

Research Design

0. INTRODUCTION

This document will outline a detailed research design for the empirical research project to be undertaken by Paul Flowers as part of the MSc by Research in Leading Learning and Change at Cranfield School of Management.

It will briefly discuss and position the research, but it is assumed the reader is familiar with the background to this particular study, whose draft thesis title is 'Enterprise2.0: The New Organisational Democracy?'.

The main focus of this paper is to develop a robust research design for review and approval by the supervisory panel prior to initiating the empirical research project and supersedes (but builds on) the draft Research Design proposed as part of Progress Review III.

1. BACKGROUND

The organisational problems which stimulated this research are (i) the disconnection between leaders and workers in organisations, and the perceived need to engage in meaningful conversations and (ii) the tension created by the conflicting desires of leaders to introduce Organisational Democracy, whilst at the same time needing to retain Power and Control.

Corporate organisations are beginning to experiment with an emergent technology – labelled Enterprise2.0 - as a means to engage leaders and workers. This is both to address a perceived disconnect and to benefit from the resultant network effects that can occur.

Whilst practitioners herald Enterprise2.0 with great promise, they also perceive that significant questions must be asked by organisations regarding this intervention. Whilst practitioners see Enterprise2.0 as transformational in nature, they also anticipate potential and significant problems with the introduction of the technology, and that challenges to existing and established cultural and leadership norms will be created as a result of the drive to a more open, more democratic organisation. Issues of hierarchy, power and control are all repeatedly cited by practitioners.

Both the promise and the problem of Enterprise2.0 as perceived by practitioners seem congruent with the language of Organisational Democracy and this was confirmed during a Systematic Literature Review which enquired into Enterprise2.0 and its relationship with Organisational Democracy. The review also identified a gap in the literature, which is that the Enterprise2.0 intervention has not been studied through the academic lens of Organisational Democracy.

The findings from Systematic Literature Review informed the development of a number of research questions. These are detailed below:

- What are the drivers for using Enterprise2.0 in organisations and to what extent is its use in democratising the organisation, through enabling meaningful conversation between leaders and workers seen as important?
- To what extent does Enterprise2.0 work as an effective mechanism to facilitate Organisational Democracy, with respect to enabling meaningful conversations between leaders and workers?
- Does Enterprise2.0 overcome the problems, barriers and tensions associated with other models of Organisational Democracy, for example by successfully overcoming cultural barriers, altering power and control structures, or in

developing a deeper level of participative democracy? If so, to what extent is this achieved, and how and why is this?

- What additional problems, barriers or tensions are observed when introducing Enterprise2.0 as an intervention to democratise the organisation through enabling more meaningful conversations between leaders and workers? How are these manifested?
- To what extent can Enterprise2.0 be considered as a contemporary instantiation of Organisational Democracy, with respect to enabling meaningful conversations between leaders and workers?

As well as aiming to contribute knowledge through addressing the gap identified in literature, and to inform the current practitioner discussions regarding Enterprise2.0, findings from a pilot study, undertaken in September and October 2008, suggest that these questions have merit and relevance to the corporate organisations as they begin to experiment with the emergent Enterprise2.0 technology.

The Systematic Literature Review also identified other aspects that should be considered as part of the Research Design. These will be referenced later in the text.

2. PHILOSOPHICAL POSITION

This study will adopt an Interpretivist position. Figure 1 (below) summarises the key aspects of this study, and will be discussed briefly here. The primary aim of this study is to inquire into what individual perspectives (thoughts and feelings) exist across the organisation with respect to the intervention (Enterprise2.0), interpreting these findings in the context of the academic literature on Organisational Democracy. As highlighted above, literature has been used to inform the study, but since this is not predicated on the existence of universal laws or causal models, this study does not set out to test pre-existing theory, for example through the use of hypothesis or experiments and will rely instead upon qualitative data, with rich, open interviews with many different organisational actors and at all organisational levels to discover and understand the individual and shared sense of meaning regarding the intervention. The study is also interested in the factors that affect the different interpretations gathered from informants. Since the pilot study indicated that Enterprise2.0 does not yet appear to be an objective reality and instead is one that is socially constructed, the emphasis here is on understanding the individual and shared meaning rather than on explaining underlying mechanisms, or identifying causal effects. This study is inductive, rather than deductive and theory building, rather than theory testing. Given that this study will be highly contextual, the external validity may be restricted with generalisation considered through recourse to existing theory and literature. Since interpretivists place great emphasis on communication and language, this approach seems particularly suited to the focus of this particular study - the ability of Enterprise2.0 to enable meaningful conversation between leaders and workers.

Research Philosophy

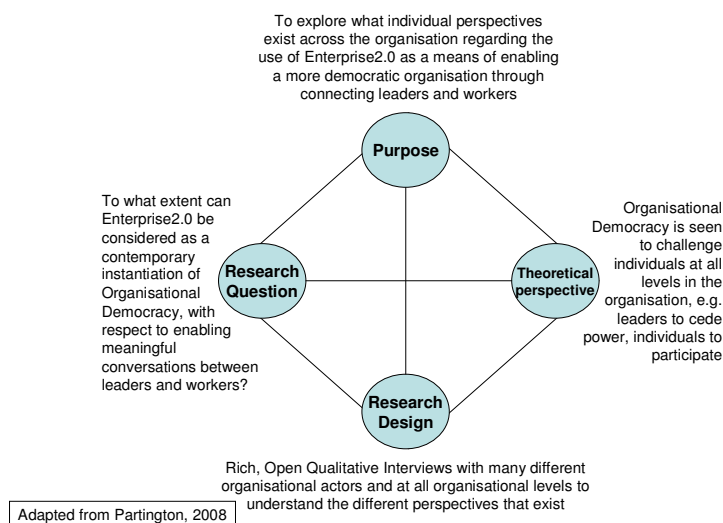


Figure 1 - Key aspects of the study

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Since this study adopts an interpretivist position, qualitative methods will be employed. Semi-structured interviews will be employed, in order to enquire openly into the individual perspectives that exist regarding the intervention under analysis, and to allow rich data collection. Kvale (1996) reminds us that 'interviews are particularly suited for studying people's understanding of the meanings in their lived world, describing their experiences and self-understanding, and clarifying and elaborating their own perspective on their lived world'.

