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Creating Leaders?

A case study of a leadership training program in practice

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ABSTRACT

Title:	Creating Leaders? A case study of a leadership training program in practice
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Authors:	Jassim, Alia and Netterby, Natally
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Keywords:	Leadership training program, Leadership development, Action Learning, Seductive development, Identity construction.
Thesis purpose:	Our purpose with this study is to gain insight into the practice and effects of leadership training.
Methodology:	The study is a qualitative case study based on semi-structured, face to face interviews and observations. We have used a hermeneutic methodology to guide our analysis. The specific core assumptions about reality and knowledge that guides this research is of an interpretive and constructive character.
Theoretical perspective:	The theoretical framework for this research touches upon different theories concerning leadership and its development. Theories about learning, leadership development and leadership development as a seductive element have been used to analyze the empirical findings.
Empirical foundation:	Our empirical findings are based on seven semi-structured interviews, a two-day observation of a leadership training session and conversations with the participants in this training program. In addition to this, the material used in the training program has also been studied.
Conclusion:	We have found that the contributions of this training program can be divided into two parts. First, it has helped from an organizational point of view with a shift in culture, towards a more supportive and developmental culture and a new emerging leadership. Second, the contributions from the employees' perspectives are connected to the emotional dimensions including security and identity issues. Through these phenomenon, we have found that the leadership training program has created leaders, maybe not in a literal sense, but rather through a cultural shaping process.

Table of content

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1. Introduction

"You think for yourself: "Aha, that's how you should do it" and you notice now when you work that you get to use it a lot, but it's more difficult in practice, especially handling conflicts and stuff like that. I think this training is really good, so I recommend everyone to take it." (Interview with participant in the leadership program[1])

Many companies today see leadership development as a source of competitive advantage and a lot of money is being invested in it, hoping to enhance organizational performance (Day, 2000). Some research in the field of leadership training and education for example McCall (1998) says that it is for an organization impossible not to develop their leaders because they always learn from experiences on the job and by examples set by others. He however argues that there is a risk for dysfunctional development that results in leaders that aren't good for the organizational performance if the development isn't actively taken into consideration. If there is an awareness of how these learning processes work and how the leaders are produced, there is also a way to influence these processes. McCall aims to point out how important it is to pay attention to what leaders are learning because they are always learning something and it's one of the reasons why investing in leadership is important.

However, research also concludes that a wide variety of classroom training programs are offered on the market but such programs have been proved not to be enough (Day, 2000). The leadership industry has apparently become a big business and a wide variety of research has been conducted on the topic of leadership. However, when it comes to research within the leadership training area there are some shortcomings and the value of many training programs are described as uncertain (Fielder, 1996). Still companies spend millions on leadership training programs and it's very costly. It has been estimated that the cost to develop such programs run from $50,000 to $250,000 per session (Stashevsky and Burke, 2006). The skills that need to be learned are often of tacit nature and are difficult to transfer into every day

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[1] Because of the small size of the company we have chosen to make all interview statements anonymous. Pseudonyms are not used since only one woman is participating in our interviews and observations; the pseudonym would thereby counteract its purpose. For the same reason positions are left out when not concerning the CEO or department managers/ top management.

work (Day, 2000). The pressure and lack of time in the every day work that the leaders conduct often results in that skills are not applied. Only very little of the knowledge attained at leadership training programs are actually used in practice. A greater emphasis on learning by experience would result in sustained changes in practice and behavior. A combination of traditional training methods and action learning should be the best according to some researchers (Hirst et al. 2004).

This increased interest in management ideas and leadership training provides us with both respectful and a skeptical discussions of the latest "fads and fashions". The debates in both media and the academic circles bring up the value and attraction of seemingly new ideas and discuss their promoters such as management gurus, consultants and academics. A wide range of studies have emerged exploring how and why ideas and practices are implemented by organizations and to what extent these processes are concerned with improving organizational performance (Sturdy et al. 2006).

The interest and search for useful ideas and techniques that can be applied to improve organizational effectiveness has as we've noticed increased. The talks about innovation and training have recently been complemented by more recent concerns with learning and with knowledge management, knowledge intensive firms and knowledge societies. The issue does not only concern how to evaluate the claimed utility of ideas and techniques, but also their transfer and application. This is questioned by both practitioners and academics but still the interest in facilitating the development and search for practically applicable or relevant knowledge has become a main imperative (Alvesson, 2004).

We are aware of the enormous amount of research and knowledge that is available and surrounding leadership, although it seems that a part is missing here and we are hoping to contribute somewhat to the field of leadership development studies. Fiedler (1996) stresses that reviews of leadership training tell us very little about the processes in leadership and managerial training that contributes to organizational performance. Very few existing training evaluations are based on credible organizational performance measures that could really add anything to the organizational performance. He argues that the only evaluation in most leadership trainings consists of just asking trainees how they liked the program and whether they thought they had learned something. Most of the research concerning leadership training suggests that leadership in one way or another can be learned. If leadership training is used to gain competitive advantage it also assumes that leadership is something that can be learned.

This however is not consistent with other researchers like Barker (1997) who claim that leadership has so many different meanings that we really don't know what it is. If we don't know what leadership is, it is also impossible to train.

The question still remains if leadership is something that can be learned. However, research frequently indicates that what is learned at leadership training programs seldom can be applied in practice and therefore its existence can be questioned. Even though this can be questioned, the leadership training industry is huge and leaders across the world attend these programs which would indicate that it brings something to the organization. What is then the outcome of a leadership program? Maybe it is a rhetorical question posed by management gurus and consultants that preach and promote leadership training. Management training is criticized by many researchers and for example Sinclair (2009) stresses that leadership development is a process of seduction that contains seductive elements, including sweeping audiences of their feet and to a certain extent concealing some of the critique about its content.

Parallels from the slightly proclaimed insignificance of leadership training, suggested by Sinclair, can also be drawn to the new management roles in knowledge intensive firms where leadership is not connected to the strategic and organizational issues to the same extent as in traditional organizations. The functions of the new management roles are more of a motivational, developmental and identity creating character. Motivating knowledge workers is an essential part of leadership because the employees are the most important resources of the organization. Through activities as leadership development they show their employees that they care about them which motivate them and keep them loyal to the company (Alvesson, 2004).

Our study is based on an organization in the construction industry that has recently invested in a leadership training program for all employees in leader position. Our aim with this study is not to evaluate the effectiveness of this leadership training program in terms of the goals reached or categorize it as something positive or negative. We don't know what really makes these programs effective or if they in fact are effective at all? On the basis of our research study we cannot evaluate the effectiveness of leadership training programs. Rather our purpose with this study is to gain insight into the practice and effects of leadership training. Our research questions are what do leaders learn at leadership training, how do they perceive

it and how do they use it? What difference in practice is resulting from this leadership training?

The questions that are being posed in this study are of great relevance to all parts involved. All parts involved include the company that our study is based on and the consultancy firm that provides the leadership training. From a research point of view it contributes and complements the already existing studies within the field of leadership development. It is not only interesting to the previously mentioned but also to all companies that are involved in planning, participating or evaluating any leadership training programs or development efforts. The aim is to give the reader an insight to how leadership training in an organization works in practice from the perspectives of the participants and their thoughts and feelings.

This thesis is divided into six chapters. The first chapter above presents the subject and introduces the problem, purpose and research question of the study. In the second chapter we discuss our methodological choices and the perspectives that guide our research. This chapter describes how the study is conducted in order to understand the starting points and limitations of our research. Our third chapter deals with our frame of reference which aims to give the reader an insight to the theoretical frame within which this study is done and give an understanding of the theories that our analysis is built on.

The fourth chapter is a presentation of our empirical findings that aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of the case that is studied and make the empirical foundation more visible. This is followed by our analysis, presented in the fifth chapter. Here we make our own connections between theory and empirical findings. The result of the study is later presented in the last chapter which contains our conclusions.

2. Method

In this chapter we discuss the methodological choices we have made during the process of our research. We start with the core assumptions which deal with our ontological and epistemological view. Second we discuss the research design and the techniques and strategies used and finally we discuss the validity and reliability.

2.1 Core assumptions

When conducting our research we have used a hermeneutic methodology to guide our analysis. The specific core assumptions about reality and knowledge that guides this research is of an interpretive and constructive character. The ontological view in this research is based on a constructionist idea that what is studied is constructed by people and their thoughts and actions. The social phenomenon that we are studying is created and recreated by the individuals in the social context (Bryman & Bell, 2003). To capture this we have to uncover the activities and processes that people participate in when constructing these concepts.

The epistemological views that guide this research are built upon the interpretative perspective. An understanding of the subjective in social reality and social actions is the aim and not an explanation as in traditional natural sciences and the positivistic perspective. We can make sense of phenomena in the social world only by understanding what it means to the people involved and take their subjective meanings and understandings into account. Trying to develop an emphatic understanding of the social phenomenon that we as researchers encounter, is essential in order to interpret and make sense of it (Bryman & Bell, 2003). The interpretative perspective and the constructionist idea takes into account that people create meaning through different activities and that the cultural background in which they act is a part of this meaning making process. People create meanings about social phenomena in different ways and different contexts shape their actions (Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2008). The result is that lived experiences and different cultural backgrounds make people create different meanings and different understandings about the social world. To capture this in our

analysis we consider how other people think and feel about different aspects of leadership, culture and leadership training and also how they act within this context.

Noorderhaven (2004) points out that organizations are not natural phenomena; rather they are constantly constructed and reconstructed by the people within and around the organization. Because of this fact, he argues that organizations can be seen as signs; they stand for something else, having a certain meaning to the people that construct them. Noorderhaven also talks about the essentials within hermeneutics as observing signs and establishing their meaning and that signs are only understood if they are reconstructed and meanings are made to be our own (Noorderhaven, 2004). In this sense, studying a cultural and social phenomenon like leadership and people's different perceptions and meaning makings around this is best studied through hermeneutics. The hermeneutic approach will give us the possibility to uncover hidden aspects and issues of what we are studying and discover the underlying meanings of this and how people relate to these phenomena (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2000).

As a consequence our result will reflect people's perceptions of and sense making of the leadership training. In this way the interpretations and analysis will be bound to this particular context within which the study is conducted. The interpretations are also heavily dependent on us as researchers and the preunderstandings and understandings we form during the process that are partly the result of our cultural backgrounds. We are not seeking to find general explanations or causal connections in our empiric data. Rather it is this particular case that interests us and the underlying meaning that is constructed in this particular context. The aim is to form an understanding of the different mechanisms that come into play and interact in a social process.

When using the hermeneutic perspective one has to consider the parts to be able to understand the whole and vice versa (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2000). It is impossible for us as researchers to have all the parts in this puzzle. The study is conducted during ten weeks and all aspects are not possible to observe and take into account. Therefore the study is bound to the parts that have been discovered and observed. Through these parts, we construct our "own" whole which will be the foundation of our analysis and conclusion. The parts that we focus on are the leadership training program sessions that we have observed and the interviews with the participants that we have conducted. By this we are able to connect the different parts to construct a whole. Due to time and access limitations it's not possible for us to take all parts into consideration and thereby create the whole picture. There are several other training

sessions that have been left out from this study. Interviews have only been held with chosen persons on leadership positions once and they were picked out by the CEO. Employees, not in leader positions that also participated in the training, have not been interviewed because of time limits and the relevance for our study. Neither have we interviewed any of the leaders' subordinates mainly because of time limitations.

2.2 Research design

This research is built on a small ethnographic study of one single company and its leadership training program as a focus. Since this research aims to develop an understanding of the deeper social meanings and sense makings of the leadership training in this particular organization, the qualitative case study makes an appropriate research design. We are interested in the specific meanings created by individuals that participate in the social and cultural construction of the leadership and leadership training in this context. Bryman and Bell (2003) among others point out that the qualitative case study offers a possibility to a deep understanding of this specific context and the meaning making activities that goes on here. The case in itself is the interesting thing and the aim is to do a deep description of it and to point out what is specific in the case to form an understanding of the phenomenon (Bryman & Bell, 2003).

