competence, professionalism and distinct value proposition to stakeholders with a deliberate strategy to propel LAMATA as the best public transport agency in Nigeria. There was a strong brand awareness culture, with the vision, mission and core values of LAMATA displayed all around the office. Respondents talked about how the LAMATA tagline "think transport" was of important value, which all members of staff were to remember. The slogan was used to end

general meetings so that it constantly resonated in the minds of organisational members. Participants talked about the organisational core values, which included professionalism, passion, and commitment to succeed as the slogans that every staff was to live by in the early days of the agency with the distinctiveness of LAMATA was a badge, which staff must all wear with pride. A management staff commented:

***“When you enter our office, from the interaction with our front desk officer we want people to see that we are different” (OKT).***

Another management staff also commented:

***“We are focused on being the best within the transport sector, and we have a brand of how we do things here, and this sets us apart from the public sector” (FOD).***

Respondents gave account of their experiences and feelings to many aspects of LAMATA learning strategy that focused on being the best in public transport. The organisational climate promoted interest in solving transport problems. All staff were encouraged to report transport issues they observed while commuting. Respondents talked about organisational learning at LAMATA increasing their ‘interest and curiosity about solving public transport problems’ (SIO), ‘passion and commitment to finding solutions’ (BAO) and ‘having a feeling of respect and recognition for having expert knowledge’ (BPF) on public transport issues. A respondent talked about the Managing Director’s message at meetings which was that LAMATA does not want people that bring problems but people that ‘offer solutions, and how this challenged him to always think about creative ways to add value to LAMATA’s mission’ (RAA).

The analysis of the account showed that there was a collective perception amongst respondents that LAMATA was influenced by its multiple identities. However, there was a difference in understanding between senior and junior staff members on the context of how multiple identities should be effectively managed. Some junior staff expressed concern

about the hybrid status of LAMATA were challenged by the question of LAMATA's identity with uncertainty and difficulty in answering the question "what type of organisation is LAMATA?" as there was no organisational communication on how to answer the question of identity.

The fluidity in identity was perceived as a threat by some that may impact negatively on the legitimacy of the agency especially as the mainstream civil service were not in favour of the difference in institutional logics. The account of the senior members of staff acknowledged the tensions inherent in the hybrid status of LAMATA, but they expressed that as the agency had a clear mandate set out by law, and management had a responsibility to continuously seek for ways to overcome the tensions and ambiguity inherent in managing organisational identity and legitimacy. They also believed that the fluidity in organisational identity allowed LAMATA to achieve more success in its operation as it could operate at the edge of both public, private and sometimes as a non-profit and be different things depending on the context and situation at hand. However, these high-level organisational contexts had not been fully translated to all staff in a manner that clearly and effectively interpreted the context of organisational identity.

#### **4.3.2. The conceptions of organisational learning**

The concept of organisational learning has varied interpretations in literature, and the researcher was interested in understanding how participants at LAMATA gave meaning to the concept with the meaning that people give to a concept gives essence to the object. The researcher did not provide participants with a meaning of organisational learning but asked them to provide a definition based on their understanding as the objective of the study is to gain an insight into the meaning of organisation learning from the perspectives of those experiencing it. Their representations will provide more understanding of how they interpret and act in relation to their construction of learning in LAMATA, which can provide a basis for how to improve the process of learning at LAMATA.

The concept of organisational learning by many participants were initially described in abstract and vague terms as something people generally do in an organisation. Most respondents always clarified the question "what does organisational learning mean to you?" by asking other probing questions as most participants admitted that they had not

given a thought about what it meant even though it was a familiar phrase. The following excerpt illustrates a common problem as participants struggled to articulate what organisational learning meant for them.

**Researcher: What is organisational learning?**

**Participant (BOA): Is it what it means for me or is it what it is at LAMATA**

**Researcher: I want to know what it means to you**

**Participant (BOA): Okay. Ehm Organisational learning is ehm; I just want to define it from my work experiences.**

**Researcher: That is great**

**Participant (BOA): Organisational learning is ehm, I don't think it can be a single definition**

**Participant (BOA): Yeah. It is kind of difficult to define it.... I will say it is something that you do every day. It is about learning about things, how to do things, how you know things, the culture of an organisation, etc. ...and when you talk about an organisation, organisation comprises human beings, it comprises resources like materials, comprises various stakeholders. Now, from my perspective, my work in LAMATA, it actually has to do with learning the culture, learning the behaviour, learning the direction, the expectation, targets of an organisation, learning how to do the things that help you to do your work....**

All respondents interviewed collectively agreed that learning was essential to human success. A participant remarked that 'without learning, one would become a dinosaur' (IAM). There were varied descriptions of learning, with definition comprising variously of the characteristics and context such as knowledge, experience, information, personal and collective learning. Organisational learning was also perceived as synonymous with different activities such as learning new things, gaining experience from work or tasks, problem solving and experimentation. The following conceptions were the most common classifications of the meaning of organisational learning from the account of the respondents:



#### 4.3.2.1. Organisational learning as a passive object

The concept of knowledge linked to organisational learning was central to the account of many participants with numerous references to knowledge perceived as a tangible asset or object that could be added to or taken from an organisation. This perspective sees knowledge as a product of learning that can be captured and used for the benefit of an organisation.

***“Organisational learning is like a pot where we all put our knowledge in and also take knowledge out of the organisation” (RSA)***

***“The transfer of knowledge in the organisation” (EEM)***

***“... how we gain knowledge from the organisation directly and indirectly” (ISA)***

Some respondents also described organisational learning as how an organisation acquires knowledge which can then be stored, shared and utilised to achieve specific objectives. Organisational learning from this perspective is outcome focused with knowledge viewed as a consequence of learning.

***“Organisational learning is about knowledge acquisition” (ITO)***

***“Organisational learning relates to retaining and transferring knowledge” (IAM)***

Many of the participants' account identified organisational learning as the knowledge that is the emergent property of individuals that becomes transformed working as part of an organisation to achieve organisational outcomes. There was a general view that every staff

brings some knowledge into the organisation, which becomes refined and shared in the process of working together. The account also featured organisational learning as the knowledge that is collectively constructed within the frame of relationships. A participant described organisational learning as:

***“....the individual learning that people bring into the organisation as well the collective learning that is gained through interaction between staff” (GOK)***

#### 4.3.2.2. Organisational learning linked to a process of improvement

Some of the participants (both junior and senior grades) also talked about organisational learning occurring from experiences gained from problem-solving, detection and correction of errors, learning from mistakes and on the job learning with a view that it was a continuous process. However, some accounts also referred to organisational learning as both a passive object and a process of experimentation and innovation for organisational improvement. There were phrases such as:

***“...learning from experiences which is used for the direction and targets of the organisation” (BOA)***

***“....the experiences that takes the organisation forward” (PFO)***

***“...learning as a process to make sense and respond to the environment” (IAM)***

***“...contribution by all used for the development of the organisation”. (OFF).***

All respondents commented that organisational learning involved trial and error with learning from mistakes essential for creativity. There was a recognition that the novel nature of projects implemented by LAMATA encouraged experimentation with learning from mistakes enabling creativity. Two quotes by a management and junior staff reflect this sentiment:

***“Learning for me at LAMATA has been through a lot of trial and error. We had implemented some projects that had not been done in Nigeria before so we had to learn about what works and what did not from doing those projects. A case in point was the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) pilot scheme which we did as a bilateral running design. After project implementation, it became obvious that there were many flaws to that strategy and we changed the implementation of the BRT extension to a median running design. If we had never tried that pilot, we would never have been able to see the flaws. Learning from project implementation allows us to improve on past mistakes.” (ROE)***

***“As a techie, you learn a lot from mistakes. The process of troubleshooting most of the time is a series of trial and error. You try some steps, it does not work and you learn from your mistakes and overtime you know what works and what will not.” (ISB)***

From the analysis of the account of most of the respondents, the meaning of organisational learning at LAMATA followed two parallel dimensions of organisational learning viewed either as a deliberate passive product used for the benefit of the organisation or as a continuous ongoing process of improvement that evolves in everyday organisational practice. However, some respondents described organisational learning as encompassing both dimensions with learning viewed as a tangible asset that is known and can be stored and shared within the organisation as well as also an emergent, continuous and changing process, product or activity that is created in everyday organisational interaction and action.

LAMATA did not have an organisational definition for organisational learning though it was accepted as a concept that was occurring at LAMATA. However, respondent's conceptualisations of organisational learning reflect LAMATA's dominant learning strategy that is focused on gaining expert knowledge and task-related skills with the management focused on organisational learning as a deliberate strategy that was required to improve the capacity of staff to effectively implement the mandate of LAMATA. However, the context of work at LAMATA has also influenced organisational staff to enact more realities beyond the scope of this deterministic strategy with emergent learning occurring as a result of interactions with others and from engaging with the complex problem of public transportation.

#### **4.3.3. The perception of the role of organisational learning within LAMATA**

Participants' accounts overwhelmingly concurred that organisational learning is required to enable an organisation to fulfil its mission and vision. The strategy of an organisation influences what members considered essential to learn with their experiences of organisational learning closely linked to the strategy adopted to implement organisational activities and projects. Participants' accounts talked about management's focused attention on learning and knowledge of the different aspects of public transport planning, implementation, franchising, and regulation of public transport infrastructure and services.

The mandate of LAMATA lays out specifically the public transport actions that must be taken to access the World Bank (IDA) credit with several LAMATA initiatives focused on achieving these objectives. LAMATA as an implementing agency of the Lagos state Government also aligned organisational goals to satisfy political imperatives. As such LAMATA had to build organisational capability to effectively manage different stakeholder's interests. A management staff explained that within LAMATA's lifetime there had been three elected governors in Lagos state with three distinct approaches to addressing public transport problems. This has influenced LAMATA's organisational strategy as a dynamic process that must be responsive and adaptable to change.

Many respondents agreed that the process for developing the organisational strategy was critical to their learning at LAMATA. Strategic planning plays a useful role in the learning process by providing focus, clarity of purpose, and orientating staff towards what needs to

be learned leading to the development of dynamic capabilities for the agency. Participants expressed their perception that the process of strategy development improves understanding of the direction of LAMATA with different departments able to recognise their fit within the bigger picture. A senior manager explained that though his department was not directly involved in the core public transport decisions, the understanding of the strategy and direction helps to plan what type of support is expected from his team to enable LAMATA to effectively implement its various initiatives (ITO).

Most of the respondents had not worked in the transport sector before joining the agency hence organisational learning initiatives were also focused on activities that aligned with the development of the capacity and skills of staff which was seen as critical to achieving organisational objectives. From the analysis of the different accounts of respondents, LAMATA adopted both formal and informal strategies for organisational learning to drive organisational strategy.

#### 4.3.3.1. Formal processes

LAMATA adopted formalised and structured processes for organisational learning to crystallise organisational intent towards developing and improving the capability to manage the problem of public transportation in Lagos. LAMATA offered many opportunities for structured training to improve knowledge and capabilities through participation in training and twining programs done in collaboration of Japanese International Cooperation Agency (JICA).

All the junior staff talked about their on-boarding experiences when they were employed at LAMATA providing them with their first information and knowledge about the LAMATA's strategy and activities. The on-boarding program was a weeklong program during which the organisational strategic direction and goals as it relates to bus, water and rail transportation, current projects being implemented and the ongoing challenges related to project implementation were all explained to the new employees. All departments and units were also required to deliver presentations on the activities of their department to the new staff to provide an overview of LAMATA.

The on-boarding program also provides an opportunity to agree on performance objectives with the line manager who is also required to perform a skill gap assessment to prepare a

training plan for the new staff. According to a respondent, the process of goal setting done with the gap assessment helps to identify all the resources required for performance (ISB). Another respondent also explained that the induction program gave him an insight that LAMATA was not like the ministry and that he was quite impressed and intimidated by how much people seemed to know, which challenged him to want to improve personally (RAA). A common account was that organisational learning involved the improvement of skills and competence through formalised and structured training with the acquisition of technical skills seen as necessary to work effectively in the context of LAMATA especially as implemented projects were novel and most of the staff had no sectoral experience before joining LAMATA.

Many of the respondents in the junior grade talked about developing their expertise from the exposure to technical training both locally and internationally. A junior staff commented that organisational learning was the investment that the organisation provided to staff through training (ISB). There were references to being an "expert" in the field, having technical knowledge, etc. that they believed can be achieved through participation in relevant training programs. Many participants talked about the various training providing them with the knowledge to do their jobs. The account of the respondents indicated that formal intervention that was focused on developing cognitive capabilities through staff training, study tours, and job shadowing were essential facilitators of organisational learning with many staff admitted that it was both a personal and organizational investment.

#### 4.3.3.2. Informal processes

LAMATA's strategic intent was also shared with organisational members using less formal approaches such as annual retreats, periodic staff meetings that are done at the departmental and organisational level and a monthly office get together called thank God it's Friday (TGIF). Fourteen respondents mentioned that these different platforms provided many opportunities for interaction, communication, staff bonding and information sharing on what matters most to the agency. The understanding of what LAMATA was seeking to achieve allowed staff to understand what they needed to know in doing their work.

The annual strategic retreat was viewed as an important learning forum that is used to articulate the strategic intent of LAMATA. A management staff commented that the annual strategic retreat provides LAMATA staff with an opportunity to come together as an organisation to review public transport plans and discuss concerns or challenges that may be related to its implementation. He remarked:

***“... ..understanding the shared vision and organisational strategy helps to know how to contribute to the roadmap.” (PAD)***

Many respondents gave account on the importance of participation in the annual all-staff retreat where the plans for the coming year are presented and discussed. The three-day retreat allows all staff to work together to review the plans with discussion centred on how the plans will be achieved in the next year. A senior manager also described the annual retreats as:

***“... ..helpful to learn about the organisational plan and interact with other members of other department’ (ELA).***

Another senior manager also talked about the relevance of project briefings done for the whole agency providing the staff with opportunities to know what is happening in other departments and providing an understanding of how all departments are interconnected. The respondent expressed this sentiment:

***“Meeting is a source of learning at LAMATA. I was not involved in the intelligent transport systems (ITS) implementation, but as staff are required to present their project briefings, I was able to learn a lot about the importance of ITS and its link with bus operations planning” ((ITO)***

Another senior manager talked about the top-down nature of the general meetings that allows staff to focus attention on the plans of management regarding organisational activities (EKO). However, most of the junior staff critiqued the top-down approach to strategy development and believed that the quality of the strategy would be improved if it was more participatory. A junior staff commented:

***“We learn a lot from the organisational strategy as it provides us with information on what we will be doing in the new year as everybody is supposed to develop their performance goals from it but usually the junior staff are not carried along in the strategy formulation We are informed during the strategic retreat on the direction and are expected to develop plans to make it happen” (ROO)***

***My experience of meetings at LAMATA is a mixed bag. Our weekly departmental meetings are very effective because we discuss the task at hand, you discover what your colleagues are working on through the briefing and we able to share ideas on challenges being faced. However, I have found general meetings as being reactive and not proactive as it tends to be information-driven from the top.” (BAO)***

The respondents across the different organisational grades expressed that the strategic intent of LAMATA was a driver for what members learned. LAMATA had an explicit mandate to reform the public transport system and as such learning was a critical driver for achieving the vision and mission. The process of implementing the organisational strategy enabled members to understand their purpose with learning as integral to the ability to contribute to organisational objectives, promote a sense of ownership towards achieving organisational values of being the best and creating new novel ideas that made LAMATA a different type of public sector organisation. Respondents, especially in the junior grade, however, expressed that organisational learning will benefit more from a strategy that was more collaborative and participatory with knowledge flowing from both the top and bottom of the hierarchy rather than through the current top-down approach of strategy development.



#### 4.3.4. The perception of the influences of organisational learning

Organisational learning in LAMATA is driven by both internal and external influences with overall impact either facilitating or inhibiting learning. The account of participants provided varied factors that influenced organisational learning at LAMATA with a concurrence amongst respondents on staff development, leadership and management commitment, organisational culture, and the political environment as the main themes that can be distilled as influencing organisational learning.

##### 4.3.4.1. Staff Development Policies

All respondents referred to the different staff development initiatives adopted by LAMATA as providing positive influences to organisational learning. The respondents mentioned participation in related technical training, seminars, conferences, retreats, and meetings as important facilitators of organisational learning at LAMATA. The different platforms that were made available to staff were perceived as factors that enabled the improvement of skills and competence across different levels of the organisation.