The Systematic Literature Review identified that Case Study methods were the most widely employed method within the Organisational Democracy literature, and since interpretivist studies are seen as highly contextual, it seems important to use the case approach as a mechanism to describe the context under which the different interpretations are being collected. Kvale (1996) reminds us that 'interviews are often applied in case studies'.

Yin (2003) informs us that Case Studies are relevant when focusing on contemporary events and when the investigator has no control over actual behavioural events (both of which are congruent with the conditions of this particular study); that Case Studies are favoured when Research Questions are exploratory 'what', 'how' or 'why' questions (as is the case in this study), and that questions of this nature would also infer the use of interview, reminding us again that interview and case study approaches are compatible.

Since this study is intended to be theory-building, the case study approach may be considered as exploratory. Since this inquiry is aimed at understanding a particular phenomenon, the case study may be classified as 'intrinsic'.

In terms of an interpretivist design, Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Jackson (2008) discuss potential questions of validity that may arise and suggest ways to defend against these. They cite Golden-Biddle and Locke stating that rather than validity, interpretivist designs should consider issues of authenticity (showing deep understanding), plausibility (linked to current academic interest), and criticality (provoking the reader to question their assumptions, and creating something that is genuinely novel). They also cite Silverman, who argues that key safeguards to selectively drawing from a mass of data include – refutability (seeking evidence to disconfirm current beliefs), constant comparison, comprehensive data treatment, and tabulation. These (and other) limitations associated with the particular methods proposed will be discussed further within the text along with

the approach being taken to mitigate and address these. Issues of validity, reliability, generalisability and researcher bias will also be discussed.

4. UNIT OF ANALYSIS

A single case will be considered, with multiple 'embedded' units of analysis. Yin (2003) suggests a number of rationales for adopting the single case approach, two of which are seen as relevant. The first is when there is an opportunity to investigate a *rare* or *unique* circumstance. The emergent nature of the Enterprise2.0 experiments, suggested by the limited literature available, suggests that the phenomenon is *rare*, if not *unique*. The second is that of the *revelatory* case or the situation where the researcher has an opportunity to observe and analyse a phenomena previously inaccessible to investigation. The opportunity to gain privileged access to an organisation that is actively experimenting with the new technology is seen as *revelatory* and this, in conjunction with the *rare* nature of the phenomena suggests that the single case approach is valid.

The selection of the organisation that will form the single case is predicated on three primary factors. Firstly, findings from the Systematic Literature review that key drivers of Organisational Democracy are the rapid technological change and the acceleration to knowledge work. The organisation under consideration is a technology-driven company, at the forefront of technological change and makes substantial investments in the research, development and operation of new IT and network technology in order to provide leading-edge, value-added services globally to its business, consumer and wholesale customers. In addition, most of the workforce is deployed in knowledge work, and, variously across the different business units in roles such as research, network and IT development and operation, and service, sales or marketing activities. The second factor for selection is that the organisation is actively experimenting with Enterprise2.0 at multiple levels, both corporately and locally. Key pioneers of the Enterprise2.0 ethos and approach are employed by the company, and advocate its use and benefit. The final factor is that of access. As an employee of the company, who are sponsoring this study, it is possible to gain access to key informants, and relevant case materials. Whilst this provides benefits, this may also introduce risks, and these are discussed later in Chapter 13 – elimination of bias.

Using a case approach, the unit of analysis will be considered as the 'business unit'. In general, the Case Studies identified through Systematic Literature Review were not explicit in defining the unit of analysis, and whilst many appeared to consider the whole organisation as the unit of analysis, others considered specific units within the organisation. For the organisation under study here, whilst some Group functions have central responsibility for policy, strategy and oversight, due to their size and varying nature of their business, each business unit has its own CEO and executive board responsible for making specific implementation choices. The Systematic Literature Review identified a number of contextual factors that could influence Organisational Democracy, which included leadership style and organisational culture. For the organisation under study here, these factors are more correctly affiliated to the business unit since, for example, each business unit takes responsibility for its own employee engagement, employee participation, learning and development and communication strategies and plans. As well as being managed at business unit level, these aspects are also measured at this level. Figure 2 explains this structure. All 'business units' considered under this study use the technology that is under consideration here, although to differing degrees (see later discussion on sample selection).

Organisational Overview

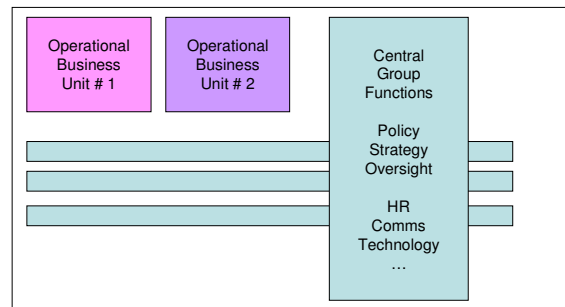


Figure 2 - Organisational Overview

Yin (2003) describes this approach as an *embedded* case study, and advises that this occurs when within a single case, attention is also given to subunits. Yin advises that such an approach provides 'significant opportunity' for extensive analysis which enhances the insights of a single case. He also advises that whilst such an approach avoids the risk of simply examining the phenomena under investigation at an abstract level (a risk associated with a *holistic* case where only the organisation as a whole is considered), and also serves as an important device for focusing a case study inquiry, he cautions that one risk of the *embedded* approach is that too much attention may be placed on the sub-units with the risk that the larger, holistic aspects of the case are ignored.