For our study we have chosen to conduct qualitative interviews with the people involved as well as observations of one of the training program sessions. Since the research is of an interpretive character and emphasizes the social context in every aspect it is important to consider also the context of the interviews and the observation itself. Alvesson (2003) suggests an approach to the research interview that considers the social context in which statements are given. According to Alvesson the interview should not be seen as just a tool for producing data; rather the interview situation is a complex social event that needs to be reflected upon. He continues arguing that one should not see the interviewee simply as a knowledge producer that gives truthful statements resulting in a realistic picture, but one should explore different meanings and acknowledge ambiguity in the statements. The empirical material gathered from interviews will always be influenced by the social processes

present in its context (Alvesson, 2003). Different expectation for example may influence how our interviewees choose to answer our questions. This is something that will always be present and can't be illuminated and should instead be a part in the interpretation process to reflect upon.

2.3 Sampling and strategies

We wanted to study this company since it is a small company going through an interesting development and growing very fast. To find interesting research areas we started off by going in with very wide preconceptions of what to study. After our first encounter with the company we came up with different research proposals that would fit this company and the way they are organized and the specific phase they are going through. Our interest in the area of leadership derived from the focus of our MSc in Managing People Knowledge and Change, fitted well with the company's developmental phases and leadership focuses.

Our sampling of the respondents for interviews is based on the access given to us by the CEO and the participants that were present in the particular training program session that was observed. To get different perspectives on things in ethnographic studies, it is important to talk to as many different kinds of people as possible that are relevant for the study (Bryman & Bell, 2003). We got access to five persons on three different management levels within the two fields that the company is active in and with varying experience within the company. We also interviewed the CEO and the consultant that both could contribute with different perspectives on our studied phenomenon. This sample fulfills the variation requirements mentioned above.

The access was given to us, primarily by the CEO, who provided us with contact information and prepared the respondents with what it was all about by e-mail. In this way they were prepared that we were going to contact them. However, we wanted to be clear about the fact that it was their own choice to participate in the interviews and not a decision made by the CEO, but still they were aware that it had been approved by the CEO. We called them up to ask if they had time and interest in participating in our study. They all agreed to be interviewed and a personal meeting was scheduled at their work place. We have chosen to, in

every case it has been possible, to visit the respondents at their workplace to secure the context that they act in. It is important to us to also capture their every day working environment to better understand how they form their reality. One of the respondents however was situated up north in the country and agreed to meet with us for an interview during the weekend on his time off. Since he offered this himself we thought of this as a better solution than interviewing over the phone. Instead this interview was conducted at a local coffee shop in Malmö, whereas the other interviews were held at their offices, or at the location of the construction place in Malmö, Trelleborg and Lund.

The interviews have been recorded to secure accuracy in the data, but we also found it necessary and important to take notes during the interviews. This is primarily to be able to capture specific interpretations of the situations that we experience. After our interviews with the employees we turned to the consultant responsible for the leadership training program. We thought that interviewing him would be interesting and essential and bringing more depth to our study. By interviewing him, which we did over the phone due to his lack of time and the geographical distance, we wanted to complement our empirical material with his point of view and see how it matched with the rest of our findings. We specifically looked for a matching purpose and if the employees perceived and learned what was aimed to be learned.

After noticing that some of our respondents were hesitative over us recording and citing them, we decided to keep all interview statements anonymous to protect the employees. We also choose to use a pseudonym for the company in order to protect them and their employees in case any sensitive information would come out. Another choice we made was to do the interviewing in Swedish, since the company is only doing business in Sweden and Swedish is the mother tongue of all the respondents. The interviews have been translated by us into English. Both of us as researchers has Swedish as our mother tongue and feel very confident with English. We feel that the possible errors in the data or faulty translations are brought down to its minimum because we have compared the translated interviews to the original ones.

Our interviews were combined with observations in order to better understand the social and cultural context that contributes to the sense making and construction of the reality in which this phenomenon takes place. Observations can allow us to be a part of the context we study and share some of the experiences of these individuals. The reasons for an observation are for us as researchers to get a deeper understanding to how the training program is constructed and

what it means for the people involved. Often researchers' presence in the field is stressed in ethnographic studies. This presence makes the understandings and interpretations of the researchers closely linked to the every day practice of those studied (Aspers, 2007). Through this we can se how the people interact with each other and how they deal with the program content. We can better understand what the employees talk about and how they relate to the training program when we have actually seen it ourselves. Bryman and Bell (2003) mention how people's behavior is dependent on the context in which they act. Therefore it is important for us to also watch the employees in the context of the leadership training program. It might differ from how they act in an interview situation. Through observations we gained rich empirical material which enabled us to see what people really were up to and what was really going on. The observations also gave us an opportunity to meet with the consultant in person and talk to him again.

We chose to do an observation of the last training program session, which was a two-day work-shop held in Helsingborg. The training program is divided into three parts with a two-day work-shop each time. There is also one to two follow-up sessions every year. The extent of this study makes one observation a reasonable amount of work. The sampling of this particular observation is also due to practical reasons such as it being conducted at an appropriate time considering our deadline for this research. The sampling done during the observation is as often in ethnographic studies and observations according to Bryman and Bell (2003) done by convenient sampling which means that we have talked to people that were convenient to talk to in that particular situation.

2.4   Techniques

Our first interview with the CEO was almost unstructured and had no guide other than our previous thoughts about researching an organizational phenomenon. We wanted this interview to be very flexible in order to take in different ideas. The unstructured interview offers these possibilities of flexibility (Bryman & Bell, 2003) Our other interviews were semi-structured and almost all of them done in person. This gave us the possibility to be flexible in every situation but still keep to certain predefined themes that guided the interviews (Bryman &

Bell, 2003). Only one of the interviews was conducted over the phone due to practical reasons and time limitations as mentioned before. This was the interview with the consultant that planned and executed the training programs and was placed at the end of our empirical data collection to give us more insight to the meaning of this leadership training. Before the observations we had already talked to and met most of the participants during interviews so they were familiar with us and our intentions. We also mentioned during the interviews that we would visit during their last session so they were prepared in that sense. We chose to be very open and answered all their questions about our research to reduce insecurity and curiosity.

When observing the leadership training sessions we chose to be participants as observers which means that we where a part of the group and interacting with them during the observation but still they were aware of our purpose as researchers. However we were not participating as fully in the activities as the others. We felt that by interacting with the participants this way would make us more a part of the group and them less aware of the fact that they were being observed. Aspers (2007) argues that an interaction with those studied is also a necessity for understanding the meaning of what is done.

Since it was a classroom environment, our note-taking became more natural and less obvious than during other circumstances. Pen and paper can otherwise make people very aware of that they are being observed (Bryman & Bell, 2003). Still our presence may very well have influenced their actions to some extent. Our participation will of course influence what happens and therefore also what we find (Aspers, 2007). However, by writing down our findings directly as they happened, we could better remember the things that happened and how we interpreted them. Also by summarizing our notes at the end of the day made our empirical material fuller. We chose not to videotape or record their actions in any way even though it is mentioned as a good resource for an ethnographic researcher. The negativity that follows with videotaping is that people are less inclined to act naturally in front of a video camera (Aspers, 2007). The time it takes to build up such trust with those studied to be able to videotape them was not available in this study.

Through observation of the leadership training we also gained access to the training material that was part of their education. They were given to all participants in a file folder and made it easier for us to understand both the course content and the interview statements. This together with readings of the literature on the subject of learning and leadership training constitute the

secondary data for this research. It has formed our understanding of the subject and has been necessary for doing an analysis of our empirical findings.

As Aspers (2007) also mentions an experience cannot fully be written down. Even though we made efforts to describe our empirical material as fully as possible it is impossible to reach a completely inter-subjective understanding of the phenomenon that is studied.

2.5   Validity and reliability

When considering the validity and reliability of a qualitative case study there are some things that are often questioned. A qualitative study rarely meets all these demands that are put on research from a traditional quantitative point of view. When LeCompte and Goetz (1982) discuss the problems of validity in qualitative research such as ethnographic studies they propose a point of view that is more suitable than the traditional quantitative definitions of the terms. A qualitative research has internal validity when observations and the theoretical concepts that are developed through the observations correspond. Through spending time within the social environment we have been studying it is possible for us to have a fairly high degree of correspondence between our observations and our theoretical concepts. We have interacted with the people involved in the leadership training program to a degree that is fair considering our time limits. To secure an even higher degree of correspondence we would have to also observe them in their every day work during a longer period of time which was not possible for us.

When it comes to external validity, the findings from one case cannot be generalized to be valid in all other similar cases. The aim is instead to find interesting aspects in one case that can be tested and redeveloped in other cases and therefore the qualitative case study can be said to contribute with a theoretical validity (Bryman & Bell, 2003).

The ecological validity is something of greater interest in this research. The question of weather or not the every day life, the attitudes and values of people really can be captured with our tools and techniques in the same way they would manifest themselves in their natural environment, is one that can be discussed within the concept of ecological validity. The more

the researcher changes or intervenes with the natural environment of the studied phenomenon or creates environments that are unnatural, the less valid is the result from an ecological point of view (Bryman & Bell, 2003). Our study is designed with an aim to maintain the natural environment as much as possible. Our interviews are done at the work place of the interviewees and with a structure that resembled more a conversation around the topic of leadership training than an investigating interview. The observation part is even more a natural environment in which this leadership training program takes place, and our presence is the only thing that changes this fact.

However, when considering the trustworthiness in the interview statements we have reason to be somewhat critical and skeptical. Because of the size and intimacy of the company and our openness about the project (meaning that everyone involved should have the right to read it if they wanted) we believe that a discussion surrounding truthfulness is of interest. Everyone in the company knows one another and the CEO has total control over much of what happens. The fear about saying something "wrong" or not suitable during the interviews may have caused our respondents to not tell us everything. However to try to minimize this effect, we have chosen to make everyone anonymous. Other sources also indicated that the employees thought it was very fun to be interviewed by us. This fact can be interpreted as that they felt no insecurity or pressure from us or others in the company when interviewed, which in that case makes them more trustworthy. We have chosen not to reveal positions since it would reveal the identity of those giving statements because of the small seize of our sample and the intimate relations within this company. For partly the same reasons we have chosen not to use pseudonyms, since there is only one woman in our sample, the pseudonyms would counteract its purpose of anonymity. Wee also feel that to alter the sex of our respondents would give an inaccurate description of our findings.

When discussing reliability in ethnographic studies there are obvious problems to replication due to the complex ever-changing social relationships inherited in the study. Since ethnographic studies are done in natural settings and are often recording change processes, there are always elements of uniqueness that cannot be recreated precisely. Therefore a replicated study might never give the same results. LeCompte and Goetz (1982) argue that it is not necessary to recreate situations and suggests strategies for securing a higher reliability in ethnographic studies. They suggest five problems that should be handled to enhance reliability. We discuss these further in relation to our own research and present the measures we have taken in order to improve reliability.

Researcher status position, is what position the researcher holds in relation to those studied. The dependence on social relationships within this kind of study makes it important to report the researcher's role and status clearly (LeCompte & Goetz, 1982). This is something that we have put emphasis on in the discussion surrounding our strategies and techniques. We have discussed our role within the group observed and how interviews have been conducted, in order to give the reader an understanding of the situation and how this may affect the findings and the results.

We have also carefully discussed the *social situations and conditions* of our data gathering. Among other things we have discussed the trustworthiness of our informants' related to the situation of this specific company and its intimate relations, we have also carefully described the interview situations and how it may affect what is said during interviews. The description of the observation situation is carefully described in our empirical findings to give a deeper insight into social situations and conditions.

The analytic constructs and premises are carefully considered in the sense that we aim to describe our core assumptions and definitions to the concepts used in this research. For example the discussion of leadership definitions opens the theory chapter. In addition our underlying assumptions about the research that guides the whole thesis is present in this methodology chapter.

The methods should be described so clearly that the report should be able to be used as an operating manual when replicating the study (LeCompte & Goetz, 1982). The *methods of data collection and analysis* that are the foundations of this research have been specified in this chapter as detailed as possible having a possible replication of our study in mind.

