

We have ways of making you ...
Implementation of frontline management in the
Western Australian minerals and energy industry

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Abstract

Western Australia's minerals and energy industry is a very significant, broadly spread industry that operates 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, often in isolated regions. The industry makes a significant investment in management development and is constantly looking for opportunities to offer company-based learning that meets regulatory imperatives and the challenges of location diversity. The national evaluation of the Frontline Management Initiative (Barratt-Pugh & Soutar 2002) suggests that management development is pivotal in forming workplace learning. This paper builds upon that work and details research into the practices and impact of frontline management development in the minerals and energy industry of Western Australia (Barratt-Pugh & Watson 2002). Using the voices of practitioners, the paper provides an in-depth view of the current development of frontline managers in the Western Australian minerals and energy industry and tells of the outcomes for managers, organisations, and their business. Finally the paper comments on the paradox experienced by managers seeking to extend their managing self within a system that mandates their achievement of defined management qualifications, and reflects on the brokerage role being played by The Chamber of Minerals and Energy of Western Australia in negotiating the complexity of these emerging learning patterns, relations and spaces.

Introduction

In 1995 the Industry Task Force on Leadership and Management Skills argued that improvement in the performance of Australia's managers was critical to the country's future economic performance and recommended the establishment of a national training program with a target of 80 000 frontline managers (Karpin 1995). Under ANTA guidance, the Frontline Management Initiative (FMI) was developed and piloted in six sites during 1996/7, and launched as the first national training package in late 1998. The FMI led the second-generation approach to competency-based, workplace-based learning in Australia by distancing itself from instructional curriculum, systematic skilling, and procedural acquisition (Stevenson 1996). The FMI facilitated adaptive learning practices where competency is seen as a continual learning process within a workplace (Engestrom 1999). The FMI is the first national program of competency-based management development in Australia, and is based on a flexible framework, capable of being tailored to differing enterprise contexts.

In February 2000, the extensive ANTA/NCVER funded national evaluation of the FMI began, and examined the impact of the FMI in workplaces at the individual, organisational and business levels, assessing the value of particular strategic approaches to FMI in improving performance (Barratt-Pugh & Soutar 2002). This evaluation found that over 30,000 frontline managers in Australian enterprises were engaging in the FMI along a continuum of practice from external courses delivered didactically with little management involvement,

through to workplace learning models with diverse learning pathways and strong management support (Barratt-Pugh & Soutar 2002).

Stemming from the publication of the national evaluation, the Chamber of Minerals and Energy of Western Australia (Chamber) decided to contract similar research in late 2002 to investigate the operation of the FMI in the Minerals and Energy Industry of Western Australia (MEIWA). Their specific interest was how the FMI had developed within the industry climate of mandatory management qualification achievement, driven by changes in Health and Safety legislation. This paper provides a background to the MEIWA, describes the research methodology, provides the voices of practitioners in the findings, discusses the emerging concepts, and concludes with some observations on the paradox of the mandatory introduction to the industry of a learning technology, embedded within learner-centred and workplace-centred interaction, that is generating new and complex learning partnerships, negotiation and activity.

Background

Western Australia's minerals and energy industry is significant in world production terms and accounts for 7% of liquefied natural gas, 7% of gold, 17% of iron ore, 18% of nickel, 20% of alumina, 22% of diamonds, 45% of tantalum (DoIR 2003). Developing the management skills for this industry is therefore a critical national challenge as the industry is diverse, complex and covers exploration, processing, downstream value-adding and 40 refining processes. The MEIWA is the largest industry sector in WA, producing \$26.8 billion, 66% of WA's exports, a quarter of the Gross State Product, and revenues that are more than double the State budget (DoIR 2003). The industry employs directly 41 000 people and indirectly 106 000 people, funding one in every six jobs within the State (CMEWA 2002, p.8).

The MEIWA is technologically advanced and capital intensive. It operates on a 24 hour 365 days a year basis and is highly dispersed in regional and remote areas, with the majority of personnel employed under fly-in-fly-out contractual arrangements (CMEWA 1998, p.8). The industry values skill development and workplace reform as a key to higher productivity achievement, making a comparatively significant investment in management development (CMEWA 1998, p.4). Recent mergers are breaking down traditional insularity and increasing collaborative responses (CMEWA 2001, p.2).

