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Employeeship Concept: An Interactive Model of Work Relationships Focused on Leader and Follower Behaviors

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Abstract

The purpose is to present a theoretical model of the concept *employeeship*. Employeeship concerns all employees and covers the vertical perspective of work behaviors and relationships between formal leaders and followers, and the horizontal perspective between co-workers on all organizational levels. This enables the study of both formal and informal leadership, authentically recognizing that all employees are possible leaders and that leadership emerges in the relationship between one leading and one following. Employeeship attempts to bridge some of the gap in the literature between leader and follower perspectives and is defined as *the behavior that constitutes the dynamic process of mutual work relationships between two or more employees based on task and social abilities*. The Employee-Leader-Relationship Model illustrates the reciprocity between the employee perspective in employeeship, depicted on a continuum from low to highly developed task and social abilities, and the leader perspective in employeeship, depicted as task- and relation-oriented leadership. The operationalization of the Model measures expected leader and peer-employee behaviors as two discrete factors, and interactive leader-follower behaviors which is a factor based on the responses from both formal leaders and followers. Hence, there are two measures but three perspectives: top-down leader, bottom-up follower-employee, and horizontal peer-employee, and three factors important for the employeeship concept: leader, peer-employee, and the congruence of leader-follower behaviors. Dependent of the analysis made the employee measure is labeled peer-employee in the discrete factor and follower-employee in the leader-follower factor due to the shifting perspectives. Theoretical and practical contributions are discussed.

Keywords: leadership, employeeship, psychological climate, leader-follower behavior, ELR Model

Introduction

Employeeship is a concept about work relationships that with equal emphasis takes into account the leader and the follower perspectives. It is about how co-workers support each other, how they build trust, communicate, manage responsibility, authorities, and leadership, and work on their shared mental models and common understanding whether it concerns technical, social, or personal issues. It is based on two pillars: psycho-relational and technical competences. These are referred to as *social* and *task abilities* in the employeeship concept. From a socio-psychological perspective, employeeship is defined as *the behavior that constitutes the dynamic process of mutual work relationships between two or more employees based on task and social abilities*. Even though employeeship is different from relation-oriented leadership, followership, empowerment, the psychological contract, and organizational citizenship behavior (OCB), these concepts all share some theoretical properties. This paper first points out some similarities and differences in order to provide a structure where to place employeeship in relation to these established concepts. Following the overview, we introduce a conceptual presentation of employeeship and a model which can be described as a further development of Hersey and Blanchard's (1993) situational leadership model. The knowledge gap that exists in the literature between one-sided (i.e., hierarchical and vertical) and participative (interactive) leadership theories is also discussed. Employeeship has a role in bridging parts of that gap. Unlike leadership theories and the other concepts mentioned, employeeship covers both vertical and horizontal work relationships. In that way, employeeship has a two-dimensional perspective including all employees, both those in leading positions and those who are not. Finally there is a discussion of its importance, learning outcomes, theoretical contribution and possible practical application.

Purpose

The purpose of this paper is fourfold:

1. Place employeeship in its context, its bridging function between leader and follower perspectives, and how it relates to: a) leadership theories, b) empowerment, c) followership, d) organizational citizenship behavior (OCB), and e) the psychological contract.

2. Describe and explain the concept *employeeship*, as well as the two pillars of employeeship: task and social abilities.

3. Present a theoretical model – *Employee-Leader-Relationship Model (ELR)*.

4. Discuss strengths, weaknesses, and use of employeeship.

Employeeship Relative to Other Concepts

For decades, different leadership theories have been the subject of research that attempts to understand the impact of formal leaders on employees. More recently, other theories have focused on the impact subordinates have on the leadership process and discretionary employee behavior that contributes to the psychosocial contexts that supports task performance. These other theories are followership (Avolio, Walumbwa, & Weber, 2009; Hollander, 1992b) and OCB (Organ, 1997).