The weak link in the discussion about the reliability of our research is the clarification of our *informant choices*. We have been clear about how and why we have made certain informant choices when it comes to sampling. However we have deliberately chosen not to do a detailed description about the informants. This fact makes it harder to handle the threats to reliability that results from informant bias (LeCompte & Goetz, 1982). The reason for not describing our informants in detail is because of our decision to make the interview statements totally anonymous. However, we have made a general description of our informants when it comes to positions, work tasks and responsibility within the company. We have also discussed the level of experience as an element of matter when it comes to informant choices.

Frame of reference

In this chapter our frame of reference is presented to get the reader an insight in what theories that we have built our analysis on. The first section deals with the definitions of leadership, while the other two considers the discussion around the development of leadership.

In this chapter we focus on the theories of the development of leadership and theories of how to learn leadership. Even though our study is not about establishing what leadership is, it is important to make it clear that leadership is a complex subject with many definitions. Despite all research on the subject some authors write that "leadership is the most studied and least understood concept of any in the social sciences" and that "never have so many labored so long to say so little?" (Stashevsky & Burke 2006 p. 5).

We start this chapter with a discussion surrounding how leadership is usually understood. This is to be able to relate our empirical findings to a certain understanding of what leadership is. The second part focuses on leadership development which can have many aims and functions. These theories help us investigate the different functions of training such as the *theory about leader development and leadership development*, or the hidden agendas as the *seductive leadership development theory*. The last section in this chapter deals with how leadership can be learned and it will be helpful in trying to see what have been learned and what have not been learned in this training program.

3.1 The understanding of leadership

Leadership as a social process

To understand how training and development of leadership works we first need to discuss how leadership is usually understood. Early leadership theory has focused on traits and behavior of individuals. However there are some more recent studies that indicate that this is somehow insufficient to fully understand leadership. How we define leadership have some implications for leadership training because it also defines what should be trained. Barker (1997) makes the point that there is no agreement in what traits and behaviors should be connected to leadership. He also argues that what differentiates a good leader from an effective manager cannot be defined. Leadership is seldom defined properly in the literature, and many authors seams to assume that leadership and its meaning is widely known among everyone. The old paradigm of leadership, that of a feudal kingdom with one powerful male leader on the top of the hierarchy with total control, conflicts with the modern world. Instead of describing leadership in words of a feudal or industrial paradigm, Barker offers a view of leadership as a social process that also is closely connected to culture that he calls the emerging paradigm. Leadership is not purely seen as a relationship but a social process containing several complex relationships. A metaphor that is used by Barker is the emptiness of a bowl; it's always there but can only be defined by its container. The cultural context is seen as the container in which the leadership process exists. Leadership is in this way a very complex and intangible phenomenon but something that is present more or less everywhere in all social contexts.

Leadership vs. management

However, by differentiating leadership from management we can come to a somewhat concrete definition of how it could be understood. As mentioned, there is some confusion of the word leadership and also concerning its connection to the word management. Leadership is not only used to refer to the process of directing and mobilizing people and their ideas. It is

sometimes also referring to the actions of people in leader position. This is why management and leadership sometimes refer to the same phenomenon (Barker, 1997). Kotter (1990) however tries to make a distinction in this by defining leadership as something that creates change, establish direction and aligning people in this direction. Leadership is also about motivating and inspiring people to move in the established direction and overcome obstacles on the way. Management on the other hand creates order, stability and consistency, such as making plans and budgets, organize, control and solve problems. In this way leadership is very different from management though it is tied to the actions of making changes instead of the hierarchical position as a manager and the clearly defined tasks. Similarly Barker (1997) describes management as the skill or ability to allocate and control resources with the function to create stability. The function of leadership is to create change and is about creating new patterns of action and new beliefs systems. It is important that we make this distinction because one can imagine that the ways of training leadership is very different from how to train management. Much leadership theory is built upon the traits and skills and abilities of leaders. Leadership training that is focused on this kind of definable skills assumes that leadership and management can be defined the same way, that leadership is the function of management or the excellence of management.

3.2 The development of leadership

Leader development vs. leadership development

Day (2000) also points out the confusion of the concept of leadership and also that there is a difference between leader training and leadership training as well as a disconnection between leadership development in practice and in theory. He argues of the importance of building both human and social capital in an organization. According to him, the human capital is connected to the leader development and focuses on the individual and the social capital refers to leadership development and relational and interpersonal skills. Leader development is based on the traditional and individualistic approach and assumes that effective leadership occurs through the development of individuals and that this can be added to any organization

to improve effectiveness (Day, 2000). He goes on arguing that leadership development on the other hand is based on more contemporary approaches and emphasizes the relational aspects of leadership. Leadership is though a result of a social system, it emerges in the social process, through the creation of shared meaning. This implies that everyone can be a leader since it is something created in relationships. However it is important for organizations to deal with both types of development, one does not replace the other, according to Day. Brass (1999) talks about the social capital as a factor often ignored when it comes to leadership development. He also points out the social nature of leadership, it's not occurring in isolation, but in relation to others because the essence of leadership is to accomplish work through others. Brass though points out the importance of developing the leaders of the future in interpersonal skills through a social capital perspective.

How this kind of leadership development should be done is discussed by Day, the emphasis should be on interpersonal competence, such as building trust and commitments. The ability to understand people is essential and the skills that are developed are social awareness such as empathy and political awareness and social skills such as building bonds and handle conflicts. Because it is a competence of social nature, the development of such is best made in a social and interpersonal context. Leadership development is described by Day as an *integration strategy* that contributes to a wider understanding of how to relate to others, coordinate and build commitments in a social context. The leader development is instead a *differentiation* that aims at self-understanding and independent identities. The skills associated with this are self-awareness such as self confidence and self image, but also self motivation and self regulation such as self-control, trustworthiness and personal responsibility (Day, 2000).

Leadership development as seduction

Sinclair (2009) writes about leadership development as a process of seduction. In her research she shows that the idea of seduction, which she describes as slightly illicit and sexualized is connected to the usually intellectual idea of leadership development. This connection makes it possible to reveal hidden aspects of that experience to show another picture of what may be going on. She argues that the way leadership is defined and understood is the result of power, not the uncovering truth and that leadership seduces in an invisible way. Once the audience is

seduced there is not much that can be done to weaken the participants' responses and it seems that the content was not that important to how the participants experienced the session.

In her studies of leadership development, Sinclair (2009) found that leadership was firm and that potential trainees were promised solid outcomes, the latest breakthroughs and the most leading advice. There was also talk of promises concerning global challenges and that the programs would provide the participants with global competencies. Sinclair stresses that this is another way of seducing and that marketing using this kind of language and set of promises is persistent. Sinclair stresses that leadership often works, or does not work, depending on how well the audience is swept away and to what extent their desires of being entertained are satisfied. She argues that the idea of seduction can introduce new insights to what may be going on in leadership development. By that she means that for example leadership gurus are aware of what clothes they wear and why, how they gesture and how they use their body language and voice to surprise and engage the audience.

Sinclair (2009) also points out that the money consultants and others who work with leadership development earn, indicate that these gurus are worshipped. She claims that followers are being deceived by the power and aura and personality rather than the content presented. "Executives travel the world to glimpse the great ones, companies compete to get an exclusive deal or audience with a renowned consultant and his secrets". (Sinclair, 2009, p.7)

Another way of seeing leadership development as seductive is the special feeling it can create among the participants. Usually companies send off a few employees to sessions which make them feel chosen and special and distanced from the formal organizational routines. "Participants are initiated into a brotherhood of confidential insights with languages, acronyms, retreats and rituals that perpetuate the exclusivity of those in the know." (Sinclair 2009, p 7) These are not sessions, they are performances that are highly dramatic and based on seductive element. Leadership is associated with superiority and the way this happened was not by chance, it was created. The audience is carried of by powerful and persuasive visions enacted as well as instructed in the closeness of the classroom.

Sinclair further argues that power relations in leadership and in leadership teaching are inevitable. The teacher's power and authority is important and it will always be negotiated and reproduced during sessions. Sinclair (2009) later suggests that leadership and leadership training is positive in its seductive way because of the way it can open up and engage in new

possibilities. However, these fine performances can destroy a deeper understanding. By this she argues that if these performances are so good and persuasive that they sweep the audience off their feet and make them forget being critical, avoiding conflicts and depth and confronting important issues of leadership, then its better they don't teach nor instruct.

3.3 Learning leadership

Learning theory

Some argue that leadership is not learnable in the sense that it cannot be defined as a skill as discussed before and that leadership training must emphasize something else in order to be defendable (Barker, 1997). McCall (1998) also discuss the learning of leadership and argues that leadership can be learned and the challenge is to create a supportive context. These contexts are a source of competitive advantage for an organization. On the job experience is the primary classroom for leadership development and therefore the challenge is to get people into the experiences and contexts they need to learn (McCall, 1998). The experience based learning is a concept also discussed in early research by Dewey (1938) and referred to as "learning by doing". He argues that all knowledge is derived through experience and should be learned in natural life-situations. According to Dewey, the result of giving information to pupils rather than making them work with the problem themselves, makes the information dead and mechanic in their minds.

To continue with McCall's discussion, it's important to understand how and what leaders learn from experiences and how it should be used more effectively. The most important thing however is to make sure that people learn what they need to know through connecting the development to the business strategy (McCall, 1998). Leadership development should be seen as a continuous process that can occur at any place, not only through designed programs. It should be about helping people learn from their work and experience, rather than take them away somewhere else. Training programs are not enough when leadership is to be developed. It is connected with high costs and transfer problems. It is more effective to learn in the context of every day work, when the individuals are offered a possibility to practice and

develop a deeper understanding (Day, 2000). Action learning works in a similar way and is described by Sandberg and Targama (2007) as an educational method that is built on the experience and the actions of people in order to stimulate reflection and lead to new insights. The basic idea is that the learning process starts with action and the involvement with a real problem. A key element is that a small group should be involved in a problem to a fairly high degree. If they are involved like this, they will make the problem their own, experiencing the same intellectual and emotional participation and involvement as they would in their daily work (Sanberg & Targama, 2007). Kolb (1984) describes the process of learning as based on concrete experiences and that knowledge is developed through actions. In his learning circle, Kolb describes four steps; concrete experiences, observation and reflection, abstraction and generalization and finally the testing of the generalizations in new situations. The actions can according to Kolb be directed both outwards and inwards as reflections. Hence, reflection and involvement are essential aspects of learning.

Hirst et al. (2004) conducted a study of how leaders learn. The model used in this study was based on an action learning perspective and social learning theory. Their research suggests that there is a significant difference in when leadership is learned actively or if it is taught. Pressured and stressed situations in every day working life of a leader results in that the taught skills are often only used to a minimum. They suggest that organizations should to a greater extent focus on experimental learning and that a combination of action learning and traditional developmental methods is the best, though it often results in more sustainable changes in behavior.

The value of knowledge is mostly measured in terms of to what extent it is applied in practice (Sturdy et al. 2006). Much research points towards the insufficiency in leadership training programs. The often very stressful environment at the work place makes it hard to apply new knowledge in practice. To understand something in theory is not the same as having the competence to use it in practice and the human mind also forgets which makes it even harder in reality. (Hirst et al. 2004) There are however other aspects of training that are relevant to discuss here. Lave and Wenger (1991) emphasize the social, cultural and emotional aspects of learning and argue that becoming is a crucial part of the learning process. What they mean is that identity construction is an important factor and that social membership in a group shouldn't be overlooked when it comes to learning. Their situated learning theory focuses workplace learning and that it's through social participation in the workplace rather than cognitive acquisition that learning occurs. Lave and Wenger's theory also has aspects of

power relations thus the membership of communities of practice is dependent on weather or not access is given from superior power and they point out that it is impossible to learn a practice when access is denied due to various power relations. Contu and Willmott (2003) stress this part of the situated learning theory as being of significant importance when studying learning. This theory of course focuses on learning in the workplace, however other studies has been conducted on more traditional education settings with a similar idea in mind, such as Sturdy et al (2006).