The national evaluation of FMI highlighted the value of having a supporting agency that could "network FMI users", facilitate "interaction and dialogue between them about FMI practices", and "research FMI best practice to provide case material which could influence CEOs and senior managers to invest in developmental FMI models" (Barratt-Pugh & Soutar 2002, p.13). In Western Australia the Chamber carries out that function representing 105 member companies responsible for 90% of exploration and production (CMEWA 2001). The Chamber supports the industry through promoting best practice, reducing business costs, influencing government and engaging with the community (CMEWA 2001, p.10). The Chamber plays a key role in supporting the development and management of cooperative systems within the MEIWA.

In 1997 an inquiry into fatalities in the WA mining industry called for a review of the certification process for all managers in ‘statutory positions’ required under the Mines Safety and Inspection Act 1994, and identified the need for management development to form part of the certification process (MOSHAB 1997). The subsequent Chamber and State Department working party recommended the FMI as the benchmark minimum standard for the statutory positions (DME 2000, p.3). This was endorsed by all member companies, and amendments to the Act are anticipated in 2003 making it mandatory for statutory certificate holders to have gained the FMI qualification (CMEWA 1999a, p.1).

The Chamber promotes such legislated ‘Applicable Training’ as a part of a range of long-term strategies to “effect behavioural change across the minerals industry.” (CMEWA 1999a, p.2). It positions the FMI as a technology focusing “on the operational needs of a company, the tasks that its supervisors and managers do or should be doing, and the competencies they need for those tasks.” (CMEWA 1999a, p.17). It endorses the move from a training approach towards a learning approach (CMEWA 1999a) and encourages its member companies to ensure that the FMI learning is situated and operating within flexible and diverse systems (Harris & Volet 1996; Candy 1997; Hager 1998). It vocalises the importance of the FMI for companies seeking to drive cultural change within their workforce and organisations (CMEWA 2001) and indicates in its texts, the value of the FMI in creating the innovative and adaptive cultures (Argyris & Schon 1986; Marsick & Neaman 1996; Volet 1998; Watkins 1996).

Research aim and conceptual framework

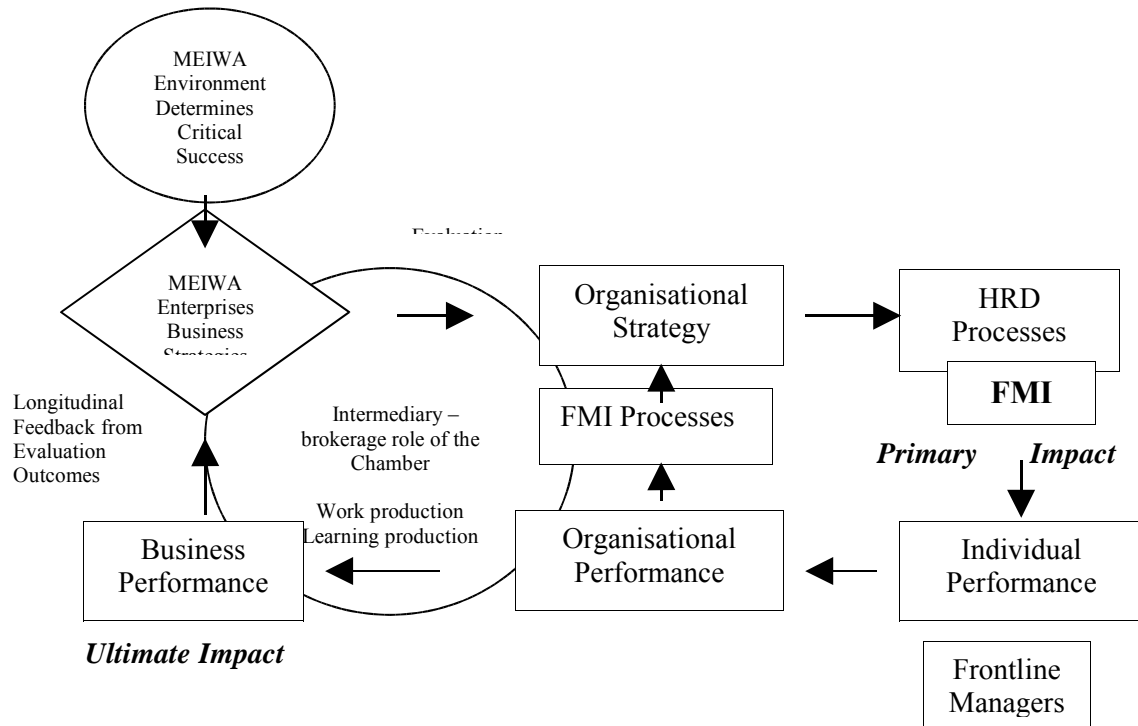
The primary aim of the MEIWA research project (Barratt-Pugh & Watson 2002) was to provide the Chamber with recent, realistic and authentic information on the operation of the FMI within the industry since 1997. The Chamber wanted to monitor the reality and to provide case data that might encourage uptake and enhance the quality of practices. The study was framed by two main questions. How the enterprises of the MEIWA had implemented the FMI? What impact the FMI had had on individuals, their organisations and ultimately each business in the MEIWA.