Consideration now needs to be given to the rationale for choosing which business units to investigate. Since the nature of the inquiry is how technology may or may not result in higher levels of engagement, these seem to be important factors in choosing the sample. Figure 3 shows how the different business units may be considered against these scales. The technology axis is the researcher's assessment of the relative degree to which technology plays a part in the engagement strategy within that business unit and the engagement axis is the researcher's assessment of the relative levels of engagement. This approach allows both similarities and differences to be explored. Within the organisation under study, one particular business unit (BU#1) places great emphasis on Enterprise2.0, and pioneers and advocates of the technology form part of the leadership team. Hence the technology axis is high. However, this unit is often described as having the lowest employee engagement levels across the group. The second business unit (BU#2), is considered to have high levels of engagement, but technology is only one facet of the engagement strategy, thus engagement is shown as high and technology low. A third business unit is considered to have low levels of engagement and low levels of technology usage. Within the case being studied, a business unit that has high engagement and high levels of technology usage is not thought to exist, and given the emergent nature of Enterprise2.0, it is questionable whether such a case exists in any organisation. These assumptions will be validated by seeking data (such as Employee Engagement survey results), through document analysis and through specifically seeking the informants views on these aspects during the study.

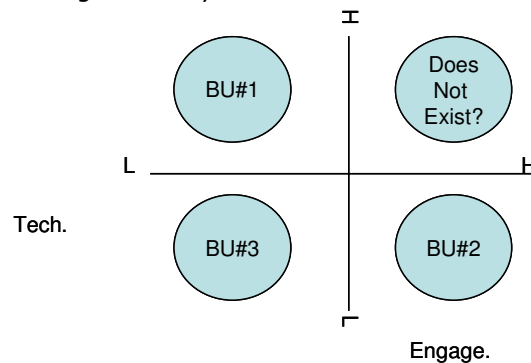


Figure 3 - Sample Selection Criteria

As well as investigating a number of operational business units, it also seems important to inquire additionally into the perspectives from individual informants within the central group functions. This is for two reasons. The first is to avoid the risk highlighted earlier that the emphasis of the inquiry could shift to the sub-unit, rather than the holistic level. The second relates, however to the role of these central Group functions in determining policy and strategy across the Group – in areas such as HR, Communications and Technology Innovation. It is felt that in gathering perspectives from these informants will further provide enriched insight into the overall context through which the (operational) business units function, as well as provide relevant case material. The overall *embedded* case study approach is outlined in Figure 4.

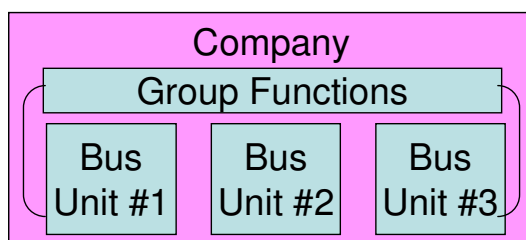


Figure 4 – Embedded Case Study Approach

5. SAMPLE

The Systematic Literature Review identified that many different organisational actors, at all organisational levels, can affect an Organisational Democracy intervention. Across the single case sample, it is seen as important to gather perspectives at all levels of the organisation, and all perspectives will be considered as holding equal validity and value. These include leaders, middle-managers, supervisors, employees and unions. Within the business units, informants may come from operational, or support functions, for example, perspectives from Communications or Organisational Development managers are seen as valid, since some journal papers included in the Systematic Literature Review represented these constituencies. Pre-existing networks (such as the talent pool) may be approached as a mechanism to 'randomly' access individuals and to gather wider perspectives from across the organisation. In most cases, the views of particular informants with respect to the research will not be known, and if possible a mix of people who do and do not use the technology will be sought.

The level of analysis in this study is considered to be the 'group', since the literature suggests that different groupings of individuals (leaders, middle-managers, supervisors, employees, and unions) may interact differently with particular Organisational Democracy interventions. In addition, it appears from the pilot study that Enterprise2.0 is not yet an objective reality, and instead is one that is socially constructed, again emphasising a 'group' level of analysis to assess group as well as individual meaning.

In considering the Systematic Literature Review findings and the organisation under study, different classifications have been developed for enquiring into different perspectives. Table 1 below shows these classifications as well the likelihood of securing these perspectives from both an Operational Business Unit and Central Group Function perspective. Although sampling will be undertaken opportunistically, it is important to ensure that these constituencies are represented across the sample and that, as a minimum, those constituencies that are highlighted should be secured for each operational business unit that is analysed. The table shows the importance of including perspectives from the central Group functions in this study as certain perspectives may not be accessible within the operational business units alone.