The Lagos State Mass Transit Study (LSMTS) conducted by the World Bank in 1992 identified that the development of personnel and institutional capacity in the transport sector was one of the actions necessary to address the complex transport problems in Lagos state. The public transport sector in Lagos lacked well trained, and experienced professionals as public transportation had hitherto been controlled by the informal sector. LAMATA was tasked with the responsibility for transport planning and coordination for the metropolitan Lagos area and was required to implement a strategic program to develop transport professionals across the various modes of transport.

The LAMATA five-year corporate rolling plan sets out the strategic objectives related to staff and institutional capacity building with strategic actions for developing technical skills in public transport for LAMATA and other relevant stakeholders in the sector. Staff training was embedded as part of the on-boarding process such that new employees were required to understand the nature of the public transport sector, ongoing transport initiatives, and challenges that still needed solutions by LAMATA.

Many of the junior staff talked about their quick recognition that technical skill acquisition in different aspects of the bus, water, and rail transport modes was essential for career

progression at the agency. As projects were novel within the context of Nigeria, training at LAMATA was orientated towards bridging the skills and knowledge gaps for improving cognitive abilities to make informed judgments.

The strategy for staff training involved a process for individual skill gap analysis through an annual training needs assessment to identify the necessary actions to bridge such gaps. Training programs were organised to develop technical capabilities as implant training or by participation at seminars and conferences related to public transportation. LAMATA is a member of local and international public transport associations such as the International Association of Public Transportation (UITP), Nigerian Institute of Transportation and Logistics (NITL) and the African Association of Public Transportation (UATP). Many respondents talked about how participation at these seminars opened their eyes to understand better, how to respond to some complexities associated with implementing public transport solutions in Lagos.

Participation at these seminars was also perceived as critical to organisational learning with respondents providing accounts about how attendance enhanced networking opportunities within the sector and provided an avenue for the exchange of cross-border learning such that LAMATA could learn from the experiences of other public transport agencies in other countries. Many respondents commented that their participation in transport conferences organised by strategic partners such as the World Bank, French Development Agency (AFD) and Korea Transport Institute (KOTI) and Japanese International Cooperation Agency (JICA) expanded their horizons and improved knowledge in new ways of doing things.

Both junior and senior staff were unanimous in their perception that staff development programs at LAMATA provided them with the opportunity to learn new ways of doing things, which impacted positively on project implementation. A staff commented:

***“The first time that I had to do procurement evaluation there were many errors and mistakes..... however, after attending the procurement clinic, I got a better understanding.....now just by looking at an analysis on a template, I can correctly complete a procurement evaluation. (PLC)***

In 2007, LAMATA entered into a strategic alliance with the Japanese International Corporation Agency (JICA), an agency of the government of Japan chartered with assisting in the social and economic development of developing countries. The memorandum of understanding provided staff with opportunities to attend up to fourteen weeks of in plant training in the Japanese transport agency in the areas of urban planning, public transportation planning and implementation, rail design, construction, and operations.

The respondents gave accounts of how the training facilitated by JICA improved their understanding and enabled them to share new knowledge and ideas with other staff with the study attachment seen as invaluable to developing staff skills and knowledge. A staff commented that his participation in the JICA training exposed him to different aspects of urban transportation. He remarked:

***“... .... we were trained in urban planning and its connection to transit development. This is an aspect that is really under-developed in Lagos” (ALA)***

Another respondent also remarked:

***“Training is a critical part of how I have learned to improve my skills and capabilities at LAMATA. I joined LAMATA as an engineer with no experience in rail engineering. However, the various training that I attended both locally and internationally provided me with the skills and knowledge to approach my work.” (RFF)***

#### 4.3.4.2. Leadership and Management Commitment

Participants affirmed that the commitment of organisational leaders and the management staff was a catalyst for sustained and continuous organisational learning in LAMATA. Many respondents commented that leadership at LAMATA emphasised technical expertise and continuous improvement with organisational communications focused on the acquisition of new knowledge, its dissemination, and utilisation by the agency. Many respondents

explained that leaders set the tone for the organisations and this influences what staff recognises as important. Some of the respondents expressed that leadership style in LAMATA can be described as “benevolent dictatorship” with a top-down approach that involves a lot of directive coming from the top with staff responding to these directives. All managers at LAMATA had a responsibility to coach and train their associates as part of their key performance objectives. A management staff commented thus:

***“The management must show commitment to learning by enabling a conducive work environment that encourages curiosity and knowledge sharing. Beyond allocating resources, management must also ensure that learning is occurring at all levels and is institutionalised.” (SOT)***

Many staff talked about the pressure to apply new learning and knowledge at the workplace as a catalyst that drives their learning. All staff from senior managers and above were required to share what they learned on their return from staff development program and discuss on how it can be applied within the context of public transport in Lagos. Some respondents talked about this factor influencing how they approach their learning. A management staff commented that the added responsibility of training others and presenting how the learning could be applied makes the training of practical and relevant importance. Managers were also given the responsibility to determine the type of training required by their associates to be effective at work by aligning learning opportunities with organisational needs. A senior manager commented thus:

***“Leadership commitment to learning is a facilitator because programs, budgets, time and resources required for organisational learning and development is the sole responsibility of management and we have to ensure that staff is provided with the relevant resources to succeed.” (ABK)***

Organisational learning is driven by what leaders and managers pay attention to, measure and control and staff learning is highly influenced by the learning culture promoted by organisational leaders. The account by some respondents showed that how leaders and managers role model, coach and teach subordinates were key influences of organisational learning. Many of the respondents talked about the role of their managers in promoting a learning culture. A respondent talked about the positive relationship with his manager that enables him to freely ask questions as his manager assures him that there is no 'stupid question' with trust and respect of the manager essential to learning.

***“Managers usually see the big picture and communicating that effectively allows us as the foot soldiers to know what to do.” (IOK)***

***“I can say that I have had a positive experience of learning at LAMATA, I joined fresh out of school with an Economics degree that I did not know its relevance in the workplace but my Manager was employed from the UK, and he was a good coach. For you to understand the tons of data gathered from the field by the field officers, you need someone that can show you how you can see the patterns in the data.” (BPF)***

Many participants also reported that there was leadership interest and support focused on the value of retaining tacit knowledge and developing critical institutional memory. In 2010, LAMATA launched the knowledge café, which was a program to strengthen institutional capacity to retain and disseminate the many lessons learned during project implementation. The program followed the World Bank institutional framework for knowledge hubs with a change management process through which knowledge sharing was embedded as part of the everyday activity in LAMATA. The pilot for the program covered four departments that were required to develop knowledge assets from their projects. A senior manager commented that the model was supported with an incentive structure to motivate staff to create on an ongoing basis knowledge assets from critical incidents experienced on work activities. The role of leaders and managers in influencing and shaping members' behaviour was explicitly cited as facilitators to learning.

However, some managers and junior staff also cited leader and manager behaviour as a hindrance to learning. This was an interesting paradox to note as the leader's behaviour and style drives both positive and negative experiences of organisational learning. The ingrained culture of top-down management was cited by respondents as stifling initiative, participation and risk-taking with inter-departmental rivalry limiting collaboration and a huge focus on the value of expert knowledge leading to limited knowledge sharing amongst staff with knowledge seen as power. Many of these behaviours promoted maintaining status quo and a lack of risk taking all creating impediments to organisational learning. Respondents narrated that negative attitudes of some managers which includes 'directional style' (EEM), 'lack of clarity of purpose' (ABK) and a lack of communication (PLC) all stifling learning as they are unable to interact effectively with their managers.

***“Learning experience at LAMATA has different dimensions, but my manager’s behaviour is related to my experience of learning. There is sometimes “emotional leakage” where because of top leadership pressures, he behaves badly, and this affects interaction and my ability to make suggestions and contributions” (RFF)***

***“Leaders sometimes inhibit learning in how they apply policies leading to a lack of consistency in policy implementation. This leads to confusion because there is no clarity of purpose.” (ABK)***

***“When I just joined, my first boss never really explained to me what to do, he just made requests which I did but did not fully understand what I was doing, and frankly I used to be quite confused, everybody in the department told me that was his style and that I should just do as I am told...” (PLC)***

In summary, the account of the respondent's showed that the role of managers was critical to how learning opportunities can be enabled or restricted depending on the manager's style. Managers that understand their positive roles support and endorse the process of

learning using different sources that include structured training, on the job training as well as coaching and mentoring processes that improve the learning experiences of their subordinates. However, the negative experiences of some of the respondents can be linked to the hierarchical, top-down focused culture adopted by some managers that seemingly promote or reward conformity rather than divergent thinking to maintain stability and regularity within LAMATA.

#### 4.3.4.3. Organisational Culture

An organisational culture that places value on learning practices was cited at all levels as a factor that influences organisational learning with culture having a dual dimension of being cited as a facilitator and an inhibitor of organisational learning. The organisational culture influence learning at LAMATA through formal and informal practices. The management team expressed that the organisational culture at LAMATA embraced many ideals that were more reflective of private sector practices formalised through human resources management practices such as staff development, accountability through effective performance management process and informal practices that enable open engagement that promotes the free flow of information and collaboration. A management staff remarked:

***“LAMATA’s value proposition was knowledge of public transport, and as such we must be the first stop for any information on public transport in Lagos” (ROE).***

The account of all management staff cited the role of multi-lateral donors (World Bank and the French development agency) in influencing practices that entrenched a learning culture through the adoption of different methodologies and processes that have improved the effectiveness of LAMATA. The peculiar context of LAMATA as a semi-autonomous agency enabled the authority to recruit certain types of people that could easily be trained and adjust to the application of “best practice” initiatives influenced by the multi-lateral agencies. The project agreement signed between LAMATA and the World Bank required that LAMATA followed several guidelines and processes especially for procurement, financial management, safeguards and environmental management and project management for infrastructure planning and implementation.

LAMATA was required to apply new approaches to project implementation by adopting the World Bank procurement guidelines of International Competitive Bids (ICB), National Competitive Bids (NCB) and Quality and Cost-based Selection (QCBS) processes to ensure transparency, efficiency, and value for money in public spending. There was also the application of safeguards and environmental guidelines for environmental assessment and resettlement action plans to facilitate sustainable development.

There was an emphasis by the World Bank on the periodic measurement of key performance indicators with deviations from expected outcomes requiring project review and analysis with corrective measures developed facilitating a continuous process of learning from ongoing work challenges. LAMATA had to follow a structured approach to planning which required that studies must be carried out before a project can be implemented changing how LAMATA approached the development of new projects. Two participants commented:

***“LAMATA has the edge over the core ministry because of our use of research in decision making. The strategic master plan is an example of a medium to long-term strategic plan that lets us know which transport initiatives to focus on. Whereas in the ministry there is no structured approach to planning.” (ROE)***

***“Public transport is closely linked to human behaviour, and through research, we can test our plans. In the past, we did not fully recognise the linkage of Public transport infrastructure development to influencing people’s behaviours but carrying out research like travel demand study and willingness to pay study improves our understanding of what is happening out there.” (BOA)***

The responses of participants show that facilitation of learning was seen from the perspective of being taught or shown new technical skills with the learning culture linked to access to knowledge from best practices, which is different from a culture that promotes practices such as risk-taking, experimentation or collaboration. The managers also supported the perception that LAMATA’s culture put a lot of value on expert knowledge



and expertise through its incentive structure with the culture modelling behaviours of what it means to be a good staff. Two managers talked about the importance of self-improvement as management rewarded employees that showed an interest and aptitude for new processes with staff was always looking for opportunities to improve their knowledge and display their skills. A manager commented:

***“There have been times that I was working a project and was given a task and did not want to admit that I did not know what do because in LAMATA, when you are called a specialist it connotes that you should know, so what I do is go through personal research and learning, reach out to friends in the industry to get an understanding on what to do. This has challenged me to learn faster because, with projects that are always timed, you can’t make excuses.” (GOK)***

The respondents from the junior grade specifically pointed to formal aspects of LAMATA’s culture such as staff development and the appraisal process providing access to knowledge and informal aspects that enables knowledge and ideas to be easily shared such as the office design, and communication process all promoting organisational learning.

***“The annual performance appraisal process requires that all staff submit their performance objectives and this basically states what I must achieve in that year, the targets assigned by my supervisor let me know what I need to learn” (SIO)***

***“Our open office design allows easy interaction amongst staff. I have learned from colleagues by listening to different conversations. Because our office is open when people are discussing problems, it is easy to get the opinions of others, and they challenge your thinking” (RAA)***

All the six junior staff talked about how the culture of learning at LAMATA has enhanced their knowledge and built their confidence such that they view themselves as more employable than their peers elsewhere. One of them said:

#### 4.3.4.4. Political environment

LAMATA is highly influenced by government policy and direction which impacts and challenges organisational members learning practices. LAMATA because of its hybridity must constantly manage the sometimes competing interests of its varied stakeholders. Many participants in the senior cadres were unanimous in their view that LAMATA's relevance and sustainability as an agent of government depend on the ability to effectively respond and adapt to changes in the political environment with the policy direction and changes in government agenda providing a basis for learning at LAMATA.

The political changes always present both opportunities and threats for a hybrid organisation such as LAMATA with organisational learning required as a form of intelligence to manage the uncertainty and ambiguity resulting from the ever-changing political landscape. The accounts bring to focus the political nature of learning with managers indicating their need to be able to predict and understand the pressure points important to the government at any point in time to remain relevant as an organisation. A management staff commented:

***“You discover quickly in the public sector that no matter what you plan to develop, it is important that it aligns with agenda of the government of the day. During the lifetime of LAMATA, there have been three governors, and LAMATA's fate is tied strongly to which initiatives they are excited about during their tenure. The first governor wanted quick fixes, so LAMATA focused on road rehabilitation projects to improve road conditions, the second governor wanted a transformation of the sector, and we began the development of the rail infrastructure. The current governor is focused on solutions that address the causes of traffic congestion and mobility constraints, and thus LAMATA is focused on activities to achieve these agendas. What we are learning at any point in time is related to what the government wants us to focus on” (ROE)***

A management staff recalled a situation in 2006 when the new Governor wanted a quick deployment of water transportation routes in Lagos. LAMATA had not developed in house

capacity to enable a quick response. As the new Governor who was under pressure to deliver campaign promises, he lost his patience and reassigned the water transport policy to another agency. This became a learning point for LAMATA in terms of proactively developing organisational capacity in all aspect of the transport strategy to enable adaptation and responsiveness to Government needs.

The constant change in the political environment was also a catalyst for organisational learning with LAMATA continuously responding and adapting to the policy direction of government. LAMATA developed medium to long-term strategies to manage the impact of political changes which occurs every four years. Organisational sustainability was of critical concern to many respondents, and there were accounts about how LAMATA developed proactive strategies such as the operationalisation of the LAMATA law in 2005 to strengthen the institutional framework to mitigate negative political influence on the agency. LAMATA also maintained financial independence through the enactment of the motor vehicle administration law in 2006 that empowered LAMATA to receive 50% of all revenues related to motor vehicle registration in Lagos state, and the development of the strategic transport master plan in 2014, which articulated LAMATA public transport initiatives up to the year 2030.

***“Our corporate planning process allows us to be proactive such that we can respond to government policy directives more quickly than other agencies of government.”***  
(PFO)

***“In 2005, LAMATA faced a risk of continuity because of an imminent change in government, and this forced a process for systematic planning with several staff tasked with developing different initiatives to mitigate this risk. I believe that a proactive strategy for planning is what has sustained the agency till now”*** (SOT)

All the management staff identified the risks related to the political environment of LAMATA with a view that organisational learning and knowledge must be focused on identifying

factors which allows the agency to effectively predict, respond and adapt to the changing landscape. However, most of the junior staff were oblivious to the political risks as they believed that the role of LAMATA, the competence and skills of its experts, financial and structural autonomy largely protected the agency from political changes and interference.

#### **4.3.5. The perception of the effective process of organisational learning**

Many of the respondents interviewed identified ways in which learning processes and practices in LAMATA can be improved to enable effectiveness and efficiency in project implementation and service delivery. The four particular areas mentioned were participatory decision making, organisational structure, skills specialisation and effective communication.