- What critical negotiation and relationship issues need to be considered in planning FMI in MEIWA.
- What FMI learning practices appear to be most effective.
- How FMI has improved individual frontline managerial performance.
- How FMI has improved organisational performance.
- What business performance improvements FMI has delivered.

The conceptual framework used in the MEIWA research was a variation of that used in the national evaluation of FMI (Barratt-Pugh & Soutar 2002), which itself was based on the causal development chain suggested within the Karpin Report (1995). In the conceptual framework, shown in Figure 1, MEIWA enterprises determine strategies to survive and prosper in the business environment. Strategies have tacit or explicit HR processes within which the FMI may be included. The FMI has initial individual impact, subsequent organisational impact, and ultimately business impact. FMI practices also become party to the organisational operation. In MEIWA the Chamber plays an intermediary brokerage role with FMI supporting enterprise strategies and

performance, influencing the quality of organisational processes and monitoring both workplace performance by the organisation and learning practices within the organisation.

Figure 1: MEIWA Conceptual Framework



Based on Barratt-Pugh & Soutar 2002

Research design and method

This was an inductive qualitative study based primarily on multiple embedded case studies, wrestling with the tyranny of distance (Yin 1994). The core case studies were supplemented with a broader survey within the industry. The selection of the cases was purposive, ensuring both effective access and an effective distribution according to geography, company size and type of operation.

Thirteen companies were selected in conjunction with the Chamber for the broad survey and three of these organisations subsequently became case studies. The broad survey used the primary interview questions to gain qualitative responses from managers responsible for training activity by telephone or by e-mail. The three case study sites were either remote or rural operations. They each received two-day site visits during which five deep interviews were held and recorded at each site, while available texts and observations provided additional case study data. Interviewees were selected by the training manager at each site to fit the matrix of senior manager, training manager, two frontline managers and one frontline manager's team member. The focus of the study was on the primary companies and excluded the contracting bodies.

The instruments used were based on the primary research questions and piloted with the Chamber (Appendix 1). The interviews were in-depth and semi-structured and lasted from 20 minutes to nearly one hour. The protocol used by the researchers included interviewee prompts and response options similar to those used in the national evaluation (Barratt-Pugh and Soutar 2002).

Interviews were conducted in companies over 1000 kilometres apart. The e-mail protocol allowed the respondents to make an e-mail response or to have a telephone interview. Eight companies responded of which three were telephone responses. The data collection resulted in over 35 000 words of transcript, 340 pages of records and reports, and direct on-site observations.

The analysis blended logical and iterative data reduction with the intuitive discovery of qualitative analysis process, using a grounded approach (Merriam 1996). The analysis began with two researchers independently involved in content and theme analysis to build up a general picture and agree key emerging themes. The key illustrative quotes were then grouped to enable the researchers to focus on the properties and attributes of each emerging theme. Finally the key conceptual relationships emerging from the data were compared with the data gathered in the previous ANTA/NCVER project to produce tentative conceptual constructs about the emerging practice.

Findings and Discussion

The findings that follow attempt to illustrate, through the voices of practitioners, the emerging themes of FMI interaction within the MEIWA. They are unique as there is no other industry sector that has introduced the FMI within such a mandatory climate. The findings are discussed in three major themes,

- Processes – what are the characteristics of FMI in MEIWA
- Benefits – what is the FMI doing or can do for companies in MEIWA
- Issues – what are critical negotiation and relationship issues for planning the FMI in MEIWA.

Processes

The MEIWA companies began the FMI in either 1997 or 1999. For these companies this was first time structured systematic management training had been introduced with management training prior to the FMI tending to be “ad hoc”.