		Operational Business Unit	Central Function	Group
A	advocate of Enterprise2.0	Maybe	Yes	
B	has a vision for using Enterprise2.0	Maybe	Yes	
C	has a reason to use Enterprise2.0	Yes	Yes	
D	operates Enterprise2.0 usage	Yes	Maybe	
E	a business leader	Yes	Yes	
F	a middle-manager or supervisor	Yes	N/a	
G	part of the wider population (an employee)	Yes	N/a	
H	a union representative	Maybe	Yes	
I	an external communications consultant, can provide an external perspective	Maybe	Maybe	

Table 1 – Classifying Organisational Perspectives

When considering these different roles, and understanding the organisation that will form the central part of this enquiry, it is possible to develop a proposed informant group. This is shown in Figure 5 below. This shows, organisationally, the position of potential informants, and demonstrates how perspectives that represent the different constituencies identified in Table 1 above will be secured as part of the study. When considering informants from each constituency, if possible views will be sought from individuals who have, and have not used the technology under review. If possible, perspectives will be gathered from both a creator of and a contributor to a particular intervention to assess how that intervention is perceived from both perspectives as well as from informants who have experience of more than one business unit. If the full study is undertaken, it is envisaged that approximately 30 interviews will be undertaken. Within Figure 5, green represents informants whose views should be sought if at all possible, amber shows those views who could be sought. Those shown in blue are simply to complete the organisational picture. It is estimated that 6-8 interviews will be completed within each business unit, and 5-6 interviews will be conducted within the central functions.

Possible Informant Group

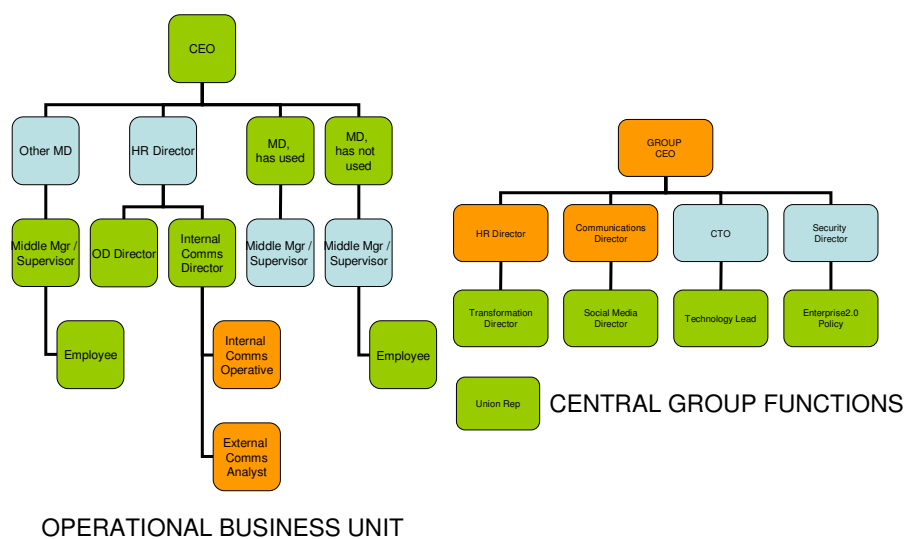


Figure 5 - Possible informant group

6. INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

It is envisaged that semi-structured, face-to-face interviews of up to 1 hour will be undertaken with each informant. These interviews will be requested initially via email, and booked in advance. At the beginning of each interview, a brief outline clarifying the nature of the research, the interview approach (content, confidentiality, consent, and recording methods) and points regarding the onward use of the data will be described. The informant will have the opportunity to clarify any points and will be asked to confirm that they are happy to proceed. All interviews will be undertaken in private areas and with the informants' permission, the interviews will be recorded and notes taken, regarding informant responses or any potential issues with the interview protocol itself. In addition, observations will be made with respect to the informants' demeanour. Where it is not possible to record the interview, for example due to geography or where permission is not granted, extensive notes will be taken, but again only with the informants permission. The length of the interview will also be noted. Where interviews are conducted by telephone, the researcher will conduct these from private areas. In addition, the informant will be advised that they too should seek to conduct the interview in an area where they have complete privacy prior to the commencement of the interview. The interview will be closed with a debrief which will re-iterate the purpose of the study, how the interview content will be utilised and confidentiality retained regarding the identity of the interviewee, as well as thanking them for their time. A log will be kept throughout the interview process, and any constraints or deviations from this standardised approach will be noted. Interviews will be allowed to overrun, and where this is the case, or where comments are made after the interview has formally completed, permission will be sought to use these statements, and if granted, the additional information will be included in the interview transcript.

The following table encapsulates the Questions that will form the basis of the semi-structured interview. The questions are intended to be general, neutral and exploratory, and this set of questions is a revised version of the questions used in the pilot study. Specific revisions have been included to accommodate the findings from the pilot study, the Systematic Literature Review and the full scope of this study, and contextualised for the organisation under study. It is proposed that a generic set of questions is used for all interviews, and as shown, only one adaptation is proposed, when conducting interviews within the central Group functions. As well as a number of core questions, supplementary probes have also been included. These will only be used if needed. In addition, general probes such as 'what do you mean by that?', 'please can you explain that further', 'can you give me an example?' or 'is there anything else you would like to add?' will be used as needed. If interviewees provide information at earlier stages of the interview that address later questions, these questions may not be used, or may simply be used to clarify earlier points.

As part of the interview, each informant will be asked whether they could provide any reference material, or recommend / introduce the researcher to other informants. This may be helpful, for example, in accessing informants who have mirrored roles in the other business units.

Each interview will be transcribed, and some or all of the transcriptions may be undertaken by a 3rd party, albeit with appropriate consideration towards confidentiality.

Prior to executing the full study, this interview protocol will be piloted to ensure that it is effective in securing rich information, and is functional in terms of timing, understanding etc. If time is a factor, some data relating to the contextual questions may be collected prior to the interview or through a tickbox at interview.