Sturdy et al. (2006) argues that the more emotional aspects are often overlooked because the focus is much more on the practical relevance of the acquired knowledge. His research with MBA graduates in work life points to that the MBA works as an identity constructer at management level. It offers a self-confidence and social legitimacy rather than practically applicable skills. The MBA offered the graduates a sharper identity with less ambiguousness which was valued emotionally. It also contributed in greater self-confidence and a legitimizing of themselves as managers and the privileges this meant even though they didn't make use of the knowledge gained from this education in practice.

Designing Leadership Training Programs

Yukl (2006) points out that the effectiveness of training programs depends on how well they are designed. He suggests that learning theory, the specific learning objectives, characteristics of the trainees, and practical considerations such as constraints and costs in relation to benefits should be taken into account when designing a leadership training program. He argues that leader training have a greater chance in succeeding if it is designed and conducted based on findings and research regarding learning processes and training techniques.

It is important that the trainer makes the learning objectives clear to the trainees because it helps them to understand what behaviors, skills or knowledge they are expected to obtain from the training. It also helps to clarify the purpose of the training and its relevance to the trainees. Yukl suggests that in most cases the best thing to do is to explain from the very beginning what will be learned and why. He also argues that the training content should be clear and meaningful and that it should be based on what the trainees already know and their

prior knowledge. In order to facilitate comprehension and memorization of material the training should include concrete and relevant examples, periodic summaries and restatements of key points. Yukl also suggests that conceptual learning can be effective if relevant category systems, diagrams, analogies and models are provided, but they should be simple enough to be remembered and applicable enough to help trainees understand and interpret their experiences. Doing this Yukl argues that training should progress from simple to more complex ideas and that concepts, symbols, rules and procedures should be introduced before doing activities that require this knowledge.

Yukl (2006) recommends that the choice of training methods should take into account the trainee's current skill level, motivation and capacity to understand and remember complex information. He also suggests that it is usually better to demonstrate a point instead of describing it with words and that trainees should actively practice the skills to be learned. These thoughts are built on the same assumptions as action learning, that participants learn through experience and active reflection (Kolb, 1984). Yukl continues describing that the trainees should receive relevant feedback from as many people as possible and that the feedback needs to be truthful, appropriate, constructive and at the right time.

Yukl also stresses the importance of appropriate follow-up sessions. He argues that complex skills are difficult to learn in a short training session because of the limited opportunities for practice and feedback and therefore it could enhance if a suitable follow-up session is held after the training program is completed. This follow-up session will help to review progress and see what skills have been learned; discuss what has succeeded and what problems have occurred. It is also important in order to provide additional support and coaching if there are questions among the trainees.

4. Empirical Findings

In this chapter we present our empirical findings starting with the company background to give the reader an understanding of the context in which this leadership training program takes place. After this we describe the content of the training program and the feelings and thoughts about it before dealing with what has been learned, what is used in practice and what their role as a leader is perceived to be.

4.1 Background

Construction AB is a small company in the construction industry. It all started in the 1980s when the current CEO decided to start his own business. He bought his first excavator when he was 21 years old and from that he developed his company. When he first started out, he was alone, and it took a couple of years until he hired a second worker besides himself. After that, the company rode on the economic upswing and grew fast. When the recession came in the 1990s, they suffered some losses but the company recovered and has never had to lay off anyone else since. Today the company has about 50 employees and is doing well despite the economic recession of 2009.

The organization is divided in three different divisions; construction, administration and railway. The company has three offices in Sweden whereas the head office is in Trelleborg and the other two in Malmö and Stockholm. The railway department and administration is located mainly in Trelleborg and the construction department mainly in Malmö. As shown in Fig. 4.1, there are five levels in the hierarchy and four of these levels have a leader position, in addition there are other non manual-workers such as construction engineers. All employees in these leader positions as well as the other non-manual workers have attended the leadership training program.

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│ Manager        │                              │ Manager        │
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│ Site           │                              │ Site           │
│ Superintendent │                              │ Superintendent │
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│ Construction   │                              │ Construction   │
│ Supervisors    │                              │ Supervisors    │
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│    Workers     │                              │    Workers     │
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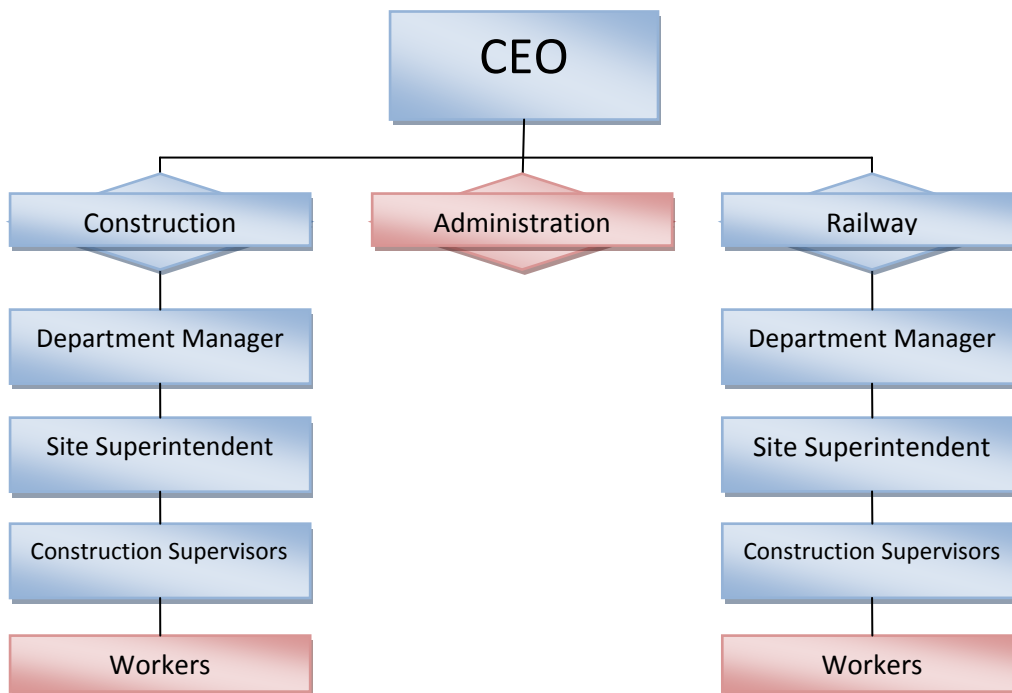
Fig. 4.1, Organization structure

When Construction AB started out and still was a relatively small company it was no problem for the CEO to be involved in all activities within the organization. Today he still has control over much of the work but the size of the company has reached a point were it becomes necessary to delegate a great deal of the responsibility to lower levels. He himself describes this as essential and said that "as a leader you have to perform through other people". His time is just not enough and he cannot be involved in everything anymore. At the moment the CEO is also working as the department manager on the railway side. This is something that he is hoping will change in the nearest future, and they are right now looking for someone who can fill in for the position as department manager instead of him. The top management group, consisting of the CEO and the department manager on the construction side, decided to contact a consultancy firm to design a customized leadership training program for all employees in a leader position and non-manual workers with an informal leadership position. The first group consisting of ten employees attended the leadership training program in 2007 and the second group with seven employees is undergoing the training during this period of our study, in 2009. The leadership training is designed in three two-day sessions with one or two following- up session every year after the training.

According to the CEO the purpose of the leadership training is to be able to "speak the same language" and "work with a shared tool box" in order to minimize errors and increase profitability. The general understanding is that the leadership in the organization has pointed in different directions and needs to be structured. They realized that they wanted everyone in the organization to "pull in the same direction" which means that everyone needs to work in a similar way and share the same understandings. The purpose and goals of this leadership training is long term goals, which aims the company to become better and earn more money. The ultimate goal of Construction AB is to make money and that is what is the most important according to the company's top management. Construction AB wants the whole company to think in a long term perspective and have the whole picture with them as they develop. The employees in leader positions are aware of what they need to do, why they are doing it and top management thinks that in order for this to flourish the employees should have the right support. The department manager also describes the need for a leadership training program as a result of the growth.

> *"We all need to feel that we have support and everyone has to have a chance to develop individually. So we need to have the whole picture with us at Construction AB, because we are getting bigger and bigger, and you're forced to lead through others. Since were getting bigger, we don't have the time to do everything by ourselves, and that is why we have to spread our thoughts to the rest of the organization."*

In addition they have focused on the priorities of the organization and that they should be well known to all employees. These priorities are described by the CEO as guidelines and they are considered to what is important for the employees to follow. The number one priority is to be profitable, if the company doesn't make money they have now reason to exist according to the CEO. Second on the priority list is the co-worker, third is the customer and last and fourth is the development, both the organizational and individual.

To solve the issues and work on the priorities, the company decided to attend a leadership training program and therefore they contacted a consultancy firm. The top management met with the consultant and put down their thoughts and ideas in a frame for how they wanted Construction AB to look like in the future. These guidelines and frames became the foundation of the leadership program content.

4.2 The leadership training program content

The program is designed in three parts, each part in a two-day work-shop. The program's content aims to focus on three parts of the learning process which are described by the consultant as attitude, knowledge and skills. The first step is to work on motivation and attitude so that the individuals are willing to learn and develop and understand why the leadership training is important. Before they started the leadership training they arranged a so called "attitude day", together with the consultancy firm in order to make sure that all the employees at Construction AB had the right attitude towards the company and towards the goal and direction they are heading. This was essential according to the consultant before starting with the leadership training. All the participants in the program needed to have the right attitude and motivation. When we asked him why, he said that "there is no point in conducting leadership training for deaf ears or eyes; they have to be motivated otherwise it's in vain".

The goals that are explicitly mentioned in the course file folder that they use during the leadership training are the four parts; 1) understanding about the company goals and resources and the role as a leader. 2) Knowledge and skills in planning and structuring the work and develop, motivate and control their subordinates. 3) Knowledge and skills in communication. 4) Knowledge and skills in different kinds of employee conversations (work material from the consultancy firm). The file folder that is given to all participants contains summaries of the course content as well as models and pictures to facilitate learning.

To give a more detailed picture of how the leadership training was conducted we will describe the two-day session that we observed. During the sessions the consultant uses the information from the file folder continuously. He asks the participants to brows through certain pages while he talks about the content. The participants used the file folder as support by browsing through it and making notes during sessions. The consultant also gives examples from his own experience and draws parallels to the construction industry. Lectures on the different parts from the content are mixed with cases were the participants are allowed to practice their newly acquired knowledge through acting in specific case situations. In these cases, feedback is given by the other participants, the course leader and from themselves. Case activities were to give the participants a chance to practice and use the knowledge and skills they had acquired. Each case was done by one of the participants that acted against the course leader.

They each took a role as an employee in a fictive company and the consultant acted as subordinate and the participant as the leader.

It started off at eight o'clock in the morning at a conference room in a hotel in Helsingborg. The consultant explained the agenda for the following two days. After this brief introduction, the department manager expressed a wish to change the agenda because he could only participate the first day and he wanted to take part in the case activity as well before he left. The consultant showed flexibility and switched places on the case activity and the group activity. After this was decided, all the participants were told to present what they had worked with since their last session and what expectations they had for the following days. At this time we also got the opportunity to present ourselves and why we were there.

The first day started with an analysis of what the employees thought about the company's strengths and weaknesses and after that they continued with a group activity with the purpose to discuss the four tasks of a leader; planning, developing, motivating and controlling. The agenda for the second day consisted of a lecture about leadership philosophy and then they wrapped it up with a case activity.

To summarize their expectations one could say that most of them had a very vague picture of what to expect. They expressed things like "becoming wiser", "learn more" and "develop within leadership". What they have worked with varied some, mostly because the difference in tasks, position and time at the current position. They are all in different phases in their development as leaders. Some of the least experienced leaders said that they have been thinking about how they interact with their subordinates while some of the more experienced leaders have worked with development and motivation. However, a majority mentioned that they also made an effort to think more about the planning of their time and how to become more effective.