The history is that supervisors get thrown in and they learn on the job. Now we have a standard formally recognised program that supervisors are asked to go on and people recognised as potential supervisors go on. (Frontline Manager).

All of the companies used external private training providers to deliver their FMI, with a number using the same provider. FMI was typically structured with a two-day workshop to start each unit followed by a half to one-day tutorial midway. Participants progressed through a workbook on-the-job, completed workplace projects and demonstrated competence to workplace assessors.

We had the provider giving us a two-day workshop with a half-day tutorial later. These are essential. It's not just about giving new theories it's also about capturing existing theory and experiences in the group and sharing and exploring the progress and examples of what we do well and don't do well within the group. Different people give different experiences and operations ... We developed a relationship that what was said in those classes stayed in those classes. Therefore it was quite an open forum. People were prepared to say, look this is what's just failed

and why the failure occurred and the group could explore that. (Frontline Manager)

What has been most effective has been that the provider has been flexible about it and has developed the program they've been presenting to us over time ... Initially it was all workplace projects but now they're encouraging also the gathering of evidence to meet the performance criteria. They haven't done away with workplace projects. If someone prefers to use a workplace project they are encouraged to do so. (Training Manager)

The most valued feature of the FMI was the development of learning networks that enabled the participants to meet with people from different areas within their own companies and, in many cases, with others from the broader industry. These contacts provided insights into company and industry operations, assisted in interdepartmental dealings and offered mentoring opportunities.

What was clearly evident with the first group that went through FMI was that because they spent two years of study together they bonded as a study team and that opened doors for us as a service provider. In one instance an operator found that many of his tasks were greatly enhanced by his networks, the ease and accessibility of people, and they enabled him to get results. ... I still maintain contact with some of the people from the group – we catch up once a quarter. We have lunch and share information and catch up on what's happening. Knowing others in other companies helps me to know what's happening in the marketplace, who's doing what and how. I think with my colleagues who did FMI there's a bond there, we share friendship. In this industry it's always important to have contacts as we all tend to move on. (Manager)

All of the companies saw the FMI as a tool in their human resources development and found it was most successful when it was bundled with other change initiatives.

We decided two years ago that we needed a cultural and behavioural change program. We had done some management development at a higher level and we decided we really needed to concentrate on frontline managers and supervisors. The FMI program we're using was designed to fit into our cultural change at the company. It wasn't off the shelf it was customised. ... We had a structural and monetary review five years ago. What hadn't been done was the understanding of how people should behave to one another. FMI is one of a series of tools of change. (Senior Manager)

The move towards a more structured approach to management development is developing multiple modes of learning that balance group support with self-paced workplace activity, to produce 'thick' learning performances. There is an emphasis on relational activity with providers and between participants that is part of, and promotes a wider culture change and new way of managing.

Benefits

Each of the companies reported notable differences in the performance of individuals, the organisation and the business as a result of becoming involved in the FMI. Interviewees commented that the FMI had made them "more effective", more "inclined to listen to a lot of different ideas" and "more open

with people”. They considered that the FMI had given them greater confidence in carrying out their management role and that the FMI was an excellent “apprenticeship for a manager”. Various examples were given of the importance of the FMI in assisting individuals become more competent in their role and many commented on how the way they managed was changed by their experience with the FMI.

There has been a difference in my performance. Especially in my time-management and delegation. I find I delegate more. It has to have been the FMI because I've read my share of personal development books. ... With the freed up time I've been able to slot in more one-to-one time with people. I'm now in charge of a major initiative in the plant, which I have to concentrate on. It's allowed me more contact time, more time to look ahead, to do more thinking, to develop a forward strategy on how we're going. ... I like to think I'm more effective... I've been able to spend time on making the group proactive rather than reactive. ... I've been able to give more responsibility to staff. (Frontline Manager)

All of the companies were experiencing a range of organisational change from a push for growth to a diversification of operations to devolved departmental responsibilities to an increased focus on customer service. FMI was viewed as a key strategic HR initiative for communicating and developing the required culture to support business performance and was seen as a major plank in their change management platform.

