



**The constitution and meanings of two
managerial practices
-A practice theory approach to better
understand managerial work in the
transportation industry**

Master thesis: Service management, Logistics

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Abstract

Keywords

Practice theory, Management, Managerial work. Empowerment, Organisational culture.

Purpose

The purpose of this thesis is to through a practice theory approach get an understanding of what constitutes the practice for the two managers under scrutiny, how they are practicing it and at last why the managers in the cases are practicing it.

Research method

The thesis is developed around two cases consisting of one manager each, the managerial practice in the cases is the unit of analysis. The context for the cases is one company operating in the transportation industry. The main method for collecting the empirical material is observation in form of shadowing, as complement to this two semi-structured has been conducted and documents in form of job descriptions have been analysed.

Findings

The managers in the two cases has two very different looking practices, different ways of proceeding but they are at the same time connected and working together towards the bigger goal.

Value

The value of this master thesis is to show the use of practice theory and what benefits that can be gained by using this approach. By using practice theory in this thesis the value also lies in the effort to show what really constitutes the managerial practice for the two cases.

Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION	1
PROBLEM BACKGROUND	1
PURPOSE	2
AIM	2
RESEARCH QUESTION	2
METHODOLOGY	3
PRACTICE THEORY	3
CONSTITUTION OF A PRACTICE	3
ZOOMING IN AND OUT	4
IMPORTANCE OF PRACTICE THEORY	5
METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH	5
CASE STUDY	6
DATA COLLECTION	8
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK	12
WORK OF MANAGERS	12
MANAGEMENT, EMPOWERMENT AND ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE	13
INTER-ORGANISATIONAL RELATIONSHIPS	15
EMPIRICAL FINDINGS AND CASE DESCRIPTION	18
WAREHOUSE MANAGER	18
JOB DESCRIPTION	18
TOOLS AND ARTEFACTS	19
ACTIVITIES	20
COMPETENCES	24
PRODUCTION MANAGER	25
JOB DESCRIPTION	25
TOOLS AND ARTEFACTS	26
ACTIVITIES	27
COMPETENCES	31
RESULTS AND DISCUSSION	32
MANAGEMENT, EMPOWERMENT AND ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE	32
INTER-ORGANISATIONAL RELATIONSHIPS	36
ACCORDING TO JOB DESCRIPTIONS	38
CONCLUSION	40
ANSWERING THE RESEARCH QUESTION	40
THE PRACTICE THEORY APPROACH	40
FURTHER RESEARCH	41
REFERENCES	42
APPENDIX 1	47
APPENDIX 2	49

Introduction

Problem background

There has been an increase in the activity of managing supply chains, this because there is an increased competitive pressure and by adopting a cooperating approach can lead to a competitive advantage (Holmberg, 2000). According to Nilsson's (2006) study on logistic managers perception of logistics, there was an overall consensus that the logistics in the organizations works fine and that logistic is gaining more importance. However, there were several of concerns presented by the logistics managers that theories of complex theories should be represented by what logistic managers are challenged with in their daily operations (Nilsson, 2006). This has guided this thesis to investigate what managers in logistics encounter in their daily operations through a practice theory approach.

The research of management dates back a long time and there is many approaches to study the subject, and there should be because the answers is not to be found through one approach (Burgaz, 1997). One approach that has gotten recognition through Mintzberg's studies on what managers actually do is the managerial roles approach, and this approach has ties to the work-activity school (Burgaz, 1997). Commonly for these two approaches are that the researcher goal is to find out what the manager under scrutiny actually does, and conclusions is only drawn upon the empirical material (Burgaz, 1997). At the early stage of managerial research there was a descriptive approach this later evolved to incorporate the question on how and even if many has tried to answer the question of what managers do, not that many has tried to answer the question why they do as they do (Hales, 1999). In order to start of in an explanatory approach the researcher needs to find what it is that makes what the manager to "managerial", what they are responsible and accountable for in their job description are a start (Hales, 1999). It also needs to account for what power they have to carry out what they are responsible over and are accountable for (Hales, 1999).

Purpose

The purpose of this thesis is to through a practice theory approach investigate what constitutes the practice of managers in the transportation industry. The questions of how and why will also be answered to be able to further analyse the “what” of the practice. This is done to get a better understanding of how managers in the transportation industry conduct their business. While using observation as the main source of empirical data, the goal is to get first hand information of what constitutes the practice for the two managers. The two separate cases in this thesis will act in relation to each other and the theoretical framework in order to find similarities and to further help understand the practice of managers and how it affects its surroundings. The purpose is also to look at the practice in specific areas namely management, organisational culture and inter-organisational relationships to see how this affects the practice in order to achieve the overall goal of the company.

Aim

By investigating managers in the transportation industry with a focus on their practices the aim of this thesis is to fill the gap of what theory says about managers and what actually is to be true for these two cases. With a direct source to the empirical material this gap hopefully can be narrowed, as Tengblad (2006) puts it *“There is a need to create stronger links between theory development and empirical investigations”* (Tengblad, 2006; p:1455). However the aim is not to present a new grand theory within the field, merely a contribution to the understanding of management practice in the transportation industry and a demonstration in the use of practice theory.

Research question

In order to fulfil the purpose and the aim of the thesis the research question will be answered. The research question is as follow:

- What constitutes the practice for the managers in the cases, and how and why are they practicing it?

Methodology

This chapter will start of explaining the subject practice theory and how this has been used in this thesis, it will then continue with the methodological approach. Presenting the outline of the two cases and show how the empirical material has been collected and analysed.

Practice Theory

Practice theory has evolved over the last decades as a new way to see human life and sociality (Schatzki et al. 2001). Practices consist of three dimensions where the first is meanings and representation, the second is the consistence of objects, technologies and material and finally that it is created of competence and activities (Magaudda, 2011). This quote will start of to explain what practices are “...*the concept of practices is typically invoked to explain continuities or commonalities among the activities of social groups*” (Schatzki et al. 2001; p 199). To further explain practice theory it needs to be made clear that theories of practice are diverse (Schatzki et al. 2001; Feldman & Orlikowski, 2011). Practice theory is not one unified theory it is a combination of several different scholarly traditions (Nicolini, 2012). A distinction also needs to be made between practice and practices, practice can both be praxis and praktik (Reckwitz, 2002). The difference is that praxis is the whole of human action and praktik is a routinized behaviour where several elements are interconnected (Reckwitz, 2002). A practice is therefore several of actions that combined creates the practice and gives it meaning (Nicolini, 2012). It is this meaning of practice that will be used in this thesis in order to understand how the practice of managers in the transportation industry is constituted and conducted.

Constitution of a practice

One important aspect of practice theory is to see the body as routinized bodily performances, in this sense the body is more than just an instrument for the agent to use when performing an activity (Reckwitz, 2002). At the same time that a practice is a set of routinized bodily performances it requires a set of mental structures that explains the social world (Reckwitz, 2002). In practice theory practices consists of both mental and bodily activities and in order for a person to perform the activity both

the mind and the body needs to be recognized (Reckwitz, 2002). The agent in practice theory is a combination of the body and the mind that performs the practices, the agent is therefore within the performance of the practice (Reckwitz, 2002).

Artefacts do not represent any meaning by themselves, they are receiving their meaning within the practice they are a part of (Feldman & Orlikowski, 2011). Artefacts in the cases in this thesis are for example the computer and other types of tools that the managers use to perform the practice but also the offices where the practices are taking place.

Finally to create the practice from the different dimensions a practice can be seen as coordinated units who require performance to become a practice (Warde, 2005), and that practices exist because they are enacted and re-enacted (Nicolini, 2012).