##### **4.3.5.1. Participatory decision making**

The majority of the respondents below management level cited the need to change the approach of decision making from a top down to a more participatory decision-making process to improve the quality of decisions. Many of the respondents talked about the over-reliance on the expertise of leaders without management providing more avenues for participation in strategic decision making by other members of staff. The junior staff was emphatic that LAMATA was not tapping into the knowledge of the collective and respondents expressed that better decisions are made when managers are more open to the ideas of their subordinates.

***“In trying to achieve project targets, a lot of learning occurs because you have to ask questions as well as work with other members of the team and also engage with several stakeholders. Working on projects also provides you with a lot of information, which improves knowledge. When it is a novel project, managers tend to be more open to ideas from subordinates because they (managers) too don’t have all the answers. When it is new, there are no rules” (BKA)***

Many of the participants’ accounts emphasised a need by management to commit towards collective participation as the diversity in the skills of staff improves the quality of solutions

proposed. The respondents were also of the opinion that it was important that all members of staff be part of the planning process such that the agency benefits from their varied knowledge and experiences. A participatory approach to decision making will engender a shared sense of vision towards solving the problems of public transport in Lagos as everyone can contribute to the roadmap.

***“In my view management should allow managers more freedom to make decisions because they are close to the operations. When decisions are top down always, you don’t bother to be creative or seek to expand your horizon, your kind of wait to be told because your ideas are not considered. I believe this limits learning potential”***  
(RSA)

***“There are many decisions that are pushed down without an understanding of why the decision was taken when you don’t have the full information it is difficult to do the job well.”*** (IOK)

***“Most decisions are made by management through functional directors and most times other members of staff are not carried along. Currently, solutions to problems come from departments; I think LAMATA should operate more like a community and allow people to come together to solve organisational problems as we have many people from diverse backgrounds that can contribute. Solutions should not only come from the top.”*** (BAA)

***“The training needs assessment should be more collaborative. Managers and human resources always decide on training needs, and it is not always effective. Staff should be given more room to determine their personal development.”*** (ISB)

#### 4.3.5.2. Organisational Structure

The improvement of different aspects of organisational culture at LAMATA was an important theme across the different grades of participants. The organisational structure at LAMATA is hierarchical with staff reporting along departmental lines which were seen as a factor that encourages interdepartmental rivalry which negatively impacted on staff interaction and sharing of knowledge. A staff talked about the impact of the tensions associated with interdepartmental rivalry limiting collaboration amongst staff especially from competing units with each department trying to outshine the other. The respondent expressed that junior staff have to be cautious so as “not to get caught between two elephants” was an organisational problem that needed to be corrected to engender cross-departmental participation, collaboration and reduce an attitude of “this is my project” but encouraging an attitude of “this our project” (RAA)

***“There is interdepartmental rivalry which does not encourage collaboration and projects gets owned by the departments implementing it. I had once suggested how a particular project may be improved, but I was told to maintain my lane. LAMATA must create processes such that there is a cross-fertilisation of ideas. We should all be responsible for solving organisational problems not just problems at the departmental level.” (BPF)***

Many respondents in the junior grade agreed that though organisational learning occurred from unfavourable outcomes, they had a personal fear of making mistakes or taking risks as LAMATA was seen as an organisation that highly valued expertise and competence and people were wary of making mistakes out of fear that it would affect their careers. A respondent in the junior grade also remarked that management style in LAMATA can be described as dictatorial which limits initiative and promotes a ‘follow the leader’ syndrome amongst staff (ISB) leading to maintaining the status quo rather than trying something new.

***“Most decisions are pushed down by management through directors and most times other members of staff are not carried along. Currently, solutions to problems come from departments; I think LAMATA should operate more like a community and allow people to come together to solve organisational problems as we have many people from diverse backgrounds that can contribute. Solutions should not only come from the top.” (RFF)***

***“There is interdepartmental rivalry which does not encourage collaboration..... I had one made a suggestion about how to a particular project could be improved, but I was told to maintain my lane” (BKA)***

***“When you are on a project, you have to depend on others to do your work. It is interesting that in LAMATA most departments do not want to collaborate because of inter-departmental rivalry.....” (BAO)***

A group of respondents also had a view that LAMATA’s top-down management style was influenced by the prevailing country culture with the norms and behaviours of the culture-sharing group showing high power distance which negatively impacts on learning as staff had almost unquestionable deference to authority, hierarchy or power structures. As a result of this culture, the staff seek to maintain the status quo even when their ideas could be better than their bosses’ ideas. This means many ideas remained the property of individuals and are not shared at the organisational level. It is interesting to note that most of the respondents that made this observation about country culture had work experiences from the United Kingdom and thus have been exposed to a different culture.

***“When I just joined LAMATA, I attended a meeting where I challenged the decision made by a Director on an initiative; he commented that the process was already on-going and so my idea could not be used. I was later told by other colleagues that you should not challenge the boss and I think this affects being proactive” (BAA)***

***“There is a country cultural dimension that leads people to be intimidated by leadership and authority figures, and so people do not challenge the status quo. The public sector is very rife with this behaviour, and it does not help learning because you have to be able to question and engage in a discussion, but you know in our culture there is a belief that adults are always right and wise...” (PFO)***

LAMATA’s work process is project oriented with staff members usually working as part of a team in their department or part of an interdepartmental team. However, LAMATA’s performance appraisal system rewards individual effort rather than team effort, and many respondents concurred that this promotes silo mentality and individualism at the expense of the collective. In practice, LAMATA has adopted the use of cross-functional teams for project implementation however; the performance appraisal process did not recognise team effort influencing individuals to be motivated towards self-development at the expense of the team. Respondents expressed that LAMATA’s organisational culture will benefit greatly when the team-work is recognised and rewarded for solving work problems.

#### 4.3.5.3. Skills Specialization

There was also the account of how LAMATA was more focused on developing technical knowledge with limited opportunities for task variety, which provides staff with a wider scope and understanding of all aspects of LAMATA’s activities. The ability to work across departments improves the capacity of staff as they can see the fuller picture of the business. This narrative was common amongst specialist and senior manager as the functional structure required them to be subject matter experts with no opportunities for job rotation at their level. Some managers expressed that though they become highly competent specialists in their role they have limited knowledge of others parts of the business which limits their effectiveness as project managers which requires them to effectively manage people with diverse skills.

LAMATA’s strategy places a lot of emphasis on training for the development of functional expertise in specialised areas of public transport, however, solving complex problems of public transportation requires an understanding of different aspects of the problem. This only occurs when staff can work across departments and learn with others, as the



knowledge required is always more than the expert knowledge of an individual. Learning as a social process that is facilitated through collective engagement featured as a common theme, which many respondents believed, would increase the effectiveness of learning at LAMATA.

***“LAMATA puts a lot of focus on training and expert opinion, but when you work on a project, you recognise that the classroom training is not always applicable on the field. As you work on the project, you discover that the skills you need on site are through discussion with other project members. When you are working on a project, many things happen that were not planned, and there is no manual to rely on, so you discuss with others to solve the problem” (RSA)***

***“In an office like LAMATA, I don’t think you can achieve much without learning from your colleagues. As a project manager, I am an engineer, but I usually would need help from external relations regarding stakeholder’s management as well as from environmental and social safeguards to help with reviewing my project to identify what problems or issues requires consideration to avoid problems for my project.” (RFF)***

In contrast to the experiences of the specialist and senior managers, staff on the junior cadre talked about the value they derived from the opportunity to work in different departments, which improves their technical skills and organisational learning creating a cross-fertilisation of ideas. As junior staff are seen as still in the development phase and are not yet experts, they are moved around multiple units and departments to help specialists and senior managers. This practice has significant importance for the junior staff as it broadens their understanding of the different aspects of public transport planning and implementation, and provides opportunities to work and learn with diverse teams, which improved their networking, and expertise.

***“As an engineer, your main interest is the development of the infrastructure, but because as a new staff, you are attached to different units in the public transport department, you develop different types of knowledge that helps to improve the use of what we are building. Bus operation requires a different kind of thinking that differs from just developing infrastructure, and I have been able to improve my skills and be a better engineer because I am not only thinking about building the infrastructure but also how it is going to be used by commuters” (RAA)***

#### 4.3.5.4. Effective Communication

The flow of communication and feedback process was cited as crucial for effective organisational learning in LAMATA. All the respondents below the management grade talked about the need for an improved process for two-way communication that allowed management to effectively receive and give information and feedback. Many respondents talked about knowledge occurring between individuals and sometimes amongst teams but do not become institutionalised by the organisation. Respondents gave examples of unexplained changes to projects leading to gossip and grapevine information with the effective communication providing all staff with accurate information to understand not only what needs to be done but why it is to be done in a particular way. The ineffective flow of information was also linked to the prevalence of hierarchical culture and power distance orientation and some manager’s negative behaviour, which inhibits participation and collaboration. Respondents commented that there was a need to improve the process, content and volume of information shared at all levels of the organisation.

***“It is important that management finds a process to integrate information across all levels of the organisation.... Common knowledge across the organisation will improve the quality of work”..... (PLC)***

Many respondents remarked that communication through varied means that includes general meetings, learning forums and informal gatherings such as the Thank God It Is Friday

(TGIF) events are effective means for promoting the collective exchange of information and sharing of ideas and knowledge. Many of the respondents expressed that meetings provided staff with the opportunity for dialogue, information sharing as well as promoting interaction amongst staff for building common understanding and knowledge about the organisation. Some responses include:

:

***"As a field officer, you are (physically) cut off from the head office and have to do your work with limited information that trickles through discussions with other staff, but the monthly meetings provide opportunities to get information about the activities of LAMATA. The briefing by Management on all organisational activities lets you understand how you fit into the big picture"* (BKA)**

***"There are some organisational issues that management would not like to disseminate through emails (you know political intrigues) but can discuss with staff verbally, and meetings provide an avenue where you can tell it as it is"* (IOK)**

#### **4.4. Summary**

The findings from the interviews were revealing in terms of the assessment of learning and its practices at LAMATA. There were some areas of differences amongst the participants however, it is useful to note that there many convergence in answers to several questions across the different grades. In terms of convergence, there was an alignment in perceptions amongst managers and junior staff on the relationship of organisational learning with knowledge with all agreeing that learning led to knowledge. There was also agreement that organisational learning in LAMATA was generated through training and ongoing action brought about in seeking to resolve the problem of public transport. Both groups of respondents also agreed that LAMATA had an unclear identity that had to be constantly negotiated, as it was a new type of organisation that was different from existing government organisations.

The context of the hybridity of LAMATA was an important theme that defined the shared realities of organisational identity by the respondents with the context of LAMATA in the public sector space a source of tension for organisational members. The impact of the context of LAMATA as a hybrid organisation and its influence on organisational learning had not been identified as an issue before data collection by the researcher. However, the hybridity status of LAMATA was of significance to how members interpreted their organisational realities and consequently influenced how they experienced learning at LAMATA. The hybrid status of LAMATA required staff to interact and work with diverse stakeholders that included the private and public sector, multilateral organisation, Infrastructure financing investors etc. meaning that the knowledge, competence and capacity of staff were critical to how the agency developed its brand and maintained its legitimacy to the outside world.

The results also showed some areas of divergence between the perceptions of managers and the junior staff. The leaders perceived the meetings as an opportunity to share ideas, but the junior staff felt the meetings were for passing down information. The meetings reinforced the perception of the junior staff that management promoted hierarchy, and top-down approach, though management believed they promoted openness and an open door policy. The managers also placed a huge emphasis on the use of formalised knowledge management systems for the access and sharing knowledge, however many of the junior staff perceived that learning and sharing knowledge occurred more from interactions amongst staff working together and solving problems together. Most of the junior staff perceived that the unit structure and specialisation limited participation and knowledge sharing amongst staff though management believed that specialisation was critical to improved competence and organisational performance. Finally, the managers and leaders perceived the political environment as a challenge, while most junior staff were oblivious of any negative impact from government influence.

Organisational learning at LAMATA has evolved overtime by adopting different learning orientations influenced by both internal and external factors. The internal influences have been driven mainly by the organisational strategy and culture promoted by organisational leaders seen in the content, process and practice of learning at LAMATA. The varied stakeholder interests that includes the government, the multi-lateral agencies and the

Public transport users are the external factors that influences the staff at LAMATA in different ways.

The Organisational learning practices at LAMATA was designed as a formal and planned strategy for developing capacity and improvement of the Public transport sector, however solutions to real-world problems are not linear in nature with complex interactions amongst diverse stakeholders creating and promoting learning as an emerging and continuous construct that is enacted and recreated through on going practice. Organisational learning at LAMATA has been assumed as a determinate process. However, it has also occurred as an unplanned and uncontrollable consequence of organisational realities with LAMATA seemingly less prepared to capture and share such emergent learning.

The account of participants identified aspects of the organisational culture that included staff development policies, leadership commitment and human resources practices as critical facilitators of organisational learning at LAMATA. The role of stakeholders that include the government, as well as the multilateral agencies, was also a crucial influence on LAMATA's learning practices.

As a member of LAMATA with responsibility for learning and development, some of the results of the findings confirm some of the initial thoughts of the researcher. Firstly, strategic investment in staff development activities in both formal and informal training, staff twining opportunities and institutionalising an organisational culture that was committed to learning at all levels is essential to developing the necessary competence that enables staff to adapt, respond and create new solutions to emerging practice problems.

The big surprise, however, was the impact of national cultural orientation, which was not an issue identified by the researcher as salient before going into the research. Many discussions brought to fore the influence of national cultural dimensions of Nigeria on our process of managing and organising. The reliance on the top down and hierarchical approach is an outcome of how leaders perceive the role of managing and consequently affecting how members experience learning.

In addition, a key finding of this research was the inadvertent consequence of hybridity on LAMATA, which was central to the tension generated from the application of imposed international “best practice” principles without consideration of the influence of prevailing

national culture that is highly patriarchal with high power distance. Organisational members' account of the inhibitors of organisational learning at LAMATA was related to issues such as the hierarchical structure limiting staff participation and collaboration, ineffective communication as a consequence of the top-down approach was also seen as a limiting factor. Organisational members were challenged with the tensions generated from managing within conflicting norms that can be observed in the account provided as the inhibitors of organisational learning at LAMATA.

The account of participants also provided the key features of factors that facilitate organisational learning and contribute to the creation of new knowledge as well as the main features that inhibit creativity, initiative and effective participation and collaboration. The five organizing themes are interrelated with each one influencing and impacting members' experiences of learning at LAMATA. The next chapter will interpret and discuss the main insights that emerged from the account of respondents to determine practical solutions that can improve organisational learning at LAMATA with the knowledge gained also generating practical knowledge that may also be relevant to other public sector organisations such as LAMATA, especially in Nigeria.

## 5. CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSIONS

### 5.1. Introduction

The primary question that the case study seeks to examine is how organisational members at LAMATA experience organisational learning and its impact on how they take action. The unique case study applies a qualitative approach using semi-structured interviews of twenty-six participants at LAMATA for an in-depth understanding of participants' experiences of organisational learning at LAMATA to produce knowledge that is of practical importance to enable effective learning practices for improved organisational ability for effective collective action.

The main research questions that the study seeks to answer are: how do members at LAMATA understand organisational learning? How does organisational learning occur at LAMATA? What facilitates organisational learning at LAMATA? What inhibits organisational learning at LAMATA? How can organisational learning be improved at LAMATA? This chapter interprets the main findings of this study and draws some conclusions by making recommendations specifically for LAMATA regarding what actions are required to improve organisational learning practices. As context-specific research, it does not intend to provide a direct generalisation, but the problems explored in this study will be relevant and useful for practitioners in public sector organisations such as LAMATA as many of the challenges documented are relatable and applicable especially in the situated context of Nigeria. The chapter will also discuss the limitations of this research and suggestions for future research and conclude with a chapter summary.

### 5.2. Summary of findings

The study revealed important findings related to members experiences with responses confirming the complex and multi-dimensional nature of organisational learning. Firstly, members at LAMATA all concurred that there was organisational learning at LAMATA; however, there was no consensus on its meaning with diverse attributes associated with the concept. Organisational learning was variously perceived as an outcome, process and activity that had both static and emergent properties and can be influenced positively or negatively by both internal and external factors.