The company had a lot of different initiatives going in different streams ... and the focus was to get out there and have the best leaders and the best managers and the best people working for us. ... What FMI has done it's been the glue. It continually reinforces the principles and directions the company has chosen to go. ... FMI has complemented what the company wants to do. (Manager)

We've been through so many radical changes in the company. With the restructures there's a lot of uncertainty out there. The company has tried to be more open and push the communication more openly down. ... FMI's been put into the company at a time when there's a lot of change so it's been seen as part of the change. (Frontline Manager)

It was noted that required change was achieved when there was an improvement in the level of the management expertise within the different companies. Where managers embedded FMI within their own approach they reflected on their style, questioned their own behaviour and adopted a “big picture” focus.

We developed a clear vision for the group. We had a common purpose. We had role definitions, which became very, very important to complement that. That infrastructural framework with role definitions wasn't something that we learnt in FMI, it was something else that was happening in the company but the priority focus on that through FMI was strong. The strategic planning was huge and all the Departmental members were involved in that. The team members had input into that so they had total ownership of the whole package. There was focus on continuous improvement – we reengineered processes, captured new efficiencies to get better with the same number of people, it wasn't just chuck more people at it. Being a support service is always a tough gig – trying to get more resources is difficult. We really had people working at

top capacity. Overall, generally my leadership style changed in making team members more accountable for their results and their behaviour and in the end they became as close as you can get to a self-managing work team. The performance of those two groups was outstanding and across the operation they were seen as two of the more dynamic and high performing groups on site. (Manager)

Many interviewees commented on the direct relationship between FMI activity and improved business performance and outputs.

One thing that came directly out of an FMI project was a whiteboard that appeared in a muster room that gave a whole list of equipment down one side, then the operators who were operating it that shift next to that, they were magnetic strips, then next to that was information on where that machinery was located and status of the machinery and whether it needed oil or you check the brakes or that it was OK. Previously I can recall a number of times we literally spent hours looking for a piece of machinery underground. And we're talking about a mine 700 m deep and 20 km of workings. It might sound strange that you could spend hours looking for a piece of equipment but there were literally thousands of spots where it could be hidden. Until this board appeared we relied on word of mouth from our cross mates who you might not necessarily catch up with. So if you happened to miss them and if you hadn't spoken to them you could spend hundreds of hours looking for equipment. So I guess that was an effective tool. (Training Manager)

Since the introduction of the FMI there had been an increased focus on the documentation of “what used to be in people’s heads”, on making the “knowledge explicit” and on developing “systems and tools” for improving work processes.

FMI's made a difference to productivity in the machine shop. We've come up with a few different ideas. I used to take photos of the set-ups whereas before it was all written down. They say a picture tells a thousand words. I have a drive with all the pictures in it that I've taken of the set-ups, so if somebody else comes in they can see that's how to set-up, and they say this looks easier to do it this way. ... People can follow that. Within 20 minutes they know how we set-up and away we can go. Time there is certainly saved. ... Before it used to take a couple of hours. ... People can replace the picture if they have a better way (Frontline Manager).

One of the guys with their mechanical seals got onto their suppliers and looked around for quicker and easier ways of doing it. Out in Area 1 they've saved nearly a \$1 000 000. The savings are there, you just have to put them in place. With FMI to some extent you may not see a straight up dollar value ... but down the track you more than get your money back ... and they've got someone on the right track (Frontline Manager).

A strong outcome of FMI was more effective communication between groups and an enhanced capacity of managers to relate more effectively with staff. Workgroups had begun changing the way they operated and there was a common language developing.

The awareness, the understanding and the measurement and analysis of those things have improved. ... Because we have people responsible for their cost management, when we ran an FMI module around business planning and began to talk about accrued annual leave liability ... people

had no idea at the frontline what our accrued annual leave liability was. The payroll guy rang me after that module and said what the hell are you doing in that FMI, I've got everybody booking their people on leave. But we talked about if you have a 5% salary increase year on year ... and you're carrying a leave liability of \$1 000 000 and these guys said wow we didn't realise. Yet we've got guys in our crews who are accruing four, five six, seven hundred hours of annual leave. You draw their attention to it and they start to focus on it and they do react. (Training Manager)

A range of interviewees commented on how FMI enabled them to focus on quality provision, provided them with tools for improving service to both internal and external customers and effected savings.