Each of these steps is aimed at strengthening the validity of the research design. Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Jackson (2008) remind us that one common risk associated with the interpretivist approach is whether the study does 'clearly gain access to the experiences of those in the research setting' and that issues of validity can affect the generalisability of the findings.

Questions

Questions concerning "expectation" and "experience" of Enterprise2.0 use.

1. What is Enterprise2.0?
 - a. What personal experience do you have of using Enterprise2.0?
 - i. Do you create, contribute, or both?
 - ii. Instigate, author, or review?
 - b. How is it being used within your business unit?
 - i. Could you name or describe some interventions?
 - c. How do you use it? Do you take any action as a result?
 - i. What do you think of what you observe through these interventions?
 - d. What do you believe the drivers for using Enterprise2.0 are within your business unit?
 - e. What are the outcomes from these interventions?
 - i. Benefits – for the employee, for management, for the organisation
 - ii. Costs – for the employee, for management, for the organisation
 - f. Are these interventions effective? How would you rate success?
 - i. What works, what doesn't?
 - ii. Overall, how does what has actually happened in the use of Enterprise2.0 compare with your original expectations?
 - g. Do you feel usage varies across different business units? Why is this?

Questions concerning usage aimed at enhancing Organisational Democracy.

2. Within your business unit, in what ways and to what extent does Enterprise2.0 facilitate conversations between leaders and workers?
 - a. Can you describe any examples?
 - b. What are the outcomes from these interventions?
 - i. Benefits - Openness, Transparency, Engagement – sharing previously privileged information; adapting plans; joining the debate
 - ii. Costs / impacts
 - c. Has the introduction of Enterprise2.0 been accompanied by any wider Organisational Development initiatives?
 - i. Training in participative or democratic principles?
 - ii. Training in understanding complex business data?
 - iii. Other initiatives to encourage participation?
 - d. Overall, are the Enterprise2.0 interventions effective? How would you rate success?
 - i. What works, what doesn't?
 - ii. How does this compare to communication and engagement prior to the emergence of Enterprise2.0?
 - iii. How do you think it is viewed more widely in the business unit? By leaders, by middle-managers, by supervisors, by the wider population, by the unions?
 - e. Are the conversations meaningful or do you feel that Enterprise2.0 has altered traditional power and control structures?
 - i. 1-way, 2-way; deeper sense of participative democracy; openness / transparency, action as a result
 - f. How would you describe the level of participation Enterprise2.0 has created within your business unit?
 - i. Manipulative, therapeutic, informing, consultation, placation, partnership, delegated power, employee control
 - ii. Ultimately whose purpose is served?
3. How does Enterprise2.0 compliment other forms of communication and engagement between leaders and workers within your business unit?
 - a. In what ways does it enhance communication / engagement / participation?
 - b. In what ways does it impact communication / engagement / participation?
 - c. How effective is it? How would you rate its success?
 - i. What works, what doesn't?
 - ii. How does communication and engagement compare before and after the introduction of Enterprise2.0
4. To what extent do you feel that the use of Enterprise2.0 to democratise the organisation through enabling meaningful conversation between leaders and workers is seen as important within your business unit?

Questions concerning tensions, and barriers anticipated or observed.

5. Are there any tensions with respect to the way in which Enterprise2.0 is being used within your business unit to enable conversations between leaders and workers?
 - a. Are there any tensions observed between different uses?
 - b. Are there any tensions in the way it is being used?
6. Within your business unit, have you observed any organisational issues with the use of Enterprise2.0?
 - a. With respect to the leader(ship team)?
 - i. Power and control structures? / openness / one-way or two-way conversation / leadership style / accessible?
 - b. With respect to middle-managers or supervisors?
 - c. With respect to the employees?
 - i. Willingness to participate? Ability to participate? Reaching the tipping point and achieving critical mass?
 - d. With respect to the relationship between the leader(ship team) and their employees?
 - e. With respect to the culture of the organisation?
 - i. Safe to speak up, Open/Closed, Information overload, Reach the masses, 360-degree feedback etc.
 - ii. Language – straight and direct, open and honest, reflecting reality?
 - f. With respect to the unions?
7. Within your business unit, are any limits or controls in place with respect to the use of Enterprise2.0?
 - a. What is the extent of these controls?
 - i. On the content, or on responses?
 - ii. On the leaders, on the employees?
 - b. How are these limits and controls implemented, and enforced?
 - i. Are there any consequences?

Contextual Questions.

8. Please confirm your business unit
9. How long have you been a member of your business unit?
10. In what other business units have you worked?
11. How would you describe the general leadership style within your business unit?
 - a. Open/Closed, Autocratic/Democratic/Participative, transparency, integrity, honesty, accessible?
12. How would you describe the general culture within your business unit?
 - a. Open/Closed, Autocratic/Democratic/Participative, transparency, integrity, honesty?
13. How would you describe the engagement level in your business unit?
 - a. Manipulative, therapeutic, informing, consultation, placation, partnership, delegated power, employee control
14. How do you feel the leadership style, culture and engagement levels in your business unit compare?
15. How would you describe your involvement with respect to Enterprise2.0?
 - a. Advocate, vision, reason to use, operates, joins in/acts on the discussion, policy
16. What position do you hold in your business unit
 - a. Business leader, middle manager, supervisor, member of the wider population, external, other
17. What is your sphere of influence?
 - a. Leadership team, leaders, workers, whole organisation
18. Do you have any additional information that may be useful in my research or would you recommend any other informants?
 - a. Would you be able to assist in any introductions?
19. Is there anything else you would like to add?