The analysis of data suggests that organisational learning is a driving force in organisational practice at LAMATA with participants constructing and interpreting organisational learning and knowledge from their varied experiences as they engage with everyday work. Organisational learning occurred at the multi-level analysis of individual, group and organisational that can be operationalised using the widely recognised Crossan et al., (1999) 4I framework. Participants' accounts suggested integration amongst the different levels with intuition and interpreting occurring at the individual level through a process of cognition enabled by changes in behaviour. The process of interpreting enabled shared understanding for the process of integration amongst groups as members work together to solve project problems though there were some observed gaps in integration because of the departmental structure of LAMATA. Participants' accounts however pointed to the limitation in the feed forward process at the institutional level of analysis which can be linked to issues related to hierarchy and power structure constraining learning and knowledge transfer.

The main organizing themes generated from the interview questions provided interpretations, reflections and meaning that participants construct about their organisation, its philosophy and identity, and their relationship with its varied stakeholders as well as suggestions on how to improve learning practices for improved organisational performance. The main organizing themes abstracted from participants' accounts and fully discussed in chapter 4 includes (1) their perception of the organisation; (2) their perception on the concept of organisational learning; (3) their perception of the role of organisational learning in LAMATA; (4) their perception on influences of organisational learning and (5) perception on the effective processes of learning. The findings organised in themes that help to answer the research questions are discussed below.

#### **5.2.1. Question 1: How do members at LAMATA understand organisational learning?**

The question on the meaning of organisation learning generated diverse accounts by participants reflecting the multi-dimensional nature of organisational learning and the hybrid context of LAMATA. The participants in the study collectively agreed that organisational learning was a practice at LAMATA but there did not exist any set organisational definition and thus members created a variety of meanings by interpreting



from their everyday subjective experiences with each providing a view of learning at LAMATA based on how they have been individually influenced by the organisation.

The diverse perspectives of respondents also highlight the abstract, complex and the multi-dimensional nature of learning with meaning ascribed by respondents highly influenced by how they construed and interpreted their reality. The challenge of definition is confirmed in organisational learning literature as there is a lack of agreement in the meaning of organisational learning (Fiol and Lyles, 1985, Dodgson, 1993, Crossan et al., 1995). Antonacopoulou (2005) argues that organisational learning is immensely rich and no one perspective can adequately capture fully the multiple connections and possibilities that it creates and from which it emerges. Clegg et al., (2005) aligns with this view and argues that rather than seeking for a concrete or stable definition, organisational learning should be considered from the perspective of multiplicity.

Some participant accounts viewed organisational learning as a process with knowledge as the outcome which is consistent with literature with knowledge seen as stock, and learning as a flow through which knowledge is developed (Bontis et al, 2002). Participants linked the concept of organisational learning to the acquisition of knowledge, which highlights learning at the individual level of abstraction with individuals as the primary entity in the learning process (Dodgson, 1993; Grant, 1996). The rational and conscious need to improve individual understanding and knowledge within an aggregate brings to fore the nature of organisational learning as ultimately beginning from the individual, recreated and shared as an aggregate in interactions with others (Kim, 1993).

Organisational learning was promoted in LAMATA as a process of organising that privileges explicit individual knowledge through the knowledge-sharing framework developed in conjunction with the World Bank reflecting a formalised organisational strategy for knowledge acquisition, codification, storage and sharing across the organisation. This aligns with the technical –information perspective (Prieto and Revilla, 2006) with organisational learning viewed as effective information processing, interpretation and response whereby organisational participants can use their knowledge to achieve organisational objectives. This approach targets the application of both behavioural and cognitive dimension of organisational learning as a logical process of knowledge acquisition, information distribution, information interpretation and organisational memory. Huber, (1991).

Some participants also described organisational learning as a process through which LAMATA achieves its outcomes with learning occurring as both an active and reactive process for organisational improvement. This aligns with organisational learning literature with many definitions following a process approach (Shrivastava, 1983; Stata, 1996) and organisational as a means for achieving organisational improvements (Fiol and Lyles, 1985; Senge, 1990; Garvin, 1993; Finger and Brand, 1999). As a process, organisational learning was also described as a strategy that enables an effective response to manage change, uncertainty and adaptation (Argote, 1999; Argyris and Schon, 1996) with participants using several attributes and characteristics to describe organisational learning.

The findings also illustrate that beyond the rational process of organizing promoted through a cybernetic metaphor (Morgan,1980), organisational learning and knowledge was also created and sustained through an interpretive paradigm as members interact with each other and their environment in their engagement with practice which became mediator between subject and object (Gherardi,2000). The focus on knowledge management as the main process for improving learning in LAMATA has inherent limitation, as it does not provide a holistic view of how learning is created within a complex social structure where several agents are engaging in unpredictable and unplanned process of organising. Participants that included project managers and field officers provided accounts on how the complexity of public transport development generates unanticipated situations or consequences, which triggers a new interpretation and understanding to the problems with action enabling the creation of new solutions through trial and error and experimentation.

Organisational learning practices at LAMATA was also linked to how participants perceived the concept of organisational identity with accounts amongst participants recognising the distinctiveness of LAMATA as a different type of public sector organisation. LAMATA is a first of its kind in terms of its structural and financial autonomy within the public sector in Lagos with defining characteristics that is neither distinctively a public nor private sector organisation. This defining quality was important to how members interpreted their reality with all participants recognising that LAMATA did not follow the established logic expected of a public sector organisation. LAMATA imbibed the logic of being an autonomous organisation that had to ascribe to the values and philosophy of being a World Bank-funded agency expected to apply business practices that were more akin to the private sector

rather than the bureaucratic public sector. However, critical to the challenge of identity was the big question of 'who are we', with implications on how members interpret their collective sense of identity with the process of changing, modifying or preserving organisational identity constituting organisational learning (Cook and Yanow, 2011)

The participants understood that LAMATA had a different and distinct underlying organisational philosophy; however, there was a lack of clarity of what type of organisation it is or what it was developing to be. This challenge of identity in LAMATA had not been initially identified as a critical focus for the research before data collection. However, the challenge of identity was evident in participants' accounts as organisational members struggled to fully enact and interpret the nature of LAMATA with all participants attempting to provide definitions through a self-developed reality in an attempt to bridge the gap created by a lack organisational frame that enables a collective understanding in the context of LAMATA. The consequence of a lack of clarity in identity can also be linked to the inability of the organisation to formulate a clear approach to organisational learning. This question of 'who are we' ultimately impacts members' ability to understand 'how we do things' in order to interpret their common realities, experiences, and meaning with the collective identity of a group important to how they accept new ideas (Schilling and Kluge, 2009).

The literature on organisational learning acknowledges the diversity and difficulty in ascribing a standard meaning to organisational learning as its multi-dimensional nature leads researchers to focus on different perspectives (Fiol and Lyle, 1985). However, De Hower et al., (2013) argues that in order to provide clarity and avoid misunderstanding there is a need to address the definitional issues of learning explicitly. Organisational learning is intertwined with organisational identity as changes in the meanings associated with identity is a process of organisational learning (Corley and Gioia, 2003). As organisational identity is related to how members interpret their experiences which in turn shape the behaviour and actions of its members, it is thus essential that leaders facilitate a process of collective sensemaking (Fiol,1991) to provide a sense of organisational identity that is negotiated within the context of the hybridity of LAMATA with feedback learning processes through institutionalised mechanisms required to guide future individual and group learning (Crossan et al, 1999) to answering the identity question of 'who are we' as the creation of a collective frame of

reference is necessary for the creation of the intersubjective meaning that enables collective interpretation of 'who are we' and 'what do we want to become'.

### 5.2.2. Question 2: How does organisational learning occur at LAMATA?

Organisational learning at LAMATA was expressed as occurring from various sources that were closely linked to the objective of achieving organisational strategic intent. Participants were influenced by what they were required to know to achieve organisational objectives. The context in which learning was perceived to have occurred were driven from both internal sources that included training, organisational strategy, engagement with work and external sources which comprised of managing the interests of stakeholders and the process of monitoring and performance evaluation.

#### 5.2.2.1. Internal sources:

##### a. Training

Many accounts identified that LAMATA placed a lot of attention on identifying skills gaps of members to develop a responsive, structured strategy for learning through different formal activities with an expectation that it would improve cognitive abilities and competence necessary in carrying out organisational activities with different strategies applied at different levels. At the individual level, training was collectively identified as significant to their learning with training encompassing all types of structured training as well as on the job training. Training is considered to be one of the most significant human resource practices for the organisational learning process (Easterby-Smith 1994; Tsang 1997) that facilitates openness, sharing of ideas and best practices.

The findings illustrate that context-specific technical training in areas such as urban planning, bus franchising, rail implementation etc. organized for LAMATA by the World Bank, Japanese International Cooperation Agency and International Association of Public transportation were seen by participants as directly relevant and essential for the improvement of competence, skills and knowledge. Participants' accounts also recognised the significance of informal training that occurred as members interacted daily in solving work challenges. The accounts of participants suggest that though structured training were

important however, informal training that occurs amongst staff facilitates the process for connecting and interpreting the "classroom" training to the realities of ongoing practice. Though the organisational focus was on structured training with a codification strategy for sharing and storing for future use however, most of the junior staff did not mention solving ongoing work problems from using the organisational knowledge repository, which leaders believed provided members with access to knowledge. This shows a gap in the feedback process as leadership perceived use of knowledge management for learning was different from the process applied by members in problem solving.

Participants also identified as ineffective the top-down approach for skill gap assessment as the high expectation of competence creates undue pressure on staff leading to defensive routines with people not admitting to a lack of knowledge to protect their reputation and status within the organisation. This behaviour has implications for the effectiveness of the learning process in LAMATA as it may narrowly lead to a focus on what leaders or managers are interested in with members complying and conforming in order to sustain their career progression. A more effective learning approach would be to adopt a more participatory approach that enables the development of intuiting process giving autonomy and to organisational members to take personal responsibility towards their learning.

### ***b. Organisational Strategy***

The process for the formulation and the implementation of the organisational strategy was also a source of learning as it provided an impetus for what was important to be learned with a collective recognition by all respondents that it was a tool for the achievement of yearly organisational plans. LAMATA on a yearly basis organises an all staff retreat where the annual plans are presented and discussed with all staff members and the planning process provides a context-specific and situated approach to project planning.

Leaders and managers develop the annual plans, which are discussed at the annual retreat and agreed plans prepared as the annual action plan with timelines and key indicators for measuring performance were seen by leaders as a means of promoting a shared sense of purpose at the organisational level. Moore, (1995) explicates that strategy is essential in the public sector as it is used to re-orient the organisation on the political positioning about its stakeholders as well as the management of internal relations. The process of strategic

planning is also stimulated from the signals from the external environment, which provides a basis for reflection on work with planned activities assessed against actual performance with an analysis of the variances providing opportunities for learning and organisational improvement. The process of strategy formulation and planning provides a linkage between cognition and action with strategising and organising connecting organisational levels to the situated nature of organisational learning (Crossan et al, 2011).

However, the staff at the junior level point to the top-down approach to strategy formulation that can be linked to the hierarchical structure of LAMATA limits the quality of strategic planning. The distance in the organisational hierarchy creates a discrepancy between manager's intention and organisational actions affecting top-down planning and bottom-up learning (Kim et al., 2014). The need to integrate the top-down and bottom-up perspective in the internal process of strategy formulation and planning is especially important for LAMATA because of its hybridity as the process will enable the collective interpretation and negotiation of organisational identity to manage the tension of 'who are we', and 'what are we trying to do'.

### **c. Engagement with work**

Organisational learning and knowledge creation were seen as emerging from the dynamic, active and situated process as people participated together in their engagement with practice problems. The accounts of organisational members suggest members' learning occurred both consciously and unconsciously when seeking for solutions while working on day to day organisational work with the art of knowing closely linked to the ongoing activities of practice with organisational members able to demonstrate their knowledge of 'know what' to 'know how'. Many participants discussed how they had to reflect their training in application to practice which shows the interrelatedness of learning with action.

The study findings illustrate that though LAMATA adopts behavioural strategies regarding the application of standard operating procedures, manual and guidelines, for different routine tasks, continuous work opportunities allowed members to further refine their knowledge, which results in improved effectiveness leading to dynamic capabilities (Teece et al, 1997). The unpredictable environment for resolving the messy social problem of public transport also creates opportunities for emergent learning with participants adopting new

approaches to solving novel problems. The creation of emergent learning was demonstrated as organisational members responded to sometimes-unintended more openness for experimentation” with organisational learning driven by novelty with a lack of a solution template enabling new ideas and creativity. Antonacopoulou, (2005:245) argues that ‘learning about practice is an activity that is also a flow, a flexible, ever-changing structure that connects actors, systems and artefacts’.

Accounts of participants illustrate that there was recognition of the existence of a structured organisational approach to learning through codifying explicit knowledge. However, their learning experiences occurred during the need to find solutions to practice problems which were found as people were working together on different work activities. Respondents talked about adjusting their interpretations and understanding when working with others on routine tasks as well as on novel challenges providing opportunities for the generation of new ways of doing and working which was not linked to a dependency on a knowledge management system. This supports Brown and Deguid, (1991) practice-based perspective to learning which is seen as a bridge between working and innovating with learning a social construction that is highly active and situated and connected to the conditions through which learning occurs.

Organisational practice is influenced by the dynamic nature of the environment, which entails the need to accommodate and respond to unanticipated changes in the social-political and economic dynamics within the environment. This means that the solution to practice problems do not always lend themselves to a linear structured method but require active engagement with different stakeholders with learning occurring through repeated action taking. Learning in this context goes beyond technical rationality or expert competence with engaging with work problems and responding to the environment enabling the dialogical process that facilitates questioning, inquiry and reflective practices with learning and knowledge becoming refined in practice. Antonacopolou & Meric, (2005) argue that organisational practices evolve with learning unfolding through the repeated enactments that configure multiple arenas for negotiations of order.

In summary, organisational learning at LAMATA was formally driven from technical rationality reflected in the application of a structured approach to managing some work activities with organisational members expected to follow procedural guidelines. However,

the complexity inherent in the social problem of public transport also meant that organisational members enacted and interpreted their practice through intuition and a process of muddling through (Schon, 1995) with learning and knowing opportunity driven from performing everyday action. The implication is that organisational learning practices should be framed more broadly to avoid constraining learning at different levels of the organisation. Medcalf, (2001) cited in (Betts and Holden, 2003) posits that for effective organisational learning to take place it must respond to the many organisational levels of receptivity to what is learned.

#### 5.2.2.2. External sources:

##### **a. Interests of stakeholders**

The problem of public transport is a social issue that impacts multiple stakeholders, and for LAMATA to effectively manage these diverse interests, considerations must be given to their needs. Many participants expressed that learning occurred in response to the political or policy direction of the government influencing organisational strategy to focus organisational learning in a specific context. Participants talked about improving organisational knowledge in Water transport services as an example of learning that occurred as a response to Government policy in the deregulation of water transport services providing learning opportunities for LAMATA.

There were many accounts of learning sources also occurring from feedback from funding organisations such as the World Bank and French Development Agencies and the Japanese International Cooperation Agency, which influences how work is done in LAMATA. The exchange of information and feedback with road users also provides several learning opportunities that create new learning and ways of working with organisational learning processes reflective of managing diverse stakeholder interests with learning requirements tailored to achieving these diverse interests.

LAMATA as a donor-funded agency is required to periodically adapt to different guidelines for funding eligibility influencing learning of new practices by members. Organisational learning was also driven by the political direction of government with leaders at LAMATA constantly seeking to understand the needs and requirements of the diverse stakeholders to develop an effective response. The impact of learning as a response to the fragmented



needs of diverse stakeholders has implication for LAMATA's ability to develop 'double loop' learning capabilities which involves questioning why things are done rather than promoting 'single-loop' learning which is restricted to asking how the same things can be done better (Common, 2004).

### ***b. Performance evaluation process***

Respondents indicated the process of review, monitoring and evaluation was a source of organisational learning. As a public transport-implementing agency, LAMATA applied different monitoring and evaluation techniques to assess project impact and outcomes, which served as a basis for improvement. LAMATA's monthly project appraisal process provided an avenue for reflection in action (Schon, 1991). Participants mentioned that as reviews provided a platform to learn for other people's experiences with monitoring enabling a process for feedback with members able to analyse the impact of the complex interaction between cause and effect of issues related to taking action.