We successfully restructured the Department and reengineered our processes ... One of the benefits from that was a \$1.2 million cost saving in inventory commodities. We improved our systems and processes and concentrated on some of the system side of things for our internal customers. ... FMI didn't come in and directly say there's \$1.2 million cost save. But the whole concept of being able to successfully restructure a Department and successfully reengineer processes and being able to communicate with and influence team members to accept this and take this on board and run with it – all of those skills helped us and were developed by FMI. (Frontline Manager)

There's the utilisation of one of our water jet machine, a \$1 000 000 machine. I asked one of our FMI guys what the utilisation of that machine is. He couldn't tell me what the utilisation was. We've got contractors in doing water jet machines with their equipment and yet we don't know the utilisation of ours. He couldn't tell me if it was 100% and I suspect that it wasn't. Us drawing attention to that I bet he now knows exactly what the utilisation is and he tries to keep it as close to 100 % as he can. ... If we didn't have FMI would it have changed? ... Well it hadn't in twenty years so probably not. (Training Manager)

The responses were almost uniform in their positive view of FMI impact. Individually individuals were more confident about their managing identity and more willing to include team members in decision making. They were part of a broader managing network that increased communication, inclusion and questioned past practice. As managers they were developing both a toolkit and relational capability that appeared to be part of the glue contributing to some business improvements.

Issues

Each of the companies identified critical negotiation and planning issues that need to be considered when implementing FMI. CEO commitment was considered vital as was the need to ensure “management buy-in”.

CEO support is essential. It's got to come from the top-down. ... Commit plenty of planning time and involve all management in the planning The program must be “owned” by Management – not Training or HR. (Training Manager).

There's been a whole series of issues to do with the culture of the management team, as well as the culture of the frontline supervisors as well as the workers. One of the lessons was you've got to change the

culture of the management team at the same time because for a while there we found the middle management level particularly were resisting the process. We've dealt with that by a lot of training of the middle management team, spending a lot of time telling them how the system works. Getting them to understand where they fit in and they still have a role – even though the role has changed. Some of those people have deselected, they've felt the change was not for them, they can't handle the new way (Senior Manager).

Interviewees saw appropriate marketing and communication of the intent, processes and benefits of FMI as important planning issues to be addressed. Advice included “doing a good selling process”, using the “experience of others who have gone through it”, communicating the “personal benefits” and “making sure people understand that the driver for FMI is we can do our business better”. Provision of appropriate support structures was nominated as a key requirement for FMI to have its greatest impact for the individual and ultimately the business.

Key is supporting those people who are going to go through the program. It's something that can be as challenging and as beneficial as you want to make it. ... If you approach it with the idea that it's going to improve your business and you can really release the potential of these people and you're going to support them in this process, then you can change the world let alone your business. (Training Manager)

The practitioners in MEIWA strongly suggest that broad manager inclusion is critical for developmental FMI performances. “Buy in” by the rest of the managing team is critical both to support the participants in self-paced workplace learning and to ensure that the relational style of managing embedded in the FMI competencies has a broader influence within the managing system.

Interpretation and meaning

This study is based on limited data from a specific industry but is able to benefit from comparison with the reservoir of data, and the continuing conceptualisation, from the larger national evaluation of the FMI (Barratt-Pugh & Soutar 2002). There is a strong congruence between the findings of both studies *despite* the mandatory nature of the FMI for many managers within the MEIWA. In answer to the primary research questions, the FMI appears to have had a broadly positive effect on individuals and organisations within the industry, and has developed new patterns of learning relations. The study supports the potential for business improvement through the employment of a strategic approach to the FMI based on a developmentally oriented model, or thick performance of learning diversity (Mulcahy & James 2000).

There appears to be a relationship between the involvement of frontline managers in more complex FMI performances and the growth of manager confidence, and the development of a more centred managing self. The FMI learning activity seems to promote greater self-awareness and contribute to the development of improved patterns of communication, where managers include team members and seek peer interaction. These patterns are based on learning

partnerships that are negotiated both between companies and training organisations, and within the companies, through the emerging learning groups. From the practitioner feedback, the balance between self-paced activity and group activity appears instrumental in stabilising the emerging patterns of learning. Practitioners are very vocal that the inclusion of “other” managers is critical for richer and more enduring FMI performances where participants are supported. More importantly, this additional manager inclusion also supports the change in managing practice that is developed through involvement with the FMI and self-reflective processes. This involvement produces a substantial network of managers to drive cultural change. These rich performances of the FMI are characterised by partnership and negotiation both within learning activity, and in subsequent managing activity.