Zooming in and out

Nicolini (2012) presents a theory-method toolkit in order to use and understand the practices and practice theory. Its purpose is to zoom in on the practice and then zoom out on its relationship to the bigger picture and third is to enrich the understanding of mundane practices (Nicolini, 2012). In order to be able to zoom in on the activity there should be a focus on observing what is done in order to accomplish the activity, the requirements of the body, mind and artefacts (Nicolini, 2012). The constitution of a practice is presented in previous section. There is a pre-determined way of what needs to be done in a practice and how it is done, this is taught through the social settings of where the practice is carried out (Nicolini, 2012). This is because the knowledge is situated in the relationship between the persons involved in the practice (Nicolini, 2011). Therefore, in order to understand the practice focus also needs to be on the relationships between the humans who are in the creation of the practice (Nicolini, 2012). This is the start for the next step in the process of investigating practices, namely the zooming out. In the zooming out process the attention is lifted and the focus shifts to the surroundings of the practice (Nicolini, 2012). All practices are involved and interconnected to other practices and therefore the scope needs to be broadened to see how the practice is affected and affects other practices (Nicolini, 2012). In order to zoom out and understand these relations the

connections needs to be unveiled and later understood in how they are structured (Nicolini, 2012). However, to at all be able to zoom out the practice must be understood in itself through the data collected (Nicolini, 2012). The purpose to at least fulfil with the zooming out activity is to understand and see from a broader perspective why the practice is as it is (Nicolini, 2012).

Importance of practice theory

One argument for the importance of practice theory is that in order to understand organisations and to be able to implement new standards and routines, it needs to first be a focus on the doing of the people in the organization (Nicolini, 2012). In this sense *“Practice theories offer a promising and vibrant basis for a programme of research”* (Warde, 2014; p 287). When theorizing practice it is important not to trade the academic view for the practitioners, this because as an observer and academic researcher it is easier to identify what constitutes the practice (Nicolini, 2012). When looking at the practice from outside it becomes easier to explain and identify the practice (Nicolini, 2012). Even if an observer never can understand the practices better than the practitioner the observer can see different things and from another perspective (Czarinaawska, 2007). Practice theory can provide a good analytical tool to organizational studies with its focus on the dynamics, relations and enactment (Feldman & Orlikowski, 2011). And practice theory can then provide practitioners with a new way to understand and carry out their practices (Feldman & Orlikowski, 2011). But a practice can only bring meaning to those who have the capability of recognizing it (Nicolini, 2012).

Methodological approach

The context of the two cases in this thesis is a company involved in the transportation industry, more precisely it is major player within the field. In this context one company have been chosen to be part of this thesis, it is located in the southern part of Sweden. Further the two separate cases in the context of the company consist of one manager each with a title related to logistics. The unit of analysis is then the practice of the manager. The two cases are related to each other and this allows me to see the practices act connected to each other.

The approach between the theoretical world and the cases in this thesis is abductive, this because I first studied about practice theory and how to use it. There also was an idea of what was to be found during the observations because of my previous education in logistics service management that has led to this thesis. After this I went out to the cases and started observing, during the observations the categorizing started to find patterns to analyse and similarities between the cases. After, and meanwhile, the observation took place I went back to theories about managers, management, empowerment, organisational culture and relationships to build up the theoretical framework to further analyse the categorized empirical material. When building theory using an exploratory qualitative approach the analysis and collection of data is carried out simultaneously (Eisenhardt, 1989). Therefore the researcher is being guided, by the first analysis and data collection, in which direction to proceed with the study (Nilsson, 2006).

Jacobsen (2002) states that research and investigations always must minimize validity and reliability risks. This is mostly connected with quantitative studies but Jacobsen (2002) claims that even qualitative studies must be subjects under scrutiny, therefore as a researcher you should question the validity and reliability of collected empirical material. It is not a big number of data that can prove statistical significance that is important when investigating how managers conduct their practice, instead it is to look at the right things (Tengblad, 2012). According to this I have studied about practice theory before the observation took place so that the right things could be observed.

Case study

A case study can be designed in many different ways depending on what you want to study and what the background is, it can for example be a country, organization and even an individual (Alvehus, 2013). In this thesis there is two separate cases that is being analysed and compared to one another to better understand the practice of managers in the transportation industry. The two cases are two separate managers working within one specific transportation company. The reason to have two cases is not to be able to claim statistical significance, but to be able to see them in relation to each other and find patterns. This is in direct relevance to what Alvehus (2013) says

the reason and benefits for multiple cases can be. Also because the two managers work is related to each other it allows me to zoom out, presented above, more and see how the practices interconnect with each other. This would not have been possible if the two managers would have been working in two separate companies.

The unit of analysis in each case is the practices that the managers are conducting. The first manager is actually holding two manager positions at the moment, he is both warehouse manager and traffic manager. The second manager is a production manager and in charge of the daily production of the warehouse that the warehouse manager is in charge over in total. This constellation of managers has given a vibrant insight to the practice of managers. Because even if their goal is the same, a well functioning, continuously developing and profitable warehouse, they have different daily routines and objects that they need to handle. During the observation this has shown two different types of managers with different prospects, however there is possible to find similarities in the practice when it is looked with a broaden perspective. It is not at the direct observation there is similarities, at that moment they are completely different, it is when you look closer and then lift to the bigger picture you can see how there is similarities in their operating procedure.

The two cases falls under the category of micro-ethnography, a micro-ethnography allows the researcher to spend a smaller amount of time in the field by focusing the topic (Bryman, 2008). In this way I have been able to focus on the practice of the managers but not been forced to spend several of months in the field collecting empirical material. One important aspect to consider when conducting ethnography is to gain access to the field (Bryman, 2008), in this thesis the field is two closed non-public settings. Namely one company, and two separate cases in the company, that are closed for the public in general, one way to go around this problem is to not disclose your attentions and your role as a researcher (Bryman, 2008). However, that would not have worked for this thesis because the access needed to allow me to observe two managers in their daily environment. To gain access instead I used tips from Bryman (2008), first I used contacts in the organisations that I received from various colleagues. Secondly there also was an honest and open dialogue about the thesis and what methods that were to be used, this in order to establish a trust. Eventually I gained access to two managers but it is one of the most critical parts when conducting

this type of research. It was also the first manager who gave me entrance to the second manager.

Critique against case studies is in what extent it is possible to draw conclusion to other situations from the empirical material of one case (Alvehus, 2013). This is not the aim of the thesis either, it is to show that it is possible to find patterns in the managerial work and by using a practice theory approach you can question and understand the practice in another way. The case should be studied from a certain angle, it is not the whole case that is under scrutiny it is a specific part (Alvehus, 2013). In this thesis it is the practice conducted by the two managers that is being the unit of analysis in the cases. However, the case in it self will not be interesting it is the theoretical approach, presented in the next chapter, which will explain and give meaning to the cases (Alvehus, 2013).

Data collection

Below the procedure and techniques used to collect the empirical material will be outlined and explained.

Shadowing

The research question and the goal of the study should guide the researcher to what method to use, this because different methods are more or less suitable to address different research questions (Näslund, 2002). The goal of this thesis is to better understand the practice of managers and Nicolini (2012) states that studying practice through verbal information is contradictory, therefore the main method for collecting data to this thesis is shadowing. To further emphasize the choice of shadowing it is important to know that to be able to use practice theory scholars needs to commit to the field where the work is carried out e.g. through observation (Feldman & Orlikowski, 2011).

In this thesis an approach of direct observation has been used, direct observation in contrast to indirect observation is when the observer is present and the object is aware of the observation (Czarinawska, 2007). Direct observation can be further divided into

participant and nonparticipant observations, and under the category nonparticipant observation we find the method of shadowing (Czarinaawska, 2007). The distinction between participant and nonparticipant observer can be, there is debates and different opinions, that a participant observer takes part of the everyday work that is being observed (Czarinaawska, 2007). According to this explanation the data collection to this thesis will be nonparticipant, because I as a researcher has not been taking part in or of the practices under observation. One benefit from using nonparticipant contra participant observation is that a nonparticipant researcher can focus on observing instead of trying to carry out a work activity at the same time (Czarinaawska, 2007). In this thesis the nonparticipant observation is a fact, I have never worked as a manager and to try to carry out the work of one simultaneously as trying to understand the practice would make the data collection suffer.

The ethical dimension of observation and shadowing can be hard, but in this thesis the managers under observation are well aware of my presence and why the study is conducted. Shadowing is not supposed to be completely unnoticed, in fact it is impossible, because only the presence of me following them around will affect them. To avoid the managers to be uncomfortable and avoiding certain activities there has been a transparency about the thesis, and they have always had the choice to tell me to stay put. The point of this has been to build up a trust to the manager and reassure that the thesis is focusing on the practice of the manager and not sensitive information about or concerning the specific company.

