

Heading	Number of words
<p><i>[1] Topic</i> An investigation of knowledge acquisition by small-business owner/managers</p>	8
<p><i>[2] Location</i> Kent. Interviews will be at locations in Kent mutually convenient to subjects and interviewer.</p>	14
<p><i>[3] Research questions</i></p> <p>(a) What is the nature of learning and development within the context of a small-business?</p> <p>(b) What is the significance of the distinction between inferred learning from similar previous experience (infralogical learning) and original learning from new experiences (logological learning) within a small-business?</p> <p>(c) What is the importance of this distinction in relation to knowledge-transfer in the small-business setting?</p>	57
<p><i>[4] Importance</i> <i>Explain (a) why the research is important, (b) how it relates to existing discussions, and (c) what makes it sufficiently broad, deep and original for MPhil/PhD work</i></p> <p>a. There is a growing body of evidence to suggest that learning-types may affect professional competence. It is my hypothesis that small-business owner/managers are unique in their increased exposure to logological learning situations as they are exposed to 'discontinuous' i.e. unexpected, events, on a greater scale than managers within large organisations. A large proportion of UK businesses are defined as 'small businesses' and arguably they affect every part of UK life, from economic contribution to societal values. This research is important as it examines the epistemology, development and transfer of knowledge within the small-firm which is of increasing significance as interest in continuing professional development and lifelong-learning agendas are objectives maintained by the HE sector and government.</p> <p>b. The research will draw upon discussions regarding the nature of learning, knowledge transfer, organisational resilience, professional lifelong learning and the learning development role of a small-business manager in an increasingly knowledge-based economy.</p> <p>c. The study will consider the role of theory-in-practice in evidence within small businesses and draw upon a broad range of literature to investigate notions of learning for owner/managers. Exploring the epistemology of entrepreneurs through their experiences may provide insight into attitudes regarding learning and development within some small-businesses. Infralogical and logological notions of learning are mainly theoretical and have very little literature published – most of what exists reflects an education setting rather than a business or management one.</p>	229

Identify the broad areas of literature which you intend to consult.

For each area (a) explain how it relates to your research questions, and (b) provide no more than three key references. Here you must show that you are looking further afield than the core literature connected with your topic.

1. Nature of learning (Infralogical/logological) and knowledge transfer.

Pascual-Leone & Irwin (1994) "Non-cognitive factors in high-road/low-road learning", *Journal of Adult Development*, 1(2), 73-89 explored the interactions of non-cognitive factors in facilitating adult learning. The learning types they defined are useful when contrasted to those identified by Salomon & Perkins (1989) "Rocky roads to transfer: rethinking mechanisms of a neglected phenomenon", *Educational Psychologist*, 24(2), 113-142 as they both broadly conclude with reference to infralogical and logological learning. This area is the primary interest in this research as it appears to be fundamentally important to the nature of knowledge transfer in small-businesses.

Maclellan's (2005) "Conceptual Learning: the priority for HE" *British Journal of Educational Studies* 53(2) June 2005, 129-147 important text utilises the research conducted by Pascual-Leone & Irwin and Salomon & Perkins and, importantly, addresses the concepts with a pragmatic view of what each means in terms of the transfer of knowledge. Specifically, she argues that experience does not necessarily constitute learning and that the ability to conceptualise from experience is of key importance in applicability.

2. Research methods

Fillis (2006) "A biographical approach to researching entrepreneurship in the smaller firm", *Management Decision*, 44(2), 198-212 is a key paper that explores the uses and strengths of biography in entrepreneurship research. Fillis regards the application of biographical research methods and determines the values of recurring themes and 'stories' to be constructive and useful in management research.

Llewelyn (1999) "Narratives in accounting and management research", *Accounting, Auditing & Accountability Journal*, 12(2), 220-236 and Shamir et al (2005) "Leading by biography: Towards a life-story approach to the study of leadership", [online] London: Sage Publications. Available from: <http://lea.sagepub.com>, also focus on the values of 'story-telling' and provide arguments as to the usefulness of 'proto-stories' and 'meta-stories' in reaching wider audiences than would otherwise be available.

Wetherall et al (Wetherall, M & Taylor, S & Yates, S (2001), *Discourse as Data*. Sage/Open University: London) demonstrate the analysis of discourse and language and show the benefits and drawbacks associated with this method. It is intended that Critical Discourse Analysis of patterns of terms and meanings be used to explore issues within the themes identified from respondent biographies.