Organisational learning benefits from effective feedback loops from performance evaluation as the process of planning and review is essential for continuous organisational growth and improvement as evaluation and feedback enables a review of both the process and outcome for reflective learning from experience. Greve, (2003) posits that goals and feedback both accelerate learning with individuals or groups in an organisation seeking for ways to improve their performance when they receive information on their performance relative to the aspiration levels.

The different monitoring and evaluation practices at LAMATA is driven by externally established norms and standards primarily based on the worldviews and priorities of the funding sponsors have implication for adaptive learning and organisational development as the focus is directed more on predominantly technocratic conception of control, regulation, and compliance (Greene, 1999) with a disregard to context. As performance evaluation is not merely a technical activity bereft of political or normative values (Greene, 2000) there is a need to create space for transitioning to an organisational learning approach to evaluation (Torres and Preskill, 2001) that enables evaluation practices that reflect the diversity and exigencies of their program context (Chouinard, 2013).

### 5.2.3. Question 3: What facilitates learning in LAMATA?

The improvement of organisational learning requires an understanding of the factors that foster effective learning at LAMATA. The results of the findings show that participants saw organisational culture, leadership commitment and human resource practices as critical factors for facilitating organisational learning at LAMATA.

#### *a. Organisational culture*

All participants discussed the influence of certain aspects of the organisational culture at LAMATA as a facilitator of learning at LAMATA with culture encompassing various aspects of organisational life. Organisational culture is related to the internal practice of organisational beliefs, shared meanings, values norms and philosophy (Taylor et al., 2010) that drive an organisation's behaviour. At the individual level, the process of on boarding for new employees provided a frame for understanding LAMATA's goals and objectives and recognising how they were expected to contribute to organisational goals. LAMATA's culture was supportive of different learning initiatives through the implementation scheduled individual and group targeted training and seminars for staff during the year.

Many respondents talked about the development of their learning and competence as they were exposed to new ways of doing things with an identification of the organisational focus on continuous improvement programs and "best practice initiative" that were related to changing patterns of thought as well as behaviours. Managers also talked about the positive impact of the management development program that was mandatory for managers as critical to developing managerial competencies as evidence of management commitment to managerial development. Participants saw the allocation of time and financial resources evidenced by the annual capacity building budget as critical to stimulating a culture of continuous organisational learning. Barrette et al., (2012) contend that no organisation can be a learning entity without an investment in learning. Organisational support to learning stimulates and drives the motivation for learning with the effectiveness of investment in learning depending on the right conditions for the learning transfer process.

### ***b. Leadership Commitment***

Participants described leadership commitment to enabling processes for learning across different dimensions in LAMATA as a facilitator for organisational learning. The accounts recognised leadership commitment to processes such as facilitating capabilities development, developing a clear vision, strategic planning and human capital development plan as being critical to members continuous learning. Learning ultimately becomes about leadership as they are crucial to creating and institutionalising the organisational culture that provides the right climate and structures that support organisational learning. The leaders set the tone for the organisation and act as mentors, coaches and facilitators in the institutionalisation of organisational learning.

The effect of leadership on learning has been recognised by many researchers (Goh and Richard, 1997; Garvin et al., 2008) with leaders playing an important role in connecting individual and organisational learning (Ellinger and Bostrom, 1999). The role of managers as knowledge generators have implications on the dominant processes for producing knowledge (Aram and Salipante, 2003) which is critical to stimulating organisational members' thinking and ability to question established procedures while giving employees the basic security to have confidence for experimentation and taking risks.

### ***c. Human Resources Practices***

Participants account identified different factors related to the human resource practices at LAMATA with the selective hiring and performance management practices seen as critical enablers for learning. The ability to learn and improve in part depends on the cognitive capabilities of organisational members and recruiting the right people was an important imperative for LAMATA to achieve a key organisational goal of developing professionalism and expertise in the public transport sector. There was a conscious strategy to recruit staff with international experience in different public transport modes, which was seen as enabling the diffusion of knowledge and facilitating the adoption of best practices within LAMATA.

- i. **Selective hiring:** As a semi-autonomous agency, LAMATA adopted the hiring processes that was akin to the private sector by following a competitive process for recruiting the right people with the right skills. The ability to adopt a competitive

compensation package different from the mainstream public sector organisations in Lagos was linked to the ability to attract the right people with the right skills. The accounts of participants illustrate the advantage for LAMATA to have well educated and trained professionals that had the right cognitive and behavioural propensity to learning. Organisational learning has been linked to selective hiring practices (Wayland and Cole, 1997) with the management of the employment relationship generating value-added knowledge for the organisation. As organisations learn by 'ingesting new members who have knowledge the organisation didn't previously have' (Simon, 1991:125) the ability to attract people with creative talents becomes essential to developing organisational learning.

- ii. **Performance management:** This was recognised as critical to learning as the process of performance management at LAMATA enabled organisational members to have a clarity of purpose in their roles. The performance management system was used as a developmental tool to determine skills and document skill gap with a plan for improvement, which promoted an interest in learning.

#### 5.2.4. Question 4: What inhibits learning?

The understanding of factors that inhibits organisational learning is critical to the improvement of organisational learning practices at LAMATA. Participants identified some factors that were inhibiting or impeding the practical application of organisational learning at LAMATA with findings showing that organisational culture, organisational structure, leadership style and behaviour and process of communication were some of the most important factors that were collectively identified by participants.

##### a. Organisational culture

Participants' accounts had cited the role of many aspects of organisational culture at LAMATA as critical facilitators of learning. However, the influence and impact of the country culture of Nigeria, which is a patriarchal society with high power distance, was an important issue that was seen as inhibiting the effective processes of learning. The impact of power distance limited staff ability to challenge the ideas of their superiors or offer their ideas as the local culture was steeped in "the leader is always right" mentality. There was also a high value placed on rank with ideas judged by status rather than by the content of the proposal

or ideas. The culture is also evidenced in the centralised decision-making approach, which is also linked to the hierarchical structure that was identified as limiting collective participation. The consequence is that LAMATA is unable to effectively tap into the knowledge of all its members with critical knowledge remaining the property of the individuals with limited opportunities created for diffusion of knowledge to the top levels of the organisation.

Troy et al. (2008) explicate that the culture surrounding an organisation determines the behaviour and interaction of individual members of the organisation. This is highly significant for LAMATA as its culture is highly influenced by the prevailing country culture that has a high power distance orientation but influenced by international funding agencies to adopt and apply practices that follow an orientation that is less hierarchical with low power distance. The implication of hierarchical and power distance orientation on learning is that it limits the flow of information and knowledge from the bottom of the hierarchy to the top. Learning and knowledge become stifled as members do not share and engage with their superiors on new ways of taking action limiting the extent to which the espoused organisational learning culture is experienced and can be effective. As culture is ingrained norms and practices, the context cannot be simply changed, and leaders and managers have to find creative ways to manage the tensions associated with hierarchy on the learning process.

### ***b. Organisational structure***

LAMATA's organisational structure is linked to its organisational culture driven by the leadership and management beliefs of how to get things done. LAMATA is structured along departmental functional lines with project ownership residing with departments. This structure also supports a performance appraisal process that recognises individual effort, and this drives competitiveness amongst departments and units creating a barrier for departmental collaboration and the free flow of information and ideas. The structure promotes silo mentality with people using knowledge as a source of power to promote self-interest rather than organisational interests with rigid boundaries influencing a “we versus them” mentality amongst the departments. The effect of this behaviour leads to fragmented learning (March and Olsen, 1975) with LAMATA unable to benefit from the learning that exists in all parts of the organisation.

The functional structure encourages expert specialisation leading to the application and continuation of the same strategies, routines, processes and practices that eventually makes it difficult for members to evolve new learning and knowledge. (Levitt and March, 1988) describes this as the ambiguity of success that leads organisational leadership to perceive and interpret organisational strategies as more successful than the actual reality leading to a misrepresentation and interpretation of organisational challenges. LAMATA's focus on competence and expert knowledge with staff development related to developing specialized skills also reinforces the continued use of the same standard routines leading to competency traps (Levitt and March, 1988) with focused learning and embedded routines used successfully in the past becoming the enemy of progress as new perspectives are rejected in favour of maintaining status quo.

The accounts of junior staff members illustrate this problem especially amongst middle managers who are usually functional experts with limited opportunities for task varieties. Their specialisation leads them to a narrow view to solving complex transport problems and a focus on what they already know using “tried and tested” methods without a motivation to embrace new tactics proposed by the “foot soldiers” who are usually closer to the problem because of the nature of their job. A focus on specialisation for managers means that Junior staff members with more opportunities for task varieties gained deeper insights on the importance of integrating different aspects of knowledge to problem-solving though the organisational structure did not enable an effective process for feed forward through intuition, integration of knowledge at this level. Accounts of junior staff talked about the fear of blame with the admonition to “maintain your lane” culture limiting their motivation to be creative or to show initiative, which signifies emotional barriers (Argyris, 1990) at the individual level negatively impacting organisational learning at LAMATA.

### ***c. Leadership style and behaviour***

The accounts of participants highlight the negative impact of the Nigerian cultural context influencing the style of people in positional authority with the associated problems of power relations on the process of organisational learning. LAMATA is project and outcome focused with managers and leaders exerting control on the process, which leads to a style of telling which limits the ability of organisational members to effectively contribute and thus inhibit their learning development. Some participants' accounts suggested that LAMATA's leaders

applied a transactional or authoritarian leadership style (Raelin, 2000) that is high on power distance preventing organisational members' ability to effectively take action. This leads to role constrained learning (March & Olsen. 1975) which is a rigid requirement to comply to particular ways of working inhibiting organisational members' ability to take effective action. LAMATA's hierarchical culture influenced by the country's cultural dimension of power distance influences a "do as you are told" leadership style which is an inhibitor to creating new learning.

The context of LAMATA as a different type of public sector organisation that must be seen to succeed in contrast to the traditional public sector drives an outcome-focused approach with leaders highly concerned about achieving results leading to enormous psychological barriers for organisational members. When leaders are more focused on outcomes and results to justify funding requests, little consideration is given to the time required by project members to learn from the process of taking action, reflection and responding to complexity, ambiguity, uncertainty and change. Participants talked about manager's style of 'do as you are told', 'there is no room for mistakes', and "you are employed for solutions" mentality were organisational accounts that promotes anxiety, fear, blame and threat leading to defensive routines (Argyris, 1990) that inhibits learning.

#### ***d. Process of Communication***

Many interview respondents identified a limited communication process as an inhibitor to effective learning, knowledge creation and sharing amongst organisational members at LAMATA. The ineffectiveness of communication is also linked to the hierarchical organisational structure that is also derived from the prevailing country culture that is high on power distance limiting the flow of information and knowledge between different levels of the organisation.

Participant accounts illustrated that there was a reliance on informal communication flow within levels with many respondents admitting that they relied on their colleagues for problem-solving and sharing ideas. The management used different formal avenues such as general meetings and departmental meeting to communicate with staff with electronic platforms also available for information dissemination. However, junior staff perceived this

process as a one-way communication that does not foster engagement and collective thinking, participation and open dialogue.

Managers also talked about their experiences with managing problems related to tensions of identity. With LAMATA as a hybrid organisation, leaders were constantly managing ambiguity and uncertainty and had a difficulty in clarifying the appropriate message and information to members. A management staff expressed the difficulty in interpreting the problems related to the political environment, and as leaders are supposed to be the beacon for the organisation, it is difficult to admit 'they do not know'. However, organisational members perceived this as leaders hoarding information with this tension affecting trust between the staff and the hierarchy thus negatively impacting effective communication.

The structure of LAMATA along functional lines also encourages departmental or unit rivalry and unhealthy competition limiting the flow of information with knowledge seen as power. This unhealthy rivalry creates a culture of blame with a lack of reflective practice and failure avoidance (Sitkin, 1996) with some junior staff members having to manage social relationships by not speaking out about problems. There were accounts by participants indicating that there was organisational silence (Morrison and Milliken, 2000) with known problems not discussed especially on projects of other units as you would be advised to "maintain your lane", and this limits a sense of collective responsibility inhibiting learning and knowledge creation. There were also weak processes for feedback loops which limited effective communication across levels, departments with field staff often having critical information and knowledge that gets stifled and lost along the hierarchal structure.

#### **5.2.5. Question 5: How can organisational learning be improved at LAMATA?**

The objective for organisational learning in LAMATA is for "improving actions through better knowledge and understanding" (Fiol & Lyles, 1985,) with organisational members better equipped to deal with the messy social problem of public transport. LAMATA currently recognises the importance of organisational learning as a strategy to enable continuous organisational growth and sustainability and adopt rational and structured based approaches that target improvement in individual competencies. However public transport problems are in the class of problems termed wicked problems (Rittel and Webber,1973) which occurs in the realm of complexity and requires shared understanding



for project definition which is achieved through collective dialogue, reflection and ongoing learning processes (Whelton and Ballard, 2002). The next section therefore builds on the findings to make practical recommendations that properly reflect the particular organisational context of LAMATA.

### **5.3. Recommendations for LAMATA**

The problem of resolving public transport problems in Lagos is a complex social problem that requires LAMATA to learn and adapt to new creative ways to work with others (Calton & Payne, 2003). Organisational learning was implicated as having a causative effect on change, introducing transformation, raising innovative ability, strategy formation and execution, problem-solving, organisational renewal and revival, gaining competitive advantage and performance outcomes (Imran et al., 2016). The practice of organisational learning and knowledge creation at LAMATA shows that both concepts are interrelated and intertwined mostly emerging and refined through engagement with work and taking action.

The organisational learning framework proposed by Crossan et al, (1999) is a holistic conceptual theory that enables an understanding of what motivates learning and where it occurs at the different levels in an organisation. The framework establishes the link between strategy and learning (Vera and Crossan, 2004) with organisational learning viewed as a multilevel (individual, group and institutional) phenomenon that is linked by four interrelated psychological processes of intuiting and interpretation at the individual, integrating at the group level and institutionalisation at the organisational level. All the processes involve both cognitive and behavioural processes of learning.

The accounts of participants emphasised the social nature of learning with the dominant approach to problem-solving includes activities such as asking, discussions, questioning, brain storming, coaching, feedback, observation, and sharing ideas which highlights the social construction of knowledge. Accounts identified the effectiveness of social interaction based learning strategies such as the institutionalisation of the knowledge café which provides an informal platform for members to share work experiences and discuss project challenges to find workable solutions through collective sensemaking. The framework enables a recognition of the tension between exploration and exploitation of knowledge through the feed forward and feedback mechanisms with an improved understanding of

the flow and stocks of learning capturing the rich interplay that exists between processes and different learning levels of the organisation.

The context of LAMATA as an autonomous public sector entity was of unique significance to the findings as it highlighted the influence and impact of how organisational context shapes members' behaviour as they attempt to mitigate the inherent tensions of hybridity in a complex landscape to find equilibrium and fitness (Stacey, 2011). An effective organisational response requires a holistic and integrated approach to organisational learning in a way that embraces complexity rather than managing for stability within tightly structured goals and objectives.

The following recommendations proposed are grounded in research-based data derived from the interviews of 26 participants analysed with reference to existing literature as well as the researcher's experiences as part of the organisation will give consideration to the peculiarity of the organisation and the cultural context that defines people's realities for the improvement of organisational learning practices at LAMATA. The recommendations is focused on strategies that improves the effective integration of learning across all levels at LAMATA to enable better feed forward and feedback mechanisms that is essential for effective coordinated organisational action.

### **5.3.1. Bridging the gap in espoused values and values in use**

**Problem:** There is an incongruence between organisational espoused values and theories in action (Argyris & Schön, 1974) related to the organisational philosophy of learning. LAMATA organisational espoused values are related to developing the organisational capacity for actions such as daring to be a different organisation that would transform the public transport system in Lagos, being creative and implementing innovative ideas, responsive and agile. These espoused values were illustrated through organisational vision, mission and core values and various organisational artefact that can be observed around the office as well as in conversational engagements using tag lines adopted at meetings, emails etc. However, organisational processes for learning was focused on the application of competency-based processes to develop standardised competencies with knowledge applied as an external reality that can be captured, codified and stored. This approach

focuses attention on compliance with no motivation or a conscious strategy to promote experimentation and risk-taking by organisational members.