Interviews

As a complement to the data collection of shadowing I interviewed the persons who is performing the practice. The interviews have acted as guides to understand how the actors within the practice under scrutiny understand the practice. Using qualitative interviews will give the persons own opinions and interpretation of the subject (Jacobsen, 2002). Another benefit of using interviews is that you can receive a lot of information in elaborated answers (Trost, 2010). The interviews as supplement to the shadowing will work to better understand specific parts of the practice that only experience of conducting it can bring. However, to be able to get good and valid information it is important to have knowledge in the subject in order to ask the right

questions and follow up questions (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). I will get information about the practice during the shadowing process and therefore have the tools to ask the right question to better understand the practice.

The type of interview used in the fieldwork was constructed in a semi-structured manner. At the end of the three-week shadowing there was a follow up interview and this was conducted in a semi-structured manner. The benefit of semi-structured interviews is that the respondent is allowed flexibility in the answers but still within the frame of the subject (Bryman, 2008). During the shadowing process the interview guide started to take form, depending on what was being observed different subjects emerged and needed to be clarified. According to Trost (2010) the interview guide should consist of few overall subjects in order to let the respondent answer freely. I have adapted this approach so that the respondents view is presented, but at the same time I knew what I wanted answers to thanks to the shadowing this gave the tools to ask the right follow up questions and guide the interview to relevant topics. The interviews were supposed to be transcribed to easier use the information in the further work of analysing the data. This was only possible to do with the production manager, due to technical difficulties the interview with the warehouse manager was destroyed in the saving process and not possible to restore. Instead the notes from the interview and a documentation of it conducted shortly after have been used to track the information from the interview.

Document analysis

As a complement to the shadowing and interviews I will use document analysis. The documents that are being analysed are three job descriptions, two for the case of the warehouse manager and one for the production manager. This will help to understand the companies goals with the managers practice and later it can be compared to the other empirical material collected during the shadowing and interviews. To conduct the document analysis I used an informal approach that Denzin & Lincoln (2011) states to be the best way to conduct document analysis when this not is the core method. In this thesis the document analysis works as a complement to the other methods in order to better understand the practices. When using an informal approach you do not use a protocol to analyse the text, it is more about reading the text over and

over to find themes in order to understand the message in the text (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). A presentation from a monthly meeting has also been analysed to get an understanding of what information the warehouse manager communicates to the employees and in what way this is done.

Data analysis

During the analysis of the empirical material the field notes from the observation was categorized accordingly to the definition of what constitutes a practice presented above. The two separate cases was later compared to each other in order to find similarities and deviations that created their practice still made them aiming for the same goal for the warehouse. The interviews has been used to explain things seen that could not have been understood without further explanation from the manager, the material from interviews has also been categorized after the same pattern as the empirical material from the observations.

The documents that has been provided by the company in form of three job descriptions has been presented without any analysis, the analysis of these comes in the result and discussion chapter where they are compared with the other empirical findings. This is done to see how and why the manager's practice is carried out in order to fulfil the conducted job description presented by the company. The document from the monthly meeting has been categorized in order to see how the warehouse manager is communicating information with the employees in these meetings.

All the categorized and analysed empirical findings has later in the result and discussion chapter been synthesised through the theoretical framework to get an understanding on how the practices are affecting the company in different ways. The two cases are also compared to each other to find similarities and differences in the way the managers have constituted their practices.

Theoretical Framework

In this chapter the theoretical framework will be presented this will later be used in the results and discussion chapter to help explain and further develop the empirical findings.

Work of managers

A manager has according to previous research many tasks during a day and they need to switch between tasks and not spend as much time at one specific task (Holmberg & Tyrstrup Chapter 3 in Tengblad, 2012). The most of the research on managerial work has been devoted to decision-making and the financial outcome of their performance, and not so much on the managerial behaviour (Hales, 2001). However, the focus has shifted from the hierarchical organisations to the post-bureaucratic where there is a combination of skilled workers and machines in a task driven approach, and where self-managing in the teams carrying out the work (Hales, 2001). With this new approach in organisations a manager for a department in the organisation can manage it more independently, free from the control and demands on reporting upwards in the organisation (Hales, 2001). The employees will not experience the everyday control from the manager and the lower managers will act as more co-ordinators than managers (Hales, 2001). It is stated that the new tasks for a manager is to inspire, give advice, collaborate and negotiate in order to be able to achieve learning and change in the organisation (Hales, 2001). The role of the manager in the new more post-bureaucratic era is to enable for empowered employees to solve their own problem (Tengblad, 2006). According to Hill's (1992) study of managers, one difficult task is to handle employees who they dislike and employees who do not perform a good job. In these cases the managers stated that their job was very stressful, they had to perform good to the company but no chance to ventilate their frustration, stress and concerns (Hill, 1992). They also had to act accordingly with the corporate values when facing other employees in the company and a simple gesture to one employee could cause problem from another. The main conclusion from previous work conducted is that managers workdays are fragmented and that they need to manage their time so that they can focus on strategic development (Holmberg & Tyrstrup Chapter 3 in Tengblad, 2012). A manager therefore needs the ability to secrete the

important fragments of a problem in order to make grounded decisions, according to theory about sense making it is first afterwards that you can see the outcome of the action taken (Holmberg & Tyrstrup Chapter 3 in Tengblad, 2012).

The size of the company may influence the possibility to implement a more post-bureaucratic approach, it is easier to succeed in a small company than in a multi-national organisation (Tengblad, 2006). Tengblad (2006) claims that the changes in managerial work are not as radical as explained with the post-bureaucratic approach, it is instead a development where bits and pieces are changing. It is therefore important to investigate the whole of the managerial practice and what it consists of (Tengblad, 2006). The unit that enforces control has shifted from the manager to teams that are being driven by empowerment (Hales, 2001). Even if there has been a change to more post-bureaucratic organisations there are only a few cases where this is truly practised (Hales, 2001). This is because the managers are still responsible for the work and result presented by the employees and therefore want the manager to still have control over the situation and the ability to intervene (Hales, 2002).

The resources available and the budget given to the manager will either help or limit the manager in the practice (Hales, 1999). Depending on the resources given the practice will take different forms and influence how the practice of the manager is carried out, in a company driven by costs these factors will influence more than the cognitive and moral rules (Hales, 1999).

Management, empowerment and organisational culture

It is important for companies to continuously improve the quality to an affordable price on what they are selling, but for the performance of the company the employees are crucial (Babel'ová & Vaňová, 2014). When dealing with motivation of employees' one view to approach this is with the help of McGregor's Theory X and Theory Y. Theory X states that human is by nature lazy, passive and with unreasonable demands on salary (Eriksson-Zetterquist et al., 2010). This kind of persons are unlikely to adapt to change, take responsibility and see to the organisations interest, they instead want to be told what to do in the organisation (Eriksson-Zetterquist et al., 2010). When seeing humans in Theory Y they have the possibility and potential to develop with

and in the organisation, but the circumstances and experiences of the organisation have made them reluctant to the organisation (Eriksson-Zetterquist et al., 2010). When adopting this view of people in organisations there are different ways of motivating them in order to cope with the organisations goals. When managing a Theory X person it is a matter of carrot and stick, but in the case of Theory Y the organisation should focus on giving the employee the possibility to fulfil themselves in according to the organisations goals (Eriksson-Zetterquist et al., 2010). Organisational citizenship behaviour (OCB) regards to the willingness of the employees to invest time and effort that not are directly linked to the companies reward system (Vigoda-Gadot, 2006). A lot of research in the area of OCB has focused on the positive effects e.g. the potentially better performance of the company and the atmosphere in the workplace (Vigoda-Gadot, 2006). However, it can also create extra pressure on the employees from other employees and managers, and lead employees to take on extra-work unwillingly (Vigoda-Gadot, 2006). Therefore it is important to see the OCB that comes voluntarily separately from the one enforced by managers, because the voluntarily will increase the performance of the workplace and contribute to a good working environment meanwhile the enforced driven by managers will do the contrary (Vigoda-Gadot, 2006).