NOTE: When interviewing informants from central Group functions, the text 'your business unit' will be replaced with 'across the Group' (except Q8, Q9, and Q10).

Table 2 - Interview Questions

7. INTRODUCTORY SCRIPTS

The following email will be used to invite potential informants to participate. This note will be followed by a telephone call to their office (for leaders) or directly (for members) seeking participation. Minor modifications will be made to reflect whether the informant is a leader or a member and between informants from the operational business units or the central Group functions.

Dear xxxxx

I am currently undertaking a sponsored management research degree at Cranfield School of Management. My particular field of enquiry is how technology and specifically Enterprise2.0 (socially-oriented, collaborative, web-based technology) may contribute to a greater sense of openness and participation across the organisation.

As a leader/member of an organisation that makes use of this technology, I would like to understand your views and perspectives on this phenomenon.

I would be grateful if you were able to devote some time to discuss this with me as part of my Research Project, in the form of a semi-structured interview.

All data gathered will be collected in strictest confidence, and will be reported anonymously. This interview will be one of a number I hope to undertake as part of my overall Research Project, with the findings being prepared for November.

I would be happy to answer any other questions you may have, but would be very grateful if you felt able to participate. The interview would take around one hour, and could be scheduled at a time convenient to you.

Please could you confirm how best to proceed.

Thank you in anticipation,
Paul

The following outline will be used at the start of each interview:

I am currently undertaking a sponsored management research degree at Cranfield School of Management. This interview forms part of an Empirical Research Project and will contribute to the final thesis. My research interest is in the role of socially-oriented, collaborative, web-based technology, or Enterprise2.0 within the organisation, and specifically what role, if any, it might play in connecting leaders and workers or democratising the organisation. Enterprise2.0 interventions include the use of wikis and blogs, but can include any online technologies and practices that people use to share opinions, insights, experiences and perspectives with each other, and is sometimes referred to as Social Media.

The Interview is voluntary, anonymous, and undertaken in strictest confidence. You will not be identified, and all results will be aggregated and analysed for themes.

Would it be ok for me to tape record the interview and take notes?

Do you have any questions?

Unless otherwise stated, all questions relate to your Business Unit/the Group, in this case nnnn.

Are you happy to proceed?

Thank you for your time.

A laminated card with the Enterprise2.0 definition 'any online technologies and practices that people use *within the organisation* to share opinions, insights, experiences and perspectives with each other' (adapted from Gregory, 2007) will be available during the interview.

8. STRATEGY FOR CODING AND ANALYSIS

Once interviews have been completed, a qualitative, subjectivist approach will be adopted. The interview transcriptions will be coded using NVivo software. As part of the coding process, where responses are particularly long, they may be condensed into key phrases capturing the main essence of the dialogue. This coding will be analysed for emergent themes (or contexts, actions or processes), using an interpretative classification and inductive (bottom-up), rather than deductive (top-down or a priori) approach. Categories will be allowed to emerge from the data, and where possible, higher level categories will be identified. Data that 'does not fit' will be parked, with the overall process resulting in 'data reduction'. Full data analysis will be undertaken prior to generating conclusions, again an approach recommended to add rigour to the interpretivist approach.

To establish any general themes that emerge at the level of the overall case, comparative analysis will be undertaken between responses from leaders, middle-managers or supervisors, and members of the wider population (employees) across the case. Separately, the views of these constituencies will also be compared both within and across each business unit. That is to say, within Organisational Business Unit #1 and separately within Organisational Business Unit #2, the perspectives from different constituencies will be discretely considered and compared so that common occurrences or differences within each unit of analysis can be noted. These approaches link the analysis to the findings from the Systematic Literature Review that each of these different constituencies may perceive Organisational Democracy interventions differently. In order for the study to consider the importance of the different contextual factors, such as leadership style and culture identified through Systematic Literature Review, the corresponding layers will also be compared across each business unit that is analysed. This approach is shown in Figure 6. As well as linking the analysis to the findings identified in the Systematic Literature Review regarding culture and leadership style, these tabulations should add further rigour to the qualitative approach adopted for this study and the approach for organising data, and re-enforces the earlier decision to consider the level of analysis as the 'group'. In addition, this approach will also allow the researcher to identify what elements are common and which are unique to specific implementations, allow the specific contexts to be considered and may ultimately suggest 'best practice' approaches or potential pitfalls, with informant responses being used to determine success or failure. Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Jackson (2008) advise that for interpretivist designs, analysis is primarily within case and these approaches, which assess multiple embedded units of analysis within a single case, are compatible with this view.

Comparisons

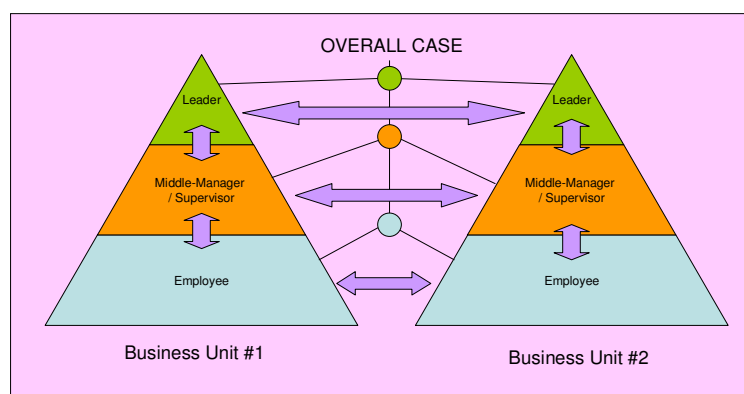


Figure 6 - Within Case Comparisons

Additional interviews may be required to further investigate emergent themes, if no clear themes emerge, or if there are disparate responses.