**Discussion:** From the findings, participants perceived organisation learning in LAMATA was linked to formal training while largely ignoring many other informal processes of learning that frequently occurs during work as there was a lack organisationally construed meaning to enable an understanding of how we members could relate to it. The participants' accounts confirmed many instances of hidden learning that were not shared at the organisational level as it did not follow the patterns constructed by leaders as learning. The espoused values of being different were not operationalised as an organisational identity that staff could live out through their actions leading to tensions and crisis of "who are we"? Many of the staff were challenged with understanding what type of organisation LAMATA is and what it was trying to become with tensions associated with the rigid application of an established policy document that do not take into consideration the context of LAMATA's hybridity nor its cultural context.

**Actions:** Leaders and managers occupy powerful roles within the organisational hierarchies and influence understanding and behaviour and as such must recognize that values guide to action. The ability to bridge the gap between espoused and theories in use requires the process of interpretation, which enables the creation, and refinement of common language (Crossan et al 1999). A strategy for continuous evaluation of the link between espoused values and assumptions to organisational structures, processes and behaviour relative to intention helps members to reduce equivocality by interpreting through 'shared observations and discussion until a common grammar can be agreed upon' (Daft and Weick; 9: 291)

### 5.3.2. Recognition of learning as a social process situated in practice

**Problem:** Organisational learning practices at LAMATA is largely focused on the development of individual competence without a recognition of the situated and social nature of learning which limits the design and process of how learning practices are developed at LAMATA.

**Discussion:** Organisational learning practices at LAMATA is focused on developing individual competence with a high reliance on expert knowledge. However, the problem of public

transportation is about managing complexity and, uncertainty, which cannot rely only on the technical rationality of its experts. Organisational knowledge requires ongoing engagement with the problem resulting in organisational adaptation and resilience with organisational learning and knowledge enacted through organisational choice, action and outcomes. With participants' accounts confirming that working together generates emergent learning, requires organisational member's ability to engage in reflective practice for problem-solving promoting an action learning approach with a conscious cyclical process for action, reflection, planning, and action. In 2017, LAMATA launched the knowledge café initiative for the public transport and rail team to provide space and time for group learning from work problems. The knowledge café is a dedicated physical space (equipped with necessary resources such as flipcharts, markers and refreshments) designed to allow people to come together to discuss project problems to generate solutions.

**Actions:** Learning strategy must focus on the institutionalisation of knowledge such that learning can move from integration to the organisational level through the company wide deployment of the knowledge café initiative as part of the organisational learning strategy to improve the process of collective reflection. Institutionalisation is a means to leverage the learning of individual members with structures, systems and processes providing a context for interactions (Crossan et al, 1999). A formalised strategy that embeds the 'knowledge café' as part of common learning practice enables the integration of learning from individual to group and organisational level.

### 5.3.3. Improving organisational learning climate

#### 1. Learning needs assessment

**Problem:** The process for staff development assessment are top-down driven with limited opportunities for members to contribute to decisions regarding their own learning needs. As part of the performance appraisal process line managers are required to complete a staff development analysis form for all their direct reports which respondents assessed as ineffective and limit learning opportunities as managers cannot have a full picture of the needs of their subordinates. Some participants also narrated that the pressure related to being perceived as an expert leads them to hide their inadequacies from their managers.

**Discussion:** The top-down process of skill gap analysis is inadequate to assess training needs as its implementation is wholly dependent on the manager's style and behaviour towards learning. Some staff admitted that to avoid a loss of status or positional power, they do not admit to a lack of knowledge as the assessment is carried out as part of the performance appraisal. In order to promote a culture of learning, organisational members should have more responsibility for assessing their learning needs with the top down approach replaced with a participatory approach to staff development. Organisational members would improve intuition and interpreting processes when provided with the opportunity to contribute to decisions regarding their learning needs. Crossan et al, (1999) argue that intuition is the beginning of new learning with the process of interpretations enabling learning to move beyond the individual to the workgroup.

**Action:** The completion of the training needs assessment form should not form part of the appraisal process to eliminate counterproductive defensive routines (Argyris, 1990) related to appraisals that are perceived as a tool for reward or punishment. The completion of staff development assessment should begin with the individual identifying their training needs, which should include a linkage to their work is reviewed by the manager for implementation by the human resources department. This provides an opportunity for the staff to take more responsibilities for processes of intuition and interpretation with dialogue between the managers and subordinates integration of cognitive maps enabling coherence of actions (Crossan et al, 1999).

## 2. *Work autonomy*

**Problem:** The process for project management, which includes project identification, planning execution and monitoring at LAMATA, is rigid with project managers required to seek for approvals at many stages of project implementation process limiting the ability of the project team to take initiative hindering creativity and learning.

**Discussion:** The problem of public transportation is a complex social problem with problem-solving evolving from taking action and as such, project teams be empowered to take calculated risks within set boundaries. The devolution of project responsibility to the project teams within a given span of control will allow a balance between compliance and creativity that will enable teams to take initiatives for more effective responses to ongoing project

issues promoting the process of intuiting and interpretation at the individual level and integrating at the group level. Salter and Narver, (1995) argues that organisations in complex and dynamic environments must adopt an "organic form," that is decentralized and fluid to enable a lateral communication processes to facilitated the free flow of knowledge with an evolving nature of the organic structure addressing the dual needs for structure and autonomy.

**Action:** Manage project risk by breaking projects into different manageable parts with responsibility devolved to team leaders who are fully responsible for project outcomes. To ensure a balance between creativity and compliance, teams would be periodically required to present project updates through a process of reflective inquiry providing opportunities to challenge and review assumptions. The promotion of collective learning from questioning and inquiry promotes interpretation at the individual level and process of integration that enables coherent collective action by members through shared understanding and negotiated action (Crossan et al, 1999).

### 3. *Risk taking and experimentation:*

**Problem:** LAMATA's learning environment places a high value on expert knowledge and competence and as such people have a fear of making mistakes and this limits their motivation for experimentation leading to maintaining of status quo which is antithetical to learning.

**Discussion:** Members are motivated to take risks when there is trust that there will be no reprisal from failure. Stacey, (2011) contends that learning can be anxiety provoking and that sufficient trust is required in the organisation to engender innovation. Leaders and managers must demonstrate trust by allowing staff to propose and implement new ideas with no fear or burden of shame with failure tolerated as part of the learning process. Lipshitz et al. (2010) explicate that providing psychological safety for organisational members is a precondition for the development of effective organisational learning with processes of institutionalisation of structures, routines and programs promoting a degree of consensus and shared understanding (Crossan et al, 1999).

**Action:** A feasible approach will be to change the performance system to a developmental tool rather than its use as a punitive tool that penalises staff for mistakes. LAMATA should also remove a focus on celebrating only successful outcomes at project action review with team members also encouraged and rewarded when they can document and discuss lessons learnt from failures. Management must also show commitment to learning from failures by facilitating events to discuss failures or problems such that failures are no longer perceived as the “undiscussable” or negative part of organisational life.

#### 4. Open Dialogue

**Problem:** LAMATA organisational culture is influenced by a country culture with high power distance (Hofstede, 2011) formalised through hierarchical structures, which limits a members’ ability to engage in open dialogue with superiors. Leaders are shown a high degree of respect with authority figures and elders almost revered such that it would be seen as distasteful to voice dissenting opinions or openly criticising the view of a highly ‘experienced expert’. Respondents expressed that this negatively impacts effective communication and limits the exchange of ideas, open inquiry and questioning of held assumptions with staff members adopting a ‘follow the leader syndrome’ with knowledge flow suppressed within the hierarchy.

**Discussion:** The social context of learning is influenced and impacted by relational and political dynamics that limit effective interactions amongst organisational members. The process of learning can be anxiety provoking and requires that we pay attention to the dynamic interplay of emotions and power relations (Vince, 1999) affecting the patterns of communicative practices at LAMATA. Dialogue is a critical facet of effective organisational learning and a process that links individual and organisational learning (Senge, 1990; Isaacs 1993; Schein, 1993). Dialogue allows people to learn how to think together to produce an environment where people are consciously participating in the creation of shared meaning (Isaacs, 1993). The process of integration allows the evolution of shared meaning with dialogue used to convey both established meaning and the evolution of new ones (Crossan et al, 1999)

Leaders have a responsibility to facilitate the practice of dialogue that enables new ways for effective communication with leaders and manager modelling behaviours that encourages

open questioning, a process of inquiry that allows members to actively participate in decision-making. Leadership must take responsibility for creating behaviours that encourage staff to feel confident in sharing alternative views with 'deviant' behaviours tolerated and rewarded to reinforce this change depends on the relationship between the feed forward mechanisms of interpreting-integrating and the feedback mechanisms of institutionalisation-intuiting. Crossan et al, (1999) delineate that feed forward processes require a change from collection interpretation of maps with leading with action providing a path to shared understanding.

**Action:** Mentoring programs that pair's superiors with associates can reduce the negative impact of power distance with managers assigned staff member(s) to engage and interact at work and outside the work environment to promote interactions that are more informal. This fits into the narrative of leaders and subordinates as a product of Nigerian culture of patriarchy as leaders feel more personal responsibility towards their mentees or subordinates who also interprets the relationship from a nurture perspective with informal associations promoting trust and a bond that enables and improves discursive engagement. The process of adopting a different culture that expects candour from organisational members will also benefit from the use of an external facilitator to lead a series of sensitivity training for all members to recognise the negative impact of power distance on learning. Organisational members must collectively develop strategies to manage the cultural conditioning without necessarily seeking a drastic cultural shift that many may find unnerving or difficult to implement.

##### **5. Collaboration and interdependence.**

**Problem:** Organisational learning at LAMATA is situated in practice with effective collaboration among diverse members and skills. However, LAMATA is structured along departmental lines with appraisal systems designed to reward the individual rather than team effort which drives competitive behaviours that limit the sharing of relevant knowledge with knowledge seen as a source of power.

**Discussion:** The accounts of participants indicated that LAMATA has a wealth of learning at the group/team learning as when these diverse skills and personalities have to achieve an objective together there is more willingness to share knowledge for the success of the team.



Raelin, (2003) posits that collaboration is aligned with problem-solving with the parties involved interested in mutual exploration and development. The process of dialogue and conversation amongst individuals provides as a means of integrating new ideas and negotiating actions with others which is an integral part of the learning process (Crossan et al, 1999)

The findings suggest that that quality of project outcomes is improved when different members with diverse skills work collaboratively to achieve a goal. Teams composition should be dynamic with different projects providing different opportunities of bringing different people together to solve time-limited projects to promote a task orientation focus (Bernthal and Insko, 1993) which limits the problems associated with group dynamics such as group think (Janis, 1973). Organisational members at all levels must also be given the opportunity to participate in the strategy formulation process, which also enhances the feedforward, and feedback process across different levels in LAMATA.

**Action:** The use of cross-functional teams for project development and implementation rather than implementing projects within departments was identified as a strategy that improves the learning of members as the diversity of the team generates the cross fertilisation of ideas thereby leading to positive outcomes for LAMATA.

The performance appraisal system updated to recognise team effort rather than a focus on individual effort to enable an alignment between individual interests with team interest. The functional units may remain for structural classification; however, projects are carried out as work groups that are nominated from different departments with staff development targeted on group level rather than on individual basis to promote team spirit.

## 6. *Monitoring and performance evaluation.*

**Problem:** LAMATA has an outcome-focused approach to project measurement and evaluation which leads managers not to fully disclose and document failures or project problems so that they are not penalised. Edwards, (2002:334) argues that learning requires that error is embraced as an opportunity rather than as a mistake to be hidden. Where problems are identified, the current process of monitoring and evaluation leads to blame game amongst members thereby promoting defensive routines (Argyris, 1990) which limits learning.

**Discussion:** LAMATA is accountable to various stakeholders, which include patrons such as the government from which it derives its mandate, the multi-lateral agencies that provide financial and technical assistance, and the public transport users that are direct beneficiaries of the transport solutions. With the need to adjust to the performance evaluation requirements of its patrons, LAMATA has a strong focus for monitoring, evaluation and impact assessment, which is usually required by the government and the multilateral agencies to determine, document and report project progress to ensure that plans are carried out accordingly.

An outcome-focused approach has a short-term quantitative results orientation that emphasises easily measurable and quantifiable results over more ambiguous and less tangible change in social and political processes (Ebrahim, 2005). It is important to note that the assessment with a compliance and control focus can only enable correction of errors, which is only single loop learning with reflective practice that enables learning from failures will aid the development of double loop learning.

The link between performance evaluation and learning has been described as both practical and normative with the value of evaluation related to the systemic ways by which information can be fed into the decision-making process (Ebrahim,2005). Monitoring, evaluation and accountability is a relational concept that is reflective of the relationships among organisational members that are embedded in a social and institutional environment (Ebrahim, 2005) with knowledge generated from the evaluations enabling the improvement of actions through better knowledge and understanding (Fiol & Lyles, 1985).

**Action:** LAMATA to develop an evaluation and monitoring practice that is decoupled from formal reporting to stakeholders. In order to facilitate organisational learning from evaluation and feedback, LAMATA should develop an internally focused evaluation process that is embedded in the structures, processes and culture of LAMATA with contextual targets that shifts the focus of monitoring and evaluation as a scorecard or compliance mechanism to a method for process and outcome improvement. Diagnostic systems through formalized mechanisms enables the process of institutionalizing by creating a context through which events and experiences are interpreted (Crossan et al, 1999).

#### 5.4. Implementation actions and challenges

The responsibility of ensuring the implementation of recommendations has to be driven from the top as the Management and Leadership team must demonstrate commitment to the change process. The Management team's ability to address issues related to organisational identity, improving organisational learning climate and culture requires trust by members to reduce resistance to change.

The researcher being no longer part of LAMATA has a responsibility to provide a clear understanding of the main issues identified from the research and provide a concise guide for the implementation of recommendations to enable improved organisational learning practices at LAMATA. The researcher has had an initial meeting with the Management team to discuss the summary of findings and proposed recommendations. In integrating findings from the research and from organisational learning theory, the practical steps for implementing the different strategies and actions seek to improve feedback and feed forward mechanism for effective integration of learning at all levels in LAMATA.

The accounts of participants show that identity was central to interpretation and meaning making with the relationship between learning and identity mutually dependent and enabling (Corley et al, 2001) with a clarity of meaning impacting actions, interpretation and collective decision making. The researcher has proposed that LAMATA adopts the meaning of organisational learning adopted in this study, which is "as the process of improving actions through better knowledge and understanding" (Fiol and Lyles, 1985). This meaning provides a simple definition that aligns with the organisational goals and objectives of LAMATA.

In managing the process of change, Management have to depend on influence strategies as change rarely occurs when people are commanded but when they feel committed to both the process and the goal (Raelin, 2003). Nigerian culture is ingrained in our social way of life, it is critical that management understands that a change process that targets a cultural change in behaviours will require an evolution of change in small doses engendered through continuous organisational practice until it infectiously spreads across LAMATA. Members at LAMATA must be made conscious of the negative impact of hierarchical culture that creates outcomes such as "follow the leader syndrome" or "maintain your lane attitude" which is

not aligned with organisational strategy or intention. The main challenges for effective implementation includes structural, cultural and managerial.

**Structural:** LAMATA's structure as defined by law is a function-based hierarchy. However, organisational work structure follows as project based approach creating a misalignment between structure and strategy. Management must consciously ensure an alignment between the strategy and work processes and practices. An example would will include managing projects through work groups with functional units only serving as administrative classifications.

**Cultural:** David (1997) argues that changing a firm's culture to fit a strategy is usually more effective than changing a strategy to fit existing culture. However as culture comprise a set of norms that is imbued with meaning, unlearning these old values, assumptions and behaviours is clearly a difficult leadership challenge which requires commitment by Management to integrate the deployment of leadership tools that include visioning, persuasion, negotiation and storytelling with management systems that enable distributed leadership and effective communication across LAMATA.

**Managerial:** Management practices must be aligned to new behaviours with systems supporting a process of participative and collaborative knowledge exchange. The retreat and staff meeting provides a platform to facilitate collaborative engagement and open dialogue with all members of staff such that ideas can be shared without a fear of sanctions. Participatory inquiry can be encouraged with junior members of staff empowered in planning the retreat as well as allowed to facilitate aspects of retreat such that leadership team can lead from behind rather than from the front.

