

Exploration of job relocation in a military context

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Abstract

Australian Defence Force (ADF) staff members experience a job relocation every 3 to 5 years. This research explores the perceptions of a group of ADF staff regarding job relocation. Grounded Theory methodology was used to examine the respondents' perceptions of moving and settling into a new job. A schema called *MOVING WORK* was developed as a way to illustrate the respondents' experience and to provide an insight into the widespread workplace practice of job relocation in the ADF.

The results revealed that a characteristic of the ADF military context is for ADF staff to support each other at the workplace. As such, it was established that ADF staff function as a 'community of practice'. Also, definitions of legitimacy and peripherality were established with reference to how the respondents act. From the analysis of the data it was demonstrated that the respondents' actions could be examined and explained using the theoretical framework of Situated Learning.

The outcomes of this research can be used by researchers and ADF senior staff as a means to examine, or manage, the ADF workplace practice of job relocation.

Declaration

I declare that the work presented in this dissertation is my own work and has not been submitted in any form for another degree at this or any other university. I have acknowledged information derived from the published work of others in the text and in the list of references.

Signature

Date

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Definitions and Terminology

This section describes the acronyms and terms commonly used in this dissertation as they have particular meaning in the context of this research.

Acronyms

ADF: Australian Defence Force

CO: Commanding Officer

CoP: Community of Practice

DSTO: Defence Science and Technology Organisation

DFDA: Defence Force Disciplinary Act 1982

LPP: Legitimate Peripheral Participation

RAAF: Royal Australian Air Force

WASP: Wide Area Surveillance Platform

XO: Executive Officer

Terminology

Esprit de corp: The capacity of a group of ADF staff to work together and maintain their belief in the aims and values of the ADF.

Camaraderie: The loyalty ADF staff have to each other in the context of sharing the same belief in the aims and values of the ADF.

Commanding Officer: The senior officer in charge of a Royal Australian Air Force military unit.

Community of Practice: A concept that is a part of the theory of Situated Learning where people learn collectively as they mutually engage in a joint enterprise (Wenger, 1998).

Grounded Theory methodology: Grounded Theory methodology is a general research method where a set of rigorous research procedures lead to the emergence of codes, concepts, and categories from the data. These concepts/categories are related to each other as a theoretical explanation that is grounded in the data.

Learning: Learning is experienced by individuals when they construct new knowledge that affects their behaviour, develops skills, changes their values, preferences, or understanding of what constitutes reality.

Legitimate Peripheral Participation: A concept that is a part of the theory of Situated Learning about how people participate in the activity of a community of practice (Wenger, 1998).

Losing Locality: When ADF staff make a job relocation from a previous location to a new geographic location the previous location is known as the 'losing locality'.

Manning Staff: ADF staff employed to manage promotion and postings of ADF staff.

Mess(es): A place on an ADF installation where ADF staff may meet, socialise, eat, and live. There are usually three messes where access is based on military rank. One for junior ranks, another for senior non-commissioned officers, and another for commissioned officers.

Mustering: The employment stream to which an Royal Australian Air Force staff member belongs. For example, Engine Fitter, Air Surveillance Operator.

Posting: Formal allocation of a particular work role, geographic location, military rank, and military unit for an ADF staff member.

Serving: ADF staff serve the Australian public by working to maintain the national security of Australia.

Situated Learning: This is a theory of learning that is concerned with learning as a part of everyday activity and is a function of an individual's participation in that activity within the context and culture of a community of practice.