<p><i>[6] Methodology</i></p> <p><i>Describe (a) the research approach which you intend to employ, (b) how this will be translated into data collection or source consultation, and (c) how it is an appropriate means for addressing the research questions.</i></p> <p>a. Initially, a review of existing literature will be used to identify broad areas within which further research is required. Semi-structured interviews will be conducted with 10 managers from a nonprobability sample of Kent-based small-businesses. It is expected that each respondent will be interviewed three times.</p> <p>b. 10 respondents will be interviewed for professional and academic experience to create a narrative that will form the focus of the research. Interviews are expected to vary in length as themes are developed and explored, however it is likely that first-stage interviews will last for 1.5hrs each. Subsequent interview length will be dependent upon the amount and depth of data available to inform the research, but individual points that may need clarification could be resolved through telephone conversations and/or email.</p> <p>The data will be interrogated in context of the research questions using ethnographic methods including biographical and discourse analysis. It is intended that the interview data will provide information to develop arguments of infralogical and logological learning and knowledge transfer. Ongoing literature searches in light of the emergent themes will be required in order to clarify connections between themes. Follow-up interviews can further explore the themes identified and other significant findings and will serve to illuminate previous discourse. Analysis of patterns of terms and meanings using a Critical Discourse Analysis technique will also be applied to the narratives to explore issues of distinction and importance within the themes. This iterative process will ensure that the desired depth of research is reached and the research questions answered.</p> <p>c. It is felt that the mixed-method analysis will allow the research to address the fluid, multi-faceted, non-linear and unpredictable processes involved in small-business entrepreneurial learning rather than risking a reductionist approach which, whilst providing generality, may lose contextual accuracy.</p>	<p>293</p>
<p><i>[7] Arrangements, access and ethics</i></p> <p><i>Describe what arrangements will be made for data collection or source consultation, with special reference to (a) access, and relations with participants or other bodies, and (b) ethical issues</i></p> <p>a. I have been involved with small businesses for many years as stakeholder, consultant and now researcher, and am a member of several small-business forums. Through these contacts I will determine an appropriate (available for interview at a later date) group of respondents and will contact them by telephone in the first instance. A letter detailing my research, my expectations of them and what they can expect from me, will be sent following the call.</p> <p>b. The letter details the ethical position in terms of confidentiality, anonymity, data retention, data access and encryption. It also makes clear the respondent is able to withdraw from the research at any time up to publication.</p>	<p>131</p>

<p>c. At all stages, this paper will be subject to ethical clearance by the faculty of education Ethics Committee.</p>	
<p><i>[8] Special supervisory requirements</i></p> <p><i>If you intend to be away from Canterbury for more than one month for the purpose of data collection, source consultation or other activities related to your research, state (a) the duration and occasions of this absence, (b) how contact will be maintained with your supervisors and (c) how you will be able to access the necessary library resources.</i></p> <p>a. ...</p> <p>b. ... Not Applicable</p> <p>c. ...</p>	

<p><i>[9] Timed objectives</i></p> <p><i>State what you hope to have achieved by the end of each year of your proposed study.</i></p> <p><i>Year 1</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Begin review of literature in order to provide conceptual framework. • Creation of participant criteria, according to research questions. • Participant selection and invitation. • Collection of data – Interviews 1st round & transcription • Thematic analysis • Write-up of literature review and methodology to date. • Collection of data – Interviews 2nd round & transcription <p><i>Year 2</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue write-up of methodology. • Further literature search following identified themes. • Collection of data – Interviews 3rd round & transcription • Data analysis Start write-up of findings. <p><i>Year 3</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review data and analysis. • Final write-up of findings. • Submit. <p><i>Year 4 (for part-time students)</i></p> <p><i>Year 5 (for part-time students)</i></p>	<p>97</p>
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<p><i>[10] Funding</i> <i>State how you intend to fund this research.</i></p> <p>This research will be self-funded.</p>	5
<p><i>[11] Ethics and Police Clearance</i> <i>Tick the following boxes</i> <i>Have you received ethical approval for your research project? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/></i> <i>Have you received Criminal Records Bureau clearance? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/></i> <i>If 'no' to either category, (a) what are the reasons; (b) what steps are being taken to fulfil these requirements?</i></p> <p>a)</p> <p>b)</p>	0
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