The table below shows a list specific change actions for implementation that has been discussed with the management team at LAMATA.

Problem	Actions
Align espoused values with values in use	<p>1. Launch the meaning of Organisational Learning as an office wide initiative by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Including Organisational Learning definition on the learning management platform (LMS)</li> <li>• Use as office artefact to gain recognition and acceptance</li> <li>• Explicit discussion on context of LAMATA as an hybrid organisation with recognition for ongoing conversations around questions of identity through:</li> <li>• Critical analysis of the following questions by management and the leadership team <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Who are we?</li> <li>b. What are we trying to do?</li> <li>c. What do we want to become?</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Including a session to discuss identity in relation to organisational goals during annual retreat. Leaders to facilitate the process of organising reflecting espoused values that is linked to the identity story of LAMATA.</li> <li>• Always include the context of hybridity and identity as talking points in the monthly staff meetings agenda such that it is always linked to strategy and action.</li> <li>• Adopt slogans such as “say it as it is” or “speak up” as part of the organisational newly espoused values, shared and reflected as organisational artefacts</li> </ul> <p><b>Issues to consider:</b>  Creation of meanings and symbolisms are essential for change and provides a quick win with collective interpretation of meaning developed at the organisational level.</p> <p><b>The issues around identity requires time and commitment by leadership to facilitate continuous collective reflection on organisational reality on an ongoing basis.</b></p> <p><b>The goal is to achieve adaptive learning which requires continuous interpretation of meaning.</b></p>
Recognition of learning as a social process situated in practice	<p>2. Facilitate integration and reflective practice</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implement the knowledge café initiative across LAMATA with all projects teams required to host an agreed minimum number of project review meetings which covers project initiation, execution and completion.</li> <li>• Project teams to share lessons learnt during the monthly staff meetings. This can be a 15-20 minutes showcase of team learning during the monthly TGIF events. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. What is the project objective?</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>b. How is it happening?</li> <li>c. What are the challenges that need solving?</li> <li>d. What do you require to address these challenges?</li> <li>e. What can LAMATA learn from the project?</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adoption of Post-mortem evaluation meetings with all project teams required to share positive and negative experiences and lessons learnt through stories and presentations after project completion. Discussion should include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. What went wrong in the project?</li> <li>b. What could have gone better?</li> <li>c. What did we learn?</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Incentivise this process by creating a team award category for the knowledge café initiative to recognize the most innovative teams with creative solutions to organisational problems thereby encouraging the development of loosely connected self-managed teams</li> <li>• The head of Human resource to include the criteria to win this award teams on the LAMATA learning portal</li> </ul> <p><b>Issues to Consider:</b>  <b>Ability to provide adequate incentives to facilitate voluntarily participation in the knowledge café initiative</b>  <b>Allocation of time and budget to facilitate sessions</b></p>
Improving organisational learning climate	<p>3. Facilitate collective learning through collaborative practices</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Remove the section of training needs from performance appraisal to promote more openness and acceptance of knowledge gaps.</li> <li>• The performance appraisal form should be redesigned to include a section where all staff reflect on their learning and are all required to document new knowledge from failures or mistakes</li> <li>• Change the responsibility of training assessment from the manager to the associate. All staff are required to self-assess their training requirements with a discussion and justification to their manager.</li> <li>• Include group targets in performance appraisal with certain percentage given for team performance.</li> <li>• Formalise the use of cross functional teams for project development and implementation with a requirement that projects teams must be chosen across different units rather than from functional units</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A new focus on celebrating failures with recognition given to staff or teams that provide lessons learnt from a failure or mistakes.</li> </ul> <p><b>Issues to Consider:</b>  <b>How to determine clear matrices for objective evaluation of team performance. Investing in management systems to facilitate effective and seamless teamwork. This action can be implemented in the short term and adopted within the appraisal cycle to facilitate prompt adoption.</b></p>
<p>Organisational culture influenced by country culture driven by high power distance</p>	<p>4. Facilitate employee empowerment and participation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implement a mentoring program and requiring all staff below Director level to choose an office mentor. Mentors would superior in hierarchy and would be required to meet formally at least once a month as well as informally outside the office.</li> <li>• Improve staff participation at meetings by allowing junior members staff to facilitate meeting rather than meetings led by managers</li> <li>• Launch an anonymous feedback process that allow staff to get information from across the hierarchy. This brings shadow themes into mainstream conversations.</li> </ul> <p><b>Issues to consider:</b>  <b>National culture is a strong influence on people’s identity and drastic changes may be disconcerting leading to resistance</b>  <b>Unlearning old behaviours and adopting new ones require commitment to change which requires reinforcing new behaviours overtime. Change would not occur immediately as behaviours must be a practice overtime.</b>  <b>Proposed cultural related changes must be developed organically and collectively negotiated over a period of time.</b></p>

### 5.5. Implications for practice and knowledge

The case study on LAMATA is an interesting and unique one as it seeks to understand the experiences of organisational learning by members at LAMATA to improve organisational ability to take effective action. LAMATA, a semi-autonomous agency in Lagos from inception touted the practice of organisation learning as a strategy for developing organisational competences to address the intractable social problem of public transportation. LAMATA derives its mandate as public transport regulator of the Lagos state government with a financial and technical institutional arrangement with the World Bank that has influenced the adoption of “western” new public management ideology into LAMATA’s structure, process and practices to develop institutional capacity to implement the reform agenda for public transportation in Lagos.

The research findings align with literature in terms of generic facilitators and inhibitors of learning. However, the most profound contribution of this research relates to the impact of national culture on organisational members as they seek to interpret and apply an identity and process that conflict with their cultural conditioning. The World Bank promotes a policy document with set objectives, measures, targets and institutional arrangements with organisational learning practices promoted as a known objective reality that is focused on behavioural and cognitive changes. However, in spite of the acceptance of “generic best practices” by LAMATA, solving real-world problems do not fit nicely into a script-driven solution and processes but must recognise the limitations that are driven by cultural conditioning as organisational members seek to achieve these set goals.

The role of the multi-lateral agencies was recognised by interview participants as critical to learning new ways and providing new perspectives on social development. However, an interpretation of the participants’ experiences shows that there was a lack of a recognition of the context of country culture in the institutional framework for LAMATA. This highlights the limitation of organisational learning models that are predicated on the western ideals or context without consideration of the cultural roots and history in which the organisation operates. Theimann et al., (2006) contends that though driven by good intentions, most western theories that have been applied to organisations in Africa have not achieved their desired outcomes as many Africans find it difficult to sacrifice their authenticity to fully embrace western ideals.

This case study has significant implications especially for practitioners in multi-lateral funded public sector agencies in developing economies. Reform agendas by developmental agencies that provide financial and technical support in underdeveloped countries such as Nigeria are focused on promoting institutional strengthening with a perspective that if the institutions can apply the right rules, processes and practices, they can easily deliver on their mandate and objectives. However, as organisational members engage with practice problem in their local context within the boundaries of imposed processes, the limits of their cultural conditioning create challenges for achieving effective learning practices. Parks et al, (2017) argues that most multilaterally funded agencies falter in the later years as a result of a focus on “institutional forms” (how institutions are organized) rather than improvements



in “institutional function” which allows public sector institutions to solve social problems using “home grown” approaches that are structured around Nigeria’s cultural realities.

The findings illustrate that a recognition and understanding of a cultural context is critical to finding the most feasible “rules” that is effective to drive social interactions more naturally and organically amongst a culture-sharing group. The solutions and recommendations proposed by this study have emerged from an iterative process of learning based on participants’ experiences, from experimentation and trial and error rather than following a prescriptive program of actions that do not consider contextual and situational factors.

### **5.6. Limitations**

This case study has been able to achieve its objectives though like all research it is not without its limitations. Firstly, the research accounts are from the experiences of members in a unique public sector agency in Lagos with the hybrid context an important influence on how the members contextualise their organisation. Their interpretation of their experience of organisational learning makes the concept of generalizability of the research a contested issue with the nature, specific context, time and prevailing culture of the organisation making the outcomes of the study not easily transferable. However, the research may provide vicarious learning to organisations with similar and peculiar context like LAMATA, which can lead to naturalistic generalisation of the research.

Secondly, the qualitative research sample was limited to the experiences of 26 participants out of the 107 organisational members. Though the sample is diverse in characteristics, it may seem to provide a fraction of data from the possible range experiences of people in LAMATA. However, the many converging themes shared by the participants provides a reasonable assumption that the study provides a recognisable picture of participants’ experiences of organisational learning In LAMATA.

Thirdly the case study research gives voice to participant experiences within an artificially bounded system of LAMATA. As the research was focused on the experiences of members at LAMATA, there was no representative data from the perspectives of other critical stakeholders such as public transport users and operators or ministries within the transport

sector that interact and collaborate with LAMATA, which could have provided a broader and holistic interpretation of the sectorial context.

Fourthly, as an interpretive study, the research does not seek to provide objective and logical truth but depends on the accounts of participants with rich descriptions enabling readers to make decisions on the applicability of findings (Creswell and Miller,2000) with each participant account contributing to understanding the problem.

Fifthly, because of issues beyond the control of the researcher, there was no opportunity to apply and evaluate the case study to move beyond organisational problem identification and analysis to an application of action solution and evaluation. However, the proposed solutions are based on a full diagnosis of the problem through a process of collaboration and co-inquiry.

Lastly, the principal researcher was an insider researcher solely responsible for all aspects of the case study including data collection, analysis and interpretation risking a potential researcher bias. However, the researcher constantly engaged in reflexivity by challenging her own assumptions in the interpretation of data. This was also mitigated by providing research participants with the interview transcripts for validation as well as relying on the independent review by the primary supervisor.

### **5.7. Further research**

The findings of this case study were based on the accounts of the experiences of members of LAMATA regarding their enactment of organisational learning to provide broader implications for how the practice of organisational learning can be improved to enable improved organisational outcomes. The study has been able to provide an in-depth understanding of how learning and knowledge occur in a unique public sector organisation with a clarity of the mechanisms that facilitate effective learning and recommendations for improvement.

The study falls short in its action research objective in terms of applying practical action solutions and evaluating change with further research required to complete the action research cycle by moving from research about action to research in action (Coghlan and Brannick, 2014). This is important as collaborative learning can emerge as the organisation takes action and evaluates proposed change concurrently. There has been initial discussions

with the management of LAMATA by the researcher to present recommendations of the study for deliberation and implementation. Further considerations for implementation is discussed in chapter 6.

Further research will also be required to assess and evaluate the effectiveness of the recommendations and actions with the process of reflection leading to further cycles of action research to accommodate new insights and knowledge arising from the implementation of the solution actions.

The findings also uncovered some significant issues that need a deeper exploration to provide a deeper understanding of organisational learning and knowledge in the particular context of Nigeria. The prevailing Nigerian culture is highly patriarchal with a high power distance orientation driving a hierarchical and highly formalised structure, which has been identified as an inhibitor for organisational learning. The main challenge for LAMATA is how to develop into an organisation that is good at learning within such an antithetical structure. LAMATA has also been identified as a hybrid organisation with members challenged by how to manage the associated tensions of different institutional logics which affects members' interpretation of organisational reality within the Nigerian cultural context. The recommendations of this study are carefully grounded in a recognition of these contextual issues with further research required to deliberately explore the following significant issues that were uncovered from the research.

- How is organisational learning and knowledge shaped by the tensions and constraints of competing institutional logics?
- How can organisations manage the impact of a country cultural dimension on organisational learning processes, structure and climate?

### **5.8. Summary**

This case study explored how learning occurred amongst organisational members at LAMATA and given its specific context, what behaviours, practices and systems can enable effective workplace learning to improve organisational ability to respond to the messy social problem of public transportation in Lagos, Nigeria.

Organisational learning was identified as a strategy to develop institutional capacity to resolve this intractable messy problem with organisational learning practices at LAMATA

evolving over time driven initially from capability and competence perspective with the process of organisational strategy acting as learning spaces (Cuccurullo and Lega, 2013). As a hybrid organisation, LAMATA must adapt to the disparate logic of public sector management in Nigeria with “best practices” structure and processes imposed by the financial and institutional arrangements with the World Bank. The institutional logic required for managing the interests of these stakeholders creates a tension of identity as organisation members have to constantly find ways to cope with different interpretations of reality, norms of appropriate behaviour and different success criteria (Johansen et al., 2015).

The research adopts an interpretive case study approach to generate the multiple realities of the subjective experiences of the participants as a basis for evidence-based recommendations for improving learning practices in LAMATA. The choice of the interpretive paradigm enables an understanding of the experiences of a particular people in a particular context on how they make meaning of events and its impact of how they take organisational action.

The research findings illustrate that meaning matters as our view of the world is created through the lenses of our conceptions, through which we interpret and act (Pratt, 1992). Participants provided varied conceptions of learning as a process, product, or outcome that can be active, static, reactive or emergent. Participants accounts indicated a lack of organisational conception for organisational learning with diverse interpretation illustrating what they identified or linked to the concept as result of organisational strategies, processes and their experiences, creating a gap between organisational intention and reality.

As a hybrid organisation, the combination of two disparate identities also created tension for organisational members on how to reconcile the multiple organisational logics to cultural norms and behaviour. This tension of identity is highly correlated to the conflict generated from applying best practices western script of governance influenced by the World Bank governance to a national culture of Nigeria influenced by patriarchy with a high power distance orientation with this conflicting identity creating challenges for organisational members.

Organisational learning and knowledge occurred through rationality driven structures and processes created by LAMATA and also from emergent and evolving social processes that were driven by the interaction of organisational members as they fulfil their agency responsibilities. Workplace learning was a social construction enacted as members organised around work with the diversity of their interactions and interdependence impacting organisational practice in many unpredictable ways.

Organisational learning and knowledge were positively driven by an organisational focused strategy on learning, leadership commitment to facilitate learning at all levels and effective human resource practices such as selective hiring, retention strategies and performance measurement systems. Organisational learning was on the other hand inhibited by organisational culture that was influenced by the national culture, organisational structure that promotes rigid functional hierarchies, leadership style and behaviour that limits initiatives and creativity and ineffective process of communication that limits interdependence and stifles the flow of information, learning and knowledge.

The insights gained from the findings provided a basis for feasible recommendations within the context of the organisational identity and culture on how to improve the practice organisational learning at LAMATA from different dimensions of structure, processes and actions. From the dimension of the structure, Learning at LAMATA would benefit by replacing functional project teams with cross-functional teams to improve collaboration, interdependence and synergy. As regards to processes, enabling staff more autonomy for project management and leading an active role in planning their learning will enable creativity, experimentation and application of new ideas. In terms of new behaviours, a mentoring scheme aimed at reducing the power distance across the levels of the hierarchy with senior members acting as mentors for junior members can enable more fluid interactions. Organisational strategies around goal attainment should also be aligned with the identity question to ensure that espoused values are aligned with theories in use.

The recommendations proposed provide a baseline for a better understanding of organisational learning in the context of a public sector agency in a developing economy. The study draws attention to the significance of context in applying best practice solutions with any feasible recommendations on how to enhance the learning process in an

organisation must recognise the influence of cultural conditioning on how practices, structures and processes can be effectively implemented.

## CHAPTER 6: REFLECTIONS FROM THE RESEARCHER

### 6.1. Joining LAMATA

I joined LAMATA as pioneer financial accounts specialist in 2003 having worked for over ten years in the private sector. I had responded to a newspaper advert and found out during the interview that the organisation was a public sector institution. I was hesitant to accept the job offer at first because of the bad perception of the public sector. However, two members of the management team at the interview projected a transformative vision of what was about to happen in the transport sector. I accepted the offer of employment and began work at LAMATA as one of the 14 pioneer staff with a desire to make a difference. I joined with no public sector, transport sector or World Bank assisted project experience, and on my first day at work, the Managing Director informed me that I would be required to attend the first of a series of training for Accountants on World Bank assisted programs.