Most of the activities were group related and not many of the tasks were individual. We could notice that the group functioned well together. All participants knew each other very well and all except one of them worked at the office in Malmö. They seemed comfortable with each others presence and the atmosphere was playful with a lot of internal jokes and laughter. We could also notice an already established relationship between the consultant and the participants because he was well aware of their private and professional situation, their internal relationships and personalities. It was also clear that he was well informed about the company and that he radiated closeness to the company and the participants. We could also

notice that the relationship between them was open and that the participants had confidence in him. The consultant interacted socially with the group during breaks and lunch which made him a part of the group but still he maintained a distance and authority because of his authoritarian behavior and his expertise.

Another observation that we made was that the participants seemed to have trouble using recently gained knowledge from previous sessions and connecting the content and models to the right theories and some practical examples. The consultant often asked questions and the answers were often vague and insecure and sometimes even blank. The participants were all very motivated and interested in the training but when it came to taking notes they were not particularly active. They were receptive and seemed fascinated of everything that the consultant talked about, and sometimes we found ourselves sitting there being captivated by his words as well. Even though, they were alert, listening and were very absorbing, they hardly ever asked any questions about the content, nor did they question what the consultant said.

Although our roles during the leadership training were to observe, it was sometimes very hard to just sit there quietly and listen. There were many things that we wanted to say and we especially would have liked to test ourselves in the case activities. It was amusing to see how nervous the participants were before, during and after the case activities. Sometimes we even felt sorry for them because we could imagine the stress and anxiety in some of the case situations that the consultant put them through. After the first case activity we almost longed for the next one to start because it was so exciting to see how they did. On occasions both the content and the case activities seemed so simple and easy to us that it was hard to sit still. We sometimes felt that we wanted to join the discussions and contribute with our knowledge and answer to the simple questions that were posed by the consultant. There were a few times when we couldn't really help ourselves and had to interfere. It was not disturbing to anyone, we kept it small and downplayed ourselves as much as we could in order for the participants to keep their comfortable feelings and atmosphere.

The consultant gained their trust, attention and respect but they were also a little anxious about his feedback and traps, which is why the participants got nervous when it came to the case activities. This was noticed a couple of times when particularly one of the participants showed how he absorbed everything the consultant said. When the consultant asked if they were ready for the case activities the participant answered; "we can never be ready when it

comes to you". Later, the second day, the same participant commented on something that the consultant had told them the first day. The consultant had told them a story about a job his consultancy firm didn't get and how he had called the potential customer to ask why they didn't get the job. The second day the consultant gave a concrete piece of advice to the participants, that when they are hiring or firing, they should not give the reason if they are asked why. Then the participant (for the first time) questioned the consultant's advice because of the story he had told the previous day. The consultant realized the contradiction in his advice and laughed it off by saying, "well you have to try, right?" He showed no insecurity and when another participant found the contrary to what he just had said written down in their file folder, the consultant immediately said that they should disregard from that sentence and strike it off with a pen.

The consultant was convincing and his experience gave him credibility. He used a lot of examples from his own experience and told a lot of stories that fitted well in the context. They were given advice of what models to apply during their daily work and he used the whiteboard, overhead and big paper sheets to illustrate and teach. It was clear that the consultant was well prepared and he seemed very committed to teaching. He was engaging, talked loud and clear and used a lot of body language and metaphors. He usually drew parallels to the athletic world, using different sports to exemplify his purpose. For example when he talked about situated leadership theory he described a tennis coach that, first shows the player how to hit the ball correctly, as an instructor. Then he stands beside and coaches, working together with the tennis player, and when the player is more experienced he works as support.

The consultant asked a lot of questions and most of the time he posed follow-up question to the answerer, like what do you mean by that, why do you think so, and why do you think it is like that? Do you believe it has to do with the humans in the company or the system? In this way he made the participants think their answers through. He kept them active by giving them tasks, letting them read, think, ask questions and act by themselves. The content of the sessions was based on contemporary leadership theory. He used models such as Maslow's hierarchy of needs, Mouton and Blake's managerial grid and theories as change management and situated leadership for example. The file folder starts with a table of contents and continues with the goals for the training program. It explicitly describes what areas they are supposed to increase their knowledge and understanding in and by what means they should do it. They use different models and diagrams that help them to describe their market platform

elements and by analyzing different potentials such as customer potentials they try to achieve a common frame of reference within the company. These are models and facts that have been created by the consultant who coordinated the material according to the guidelines from the management group. The material also focuses on the individual employee and their behavior. They learned about how knowledge, personality, skills, motivation and attitude affects their behavior. These themes are consistent throughout the content together with leadership tasks, how to achieve the wanted results, how to develop individually and how to develop subordinates and co-workers. This is taught through theories of psychological needs, leadership philosophy and effective communication. The file folder also contains specific advice and conversation patterns that the participants can follow when they need to have conversations with their co- workers and subordinates. Finally at the end of the file folder there are some blank papers that the participants can fill in what they consider important for their individual development.

At the end of the days, the course leader gave all participants five minutes to reflect upon and take notes on what they had learned and what they would take with them from the sessions. In the back of the file folder they had a personal development plan were they were supposed to write down what they wanted to develop and how, in order to improve themselves in the future.

4.3 The task of a leader

The theory that the participants learned from the training program, was that they as leaders, should be able to prioritize time and do the right things. Model 1 shows what work-tasks Construction AB wants their leaders to work with, where leadership and production should take the same amount of time and energy, and that administration should only take one fourth of the time and energy. The working tasks concerns questions as what are the most important responsibility areas, what are the most important work tasks, how do you divide your time and are your subordinates performing thanks to you, or despite your leadership efforts?
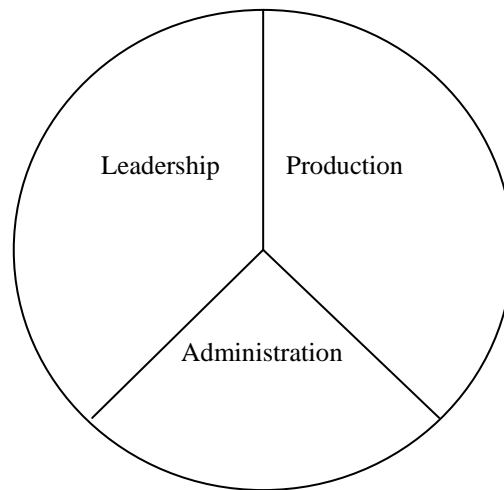
Model 4.1, Work tasks of a leader (Performax)

The employees that we have interviewed have different positions in the company and they have participated all together in the leadership training. During the interviews we often started out with asking them what their work-tasks are, how they perceived their own leadership and then we tried to relate it to what they had learned in leadership training.

The department manager had different work-tasks from the site superintendent who had slightly different tasks from the construction supervisors. Being a department manager should involve a lot of administration work and leadership but this has not been the case at Construction AB. One of the reasons of participating in the leadership training was that they needed to develop leadership skills in order to structure the work-tasks for the employees, to make them work with what they are supposed to. The department managers and the CEO are not supposed to be involved in the production process as much as they are at the moment. As the department manager puts it.

> "*First of all I need to steer the ship. There is a lot of administration and leadership involved. But unfortunately we're still in a development phase, which means that I'm still involved in the production area, more than I should. In fact, it takes too much time away from my leadership which means that I need to keep the other eight employees going, partly with their production and partly to get them out on the markets to find new jobs*".

The work-task for the department manager is also to motivate their subordinates. When we asked one of the department managers how he did that he said that he listens to his employees, he gives responsibilities to those that want it. He also talked about doing fun activities with the team and that timing was important. We asked him what he meant by timing and he said doing things at the right moment and balancing how they do things is

important. He has to be able to sense if there's a heavy workload and who is working late to be able to achieve balance.

The ones that are site superintendents are completely in charge of projects, and it's their job to keep the whole process flowing, economically and practically. As a site superintendent they plan, control and delegate. They order the materials and make sure it's certified according to different regulations and that the quality of the materials are according to the standards. They need to make sure that everything goes according to the plan and that the time schedule is held. They described their work as both office-related and field-related. The most important task in their job is to keep the time schedule and to make money. Site superintendents have usually a lot of work to do, and there is always a lot to keep up with, and sometimes it requires working overtime and nights, especially when they are running three projects at the same time.

Another site superintendent describes his work-tasks in a funny way. He talks about himself as an economist, psychologist and a coach but with the primarily task to make money for the company.

> *"Well it's like you get a bag of money and then you need to spend it wisely. You try to take a job that is supposed to cost 5 millions to do it but then you try to make it for 4,5 millions instead. So I would say that we are economists at the same time. We do the budgets, and then we look at what really happened, and why. This is when leadership comes into the picture, we need to ask ourselves if we are motivating our workers enough and in the right way?"*

When we asked him how he motivates his employees he admitted that motivation was the hardest part. He talked about the difference in individuals and that they needed to be motivated differently as well. Some needs to be "whipped over their backs" and others just do it by themselves when they have the information they need and this is where the psychologist part comes in. He argues that it is important to know your subordinates and "play them right".

In the hierarchy, the construction supervisors are underneath the site superintendents. Their work-tasks is to get their workers started, discuss the job with them and order materials if needed, in other words the construction supervisors make their work easier. Other than that they keep a diary of everything and also handle invoices, papers and bookkeeping.

All of the leaders that we interviewed said that they didn't have any particular problems or difficulties with their subordinates because they are really good workers and they often handle the work themselves.

> *"I plan and control the work. But I have to say that we have really good people here so sometimes there's not much I need to do. They are very autonomous so it's mostly about the planning and steering for me. It doesn't really matter in which order they do their job as long as they do it right and do what I planned."*

When we ask them about their leadership skills they talk about the importance to listen to their workers. Some of them that are in leader positions today have been workers before and climbed up the hierarchy, so they know that sometimes it doesn't always work out according to how someone else planned the work.

> *"I'm a good listener, I listen to the personnel. Sometimes I can sit here and plan things, but the way it turns out in practice doesn't always work. Because of my own experience, when I was out in the field and working myself, I know that it doesn't always work the way someone else planned it. Then I sometimes go out in the work field, and the boys ask me if they can do it another way instead, and I tell them if it saves us time, it saves us money, so of course we can try that."*

To conclude what the employees main task as leaders are we can describe it with the most common sentence during our interviews and that is to "make money". What they are trying to achieve by this leadership training is to find the best way to do it.

4.4 Employees' thoughts about the leadership training

To get an idea about what the employees thought about the leadership training, their feelings and perceptions we simply asked them what they thought about it and how they experienced different aspects of it. The overall feelings about the leadership training program are positive among the employees. Many of the employees mentioned the consultant's competence as a positive factor. In many cases this is the first thing they think about. They say for example that he is good at talking and to make the crowd listen. Someone said that "he is really good at

what he does" and another one said that "he was really good as a course leader...he really activated us, and made the course interesting".

A few of the employees had gone trough other kinds of courses or other leadership training courses before and made comparisons with these even though they mention that it's hard to compare them. One employee said that many courses are "boring and you almost fall asleep, they just stand there and talk". This course was perceived as different because things were happening all the time. The feelings from the training program are described by one employee as follows:

> *"It felt good. I have been to other kinds of leadership trainings before but this one had a lot of "aha- experiences", a whole lot of new things, I'd say that many rocks fell into place...It's hard to tell [the difference] because I had less experience at that time, this was surely the best training."*

The concrete things about the training were often mentioned at an early stage in our interviews. The course leader is one example as mentioned and the file folder is another. The file folder made it easier to remember the course content and was mentioned by almost everyone. They said that it was a good thing because they could always go back and look at it on their own if they needed to refresh their memory. However when we asked them how often they opened the file folder to look in it, most of them said that they rarely did. Only one said that it had been used several times. Still they all say that this file folder was very good. For example this is how two different employees describe how they thought about the file folder and also the structure of the course as making it easier to remember and understand the course content:

> *"The good things about this leadership training are that there are different sessions on different days and that makes you remember things. If you go to this training at one occasion you will forget everything you learned right away. We've had the opportunity to rehears the things we learned which makes it easier to remember it. The good thing about the file folder is also that whenever there is something we wonder about we just open it."*

> *"It was that we got these images in front of us, we got something concrete. We got a lot of information, and you're never fast enough to take all the notes and remember it at the same time. So it becomes a lot to remember but with this file folder that we got, it's easier to remember everything and not only the fact that it's written down in long texts, but that it's in images is important. It makes it easier to grasp and remember. If it was only in texts it would be boring."*

However, when we discussed the leadership training further, a lot of other aspects surfaced, some of them being of an emotional character. Employees for example mentioned that the leadership training was fun and many of them felt like they were valuable and important to the organization when the company chose to invest in their development. This is something that made some of them feel like they wanted to give something in return to the company and by that they meant to do a good job. Some answers also indicate that the leadership training is as much an individual and personal development as a professional development. When we talk about motivation they frequently mention that doing a god job, learn and develop is what drives most of them.