The FMI is promoted as providing individuals with a framework for flexible, learner-centred, workbased management, and as a means for companies to effect culture change (CMEWA 1999a, 2001). However, in MEIWA, it is set against the ultimate backdrop of compliance and compulsory certification. This presents the paradox of a mandatory learning experience positioned within a framework of increased learner freedom. This paradox is very evident to the interviewees who made a range of comments on the FMI experience.

The company has said we're doing FMI and the company has said this is the way we want to go because otherwise a lot of people wouldn't have gone (Frontline Manager)

FMI should be voluntary. The first group was forced in and it took some time to get them back. ...This time with the expressions of interest we've had an overwhelming response. We've had to prioritise the applicants. (Training Manager)

If (FMI's) just going to be to meet statutory obligations and that's the focus you take into it then there probably would be no benefits other than the (managers) keep working in the business and won't necessarily come away with any learnings... FMI needs to be marketed as a personal development program rather than as something the people have to do to keep their jobs. (Training Manager)

If we are truly looking for the best in the industry, if we want to attract the best leaders and managers in the region to our company... then FMI should be compulsory for anyone who has people reporting to them. ... Any new ... manager coming in to the company has an incredibly high benchmark to perform at. I just can't see the downside. If we can get that across then the impact is enormous. (Manager)

It appears that managers recognise that the external pressure for management development can be a driving force for changing previous training agendas, but in operationalising this new agenda, they place the outcomes of culture change above those of accreditation. It is evident that the spread of the FMI in MEIWA has been driven by the legislative changes, but it seems that the processes developing are more aligned towards developmental practice, rather than the simple expediency of certification.

Conclusion

The FMI breaks previous training patterns by changing the location of learning and the partnerships of learning. Previous studies indicate the importance of partnerships in forming the diversity of practice that appears to be associated with rich FMI performances and subsequent organisational benefits (Barratt-Pugh & Soutar 2002; Selby Smith & Roos 2001). These studies model the critical partnerships underlying such relationships and explore the relations between RTOs and FMI coordinators to find a cultural 'fit', and the relational networks provided by managers who support their FMI participants through reflective and supportive mentoring and coaching.

The FMI is creating new and diverse patterns of workplace manager learning in the MEIWA despite the legislative imperative. The paradox that exists in the MEIWA appears to *drive* engagement, but *not minimise* the resulting processes. This perspective can help enrich the developing understanding of workplace based management development practices. In MEIWA, the Chamber has added to the basic partnerships, providing an additional partner, advising, sculpturing and promoting, these new practices. The Chamber fulfils a role as broker, as intermediary, interfacing enterprises and R T Os, and mediating the negotiation of these new learning spaces and practices. This echoes some relationships found in the previous national FMI study, where knowledgeable practitioners were engaged as brokers by larger organisations to develop FMI plans and negotiate with providers, during the early phases of implementation.

The complexity of the FMI framework, and indeed most workplace learning, positions new and diverse practices of learning in tension with existing workplace production. This complexity makes great demands upon managers inexperienced with continual negotiation, and orchestrating networks of learners (Seddon 2000). They are thrust into contested territory, and need to be discourse technologists, trying to balance the development of new, and untried patterns of learning, within existing workplace agendas (Farrell 2000). In the case of MEIWA, the Chamber can be seen as an additional partner in the construction of workplace learning, acting as an informed broker. The Chamber is an active partner, positioning learning within organisations, creating new relationships and learning spaces, and helping to generate these emerging learning performances. The complexity of negotiating de-institutionalised workplace learning partnerships may increasingly benefit from, and indeed require, such informed brokerage.

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APPENDIX 1

Evaluating the Frontline Management Initiative WA Mines and Energy Industry

Interview Protocols

Company _____

Name _____

Position _____

Contact Details _____

Date _____

1. What is your role and background in the company?
2. What has been your involvement with FMI?
3. What has been different about your performance as a manager since FMI? or What has been different about the performance of individual managers since FMI?
4. Are you (your managers) more effective since FMI? How much?
5. What is different about the organisation since FMI?
6. Has FMI made the organisation and organisational culture more effective? How much?
7. What is different about the business since FMI?
8. Has FMI made the business more effective? How much?
9. Which learning practices in the FMI were most effective?
10. What has been the greatest impact of FMI on you, the organisation, and the business?
11. What additional impact would you have liked from FMI, and how could FMI have done this?