In order for a company to develop and learn it is important to have a shared vision within the company, at the same time it is important not to focus the vision on defeating the competition because that can have damaging effects in the future (Senge, 2006). The purpose of a vision is that you can create a feeling of that the company is delivering something greater then the service they are providing, but still within the frame of the service (Senge, 2006). When it comes to development of a company a change management plan often is incorporated, the purpose of this is to identify were it could be resistance from the employees and try to prevent it at an early stage (Rothermel & Lamarsh, 2012). When creating a shared vision a crucial part is that the employees can relate to it and feel that they stand for the vision, otherwise they will not commit to the vision but merely comply (Senge, 2006). When the company is developing and finding new ways there is a possibility that the competitors are looking at the same solutions, then there is a value in implementing the new way faster than the competitor and with less friction and in these changes the importance of the employees are often neglected (Rothermel & Lamarsh, 2012).

Employees often emphasise that they are gladden when the managers are listening to them regarding problems and potential development, however it is important that the employee do not get victimised and thru that feels that the changes are not enough to fulfil their requirements (Rothermel & Lamarsh, 2012). By communicating with the employees the company can then retrieve the information and the skills to further develop the company (Babeřová & Vaňová, 2014). The workforce of a company is related to the performance and must therefore be managed in an efficient manor (Babeřová & Vaňová, 2014). To increase the possibility of a good performance the objectives and targets needs to be clear and somewhat static, a clear structure within the company, efficient flow of important information and a structure for showing appreciation and not only pointing out what has been done poorly (Babeřová & Vaňová, 2014).

The development of organisation culture concludes that the organisations should be looked at as human institutions rather than a work place, and the goals should be easily understood by the employees within the organisation (Eriksson-Zetterquist et al., 2010). The point of the organisation culture is to increase the wellbeing of the employees that leads to a better performance and a well functioning organisation (Eriksson-Zetterquist et al., 2010). The managers in an organisation will affect the culture because humans create the organisation and with the encounter with new personnel they will signal the culture of the organisation, but to achieve this the manager needs the vision and ability to communicate the culture (Eriksson-Zetterquist et al., 2010).

Inter-organisational relationships

According to Giménez & Ventura (2003) it is good for a company to work with and evolve their relationships throughout the whole supply chain. Even if there should be a strive to develop a partnership relationship (Giménez & Ventura, 2003) companies avoid to minimize their independence by getting to close to other companies (Cravens & Shipp, 1993). In order to get a good working relationship the companies needs to establish a trust between one another, this to enable the relationship to work

efficiently (Ring & Van de Ven, 1994; Jarillo, 1988; Powell, Koput & Smith-Doerr, 1996).

In order to establish trust between companies Caldwell & Clapham (2003) identifies seven points; competence, quality assurance, interactional courtesy, procedural fairness, responsibility to inform, legal compliance and financial balance. The competence helps build trust in relation to the extent the companies manage to deliver what is determined in advance (Caldwell & Clapham, 2003). Related to this, trust in relationships is being built through reoccurring actions between the involved companies representatives (Tubins & Levin-Rozalis, 2008). Also that the relationships trust evolvement is something that is being built over time and that the previous interactions between the companies is of high importance (Levinthal & Fichman, 1998). It is also of vital interest for the trust to have good quality insurance based on predetermined goals that have been set in compliance between the actors (Caldwell & Clapham, 2003). The legal compliance and financial balance insures that the companies are following the law and that they can deliver what is being promised within the budget for the task (Caldwell & Clapham, 2003).

In order to keep a good relationship it is important to have a framework, the framework helps to clarify what is being expected and who is responsible for what in the relationship (Das & Teng, 2000). It also signals commitment and reliability to formulate a framework and this can make it easier to maintain and keep the relationship (Kernaghan, 1993). Another aspect and benefit from a framework is that it makes it easier to identify inefficacy in the relationship, this because that the responsibility is clearly established in the framework (Birkerhoff, 2002). However, it is important not to over formalize the relationship because that can lead to conflicts and less autonomy of the company (van de Ven & Walker, 1984). It is therefore important to find a balance when conducting the framework and establishing the relationships. To exclude the framework all together can be hazarded due to the fact that the complexity in a relationship can misguide the status and result of the relationship (Veludo et al., 2006). With the help of the framework it is then easier to evaluate and analyse the relationship and see if it is working as it should and how it can be further developed or if it should be terminated (Veludo et al., 2006).

One risk with long lasting relationships is that the parts get to dependent of each other and if problems occur it can lead to complications (Han et al., 1993). Different goals and agendas within the relationship can lead to difference in opinions and result in a non-satisfying relationship (Das & Teng, 2001). It is also troubling if one part invests a great deal of resources, time and capital in the relationship and therefore becomes to dependent of it and therefore cannot terminate the relationship as easily (Han et al., 1993).

Empirical findings and case description

In this chapter the empirical findings will be presented, the empirical material has been analysed in order to find what constitutes the practice for the managers. The findings from the two managers will be presented separately and in the next chapter compared to each other and further explained with the theoretical framework. This chapter also has the purpose of what Nicolini (2012) refers to as the zooming in on a practice to understand what is in it. To at all be able to zoom out on a practice it first needs to be understood through the collected empirical material (Nicolini, 2012).

Warehouse manager

The personal history to the warehouse manager is that he has been in the company since 1999 and he has held his current position for 5 years, for the last 6 months he has also been traffic manager.

Job Description

At first there will be a presentation of the job description that has been conducted by the company, in this case there will be two job descriptions. The reason why both will be presented at once is because it has been hard to separate them from each other while the manager has conducted his daily work. The job description is presented to show what the company requires and to show what they have specified is the practice for this managing position. But to simplify the reading this manager will be referred to as the warehouse manager, because this is his original title. The traffic manager is a temporary solution that probably not will last for that long of a time, therefore there will be a focus on the warehouse manager.

The warehouse manager duties is to lead and delegate the work in the warehouse, including development of and making the warehouse more efficient. The warehouse manager should also plan and delegate the resources available in the warehouse and make sure that set routines are being followed. He also has the over all responsibility for the staff working in the warehouse, this includes personnel questions, training and recruitment. The warehouse manager must make sure that the work conducted is

carried out in a safe manor, related to this is he has the responsibility for the forklifts, the assurance of that the warehouse is maintained accordingly to the set rules and the delegation of work environment responsibility. He is also obligated to take part of the sales process at an early stage and at last he has the financial responsibility and with this the responsibility to follow up on the result of the warehouse.

The traffic manager duties include taking part in management issues, training and recruitment. Being responsible for the operative functions of the department and inform external and internal customers if there are deviations. Take part in the budget process for the department and follow up on the financial result for the department. He is also obligated to handle price requests from customers and to evaluate and follow up on suppliers to the warehouse.

Tools and artefacts

The most frequent used tools by the warehouse manager that been recognized during the observation are the mobile phone and the computer. While using the computer several of programs was used for example Excel, Outlook, the companies business system and the companies Internet-based system. The mobile phone is primary used for phone calls when the warehouse manger is in the office, however its areas of use increase when he is out of office. The warehouse manager has experience from all of the tools used under the observation and he works with them in an efficient manor.

When using the mobile phone he always answers with his and the companies name, this even if he is aware and knows the person who is calling. The reasons for this may be to always keep a professional approach to the person calling, and to never forget this he always answer in the same way. His conversation style during telephone calls is very clear and direct but at the same time polite, he often starts telephone calls with exchanging pleasantries. Even if it starts of with pleasantries it shifts into work rather quick and when it turns into work he positions himself in a controlling position. It becomes clear that he is a person with influence in the company and that he is manager over the warehouse. Overall during the observation it came in a lot of telephone calls and it can be said that he handled them in a calm and structured

manor, he never did not answer the telephone when it rang. It signalled that when a person is calling I am available.

When conducting deskwork on the computer, the place he spends the most of his time when he is in the office, he was structured and managed to stay focused during longer period of times. He had the desk well organized and not a lot of papers, most things were handled on the computer.

The warehouse managers office is somewhat secluded from the rest of the department that he is managing, it is located in a hallway and surrounded by empty office space. It is a rather big office and it allows him to have meetings in the office at a separate table from where he conducts his work. During the observation it was an open door policy the most of the time, it was only on a few occasions that the door was closed and signalled that he did not want to be disturbed.