"The culture is to feel enterprise, to feel the cooperation from everyone, and to feel that you work at Construction AB and to be able to work hard for that and to feel belonging. You need to feel that you develop all the time. That is very important."

"What motivates me is that I have always been very competitive, I played a lot of football and the time I spent on football I have transferred to my work which means that I always want to improve what I do. And of course it is very motivating to be the one that got full confidence from the owner to build up a whole division in the company. The motivation is to be able to build something from the ground and lead people in the right way and see how they grow and also to make sure that we get better."

Everyone felt like they were learning a lot from this leadership training and had not much bad to say about it. In almost all of the conversations we can notice an enthusiasm; they clearly believe this to be important and interesting.

4.5 Lessons Learned

Many times the employees described the leadership training as something that gave them things to think about. The majority of them described the things they learned at the leadership training as "aha-experiences" and that it also gave them time to reflect on their own about how things work in different situations. At the same time as they talk about the "aha-

experiences" they had experienced, they mentioned how it really isn't something new. It is described as "logical", "common sense" and as not being "rocket science exactly". Two of the employees talks about some of these "aha-experiences" and describes and give some examples of what made them rethink.

"There are so many things, for example when you asses someone and give them grades it could go very wrong if the grades are given by someone else and not by the person who graded him or her because it doesn't give the person a chance to respond or defend him/herself. So in particular conflict solving situations was "aha-experiences", for example to bring up the problem right away and tell it in a good way without hurting the other person too much."

"It's hard like this, on such short notice, but I got a lot of them when it comes to the employee conversations we actually have them everyday without being aware of it. But the biggest "aha-experience" was more like an awakening, when it comes to prioritizing the time. This is what I work most with. I need to find the time so that the leadership part takes most of my time."

More concrete examples of what has been learned were also mentioned as the discussion about the leadership training went on. A lot of them mentioned different tools they had been given to help them in their work and other things that made common problems and situations in their work tangible. One of these tools, called the propeller that was frequently mentioned explained the priority of time and how they learned to prioritize different parts of their work and devote enough time to all the parts. A leader in this organization has to spend time with paper work and administration as well as be on the production site and also handle the coaching and motivation of subordinates.

"We have the propeller, and however you turn it, it comes down to the priority of time and how to divide the time. So these three things are what are most important to me... the leadership part must take more time from the production and administration parts."

During interviews we also discussed different situations they had learned to handle. A lot of them mentioned dealing with conflicts and preventing negative outcomes and also how to handle their subordinates in tricky situations and having individual conversations with them. Mostly they felt that the leadership training had taught them how to think in the right way about things and that it is a long-term process. One employee for example mentioned that he learned the consequences of different actions and how the things you say affect people. He told us that he thinks a lot more about that now but it is harder in reality because the

consequences is not shown right away. He also feels that the training program has given him more confidence in his position as a leader and he feels more secure with the leadership role. The aspect of the training program as building a better confidence and more security is shared by some of the other employees as well.

Other things that have been visible during the leadership training and that has been mentioned by many of the participants are the cultural aspects among others. When asked about the corporate culture one of the employees directly connects it to what was learned during the leadership training.

> *"...that is something that I noticed during the training, it was clear from the beginning how they want co-workers at Construction AB to be and how the culture [at the company] should be, which is very important I think, because usually there are a lot of different people coming from different companies and no one really knows and there's no real culture in the company that gathers all the employees. But this is something that they did really good, they really made it clear to all of us that are non-manual workers, and showed us this is what we want, this is what we want [the company] to be and what the goals are, how to be as humans, how to treat customers and that we want to be successful and so on."*

> *"That Construction AB is the most important and that they put up for the company. They should be loyal to their co-workers and the company, and that they should know that the first priority is to make money. But that doesn't mean above all. We have a motto that says that "we deliver the right quality at the right time". And when it comes to it, these two things are more important than making money."*

> *"The focus has become clearer now during the leadership training. What they did was that the pinpointed them down and structured them in order to make it easier for us to understand them. What are the goals, how are we getting there, and finding tools to get there. Like the propeller for example, it makes it easier for us to think about what we really do at work. And it's also about mediating this to our workers."*

The lessons that were learned from the leadership training are different. The leadership training seemed to have impressed all of the participants and made them feel worthy and more confident in themselves and what they are doing. It is clearly that they all learned something but they cannot express it in exact words or in practice yet.

4.6 Used in practice

During our interviews we asked the participants not only what they had learned but also how they could use what they had learned in practice and if they ever did. They often repeated what they had said on the previous question, and the answer to what they use in practice was kind of the same as what they had learned. They were honest and admitted that it was hard to apply in practice. They often blamed the time for not being enough to look through the file folder in order to apply it in practice.

> " Time flies by so quickly. It's all about priorities you don't have time for everything. You need to take yourself by the collar and just do it. "

When we asked one of the participants what they had done in one of the following up sessions he replied:

> "We started over, and went through the file folder, and then we did some cases, but then you notice that there's not much you remembered, and maybe that is because you don't have the time."

However, many were very positive about the file folder and were sure that whenever they were going to have evaluation conversations with their workers, they would definitely use the file folder.

> "When I'm going to have the evaluation conversations with my workers I will look in the file folder and use the stuff in there."

The participants were as we noted earlier very positive about the leadership training and when we asked them what they have been using in practice they couldn't give many exact or concrete examples but they could give examples of what they had learned. Answers that we got when we asked them about applying it in practice looked like this:

> "Another example of an "aha-experience", was that during a case task. I was sitting and holding my file folder in my lap, wrapping my arms around it. After the case the consultant told me that by holding the file folder in my lap like that could give a sense of insecurity to the person I'm talking to. And the thing is that I really thought about it. I thought to myself that I should put in on the table, but I didn't."

Another response that we got was that people had grown and developed from this leadership training in a very short time. We asked the participant what he meant and he explained that the leadership is working better. "There are fewer problems to deal with and conflicts are solved pretty quickly". We asked him to give an example and he said that the way people criticized each other had changed. Employees had started to discuss and tell each other what they thought face to face instead of going behind each others backs.

The department manager, whose work tasks should consist of more leadership than being involved in the production, expressed that one of the things that he learned and used in practice was how he plans his time.

> *"The priority and planning of my time, is what I really learned and use in practice. The fact that I needed to have a couple of hours free on my calendar in order to do important things, because basically I go backwards when it comes to time, I always work overtime. Sometimes I have to close the door to my office in order to get things done."*

When the participants talked about how they used what they learned in practice they said that they were more aware of how to think and what they were supposed to do now, and that they should apply this thinking daily but it's not that easy. They said that they don't really think about it everyday, but it lies there in the back of their head, subconsciously.

> *"And maybe we're not that good at going back and looking in the file folder. The consultant noticed that in the last following up session. We don't rehearse enough, that's why he snapped at us the last time."*

The participants are aware of the little time they spend on the file folder and that they should put a little more effort to it. One of them says that it would be better to look at it now and then to keep oneself updated because the tools they used helps them in all areas. He refers to it as needing an alarm clock to awaken oneself. This is how he puts it.

> *"You would have it "a jour" all the time. You need your alarm clock because it's a very complex work. It's like I say, you need to be psychologist, site superintendent, economist and a coach at the same time."*

To conclude what the participants expressed when asked what they used from the leadership training in practice, they had difficulties expressing real concrete examples, although they

were aware of it during their every day work, trying to apply it but most of them were not quite ready yet. The things that they learned at the leadership training was not as one of the participant put it "rocket science" but more common sense that they needed to learn and apply to their thinking. They were also aware that turning the theory into practice was the hardest part and it seemed that they saw it as a challenge.

5. Analysis

This chapter presents the analysis of our empirical findings. It's divided into three parts where the first focuses on how leadership is constructed through this leadership training. The second part highlights the differences between leader and leadership development and how this is connected to the skills learned by employees. Finally we end our analysis with how leadership is learned by connecting it to learning theory, the design of the program and its seductive elements.

5.1 The meaning of leadership in practice

Leadership is as we mentioned in chapter three difficult to define. To be able to analyze this study, we need to start from the understanding of leadership that exists within Construction AB. During our interviews with the employees, when we talked about their work-tasks as leaders, it became clear that they wanted to work towards a more balanced leadership. This means taking more responsibility in motivating and inspiring their subordinates and not only making plans and budgets. Their first answer to what their work-tasks were, was almost always related to production or administration, and as they developed their answers further, other answers were mentioned as motivation, development and coaching. This is obviously connected to what they learned during leadership training, since the priorities of a leader were emphasized in the training.

We noticed a consistency throughout the training program concerning the tasks of a leader and the difference between leaders and managers. Several examples were evident during our observations such as the course leader pointing out the difference between a boss, having a management position and a leader. The consultant concludes that a manager is authoritarian and tends to get people against him or her but a leader is an authority, and uses this to get people with him or her. The definition of leadership according to the leadership training is "to perform results through others" which is also something that was apparent during interviews.

How leadership is defined according to the leadership training, is very much in line with how Kotter (1990) defines it, as discussed in chapter three. According to Kotter, leadership is about guiding, motivating, inspiring and overcoming obstacles on the way and this is similar to both what the training taught and how the employees define their work tasks. Although, many of their tasks are management related, the aim of this training program is to incorporate thinking about the importance of practicing leadership. Both department managers talk about this and how responsibility and thinking need to be spread out and downwards in the organization. The way Kotter (1990) defines leadership and management almost as if they are opposites of each other, for example that management is about maintaining stability and leadership is about creating change. However when it comes to how things work in practice, we believe that the management and leadership cannot be fully separated. To be a good leader you also need to have some management skills as for example being able to plan and schedule the work of others. The leader needs to handle both the administration involving ordering, budgeting and coordination of resources and the leadership parts that involve coaching and developing people, motivating them and making them work towards a common goal. The long-term views are what this company is thriving towards and that both leadership parts and management parts in the organization should be better balanced. Concluding this part of the leadership definition, it is clear that the participants of this leadership training have learned to think more about how they work as leaders with the different leadership parts, what they need to do, how they affect their workers and how their work affects the profitability of the company.

The interview statements show us that the employees are aware of the message that has been a central part of their training. They understand that to coach and motivate your subordinates is equally important (if not more, according to model 1) as the administration parts. However, to understand something in theory is not the same as being able to use it in practice. It is a long-term process as they mention several times and the important thing in this phase is to understand the thinking. They all say that it's much harder to apply this thinking in practice than to understand the theory. Through analyzing how the leadership is framed in this particular part of the training and how the employees perceive their work tasks to be, we can see that they have learned to focus more on the leadership aspects of their work rather than on the administration, at least in their thinking. Their statements about their work tasks is primarily revolving around the planning, controlling and scheduling, which is what Kotter (1990) would define as activities that aim towards maintaining stability. As mentioned before,

when tasks were developed further they also mentioned the more developmental roles associated with leadership. What they actually did and what they thought about doing is at this time two different things. In practice, they are not quite there yet, but through gaining more experience the aim is that they will eventually get there.