### 6.2. The MBA experience

In 2005, as part of my performance appraisal, my manager suggested that I would benefit from an MBA to develop my managerial competence. My performance had been rated as exceptional for two years in a row, and my manager believed that I was ready for a senior manager role. I enrolled for the MBA program in 2006 at Lagos Business School and was stimulated by a new experience and consciousness to learning. The method of instruction followed the case study approach and the use of learning groups required to meet to analyse and solve the cases together. This was a different type of learning compared to my undergraduate years, which was a teacher-led and highly individualistic approach. Learning in Business School required that we challenge each other's assumptions as well as open our ideas to critical questioning with a new recognition of the effectiveness of learning and knowledge creation through interaction with diverse people with different skills providing me with a glimpse of how my knowledge was highly value-laden driven by my beliefs, assumptions and experiences.

### **6.3. A new challenge**

On the completion of my MBA in 2008, I was promoted to the position of Director of Business Systems with the responsibility for Human Resources and Information Technology. This promotion was very significant as I was the first staff to be promoted into the Management level and the first female Director at LAMATA. The knowledge I had gained during my MBA had given me more confidence and determination to challenge and question some organisational assumptions and ways of doing things. I had approached my work as an intrapreneur and gained more influence across hierarchical levels.

The promotion offered me with the authority to address some of the tensions inherent in the process of managing that I believed had limited my ability to fully participate and develop effectively when I was a specialist. LAMATA is hierarchical and masculine oriented, impacting the process of effective participation in organisational decisions making.

### **6.4. The DBA experience**

The aspiration to improve my performance led to my choice of embarking on the DBA, which I saw as a way to enhance and validate my intellectual credentials and competence. At that time LAMATA had two PhD holders one of whom was the Managing Director as well a PhD student. LAMATA highly valued academic qualifications and the ability to create knowledge or apply proven ideas to work problems. My MBA experience had improved my critical thinking, questioning skills and the understanding of never making assumptions without a factual basis. I had the interest to influence change based on decisions from knowledge derived through a systematic generation of evidence. The DBA offered me an opportunity to assess organisational behaviour through an evidenced approach rather than depending only on theoretical models, gut feeling or personal judgement. The DBA allows relevant knowledge to transcend the divide between specific contextual knowing and general theoretical knowing (Aram and Salipante, 2003) where the relevance of a theory is its ability to improve the utility of practice such that organisational performance can be improved.

#### **6.4.1. Learning from the taught modules and implications for practice**

The taught modules created light bulb moments that challenged many preconceived assumptions I had about managing and organising. As the Director of Business systems, I saw my role as a prime mover that creates change (Macy & Izumi, 1993) with a desire to



develop my leadership skills and be an “object and agency of change” (Storey, 1992:214). I led several significant change initiatives at LAMATA to enhance organisational performance however my perception of change followed a deterministic approach with organisational practices designed to maintain order and equilibrium. As part of the Nigerian society, I am a product of hierarchy, patriarchy and power distance orientation, with all these forces framing the interpretation of my realities and shaping my worldviews.

I had brought into my role preconceived notions of good leader practice, which traditionally in Nigeria means you lead the way and manage a process that ensured that others followed. I had also assumed that the strategy for managing people effectively was based on factors such as good working conditions, competitive incentive structures and practices that ensured high morale with determining the right processes for planning and control would all lead to improved organisational performance.

As the Director of Business Systems, I had the responsibility to ensure that LAMATA was run like a well-oiled machine. A desire to gain acceptance within a system of patriarchy influenced my approach to achieving improved organisational performance as dependent on processes that promoted order with a rationalisation of bureaucratic relationships becoming less negotiated and more structured with these rules eventually confining members as if bound by iron bars (Barker, 2005). The desire to maintain organisational order led to a focus on the rationality of the rules in and of themselves for decision making without a consideration of its impact on people’s lives (Kalberg, 1980).

The taught modules brought an understanding of how organisations are shaped by power relations with emotional and political forces occurring together (Vince, 2001). I began to recognise different forms of resistance such as ambivalence (Pederit, 2001), cynicism and scepticism (Fleming and Spicer, 2002), organisational silence (Morrison and Milliken, 2000) which all influenced how members participated in our process of organising. The process of self-questioning and reflection also brought a recognition of the tensions that my promotion had inadvertently created as I had become a boss over some men who were formerly superior to me in the hierarchy.

The leadership and community module opened my eyes to the insight on how to manage the activity of leadership as related to moral, emotional and relational aspects rather than

on rational and technical elements. The module on complex adaptive system also strongly influenced my approach to address organisational defensiveness to change by initiating programs that fostered familiarity amongst staff such as the “Thank God It is Friday”(TGIF) event which was an end of the month activity that allowed staff to interact informally as a means for addressing issues of power relations. I became aware of the link between the dynamics of communicative interaction and patterns of strategizing with change occurring when there are shifts in communicative practices (Stacey, 2011). The taught modules enabled the evolution of my identity and I assumed the profile of a tempered radical (Meyerson and Scully, 1995) seeking for change from the margins by maintaining my relationship with the management which I was now a part of and other organisational members that viewed my role as a boundary spanner having been previously one of them.

#### **6.4.2. Conducting the thesis and implication for development as a scholar-practitioner**

How do we learn at LAMATA and how can it be improved has been a question that I have asked myself all through my taught modules. My initial research intention was to evaluate our Knowledge Management System (KMS), which was a World Bank’s initiative to promote “South-South learning” for learning and knowledge sharing within and across borders. The implementation of the knowledge management systems had made LAMATA a poster child for the World Bank and celebrated for the adoption of their knowledge management framework, and I had wanted to analyse its effectiveness in LAMATA.

However, I soon realised that the evaluation of the knowledge management system would not holistically capture and interpret the complexity inherent in the process of learning and knowledge creation in LAMATA as it was yet to be applied across the organisation. I decided it was more relevant and essential to understand how members experienced learning. The interest was driven by the desire to broaden the base of my thinking about managing in organisations and to acquire knowledge not for its own sake but for improving myself as well as contribute to solving organisational problems. During the knowledge creation module, I had written in one of my critical action learning report the type of change that I envisioned for LAMATA:

***“My process of inquiry and reflexivity have allowed a deeper questioning of beliefs with an awareness of how our theories in use (Argyris & Schon, 1974) guides our***

***actions. We must develop a process that can enable the freedom from unseen constraints of habit, ideology coercion, and precedent (Carr & Kemmis, 1986). We have to value our own experiences and create our models based on a better understanding of our realities.” (OFJ)***

The recognition that "I am part of the problem, and the problem is part of me" (Pedler, 2011) inspired me to conduct an action research on LAMATA to improve the experience of organisational life by integrating three voices with the research for me, for us and for them (Reason and Marshall, 1987)

The case study was of specific importance because LAMATA prides itself as a knowledge-driven organisation with the application of different learning strategies perceived as the effective means for developing staff and organisational capacity in taking effective action to resolve the problem of public transportation in Lagos. There is also limited research on learning in public sector organisations in Nigeria and as such this research was to provide an in-depth insight of learning practices in this context that will be of value to both academics and practitioners.

As the Director responsible for managing learning processes in LAMATA, I was under the illusions of the effectiveness of the rational approach to organisational learning with initiatives driven by the need to shape organisational members knowledge about the "right" ways to act and interact in the organisation. I also took for granted the effectiveness of the application of western-led approaches promoted by the World Bank with these rules and processes perceived as a panacea for solving the ills and challenges that plagued the Nigerian Public sector. I assumed that as LAMATA had adopted western ideologies to management, we were insulated from issues of power asymmetries, ambiguity, and complexity that was rife within the Nigerian Public sector.

The key finding of the research for me personally was the tension between organisational espoused ideals of creativity, innovation and emergence and the organisational reality of governing rules that promoted compliance and control. Organizational members were constantly managing and negotiating between these tensions with varied responses and outcomes. Within these tensions, organizational members are sometimes able to find spaces for emergent learning, sometimes feeling constrained by the structures inhibiting

their effectiveness, sometimes embracing the control, and applying the structures to improve their competence e.g. through formalised training.

As an insider researcher, I was made more aware of the how the influence of emotions, organisational politics and power relations and social dynamics determine the possibilities and limitations of learning and organising (Vince 2001). This study makes a valuable contribution to practitioners in Public sector organisation especially in Nigeria for understanding the importance of context such that organisational practices are reflective of the social context within which an organisation operates. The phrase “think global act local” becomes a significant strategy for LAMATA to effectively adapt to “international best practices” without having to sacrifice valued cultural identity or norms with the implementation of the recommendations from the research findings a first step towards changing the way the LAMATA approaches the process of organising and managing.

As I reflect on the development of my identity as a scholar-practitioner, I have gained an appreciation of the power of systematic questioning which provided me with insights into people’s emotions and gave voice to their interpretation of organisational life. My process of knowledge construction consciously integrated different voices that included receiving knowledge by listening to others, organisational learning literature that provided me with procedural knowledge to develop and apply reasoning, and critical thinking and reflection that enabled me to value my inner voice.

### **6.5. Practical application of research**

I am no longer a member of LAMATA, and the implementation of the actions of this study now rests with the organisation. However, I have an interest in enabling practical application of the recommendations, and I have had an initial discussion with current Managing Director of LAMATA who was incidentally one of the interview respondents on facilitating an organisational change program based on the recommendations. A copy of the thesis will be submitted to the management of LAMATA with an executive summary of the recommendations and the concrete actions. The report will also include the details of the implementation of the proposed solutions, identification of resources required for the action and possible challenges that should be envisaged with a plan to mitigate or manage the change process.

In retrospect, the research on organizational learning at LAMATA should have included the World Bank project team as part of the research participants in an effort to go beyond institutional boundaries of LAMATA to facilitate change in both the practice and process of project development and implementation. With their role as both technical and financial stakeholder for LAMATA, a participatory action inquiry approach enables a process that allows them to better recognise and understand the influence and impact of cultural dimension on their approaches to project implementation and outcomes. The World Bank with their interest social development through knowledge exchange amongst member countries is critical to the process of facilitating change. I have had preliminary discussions with a World Bank team leader that was part of the LAMATA LUTP project with a view to presenting the findings of my case study to the knowledge management team at the World Bank. The objective is that the study can provide a basis to consider the impact of the country cultural dimension in the design of future World Bank projects in Nigeria and other developing economies.

### **6.6. Embarking on a new journey**

I had to leave LAMATA because it was time to chart a new course for my career. My current practice is a private sector organisation that is part of a global US franchise with our practices also influenced by our international affiliate. I have also observed how the leadership team are constantly negotiating our cultural identity whilst searching for a fit within the context of global rules and policies. My current organisation will also benefit from the insight gained on the research on LAMATA by sharing the research findings on how the meshing of disparate cultures creates tensions for people because of cultural conditioning.

I have brought the new insights and understanding into my leadership approach with more focus on developing my associate's competences to “take part” in the process of organising and managing. I now take a leaderful approach (Raelin, 2003) with my position more about creating fluid forms of conversation (Stacey, 2011) and promoting active participation by providing opportunities for my team to create and shape our realities. I now lead by asking questions rather than telling, by participating rather than controlling or giving directions without abdicating in my leadership responsibility. With an awareness of our social and cultural identity, my process of communicative interaction now seeks to enable the

emancipatory potential of learning through understanding, with questioning not only a quest for solutions but an opportunity to explore different worldviews.

## 6.7. Conclusion

The quote “*When we change the way we look at things, the things we look at change*” by Wayne Dyer typifies my scholar practitioner journey as it brought to my consciousness new ways for understanding and knowing. The DBA changed the way that I look at things bringing about change and growth.

The scholar practitioner journey brought to my consciousness the recognition of key influences and drivers of my values, assumptions, biases and beliefs through which I interpreted my realities and interacted with others. The process of reflection enabled me to recognise my role in the promotion of practices that enabled power asymmetries and cultural conditioning that help to maintain these inequalities and marginalisation.

The DBA was a journey of self-discovery and personal evolution. When we know better, we act better (Maya Angelou) summarises my learning experiences. The DBA journey was aimed at improving my practice, but I have become enriched with better knowledge influencing not only practice but also my approach to how I live my life with the emancipatory potential of learning enabling life-sustaining change.

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## **APPENDIX 1: INTERVIEW GUIDE**

### **PROTOCOL**

Welcome participants

Explain the purpose of my research.

Explain why I am interviewing practitioners at LAMATA for my study on Organizational learning within the context of the public sector.

Review the consent agreement

Remind all participants of confidentiality and guarantee the anonymity of their presented opinions.

Inform them of their right to stop their participation at any time if they desire

Inform that they will get a copy of the transcripts when it is completed to enable them verify what I have presented.

### **INTRODUCTION**

- a) How did you start your work in the public sector?
- b) What is your main activity in LAMATA
- c) Describe your role in LAMATA

### **CONFIRM DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION**

- a) Age
- b) Gender
- c) Grade/ Position
- d) Highest educational qualification
- e) Years of work experience
- f) Length of time in organization

### **List of Research Questions**

- 1. What do you understand as organization learning?
- 2. How do you think people learn in the workplace?
- 3. In your view, is organizational learning taking place within LAMATA?
  - a. If NO please explain why not?

- b. If YES please provide an example to illustrate OL in LAMATA.
4. What is your experience of organizational learning at LAMATA
5. In your opinion how does organizational learning impact your work practices?
6. Please provide an example to illustrate.
7. Can you recall a personal learning experience that impacted your work? (explain context of learning, the process and the content of what was learnt and why you consider it critical/impactful)
8. What would you say, are the indicators of impact resulting from this learning experience?
9. What would you consider as the top 5 factors (e.g. contextual, organizational systems, processes, personal) that facilitate learning in the workplace?
10. What would you consider as the top 5 factors (e.g. contextual organizational systems, processes, personal) that impede or are barriers to learning in LAMATA?
11. What organizational practices or/and processes can improve your experience of organizational learning in a way that can help to improve how you work?
12. Do you think organizational learning and knowledge sharing are promoted in LAMATA
  - a. if so how?
  - b. If Not how can Knowledge sharing be promoted in LAMATA
13. What type of incentives do you think can promote collective learning and knowledge sharing practices in LAMATA?
14. Is there anything else you would like to tell me that I have not covered in my questions?

Thank you for your time and participation. As already stated, there are procedures to ensure your confidentiality and anonymity.

Your responses will only be used for this study and you will receive a copy of the transcript of this interview for your review.



## APPENDIX 2: LIST DOCUMENTARY DATA

s/n	Document name	Data type	Contribution to data
1	LAMATA: A blue ocean strategy	A case study by Prof Ibanez-Gomez of the Harvard Kennedy School of Government	Information on LAMATA specifically on strategy and leadership at LAMATA
2	LAMATA	A case study by Dayyo Mobereola	The case on LAMATA: Lessons learnt on LUTP 1. Information across time
3	LUTP 1 and 2 Implementation completion report	Report 2010 and 2017	Project completion report that shows all the activities of LAMATA and processes and systems adopted LUTP 1 and 2
4	LUTP: Strategic master plan	Report (2014)	Information about LAMATA strategic direction
5	Transportation in emerging megacities: The case of Lagos	Case study by Bongo Adi of the Lagos Business School	The activities of LAMATA in reforming the public transport sector
6	Stuck in traffic: Urban Transport in Africa	Case study January 2008 by Ajay Kumar and Fanny Barrett of the World Bank	Urban transport situation in Lagos and role of LAMATA
7	Knowledge sharing implementation guide	Activity guide, assessment tool	LAMATA knowledge management guide
8	Minutes of management meeting	Minutes of meeting from 2005 to 2016	Management meeting discussions related to implementing or managing organizational changes.
9	LAMATA knowledge sharing project	video	A video documenting knowledge sharing processes
10	Training needs assessment	form	Forms used for training needs planning for all staff
11	Staff handbook	manual	Information on organizational policies
12	Newspapers	Articles on LAMATA	Information on LAMATA's plans and activities
13	Knowledge assets	report	Documents showing codification of knowledge
14	User manuals	Manuals and work guides	Step by step guide that helps users complete a process or respond to an unexpected occurrence
15	LAMATA website	Information and articles	Publicly shared LAMATA information
16	World Bank website	Project information	Triangulation
17	Case on LAMATA	A case study by Prof Nuno Gil-University of Manchester	Used for data triangulation
18	Lagos state budget (Gazette 2004-2017)	Annual budget of the Lagos state government	Data on economic and financial indicators on Lagos state projects.