Leadership

For leaders to have leader impact assumes an interaction between leaders and the people they lead. In spite of this, some leadership theories predominately address the leader side of the coin. Such theories downplay the mutual influence processes and responsibility taken between leaders and followers, as well as the influence that occurs among the followers. In doing so, employees are seen as passive receivers instead of active contributors. The authors of this paper are of the opinion that this one-sided view is too narrow to explain the interactive complexity between leader and follower behaviors. Leadership is a concern for any individual employee as they are part of and execute self-, peer-, and group leadership. Hence, it is of great importance to focus on the development of both leadership and employeeship (Tengblad, Hällstén, Ackerman, & Velten, 2007).

Much research on leadership theories takes the followers and the situation into account. They include the LMX theory (Dansereau Jr., Graen, & Haga, 1975) in which the vertical leader-follower dyad is discussed based on informal interpersonal relationships; self- and shared leadership (Pearce & Manz, 2005; Pearce & Sims Jr., 2002) in which it is argued that followers should also be included in leadership development efforts in order to exercise self-leadership and to utilize shared leadership; "SuperLeadership" (Manz & Sims Jr., 1991, 2007), transformational leadership (Bass, 1985) and authentic leadership development (Avolio & Gardner, 2005) that focus on leadership designed from the assumption that the most appropriate leader is the one who can lead others to lead themselves; as well as path-goal theory of leadership (Evans, 1970; House, 1971, 1996), situational leadership theory (SLT; Hersey & Blanchard, 1993), managerial grid model (Blake & Mouton, 1964), and Fiedler's contingency model (Fiedler, 1978) in which it is from task- and relation-oriented perspectives advocated that leadership behavior should complement the followers' abilities and fulfill the followers' need for leadership. These theories note, in agreement with employeeship and followership (Hollander, 1992a, 1992b), that leadership behavior cannot be separated from the situation and the condition of the subordinates. But even so, the mentioned leadership theories are mostly addressing the dynamic leader while the followers' needs for leadership more or less can be understood as static, part of a normative context. The imbalanced emphasis on leaders has left a gap in the literature with a continued need to incorporate the followers.

The behavior that constitutes the work relationships in the employeeship concept concerns all employees irrespective of leading or non-leading positions (Møller, 1994). In order to study a leader-follower relationship, employeeship needs a leadership theory that can be compared against the behavior of non-leading personnel. Hence, it is crucial that the vantage point is the same when studying both leader and follower behaviors and therefore almost identical instruments, based on similar models, have to be used to measure them. (A possible solution was empirically tested by Bertlett, Johansson, Arvidsson, and Jern (2012). In their study they used two questionnaires with almost identical items of which one measured expected leader behavior and the other expected employee behavior. By combing the questionnaires it was possible to: 1) describe hypothetical situations for both leaders and followers to respond to from their different perspectives and 2) measure the discrepancy-congruence level of the interactive leader-follower behavior.) Given these criteria, Hersey and Blanchard's (1993) SLT best fits the description. There are interesting aspects of SLT that suite the questions that the employeeship concept is addressing. The benefits of working with

behavioral data in applied settings have intrigued us to further develop these aspects and see whether it is possible to combine the leadership perspective with an equally dynamic follower perspective. SLT makes it possible to measure specific aspects of leadership behavior in situations where leader-follower interaction is taking place. This is preferred when trying to establish a match between leadership style and need for supervision, thus taking a first step towards task and role clarity. The SLT-employeeship merger is further explained in the section where employeeship is conceptualized.