Activities

During the observation of the warehouse manager he was at most of the time in his office executing various kinds of desk activities and speaking on the telephone. There was not that many meetings scheduled during the observation while he was in the office. Below you will find the activities explained and categorized in reporting, planning, problem solving and development.

Reporting

According to the job description of the warehouse manager he has the financial responsibility for the warehouse, he also emphasises this as a very important part of his overall job. He estimates that 20% of the workdays consist of reporting numbers into documents that can be accessed by authorized personnel within the company. In order to do this work the warehouse manager is dependent on his employees that are reporting figures to him using Excel that is being sent with mail. The observation took place in a break of two months and because of this there was a lot of work with reporting the final result for the previous month. The warehouse manager also had to approve all the invoices before the financial department could finalize them. This

activity of approving invoices consists of double checking them with the business system to make sure that the numbers are correct, in some cases he also collected information from the e-mail inbox to verify the invoice. During this activity he spoke freely about the lacking business system and it took a lot of time working with, this could lead to frustration. During the observation he seemed to handle it rather well and used the time waiting for the business system to answer mail and fixing other tasks.

One activity related to reporting cost is to inform the employees on the results of the warehouse, this is done at the monthly meeting. There was not any monthly meeting during the time of the observation but the presentations from a previously meeting have been available for this thesis. One reason to have a big focus on the result and costs of the warehouse in the monthly meetings is to engage the employees in the bigger picture and show to them how the work day are conducting are related to the over all result. In the presentation he had constructed a scenario over a wrong delivery and listed the potential outcome and extra activities related to the given scenario, with this he listed the costs and the total financial loss the company can suffer if they lose the customer. After that a list of wrong deliveries over the last two weeks are presented. The warehouse manager then continues with diagrams over all cost that are needed to operate the warehouse (e.g. forklifts, direct costs for the warehouse, personnel costs etc.) this is later broken down to specific shipments and required man-hours and total costs for a specific shipment. This is also shown in relation to previous months to show how the production is functioning in comparison.

Planning

The planning activity that was conducted from the warehouse manager during the observation was related to the different routes that are related to the warehouse. He was evaluating the costs for the different routes and tried to find different solutions for the lay out of the routes. In this activity he used a map of the routes and where the customers are located and statistics over the utilization and cost related to each route.

Problem solving

Solving problems is an activity that continuously comes back during the warehouse managers workdays, this activity varies depending on the urgency and the scope of the problem. Even if the problems are different it is important to have the right information, this means that the warehouse manger needs to collect information from the daily operating business in order to take decisions when needed.

During the observation the first thing noticed was that the warehouse manager handled the days in a calm manor, even tough he has a lot on his mind he managed to stay focused. One thing in particular stood out, every time an employee came in to the office he seemed to know what the problem was all about. He listened a lot and took in what they had to say, and then he replied with clear instructions on how to do or whom to speak to in order to solve the problem. In order to receive all this information he had initiated morning telephone meetings with key staff, all staff responsible for some part are invited to take part in the meeting. The meetings lasted for about ten minutes every morning, and during the meetings the warehouse manager delegated the word and listened to what they had to say. Often he could reply with a short comment or minor instructions just to avoid small things to become bigger problems. He tells in the interview that most of the problems that are treated in the morning meetings the employees solve to 95%, and he only intervenes in the 5% that they cannot handle by themselves. Another thing that the warehouse manager told me helped him keep up with the daily operation is that he is cc in a lot of the mail that the employees are sending. He also dedicates the Friday afternoon to be in the production, not conducting the work, but taking the temperature and see how the production is going. However, during the observation it often happened that employees came by the office to get input from the warehouse manager, at these occasions he started of with listening to what they had to say before he answered or gave instructions on how to proceed. Even if he often had a hunch of the topic it seamed like the employees just needed approval to take it further, so at times the specific information about the problem was unnecessary.

When it came in more urgent matters, often he got this information from emails that he was cc in, he left the office to handle it directly and in person. The time these

encounters took varied a lot but in general it can be said that he listened to the information given to him that not had been given to him before and then he gave clear instructions from the given information. However, smaller changes or when an employee had a problem in the warehouse the warehouse manager says that there is a clear hierarchical way to proceed and if the closest manager not can solve it he or she takes it one step higher in hierarchy. Eventually if it is not solved on the way it is presented to the warehouse manager and he has to take action on how to solve the matter.

Development

During the observation there is a continuously discussion about damaged goods and mostly the packaging, according to the warehouse manager there is a negative trend for the last years in the use of packaging. When dealing with this the warehouse manager browsed the web for information about new packaging solutions, he also used the competitors website in order to see how they write about the topic. He collects a lot of information and composes an email with a lot of information from different sites and PDF-documents, the reason for this is to collect information at one place. The email is sent to the production manager, the person that the warehouse manager has these kinds of discussions with. At the end of the day he runs in to the production manager and they start to discuss the packaging solution he had found, during this encounter he delegates the responsibility to contact the company providing the solution to discuss a test deal. When being asked about if it always goes this quick to take a decision if to try something new he answers that it is depends on the situation and cost related to it. In this case there was a reoccurring problem and they need to find a solution because the service is what he builds the relationship to customers upon.

When it comes to customers he explains that it is very important to build up a good relationship, this because it is a very strained market and they are providing a service that companies not are willing to pay for, it is looked at as a non value-adding cost. In order to keep customers it is therefore important to provide them with a transportation service with the least friction as possible. In order to achieve this the warehouse

manager conducts in contact with the customer a standard operating procedure (SOP) this entails all information about the process of that specific customer. He states that this is an easy way for the employees to find information about how to handle the customer and what is required in order to fulfil the expectations from that specific customer.

The warehouse manager describes during the observation that he always needs to answer the question if the cost is worth the potential improvement. He continues that this is not always as simple as comparing the direct cost of the investment and the potential saving, if he considers soft values and the benefits for the employees it becomes more difficult. However, at the moment there is a strict cost approach from the warehouse manager's point of view. The question he needs to answer at this moment is if they really need it or if it is something that they want to have but not really is necessary at the moment. At the same time the warehouse manager points out that it is important to fix solutions that cannot be ignored when it comes to changing the procedure for work, this because he says that we as humans are lazy and if we can skip something we tend to do it.

In the sense of development of employees the warehouse manager states in the interview that this question is lifted in the yearly meeting, if the employee feels that they have more to give and wants to evolve in the profession they construct an individual plan. This plan is created to see how the employee can evolve and what is required before they can go further in the company.

Competences

The competence that the warehouse manager himself finds the most important is to be good in using the tool Excel, to gather and process big amounts of data. During the observation it became clear that he has experience from working with Excel and he knows how to use it for his purposes.

However, there are more competences that need to be in place in order to be a warehouse manager. One of them is the ability to delegate responsibility in a clear and direct manor and then expect the job to be done. Here there has been a great change

over the last years, because even if the person can delegate the responsibility he needs the organisation to support it. The warehouse manager says that in order to come to his position the person needs to be direct and honest, and it becomes quite obvious during the observation that he holds both these competences. In the encounters with the employees there sometimes is a tension in the air, it is the expectation from the warehouse manager that the employees is well aware of. The warehouse manager do not shy away from the tough questions either, during a telephone call with an employee from the warehouse he was quite frank and cornered the person in order to get the truth. It is possible that the approach was more direct because he had got a complaint from a supplier, and needed the truth in order to know how to respond the supplier.

Production manager

The production manager has not as extensive experience from the company as the warehouse manager, he has been with the company for 5 years and held his current position for two. Prior he started at the company he was self-employed both in the import/export industry and the hospitality industry.

Job description

Here follows a job description of the production manager, the presentation has the same purpose as in the case of the warehouse manager namely to see what the company expects from the manager.

The production manager has the obligation to follow the routines of the companies management system. He also has the duties to organize, lead and the responsibility to follow up the whole of the production in the warehouse. This includes informing the employees and the warehouse manager on the continuously quality produced. To achieve this he must attend production meetings according to set routines and have daily contact with the representatives of the different parts of the production, and in special cases customers. The economic responsibility for the production manager is to follow up on the result on specific customers and the total result of the warehouse. It also involves assisting the warehouse manager when it comes to conduct the budget

for the warehouse. The production manager is also responsible for the use of resources, inventory and the competence development of the employees. He must analyse and follow up on quality and economical results and make sure that set goals is obtained, when goals not are obtained he has the obligation to report this and take the measures to obtain the goals.