Analysis will be undertaken primarily by the researcher. To reduce the risk of interpretive bias, an initial transcript will be dual-coded with an external researcher to ensure reliability, and other independent cross-checks may be conducted if there are any further concerns regarding interpretive bias.

A pragmatic approach to determining the most appropriate coding level will be taken.

NVivo is an electronic tool that allows ordering and analysis of information. Since the interviews are semi-structured, the transcripts will reflect this, and so suitable tree nodes within Nvivo will be created to allow further analysis. It is intended that these nodes will emerge from the interview content, and preliminary coding may be undertaken using paper, rather than electronic versions of the transcripts. It is anticipated that a number of subsequent iterations will be needed to develop a robust coding model that identifies and includes key themes and sub-themes. A number of cross-checks will be undertaken as part of each iteration, and a log of coding choices will be maintained throughout the process. The attribute functionality within NVivo will be used to classify the different 'groups' identified in literature as well as to capture 'demographic' information, such as to which business unit the informant is assigned and in order to assist with the comparisons discussed above and shown in Figure 6.

These approaches are intended to provide transparency, to ensure reliability (or repeatability) and to strengthen internal validity, and are in line with Silverman and Golden-Biddle and Locke's guidance cited by Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Jackson (2008) and discussed in Chapter 3.

9. CASE DATA

As part of the case study approach, key data will be sought. This data may come from the same or different informants to those interviewed, and through analysis of other material, paper, electronic, observed or web-based, and be either textual or audio-visual. It is hoped that this data may enrich, as well as inform the study (for example in understanding the contextual or causal aspects of the phenomenon under study). Since an interpretivist approach is highly contingent, use of data from multiple sources should provide some degree of contextualisation and will compliment the perspectives gathered directly from informants, ultimately having the potential to uncover meaning, identify causal effects, reveal processes, structures, behaviours or histories, and to explore, to suggest explanations, to describe, compare or add richness to understanding.

This study takes an interpretivist approach, and so history and meaning are seen as important as are contextual comparisons, and the gathered artefacts therefore provide the potential to enrich understanding, and to ultimately strengthen validity through triangulation of data from various sources. Some key items of interest include:

- The organisational history or vision for use of the technology
 - Source: Informants, Intranet, Internet
- Evidence of how Enterprise2.0 is being used within particular business units
 - Source: Informants, Business Unit intranet home pages
- Group policy documents
 - Source: Informants, intranet

In order to classify and structure these case materials, the framework developed by Pettigrew and Whipp (1993) will be employed. This framework comprises three dimensions of strategic change. The first is described as Content, the objectives, purpose and goals (or the 'what'), the second is described as the Process, the implementation or the 'how', and the third is the Context, the internal and external environment, or the 'where'.

In addition, the Systematic Literature Review highlighted other factors that can influence Organisational Democracy interventions. As well as seeking general case information therefore, where possible, data will be sourced to inform these specific aspects, again to allow data triangulation and strengthen validity. Examples include:

- Employee engagement, or other measurement instruments that provide insight into the culture or leadership style of the organisation
 - Source: Privileged information, will need to be requested from HR
- The wider external context, for example, macro-level socio-economic or socio-political events
 - Source: News outlets, internal briefings
- The wider organisational context, for example is the organisation in crisis or subject to external forces, such as legislation
 - Source: News outlets, internal briefings, informants
- Other indicators of the culture or leadership style of the organisation, for example use of 360-degree feedback programmes, quality circles, TQM, Appreciative Inquiry summits or other complimentary programmes that foster participative, more open and democratic approaches
 - Source: Privileged information, will need to be requested from HR, internal briefings, informants

Appropriate permissions will be sought to use the material for the purposes of this research.

In addition, data will be collected that describes the organisation, its history and heritage, organisational and functional structure, key appointments and governance structure, the internal and external environment, strategy, mission and vision, market offerings and business performance.

10. UTILITY OF FINDINGS

The findings from the Research Project will be interpreted within the frame of the academic literature on Organisational Democracy. If possible, a conceptual model will be developed that will aid the display of data and may contribute to theory. The external validity and generalisability of the findings will also be considered. This work will ultimately be presented in the final thesis.

11. INCLUSION / EXCLUSION CRITERIA

The Systematic Literature Review highlighted that some models of Organisational Democracy extend beyond the organisational boundary, or can be applied at different levels within the organisation and with different remits. For the purposes of clarity, this study is interested in Enterprise2.0 interventions that exist within the organisational boundary, and that enable conversations between leaders and workers.

12. RESTRICTIONS AND LIMITATIONS

This study has a number of restrictions and limitations and these are discussed here. The first is that of researcher time. This project is being undertaken on a part-time basis and part of a timetabled management research degree. This may restrict the number of interviews that can be completed or case material that can be gathered, in order that appropriate time is allowed for coding, and analysis. An attempt will be made to schedule and prioritise key interviews (suggested within Table 1), as early as possible in the process. This however, leads to discussion on the second restriction. The second restriction may be the availability (or willingness) of key informants to participate. Many of the intended informants are C-level executives, and hence time/access may be a factor. As well as affecting the overall study, there is a risk that participation may vary across the operational business units, and this may therefore introduce some degree of bias in the sample. In part this is mitigated by the fact that this is a company-sponsored management degree, and that there are a number of local sponsors who may be able to

broker or facilitate access. This leads to the third consideration. That is the potential 'conflict of interest' between the role of the researcher (and the associated organisational sponsorship) and the possibility that findings may challenge organisational views. Whilst this is not foreseen at the present time, and in fact, there is interest and support from the organisation at senior levels into the ultimate research findings, this cannot be ignored. Supervisory advice will be sought should such issues arise, and the researcher perspective on this aspect will be addressed in the personal statement (see below).