Empowerment

Employeeship and empowerment are approximate concepts but with several key differences. The main one is that employeeship focuses on co-operative relationships between people (Hällstén & Tengblad, 2006), whereas empowerment is characterized by psycho-organizational processes and decision making (Kinlaw, 1995). Empowerment is further described as a power-centered concept of how to improve an organization's use of employees (Kinlaw, 1995), whereas employeeship is a relation-oriented concept of how to create and improve autonomous co-workers' use of each other. Another difference is that empowerment has a person-oriented, whereas employeeship has an interrelating-oriented focus. In employeeship it is the communicative and participative processes holding the parts together that determine organizational function and development (e.g., operator vis-à-vis task and manager vis-à-vis subordinate). The participative process in employeeship means that subordinates and managers can come together and share experiences. It gives managers the opportunity to share authority with those who have the required task and social abilities. This is considered important since shared responsibility without shared authority will most likely not empower employees to make decisions. Hence, employeeship is, in a way, a facilitating condition for the progress of empowerment (cf. Møller, 1994).

Followership

Scholars and practitioners have noted the gap left by the traditional leadership theories and, as a counterpoint, centered on the followers' perspective when studying relationships at work. Followership is one attempt where the subordinates' perspective is in focus and their impact on leadership. Hollander and Offermann (1990) and Meindl, Ehrlich, and Dukerich (1985) note that neither leaders nor leadership exist in isolation; both depend on followership. More interesting is how Hollander and Offermann (1990) recognize this linkage as central as to whether leadership is successful or not. Leadership and followership together create a reciprocal system that according to Hollander (1992b) requires synchronization. This is interesting relative to employeeship since it resembles how vertical leader-follower relationships are studied, acknowledging the important function of participation and that leadership is not a person but a process going back and forth between formal structures and informal networks (Hollander, 1992a, 1992b).

   In spite of the similarities, there are still some general differences. The first is that followership has a bottom-up approach and needs the top-down of leadership in order to establish an interactive perspective. Following that, leadership and followership are two different constructs and there is no single model that illustrates both. Employeeship has a two-sided approach that encompasses both leader and follower behaviors in the same model. The other difference is that leadership and followership almost exclusively focus on the vertical relationships, whereas employeeship, as noted earlier, focuses on both vertical and horizontal relationships.

Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB)
OCB and employeeship are theoretically alike. They both are norm-based or morally influenced organizational concepts with the common theme of describing helpful job behavior. In essence, a good case of employeeship resembles the description of discretionary work performance used by Organ (1988) and contextual performance used by Borman and Motowidlo (1997) to describe OCB. Instead, it is the relationship aspect that distinctively separates them. Organizational citizenship behaviors are general whereas employeeship behaviors are conceptualized in transactional relationships with a specified direction, that is, either vertical or horizontal. This, in its turn, also separates OCB and employeeship in the areas of operationalization and measurement.

Most research regarding OCB has focused on *what* organizational citizenship behaviors are (see Decktop, Mangel, & Cirka, 1999; Hoffman, Blair, Meriac, & Woehr, 2007; LePine, Erez, & Johnson, 2002; Organ, 1988; Smith, Organ, & Near, 1983; Williams & Anderson, 1991). Employeeship on the other hand, as it is advocated here, emphasizes the *how* question. Employeeship therefore takes the approach similar to the one of Hersey and Blanchard (1993) and their studies of SLT. Employeeship is operationalized in responses given that describe expected behavior. This means that each response is built on the employeeship concept with joint focus on both task and social abilities (see Bertlett, 2011a, 2011b; Bertlett et al., 2012 for questionnaire, questionnaire manual, and empirical study).

Psychological contract
The psychological contract, like employeeship, has a two-sided approach with focus on transactional relationships (see Rousseau, 1989, 1990). Values and principles are to be recognized between both concepts where shared understanding is essential between collaborating parties to achieve their interdependent goals (see Dabos & Rousseau, 2004; Rousseau, 1995). But the meaning of the concepts' transactional perspectives is quite different. The transactional perspective in employeeship is about specific interactive behaviors in the participative process between all employees aiming for mutual professional and personal development and the ability to lead oneself. The transactional perspective in the psychological contract represents the mutual beliefs and informal obligations between an employer and an employee. It has more to do with the informal contract of the employment relationship.