Tools and artefacts

The most frequent used tools during the observation for the production manager is similar to the warehouse manager. The mobile phone and the computer is the base for the daily work, he uses some other programs on the computer though. One frequent used program is the one that gives an overview of the status in the production, it gives indications on work under progress, waiting work and scheduled work. He also uses Excel and Outlook frequently in order to perform his duties.

The mobile phone is commonly used within the company to get hold of people in the production quickly, but it also connects him with customers and other departments. When answering the phone the production manager always answer with his and the companies name, this to inform the person who is calling whom they have reached and to keep a professional front. During the observation it was a lot of calls and one thing that they all had in common was that he always has a very polite and friendly approach, he often starts the conversation with a moment of everyday talk. The production manager always answer the phone when someone is calling, and he manages to be polite and calm even if there is a lot on his table for the moment.

In the office space they use a pneumatic tube system and it enables the work in the production. During a day it often comes papers from other departments, booking for one example, and it is papers that need to be in the original that is being sent with this system. The production manager explains during the observation that it would not work without this system because no one from the other offices would bother the trip down through the warehouse to the office. The pneumatic tube system is not directly a tool for the production manager but he often empties it and delivers the papers to its right destination in the office space. His desk is located closest to the station and at

times he is the only person in the landscape, and by emptying and delivering it to the right place he can make sure that the production not will suffer due to missing papers.

The production manager's office can be seen as an artefact, his office is placed in an open office landscape. This office is shared with the foremen that both work in the production and who needs access to a stationary workplace. The reason why he is situated in the open office landscape is because he wanted to be close to the production and the people working in the production, this allows him to collect information and stay on top of the daily conducted work. The open office landscape was during times of the day a very occupied space with a lot of people moving around in it.

Activities

During the observation of the production manager he was mostly in the open office space conducting work at his desk, but he was also taking trips out in to the production. There were no meetings during the observation but a continuously interaction with the employees. Below the activities of the production manager will be explained and categorized in reporting, planning, problem solving and development.

Reporting

One of the production manager activities is to support the warehouse manager with figures on the economical situation, this is done with different Excel documents that are being emailed to the warehouse manager. One part of this is to keep track of all the non-ordinary employees working hours, he emphasises that it is very important that this is done right from the start. Not for the sake of the company but for the employees who will not get the right amount of salary if this activity not is done properly. During this activity he sometimes have problems with the document because of the sheer volume of data that is in it, this leads to inefficiency and frustration.

The production manager gets requests on special assignments and one time customers on a specific delivery, this activity consists then of estimating the total price for the

handling, material and transportation. When he gets a request with the information about the transportation he starts to break it down in parts and add on the costs for it, when all costs are covered for and the profit margin are accounted for he replies with an estimated price. All this is done with Excel, he also gathers the information of costs for different production stages and the estimated time from different Excel-documents. During the observation they had one special delivery from an already existing customer and after it was delivered the production manager summed up all the cost and calculated the final price. He later talked to the customer about the shipment and said that it had been highly valuable from an experience point of view but that it was not financially viable.

During the observation they had recently got a new customer who required a different handling, this has led to that the production manager collects all the information of the handling of the goods and documents it in an Excel-document. He does this to get an overview of the costs and man-hours required so that the planning of the production becomes more optimal. When this is done they have the chance of reducing their costs in employees and time wasted. He emphasised though that he would like to be involved in an earlier stage in the implementation of new customers so that he could get an easier transition when the first shipments starts to come in.

Planning

A great deal of the production manager's time is spent on planning the production, for this activity he uses the companies Internet-based tool that gives him a clear overview of the production status and the planned production. He uses this tool to estimate how many employees they need in the production during the day and the next coming days, it is also a continuously interaction with the foremen's who gives the production manager information on the status of the production. The smaller production groups with a foreman in charge over a specific part of the production have made this job a lot easier for the production manager. Before the re-organisation there was one big unit responsible for the whole of the production and that made it easier for the employees to shy away from tasks and depend on that someone else fixed it. Since

giving responsibility to the foremen's they have had a better utilization of the production.

When planning the production for the next days the production manager has to call in extra employees that not are from the ordinary staff. During this calls he is polite but also clear on what they need from the person to the production, but they give them at least four hours when they come in and work. The production manager is also responsible for the recruitment of the extra personnel and during the observation one of these interviews took place. During the interview the production manager entered a more formal role then usually and he was straightforward on the job specification and what he expected in return for giving them a chance. They had to be flexible and he could not say how much time the job was regarding, but if they performed well the chances of more job opportunities increased. This job interview was regarding a person how had a reference person within the production and the production manager later said that the recruitment process is easier when he gets tips on good persons that might be suitable for the job.

The production manager is responsible for planning the vacation schedule for the summer and this is taking up a lot of time at the moment. It is a balance of listening to the employees and seeing to the best of the production.

Problem solving

A big part of the production manager's day is to keep track on the current production and the one who is right next in time. With this there comes a lot of disruptions from employees who has a question on the procedure or a problem of some kind. The procedure questions are more or less only concerning newer employees who not have the experience over the routines to conduct the work. Even if there is a SOP over how to handle the specific customer the production manager says that they give the information verbally when they retrieve new customers, and it seems to work the same way when they are educating newer personnel into the routines.

Another problem is the tools used by the employees in the warehouse for example the forklifts, scanners and supplies. The production manager would like to see that they had equipment for all the employees and that it was personalised, however this is a cost that not is possible to carry at the moment. At the moment he has documents over all the equipment and he has to fill in the employees name, this is done so that he can go back and see who was responsible if something goes missing. The production manager also takes care of the equipment when something is broken, during the observation there were several of trips to the IT-department to drop of or collect scanners. The production manager also likes to take a look at things that are broken in the warehouse to see if he or someone in the staff can fix it before they call in external help, he explains that it is an unnecessary cost if it could be fixed internally.

Development

During the observation the production manager has worked on a re-organisation of the warehouse, the purpose is to make it flow more efficient and to minimize extra trips with the goods in the warehouse. When he has done this he has started of by creating the whole warehouse in Excel and then he has started to test different solutions. Under this process that has been over a few months he has involved and talked to the persons in the production, mainly the foremen has been asked about their opinion. He has asked the employees because he finds them to hold valuable information about the current daily routines and they know what is not working and how it could be improved. Now he has left it to the warehouse manager who needs to take a decision on if it should be looked at again or if it is worth trying the changes.

Development of the warehouse is something the production manager constantly is working with, he engages in discussions with the foremen during the workday and tries to constantly gather information about the functionality of the production. He also has developed a close working relationship with the warehouse manger and they can discuss ideas with one another to see if there is any value in it.

The primary focus for the production manager when it comes to development of the warehouse and the production is not necessarily the investment cost, he wants to see

to what is best for the employees and the efficiency of the production. That is his starting point and then he engages in discussions with various people and tries to find a middle way, however it is the warehouse manager who has the final saying so the production manager needs to have a cost approach before he presents it to the warehouse manager.

Competences

The production manager does not stress any specific competence that he believes is extra important for the making of his work. He does however point out that his previous work as self-employed has given him the ability to analyse and keep track of costs. And in the position of production manager in a warehouse with strict policies on cost-reduction he has benefits from previous work.

Other competences he lacks he now has to learn, he believes that people that have studied more than what he has has more knowledge, with that said he is eager to learn. Even if he sometimes feels that it is harder to learn at this point in his career he is grateful that he has the possibility to grow within his job.

The production manager describes his own management and his persona in it as hard, he says that it is ok to be friendly but at the job they are there to work and not being friends. He also expects the employees to work hard and tries to set a good example by showing that he is not afraid to dig in where it is needed.

Results and Discussion

In this chapter the empirical material will be analysed through the theoretical framework, this to better understand the meaning of the practice conducted by the two managers in the cases. As Llewellyn (2008; in Nicolini, 2012 p: 14) puts it *“Practices need to be studied analytically rather than descriptively”*. This chapter will also be the second step in the zooming in and out process presented by Nicolini (2012), the zooming process will show how the practices of the two managers act in relation to each other.