To summarize this we can say that the leadership training has contributed to a common understanding among the employees of the concept of leadership and its importance. We also believe that they have got a feeling or an idea of how it is supposed to be used in practice even though they sometimes do not have the right skills and competences yet to use it in practice. When looking at this particular part we can see that the participants' preunderstandings about their tasks as leaders, which are derived from their previous experiences at work and in the context they act, have developed through this leadership program towards new preunderstandings about their tasks in a hermeneutic circle.

A common understanding among employees is not easily achieved. It is something that takes time and that is created in a social process. The phrase "perform results through others" is also directly connected to how social processes create leadership. That is why it is important to understand how the creation of leadership can be seen through social processes. When discussing leadership as social processes we use Barker (1997) and his theory about the emerging paradigm. The old leadership processes where one dominant leader controls the organization stands in conflict with the modern business world. The proposed emerging paradigm is therefore better suited for complexities in organizations today. This is closely connected to the culture since the culture is the "container" in which the leadership processes exist. To look at the emerging leadership we have to look at the cultural and social processes that create, construct and contain these leadership processes. Looking at Construction AB this paradigm shift is something that frequently arises and becomes evident in our interviews and observations. The role of the CEO as a feudal king, running the whole organization and having almost total responsibility and control has to shift as the organization is growing. Responsibility and control are delegated downwards in the organization and create a new context were the new leadership emerges. This process is expressed clearly through the words "performing results through others" that are used by the employees and the CEO during interviews and is also a salient part of the leadership training.

In one way this new leadership is formed and created through the leadership training among other things. It is used as a mean to create and spread a culture that motivates the employees

and raises their understanding about the importance to take on more responsibility and develop as they are given more space. Through the training they are offered knowledge, skills and experiences that influence their sense-making and creating of this new cultural context in which they themselves are a part. In this way the leadership training program contributes to a shift in thinking and culture that is necessary for the process of sense-making on the subject of leadership. In order to get these leaders that already possess a formal leader position, to also take the responsibilities and actions that are a part of this new leadership role, they also have to construct a different reality in which they have to act.

The fact that leadership training has an essential part in this sense-making process becomes evident during the interviews. One of the department managers' talks about the importance of the culture to be supportive and that everyone has a chance to develop individually. He also mentions that they have to "have the whole picture" and they need to spread their thoughts to the rest of the organization. The employees mention how the leadership training has clarified the goals of the company, what is expected of them as leaders and how they want their organization to look like and their employees to be like. The culture is expressed by one of the interviewees as being focused on enterprise and cooperation. This culture of support and development is in our opinion expressed in different ways. First it is expressed through the very fact that money is spent on a leadership training program, this is supportive and developmental in itself. Second it is expressed through the content in the training program as mentioned. However, it is also constructed by the managers themselves as they make sense of the meanings that surround them and in the middle of this complex net of relationships the "new" leadership is emerging.

Another aspect of the creating of the cultural social constructions is the fact that this leadership training is held in Helsingborg during two days, away from their ordinary work environment. This contributes to the feelings that it's something special and important which is exactly the message this leadership training is spreading. Other aspects that reinforce these special feelings are the facts that most of participants have no previous experiences of leadership training and many are also new in their positions. The developmental and supportive culture is furthermore something very unusual for the construction industry which makes it even more special and unique. The department manager and the consultant both mention that the construction industry is very conservative and that whole hearted investments in leadership training are almost non existent. In interviews we can notice that this supportive and developmental culture is experienced by the employees. They for example

mention that they feel good about attending this leadership training because they feel that the company believes in them and therefore invests in their development. During the training session they also mention the supportive nature of their work environment as one of the company's strengths.

In summary the supportive and developmental culture is creating and recreating the new leadership partly because of the leadership training program. It is clear that the employees experience this and the connections to leadership training are easy to make. However, there are other things as well that contributes to the creating and forming of the leadership and the culture in which it is constructed and contained. The leadership training is merely one part of this that we have observed. Other parts such as top management being role models in this process is something that has come up during interviews and observations but has not been studied in-depth.

5.2 Leader and leadership development

The previous analysis about leadership as socially constructed can go on taking another direction, discussing the difference of leader and leadership development.

Leader development focuses on the individual and their skills, knowledge and abilities and the leadership development on the social systems and relationships (Day, 2000). We can use this distinction in analyzing what kind of development this particular training program is focused on. If we start with the individual leader development aspects we notice an aim in the training program toward developing these people individually. In the back of their file folder they each have an individual development plan where they can fill out what they wish to achieve and how they will work with this. The lectures that are of a more informative character could be said to develop the participant's individual knowledge and therefore qualifies as leader development. Day also gives examples of skills connected to leader development, one of these skills mentioned are self confidence. Some participants in the training program told us they feel more confident and secure in their role as a leader now. The training at least seems to add to their confidence even though it is hard to know if this confidence really derives from an increased knowledge or if it just is connected to what leadership training means on a symbolic level.

The leadership development on the other hand seems to be a bit more in focus in this leadership training program. The primary focus for leadership development is building and using interpersonal competence, such as the ability to understand others, building trust and commitments (Day, 2000). The focus on activities with a social character is evident though the training program activities hardly ever focus on individual assignments other than the individual development plan in the back of the file folder where the participants can reflect on their own development process. All other activities are group activities. The group activities are of a social character where the participants are forced to interact with each other and discuss problems and possible solutions. This is something that is evident in the leadership training program through the case activities. These are constructed to trigger a reflection in the participant's minds and ultimately get them to develop a deeper understanding of how to interact with other people. The case activities are a created social process that train the participant's social skills and interpersonal competence.

Other things that our interviewees learned can also be directly connected to the social and interpersonal leadership development. One of the employees gives examples of "aha-experiences" and mentions that things like how to interact with other people and what consequences different behaviors and attitudes have on other people are things that have been learned during leadership training.

Social awareness is something that has been developed through leadership training. Skills such as empathy and political awareness have been mentioned during interviews. One employee gives examples connected to these skills when talking about that hey have learned how to focus on the positive subordinates instead of the negative ones. This is to spread the positive feelings within the team rather than the negative ones that consume energy. Social skills like building bonds and handling conflicts are mentioned as something that has been learned during the training program. The interviewees for example frequently mention the focus on handling conflicts within the team, dealing with trouble makers and solving other social problems. The bonding aspect is evident in an interview statement where an employee mentions how getting to know the workers are important for leading them.

To summarize, the leadership training program contributes to both individual leader development and interpersonal leadership development. When looking at the leadership content as a part of the whole, there seems to be no particular focus toward leader development or leadership development. There is however some differences in what our

informants have learned during this training. What they learn are bound to their personal interests, as one of our interviewees said.

When looking at the leadership training program as a whole in the context of the organizational performance, and the program content as a part of this, we can se a focus towards leadership development and its social and cultural contributions. This is also evident in many of the discussions above.

Whether the acquired knowledge has to do with the content of the leadership training or not, can be further discussed if we switch focus from what the training teaches to how it is taught.

5.3 Learning leadership

Connecting to learning theory

Many researchers argue that experiences are an essential part of learning; some even argue that the work-place is the best classroom for work-related learning experiences (Barker, 1997 and Lave & Wenger, 1991). Action learning is however a method for bringing together planned education with real life experiences. Through action learning, the participants get involved and gain experiences that are similar to those gained in every day work when it comes to emotional and intellectual participation (Sandberg & Targama, 2007).

In this particular training program that we have observed, there were certainly elements of action learning in the case activities. These case activities aimed to provide the participants with experiences similar to those described by Sandberg and Targama and also to active reflection as described by Kolb (1984). We believe that through acting as real leaders in this fictive case against one employee played by the consultant, the participants got close to an involvement with the problem they later can use in real life. Emotions and feelings seemed to surface during these acts that were very similar to an imagined real experience. These were feelings that we also partly experienced as observers due to our emphatic understanding of the situation. These cases are very similar to real-life since there are surprises and twists in the case, not known to the participants at forehand. Some of the employees expresses that this training program and in particular the case activities are good because you get to practice and

get feedback on your actions. They feel that they get experience in an environment that is "safe" in the sense that it's ok to do wrong, which is not the case in real-life. In the case activities they also see the consequences of their actions right away as one of the participants mentions. In real life, the consequences aren't shown until after some time, if shown at all. However, some participants tell us that they felt a bit uncomfortable with the situation in the case activities. They say that it is not the same as in real life because here it is a staged performance and you are forced to act against someone you don't know. In real life you know the people that you interact with and can anticipate their actions which make it easier. The nervousness and awkwardness some of the participants experienced with the case activities may have caused them to not learn as much. What we experienced during observations was that the ones that acted seemed to be the ones that were not afraid of embarrassing themselves.

However, there is a certain amount of knowledge that is needed to handle these staged situations which cannot only be derived from action learning. This is where traditional developmental methods are important as complement which is what Hirst et al. (2004) also concludes in their research. The understanding of underlying causes and consequences from certain actions is for example of importance when dealing with people. This might be derived from long experience and learning-by-doing but is surely more efficient to learn through traditional education. Several of the employees expresses this understanding or the "thinking" as they call it, that is helpful in understanding how to deal with people and the consequences of how you act. The "aha-experiences" they mention are of a similar character; they help in understanding different connections and are a way for the employees to think about what they do and how they do things. These "aha-experiences" also have a deeper degree of involvement, similar to action learning, since they are reflected upon and really stick in the minds of the employees.

To summarize, the training program have through action learning contributed to increasing in the experiences of the participants by enhancing their emotional involvement in the problem. A deeper understanding and the ability to connect consequences and actions in their real working life is the outcome. At the same time, the action learning contributes to minor insecurities and feelings of discomfort that undermines the motivation to learn and experiment.

Except for the explicit skills and experiences the managers get from the leadership training there are other aspects to learning of a more tacit nature. This is what Lave and Wenger (1991) talks about when proposing their idea about learning as becoming. These aspects that are related to the identity construction and self-confidence of the participants are also what Sturdy et al. (2006) concludes in their research. Even if gained knowledge is not used in practice the training contributes to emotional changes. These emotional dimensions to learning are something that we also have noticed during our time on the field and in our interviews. Some of them actually explicitly mention that the training gives them an increased self-confidence and security in their work role. Others say that they feel more confident because top management believes in them, which is shown through their investment in this training program. These feelings seem to give the employees a greater sense of legitimacy as managers.

Through the leadership training they learn to "speak the same language" and work towards a shared understanding of their work and tasks. We noticed that certain key concepts used in the leadership training, such as "perform results through others", "speak the same language", having "shared understanding" and "make money" among other things were also frequently used by the employees themselves during interviews. In this sense an inner circle among participants is evolving and in that way also a valid membership of the management group. This is something that is created and is culturally bound. Parallels can be drawn to the culture that they create during the construction of the new leadership as mentioned previously in our analysis. Here they instead construct a culture that not only results in a new leadership but also in an exclusion of others and a legitimization of their own group which separates them from the rest and provides them with an identity.

Experiences and understandings are not all that are resulting from this leadership training. The culture that is created through the interaction within this group, their shared sense-making about things they experience and the common language they speak is contributing to their identity construction as managers. Identity constructions, both individual and collective are processes at play in these relationships and contexts. Their role and tasks are not only clarified through the training, but also constructed in the social context of the program.

Leadership development can also be argued to have other functions and aims than the more obvious ones of teaching and spreading ideas. A more critical way to look at training

programs are through the theories of seductive leadership development that Sinclair (2009) proposes. This critical perspective is discussed in the next section.

Seductive development

When Sinclair (2009) writes about seductive leadership development she argues that it's more about convincing people than producing results. Marketing and rhetoric are used to seduce an audience and leaves no room to question the content in sessions. She mentions worshipped gurus and the power and authority of the teacher as means to seduce their audiences.