One overt limitation of the study is that it does not endeavour to enquire into perspectives within different organisations. Whilst multiple units of analysis are anticipated, these units exist within the same organisation. Given this fact, and the interpretivist philosophical approach, with its emphasis on understanding meaning, rather than mechanism, the results are not expected to be widely generalisable, except back to existing theory and literature. Use of the embedded case-study approach with the inclusion of multiple units of analysis, albeit within the same organisation, may aid generalisability as it will potentially allow the contextual factors to be understood, and potentially for the relationships and causal links to be established.

One final restriction could be that permission may not be secured to publish (or summarise) key case study data. This may be due to the fact that the data was collected for different purposes, or that the organisation is reluctant to release it. Here, panel, and ethical advice may be sought.

Finally, we are reminded that one risk of Case Study research is information overload (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Jackson, 2008). This study will address this point through careful time-management and planning and in setting inclusion / exclusion criteria (Chapter 11) and in defining what kinds of information will be sought (Chapter 9).

13. ELIMINATION OF BIAS

The Interpretivist approach is seen to risk the introduction of researcher bias, given the close nature between the researcher and the researched, and the interpretations that may either be forced upon informants or inferred from their responses. This is further complicated by the fact that the role of researcher here is 'inside learner' which, as discussed above, may create some tension as the project progresses. Finally, Eriksson and Kovalainen (2008) remind us of the risk of the 'insider' position as one where we may confuse 'what you know (or think you know) intuitively and what you know on the basis of your research evidence' and Johnson and Harris (2002) remind us that 'staying open to surprise' is important for the qualitative researcher. Although bias cannot be completely removed, this study will aim to minimise this bias in a number of ways. Firstly, the aim is to ask open questions of all informants, and to ensure that the sampling process ensures that a range of perspectives is solicited across multiple organisational units, levels, spheres of influence and so on, and, in the majority of cases, without prior knowledge of the informants' position. Patterns will be allowed to emerge from the data, using the approaches described in earlier chapters and evidence will be sought that both confirms and contradicts any pre-existing views and considered equally. Secondly, the use of self-reflection is advised, and so a reflective learning journal will be maintained throughout this study, and a personal statement (including a personal value statement) will be produced prior to commencing the study which will outline the views of the researcher regarding the subject matter, their role, and approach to the research. Thirdly, regular contact will be maintained between the researcher and supervisory panel throughout this process, in order that activities can be externally validated and approved, or adapted where necessary. Should any matters arise for which the researcher is unclear, supervisory advice will be sought. The supervisory panel comprises Dr David Denyer (Lead), Dr Emma Parry (Chair), and Toby Thompson (Adviser).

A research log will also be maintained throughout covering all decisions, observations, deviations, findings and reflections as a mechanism to provide further transparency and to demonstrate that risk of researcher bias is minimised.

Since the researcher is a member of one particular business unit, there is a risk that this too introduces a bias, particularly when describing the interventions, or leadership

approach. To address this, the informants themselves will be asked to assess the success or otherwise of the interventions, and the particular leadership style associated with their business unit. All informants will be asked to provide any relevant documentation and every effort will be taken to secure the necessary artefacts, and equal time will be devoted to document analysis activities for each business unit, and data will be sought to validate any design assumptions. Seeking perspectives from the Group functions may allow for individual informants to compare approaches across multiple business units, and where particular informants have relevant insights into business units other than their own, these will be sought. These precautions are aimed at removing, as much as possible, the subjective view of the researcher from the study.

Yin (2003) reminds us that bias in Case Studies can be introduced due to a number of factors, relevant to this study. These include time constraints leading to selective rather than full retrieval of documents and artefacts, restricted access to key artefacts, or the unknown biases of the authors of key artefacts. These are in part, but not completely, addressed by the mitigating factors above.

14. OUTLINE PLAN

Below is an outline plan summarising the activities of the Research Project. The nature of qualitative research suggests that this plan must be considered as fluid.

Activity:	Completed by:
Basic Housekeeping – Sign off design, ethical approval, preparatory activities	Mid-February 09
Data Gathering: Interviews and transcription – Operational Business Unit #1; Collection of case material	Mid-February – End-May 09
Data Gathering: Interviews and transcription – Operational Business Unit #2; Collection of case material	
Data Gathering: Interviews and transcription – Operational Business Unit #3; Collection of case material	
Data Gathering: Interviews and transcription – Central Business Units; Collection of case material	
Work in progress, data collection and analysis presentation	25 th -26 th March 09
Data Analysis and Coding	End June 09
Produce Findings, Discussion and Conclusion	End July 09
Finishing and Examiner Selection	End August 09
Panel Review and submission	End September 09
Viva	End October 09

Table 3 - Outline Plan

15. NEXT STEPS

Prior to commencing the empirical Research Project, the following steps must be completed:

- Assure familiarity with Nvivo coding software and coding discipline
- The supervisory panel must approve this Research Design
- Relevant Ethical Approval must be sought
- The Personal Statement should be prepared and reflective learning journal created
- Create an interview template based on the protocol and develop interview schedule

Research Design

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- The research log should be created to cover all decisions, observations, deviations, findings and reflections throughout all aspects of the process – interview, coding, and case materials

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