Management, empowerment and organisational culture

When we look at the theory on what is said about a manager’s practice, it can be said that they have a fragmented working day with many different tasks that needs to be handled (Holmberg & Tyrstrup Chapter 3 in Tengblad, 2012). This is to be the truth with the two managers in the cases, they are constantly shifting between tasks and interact with the employees. Even if it was possible for both of them to find time to sit down and work with different kinds of reporting it some of the days was more disruptions, and then the “ordinary” deskwork had to wait in order for them to solve problems that had occurred. This is also accordingly with Holmberg & Tyrstrup (Chapter 3 in Tengblad, 2012) who states that a manger must learn to manage their time so that they can focus on strategic development. However, when the warehouse manager was asked about what he found to be his most important activity in his practice it was cost control. It is not directly strategic development that the warehouse manager states is his primary task, but in the outcome of the cost control he can find what needs to be done and what strategic decisions to work with. The production manger is not responsible for the strategic decisions for the warehouse but he provides documentation of the financial reality of the warehouse and how the production is functioning.

According to Hales (2001) the hierarchical organisations has been replaced by a more post-bureaucratic approach that entails more self-managing groups and less of control and reporting upwards within the organisation. This is not directly seen in the two cases because they spend a lot of time reporting upwards in the company regarding

the financial outcome of the warehouse. However, to some extent we can see that the two cases are working in this new post-bureaucratic way, the transformation from one big group in the production to several of groups with one foreman responsible for the specific part of the production. However, it is also said that it is not that common with organisations that fully has adapted to this new way of managing the organisation (Tengblad, 2006; Hales, 2001). During the observation there was a constant reminder that the re-organisation with the smaller self-managing groups was a success, not only for the daily production but also for the managers. The production managers planning activities is far more easily managed nowadays then before, he can depend more on the employees that they get the job done even if they are one or two man short for a day or two. To some extent it can be said that the things that are aligned with the post-bureaucratic approach enables the production and warehouse manager to work more with reporting activities that not are aligned with the thoughts of the post-bureaucratic approach.

To be able to develop the warehouse and the production in the warehouse it is important to create a vision that the employees can relate to (Senge, 2006), even if the vision not was directly mediated during the observation you could feel that there was a continues focus on cost reduction but still improving the delivered service. In all the development activities done by the production manager it was a focus on creating a better utilization in the warehouse, even if he has a focus on the employees it all comes to costs at the end. However, the warehouse manager answered during the observation that he has created his job rather freely and runs the warehouse as a separate company, but you could still get the sense that with his long experience within the company he has adopted to a cost approach mediated to him. Through the monthly meeting with the scenario about the lost customer and the breaking down of the figures to an individual level for the employees this is a way for the warehouse manager to mediate the importance of creating a good service to lowest possible cost. According to Eriksson-Zetterquist et al. (2010) the manager needs the ability to communicate the culture and vision of the company and that the employees should easily understand the goals so that they can relate to them. With this in mind the communication from the warehouse manager to the employees seems well executed because he relates the goal to individual employees work.

It is also important to see the employees and their value in relation to the performance of the warehouse (Babel'ová & Vaňová, 2014). The production manager has adapted to the view of recognizing the value of the employee, when he is about to start up work regarding development he first engages in discussions with the foremen. His placement in the open office has enabled him to have shorter informal interactions, this occurred daily even if there not was any specific change in mind. There continuously were interactions about problems and what could be made to take action to eliminate the problem for the future. According to Rothermel & Lamarsh (2012) it is good to implement a change management plan when dealing with development of the organisation, this part is not clearly seen from the warehouse manager. However, it is possible to see that the production manager treats the importance of recognizing potential problems when he engages the employees and their opinions and information about the production. This is clearly aligned with Rothermel & Lamarsh (2012) and their view on using the employee's information and getting them motivated to adapt to the development. It is though important not to victimize the employees, but instead to build up a dialogue so that the changes can meet the employees demands (Rothermel & Lamarsh, 2012). I believe that here the production manager and the warehouse manager has two very different but equally important roles, the production manager engages in a close relationship with the employees and get their view through the daily encounters. Later the warehouse manager needs to take informed decisions based on the information he retrieves from the production manager, he on the other hand needs to consider the budget and costs in relation to the information he has received. As Hales (1999) states is the budget a important factor for the manager regarding if it will limit the manager, and because there is a strict cost control policy in the warehouse he sometimes is limited by the budget in order to develop the warehouse in the most optimal way with the highest service possible to an affordable price. However, in their dynamic relationship where the production manager sees to the optimal solution in terms of utilization of employees and technical solutions, and with the warehouse manager who considers the cost of the warehouse they together have found a way to manage.

As presented the production manager finds it important to give the employees the chance to take responsibility and develop within the company, it can be seen that he has a more theory Y view of the employees in the organisation. According to

Eriksson-Zetterquist et al. (2010) it is the possibility to evolve and develop in the organisation that motivates the people in this category. To strengthen the managers view he also puts himself in this category, he talks about the opportunities available and that it motivates him even if he never have been thinking about jumping on the opportunities available. The warehouse manager on the other hand has a more theory X view on humans, he clearly states that if there is a chance to skip a task we as humans are prone to take it. Even if it is said that a theory X person needs to be motivated with a carrot and a stick (Eriksson-Zetterquist et al., 2010) it is not that evident that he uses this motivation strategy. It is clear that he demands a lot from the employees and that he is straight forward when he do not see the result he has expected, but he clearly emphasises the importance of giving encouraging comments on job well executed and this was seen during the observation. Problems with managing employees can be that it can be very stressful that not be able to ventilate your thoughts when dealing with employees that they do not like or are performing a bad job (Hill, 1992) this seemed not to be a problem for the warehouse manager or the production manager when they were in the office. They both stated that they had a clear management style and that they communicated that they expects a solid work performance from all employees. This type of management style were you are clear and direct and do not shy away from encounters seams to work well for the both managers when they are in the office and there were no recognition of what Hill (1992) talks about during the observation.

One important aspect that enables the constitution of the both managers' practises is the retrieval and use of information. It is not only the use of the information but also how they can retrieve information in order to know that the production is functioning and through that focus on their work related to their job description. Even if many organisations has adapted a more post-bureaucratic approach the managers still want to keep the control because they are held responsible for the overall outcome of the production (Hales, 2002). The warehouse manager has accordingly to this the routine of the morning meetings where key staff is invited to take part, in this meetings he can in an easy and efficient way retrieve an update of the status in the warehouse and what has been happening the last 24 hours. He gives instructions and takes part of information regarding problems that has been or may occur, this is also aligned with Tengblad (2006) who states that only bits and pieces of the post-bureaucratic

approach is mostly adapted to. Because even if the smaller teams with a responsible foreman has worked the warehouse manager still takes part and has a daily supervision of the work. The production manager has clearly stated to the warehouse manager that he finds the daily morning meetings to be held too often but that he understands the purpose and function of them from the warehouse manager's position. The warehouse manager is the person with the highest responsibility for the warehouse and the person with the least daily insight in the production, he does however dedicate the Friday afternoon to be in the production. With that said it is not clear if there are other purposes with this then to get an understanding of the production and how it is functioning. The production manager's way of collecting information is a lot different from the warehouse manager's way, his information comes with the continuously interactions with the employees throughout the day. Before he had an office situated away from the production but that led to that he missed things and could not stay on top of the problems that occurred during the day. Therefore is the placement of his office in the open office a key factor for his daily retrieval of information, this information do not only make it possible for him to manage problems but also allows him to plan the production in an more efficient way.

Inter-organisational relationships

The section of inter-organisational relationships is covered in this thesis because the warehouse manager is spending a big part of his work outside the office meeting customers and suppliers. This part of his work has not been observed but we can see this work from the inside of the organisation, because as stated by Caldwell & Clapham (2003) trust between companies is partly built on the quality delivered on pre-determined goals that are being set in the up start of an relationship.