The cultural and social context in which we act in today is very much characterized by competition and a high performance culture. In this world management consultants have these connotations to their work and are being valued in a way that might be exaggerated. We have in our observations and interviews found some tendencies that can be related to the seductive elements of leadership training. In the interviews the participants expressed a very positive opinion not only towards the leadership training in it self, but primarily to the teaching consultant. They showered him with praise and they had nothing negative to say about either the training or its content. This shows, as Sinclair (2009) argues that the teacher's power and authority is of greatest importance in order to gain trust and credibility. The result of this trust and credibility was that the participants got swept off their feet from the very beginning by the dramatic performance which made them neglect a critical thinking perspective. During the observations we were surprised to see how loyal the participants were and how little they questioned the consultant and the content. As we mentioned earlier in our empirical findings, we were also swept away from time to time, and sometimes we had to remind ourselves of our purpose and why we were there. After the interviews we were curious about the consultant since we had heard so many great things about him. The observation confirmed it all apart from our expectations of how he looked and how he was dressed (casual). The leadership training session's content felt basic in our opinion and many times during interviews the participants commented about the content and said that most of it was "common sense", but that "you just don't think about it everyday". This is a strange remark, since when don't you think about common sense everyday? Here we argue that the "common sense" is seen as something obvious but that the participants are not really aware of because of the lack of experience, lack of earlier leadership trainings and formal education. The reason

why the participants don't really apply any critical thinking or opposes to what they see and hear during sessions can be connected to the lack of experience. The fact that they are inexperienced as leaders comparing to the consultant also play a pivotal role.

The environment where the sessions were held was similar to a school environment where the consultant acted as a teacher and the participants as pupils, sitting, listening and incorporating everything he said carefully. This could create a nostalgic feeling for the participants and a special "we are the chosen ones" feeling as Sinclair argues, because of the close interaction between the participants during the two-night stay at the hotel. Our observations showed that the participants were very motivated and engaged and eager to learn, but when we asked them during interviews what they had learned and what they were using in practice, they couldn't really give a straight answer. They usually praised the consultant and talked about him instead. This indicates that the performance of the consultant affects what the participants learn and what they remember. In this case, the consultant was not only strict and authoritarian but also fun and relaxed. He spoke not only with words, loud and clear but with his body as well and he told interesting, fun and weird examples. Everything the consultant does or says is a way of establishing a relation to the participants in order to gain their trust and increase his credibility. This is in our opinion crucial for consultants because how well they sell themselves is connected to how well they manage to sell their services. However, if the performance is too captivating, the learning during a session risks failing and instead destroys a deeper understanding, as Sinclair (2009) argues. Even though there probably is a difference between the American way of teaching and the Swedish, the leadership training was in one way or another captivating with just the right dose of performance. If the performance were to be too exaggerated, it would loose credibility and it would therefore not be perceived in the same manner. Although all the participants were engaged and motivated during sessions both the observations and interviews showed that what they learned was not only connected to being present, but also to the grade of genuine interest in the leadership part. There was a slightly difference in some of the participants interests and experiences. This was observed in how well they took notes, how they remembered the content during interviews and what they remembered. This could be connected to and dependent on how many times they had opened up the file folder while working in between the sessions.

Moving on to the final part of our analysis, we will now take a look at the design of the leadership training in order to understand how it all went down in practice.

Design of the program

In order to succeed with an effective training program it is according to Yukl (2006) important that it is well designed and that certain considerations are taken into account.

When the CEO together with the department manager decided that they needed a clearer structure in the company and that the ones in leader positions needed to develop a higher capacity of responsibility, they contacted the management consultant for a meeting. In this meeting the three of them discussed and agreed upon what learning objectives the training should have. Before starting with the leadership training Construction AB first had "an attitude day", also designed together with the consultant, where all the employees in the organization were included to make sure that everyone had the right attitude to the organization and its goals. This day helped them understand that things were going to change and the learning objectives were thus very clear from the beginning. This is something that is important according to Yukl because it helps the participants to understand what behaviors, skills or knowledge they are expected to obtain from the training. In order to be receptive for training programs one has to be aware of why they are doing it and how it will help in their work. It is therefore important to motivate the participants and clarify the purpose. During interviews it was apparent that all the participants knew what the purpose with the training was, and what they were expected to learn. They said things like "first I need to learn what motivates me and second what motivates others". They were all aware of the common goal, which was to be able to "speak the same language" to become more effective and to "make money" for the company. During interviews and observation it became clear to us that all the participants were well incorporated with what the purpose of the leadership training was. They all, including the consultant expressed the phrase "making money" or "being profitable" both during interviews and training sessions. This purpose was introduced from the start and has been very well used throughout the whole study which indicates that the employees are well aware of both the purpose and the learning objectives of the leadership training.

The training content was clear and meaningful and it suited the learning objectives very well. Whether the content was based on the prior knowledge of the participants or not is hard to tell but since no one asked question and they all referred to the content as "common sense" we take for granted that it was easy to grasp and understand for the moment. As we mentioned earlier the content were on a basic level and the way it was presented and taught, by pictures, group activities, cases and fun examples made it easier to understand and remember points

made. During the sessions the consultant used concrete and relevant examples and continuously asked summarizing questions and gave them tasks to summarize what they had learned and what they wanted to become better at. He frequently emphasized key points and referred to the file folder where everything was written down, both in texts and in explaining pictures. The models and pictures the consultant used were basic and easy to remember. In addition to that the file folders were given to the participants with the purpose that they should be able to remind themselves while they work and whenever they want to be reminded. During interviews the employees expressed how great it was that they had the file folder to their disposal and that they felt it was important to learn by models and not only texts. The propeller, one of the models in the file folder seems to be the thing that they remembered the most, as they almost referred to it in every interview. Another observation that we made was that the consultant first introduced the concepts and theories that was required before doing any activities. For example the second day the consultant started of with leadership styles theory and continued with a case activity that required that knowledge in order to be able to analyze the case. According to Yukl (2006) it is usually better to demonstrate a point instead of describing it with words or letting the trainees practice the skills to be learned. This was also something that was central in the training program. The participants were frequently asked to do group activities and write things down and discuss them. The highlight of the sessions was thus the case activities. In this part the participants were preparing themselves for a conversation concerning a problematic situation or an issue with a subordinate that they had to handle. This was very positively received by the participants because it gave them the chance to practice what they perceived as difficult work- tasks in their job description. What they felt was positive with this exercise was that they received constructive feedback from the other participants and a summary feedback from the consultant. The way this was done is consistent with what Yukl (2006) mentions in his chapter about designing an effective training program.

However, how well the participants remembered and used the content in practice is another question. During interviews we noticed that this seems to be the hard part. The participants often blame it on the time and that they have so many things to do and that they don't really open up the file folder. This is the reason to why they in this training program also have relevant follow- up sessions once or twice a year. According to Yukl follow-up sessions are essential to the learning of complex skills because of the difficulty to learn in short training sessions. This however can be questioned because it seems that even though some of the

participants that we interviewed have attended follow-up sessions they have not really showed any special memorization of the knowledge, actually almost the opposite occurred. It seemed that the employees that attended the training program two years ago had forgotten much about the content when we asked them. The ones that recently attended seemed to have it more freshly memorized and were able to speak about it more clearly. The question here is to what extent these follow-up sessions really help to remember if the knowledge is not practiced and reproduced in the employee's daily work. Some of the participants express that the fact that the training program is divided in different session over a longer period of time and with follow-ups every year makes it easier to remember the content since it's repeated. However, what they feel about it and what it really contributes to are sometimes two different things. For example, one of the employees that participated in the training program two years ago said during an interview that they had been criticized at the last follow-up session because the consultant didn't think that they had remembered the content sufficiently. However, during the last session of the training program that we observed the consultant frequently asked question that were related to the previous sessions in the program, and he continuously reminded them of the things that they couldn't remember properly. After every new concept, model or theory that the consultant had taught, he gave them the opportunity to ask questions and provided them with support if needed. This was a way to make sure that what he explained was understood and that they could go on to the next step.

We need to be aware that this design of successful leadership training is a one source recipe and that there are plenty more where it came from. Whether these recipes are applicable or not depends on what kind of organization, what kind of employees and the specific situation and context.

6. Conclusions

We have found that the contributions of this training program can be divided into two parts. First, it has helped from an organizational point of view with a shift in culture, towards a more supportive and developmental culture and a new emerging leadership. Second, the contributions from the employees' perspectives are connected to the emotional dimensions including security and identity issues. Through these phenomenon, we have found that the leadership training program has created leaders, maybe not in a literal sense, but rather through a cultural shaping process.

In the training program we have seen a distinction between management and leadership tasks similar to how Kotter (1990) describes it. This is visible in the program through the focus on an increase in leadership tasks and a decrease in management tasks. It is evident that employees have understood the importance of a more balanced leadership and are working towards achieving it even though they experience it being hard to accomplish in practice. The understanding of a balanced leadership where both leadership tasks and management tasks are equally emphasized are clearly one of the contributions of this leadership training. The shared meaning of leadership and the preunderstandings of what it means has changed and been clarified through leadership training. This change in understanding and the new leadership that is emerging takes its point of departure in the cultural and social contexts. These contexts are changing due to the fast growth of the company and the feudal paradigm is replaced by a more emerging paradigm when it comes to leadership. The leadership training is used as a mean in a cultural change process and it has an essential part in the sense making the participants engage in. The supportive and developmental culture that is the aim for this company to achieve is reinforced by investments in a leadership training program as well as by the content of this particular program. Trough this, the members of the organization construct a common purpose and a shared understanding of their reality. The leadership training has not only contributed to the creation of a common thinking and understanding about leadership, but also to a better understanding of how their leadership affects the organization. Connected to the sense making process is the aim to "speak the same language". Words and concepts from the leadership training program are used by the employees when talking about their work. This shows how the leadership training has made an impact on their every day discourse and how their work is framed.

When connecting the training program and what has been learned during these sessions to learning theory we found that the elements in the training that could be associated with action learning had the most prominent role in the mind of the employees. The emotional involvement that action learning contributes to is shown to be central when learning practically useful skills. However, other things resulting through leadership training also became evident. These things concerned emotional dimensions such as identity construction. The employees constructed their identity around the new leadership and the program gave them a valid membership of a management group that separated them from the others and provided them with an identity. The leadership training did not only strengthen their identity as leaders but it also made them more connected to the organizational identity. This powerful identification makes them loyal and willing to work hard for the company.

We also found that the leadership training program content itself put equal emphasis on individual leader development and interpersonal leadership development. However, in the bigger picture, when the content is put in its context of the whole program and its aims and goals as well as in the context of the organization and its cultural shift, it becomes clear that the emphasis is on the social and interpersonal aspects of leadership development.

This leadership training has according to the participants and the management group been a success. They have only said positive words about it and everyone seem to have both enjoyed and learned from it, one way or another. An important reason for this is clearly the seductive elements of the leadership training. The consultant is the primary reason for this success. Without a good consultant the leadership training would not have been this successful. This shows the importance of a good consultant and his or her skills to teach in a seductive way, engaging and sweeping the audience of their feet. Other aspects as the remote location, with free hotel visits and free lunches, have also contributed to the special and positive feeling that this kind of leadership training brings about. Nevertheless the success of leadership trainings does not merely depend on the seductive part but also on the content. The leadership program was not only seductive by the consultant but also by the way it was designed. It was customized to the participants needs and this was very well admitted. They really got to practice and learn about things they felt needed and essential to their work. The motivation and willingness from the participants to become leaders and to develop individually made them understand the problems and obstacles and made them receptive to what was being taught.

Finally we conclude that this leadership training has contributed to the organization and its employees in several different ways. The participants have learned not only what tools to use in order to develop as leaders individually but also how they can use them in interaction with others. Even though the use of the leadership training in practice has been difficult to achieve, the participants have perceived the leadership training as something positive. They feel both empowered and motivated to become the kind of leaders they are expected to be. They feel that the organization believes in them and they would like to be the best they can in return. By feeling and thinking this way the individuals in the organization contribute automatically to a better organizational performance. When employees feel empowered they feel good about themselves and this often results in doing a good job. This is something that hopefully enhances the whole organization, especially since a positive feeling among employees creates a happy and positive environment to work in. Believing in themselves and continuing with the follow-up session, the aim is to achieve a better use of the training in practice and ultimately resulting in making more money. This aim is not impossible but whether this leadership training has affected the organizational performance or not is not easy to measure. One could ask if it really is possible to measure whether the success or the failure of a company originates from leadership training.

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