When being asked about the work the warehouse manager is conducting outside the office he entails that a lot of the work is to meet customers and build a relationship, this because the hard competitive environment that is in the transportation business. To be a vital player in this market he emphasises that it is important to deliver a good service with the least friction as possible, because the customers finds this service to be a non value adding activity. To simplify the work for all parts involved the warehouse manager constructs a standard operating procedure (SOP) with the

customer, accordingly to Das & Teng (2000) this helps to clarify what is to be expected and who is responsible for what. It is also said during the interview with the warehouse manager that the SOP for each customer are available for employees to access, however when discussing the implementation of new customers with the production manager he said that all the information is presented verbally to the employees. This may have an effect on the production manager's working day, because during the observation he often instructed newer employees in the working procedures. It seems therefore that the access to the SOP and the information in it is not communicated to the newer employees in that an efficient manor.

In the warehouse manager's job description it is stated that he should be involved in the process of new customers at an early stage but this is not to be found in the job description for the production manager. During the observation the production manager tells that he has been involved at an early stage on some customers but it is not that common, but it is something that he would like. If the production manager were to be involved earlier in the customer process he could plan for the utilization of the production in the warehouse better. If we look at Levinthal & Fichman (1998) who states that trust is built by reoccurring encounters it could be valuable to incorporate the production manager in an early stage, just to make him visible in the process and give the customers a face of the person in charge over the production.

The problems that Han et al. (1993) and Das & Teng (2001) stress with overcommitting and building a to close relationship with a customer can somewhat be discarded here. This because that the warehouse is equipped for the service that they are providing therefore they do not need to invest when implementing a new customer. However, the warehouse managers work with continuously following up on damage goods that passes through the warehouse and trying to solve this problem is highly important when it comes to not overcommitting. Also the activity of demonstrating in a clear and simple way in the monthly employee meeting on the damaging effects in the loss of a customer is related to nurturing the relationships that he is building up.

When we look at the theories of creating trust between two organisations the quality insurance is of high importance (Caldwell & Clapham, 2003) this is also something

that the warehouse manager stress is the most important aspect for them towards their customers. This because there is as explained a strained market with a lot of competitors and this leads to that keeping down the cost also is of vital interest for the company. In order for the warehouse manager and the production manager to build up a good relationship with the customers they need to optimize the production as much as possible considering the costs at every step of the way. The reasoning of Hales (1999) that a manager is limited by the budget becomes clear in these two cases, even if it is the warehouse manager who has the overall responsibility for the financial outcome of the warehouse the production manager is affected in the way he can operate the production in order to deliver the best possible service.

According to Job descriptions

To sum up it is possible to see that the job descriptions presented by the company that shows what are to be expected by the managers has shifted a bit between the managers. As Hales (1999) states the job description with the responsibilities and what the manager is accountable for is a first step to understand why managers do as they do. The warehouse manager has clearly taken on the duty of the financial responsibility of the warehouse and this affects all the activities in his practice. The strict cost reduction and to always look at the financial value of everything influences how he conducts his practice and it also affects the production managers practice. The second part in the job description that the warehouse manager has truly adapted is the sales process and establishment of new customers. Other parts of his job description like the recruitment of extra employees and the responsibility for the forklifts has been delegated to the production manager. Also if we consider the second job description for the warehouse manager it is the budget and financial responsibility that are the most important and also here the maintenance and evaluation of suppliers and customers are managed by the warehouse manager. However, a part of price requests from customers that is in the warehouse manager's duties has been handed down to the production manager.

When considering the production managers job description he has the responsibility to organize and lead and follow up on the production and this is a big part of his working day. This also influences the other activities that he takes on regarding

development and maintenance of the warehouse to be able to plan an as good production as possible with a high service delivered. The financial responsibility including collecting data in order to report the financial result of the warehouse to the warehouse manager is also a big part of the daily conducted practice. However, he also has the responsibility over the resources in the warehouse and the competence development of the employees and here the financial aspects are not that important for the production manager. During the observation the production manager here works as a counterpart to the warehouse manager and through that they have developed a well functioning and dynamic relationship.

Here we can see why the managers in the cases are conducting their practices and what parts that has been the most important in the constitution of their practices. It is clear to see that the financial responsibility from the warehouse manager and the emphasising on this has influenced both the practices in the two separate cases. Even if they have two different approaches in their managerial practices, presented above, this is what it comes down to in the end.

Conclusion

This chapter will conclude the presented result and discussed empirical material and answer the research question. It will also consider the value of the practice theory approach and sum up to a recommendation for further research.

Answering the research question

The first part of the question regarding what constitutes the practices for the two managers in the cases are as presented in the empirical findings. In the categorization we can find that the practices are constituted of activities related to reporting, planning, problem solving and development. How they are conducting the practice is a constellation of adapting to the events of today and their way of managing the employees. They need to be able to shift between tasks and to delegate work based on the information that is presented to them. All this is done in order for the warehouse to deliver as good service as possible to the customers, but this is done from two different perspectives. The warehouse manager has more strict cost control approach whilst the production manager has the focus on the best utilization of the production in the warehouse. When revisiting the job descriptions after the presentation of the what and how it is understood that the financial responsibility from the warehouse manager is determining why the two practices are constituted as they are. This because the warehouse manager has the highest responsibility and authority, therefore will the things emphasised as important from him influence the other practices in the warehouse. Even if the warehouse manager influences the production manager he on the other hand act as a counterpart and in the relation of their practices they can find the way on how to operate the warehouse.

The practice theory approach

The use of practice theory in this thesis has enabled the observation to focus on the right things and investigate what and how the practice in the cases are constituted and practiced. The ability as a researcher to see things differently from the practitioner is highly valuable and needs to be recognized during the work with practice theory. It has allowed me to zoom in on the activities in the practice to see how they in relation

to each other together with the person and the surroundings create the activity. After this it enabled me to zoom out and see the both practices interconnect and affect each other. When zooming out on the two practices in the cases it is possible to see their relation to each other and how they complement each other in the direction to a profitable and well functioning production in the warehouse.

Further research

The use of practice theory in research of management is highly valuable and needs to be practised more often, however the diversity of the understanding makes it complex and harder to use. Therefore there is a need to contextualise it and use it more in the research of management, not only to make it more used and easier to practice but also for the research to focus on the right things. There should also be to my opinion a focus on the relations of activities and between practices in order to understand why we practice things in the way we do.

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Appendix 1

Interview guide, warehouse manager

Background

How long have you worked at the company?

How long have you held your current position?

What do you have for experiences and competences from prior work?

What should you say is your most valuable competence for this job?

The practice

What are your most important tasks? What parts and how do they contribute to the whole?

What takes the most time?

What do you want to focus more on and how could this be possible?

Relations

How much time do you spend out of office? And what is your primary task when you are out of office?

What is important when dealing with new customers?

How do you implement them into the production?

What is important when dealing with old customers?

Tools

What is your most important tool?

How would you say the different tools affect your daily activities?

What do they enable and what do you wish they did?

Personnel

How has the trust between you and the employees been built?

-How does this affect your job?

How to you see the employees in terms of development?

How do you motivate the employees?

What is your view on management?

- Hard and soft values.

Information

How would you say you collect information in your job?

The company vs the manager

How do you feel you have created your practice within the frames of the company?

How would you say your practice is connected to the warehouse managers?

Appendix 2

Interview guide, production manager

Background

How long have you worked at the company?

How long have you held your current position?

What do you have for experiences and competences from prior work?

What should you say is your most valuable competence for this job?

The practice

What are your most important tasks? What parts and how do they contribute to the whole?

What takes the most time?

What do you want to focus more on and how could this be possible?

Relations

How does your contact with the customer look like

Implementation of new customers:

-Information distribution?

-Hard to set routines?

Existing customers:

Maintenance of relations, what is important?

Are you following up on results?

What is important from your part when it comes to customers?

Tools

What is your most important tool?

How would you say the different tools affect your daily activities?

What do they enable and what do you wish they did?

Personnel

How has the trust between you and the employees been built?

-How does this affect your job?

How to you see the employees in terms of development?

How do you motivate the employees?

What is your view on management?

- Hard and soft values.

Information

How would you say you collect information in your job?

The company vs the manager

How do you feel you have created your practice within the frames of the company?

How would you say your practice is connected to the warehouse managers?