First Purpose: Summarizing Remarks
Together, traditional leadership theories, followership, the psychological contract, and OCB cover vertical and horizontal perspectives. According to Avolio et al. (2009), this is an ongoing trend in the field of leadership. Other researchers, us included, are looking for new angles to study the leader, the follower, the fellow worker, the situation, and their dynamic interaction. It is a multidimensional perspective hard to visualize. Employeeship is a concept that provides such a perspective in the study of mutual relationships in working life, and thus, bridges some of the gap in the literature, which so far with few exceptions only takes the perspective of either the leader or the follower.

The recurrent perspectives in this overview has been made in order to place employeeship relative to the other concepts regarding the leader perspective, follower perspective, peer perspective, and the vertical and horizontal relationship perspectives.

Conceptualization of Employeeship

This section addresses the second purpose of the paper, that is, presenting a conceptual presentation of employeeship and its two pillars: task and social abilities.

The Pillars of Employeeship

Employeeship consists of two pillars: social and task abilities. The first is psycho-relational and refers to the individual's psychological ability to handle social interactions. Task ability refers to the knowledge and skills that are needed for given assignments. This means that co-workers need to have the required knowledge and skills to contribute in the given situation; they must also be responsible, loyal, committed, and able to take initiative in order to communicate the knowledge, or teach, coach, and lead if necessary. This description of task and social abilities is in line with Tengblad et al. (2007) who argue that the basics for a work group to function are that the employees have adequate knowledge in a well-functioning collaboration.

Defining Employeeship from an Integrated Psychological Organizational Perspective

Employeeship, as noted earlier, is defined as *the behavior that constitutes the dynamic process of mutual work relationships between two or more employees based on task and social abilities*. In order to clarify the definition, it is further described as *how an employee, be it a top level manager, a supervisor, or a blue-collar worker, manages relationships to their own assignments, the organization, the employer, and other people inside the organization as well as to people outside the organization such as customers, suppliers, competitors, or authorities. This takes place through open and reflective horizontal and vertical communication. The aim of this communication is to establish mutual understanding between people and facilitate learning about important organizational aspects such as values, attitudes, and collaboration around work assignments. These aspects affect human behavior and human relationships at individual, group, organizational, and societal levels. This results in people treating each other and being treated as individuals.*

The term *employee* covers all levels within an organization where people meet formally and/or informally. The *relationships* put equal focus on:

1) *the assignments*: the knowledge and skills (task ability) to manage the daily operations,

2) *the organization* and *employer*: the importance of building trustful relationships and collaboration between the hierarchical levels for sustainable management and leadership,

3) *other people inside the organization*: the importance of building trustful relationships and collaboration at the same hierarchical levels for sustainable self- and peer leadership concerning both technical guidance and social support, and

4) *outside the organization*: managing the impact of such things as productive and environmental issues (2, 3, and 4 relate to social ability).

This first part of the definition has a two-dimensional perspective of hierarchical and horizontal relationships. It covers task and social abilities considering both professional and personal characteristics. The second part of the definition which emphasizes:

- *reflective horizontal and vertical communication* is supported by Likert (1967) concerning how information should be communicated cross boundaries between and within hierarchical levels; by Johansson (2003) concerning how to reflect upon information and communication to gain understanding about human behavior; and by Argyris and colleagues (Argyris, 1993, 1999; Argyris, Putnam, & McLain Smith, 1985; Argyris & Schön, 1996), Kolb (1984), and Schulz (2005) concerning how to test, act according to, and learn from a communicative setting to gain individual and organizational development, and

- *to establish mutual understanding between people*, underlines the importance that knowledge about and respect for each other facilitate personal well-being, task and role clarity, shared authority and responsibility, and organizational collaboration based on personal trust and loyalty.

Theoretical Background

To improve social ability, all employees need to verbalize and openly test observable facts to gain insight into group processes and to minimize the risk of misunderstandings and conflicts. This communicative learning process of psychosocial aspects finds support in what Argyris et al. (1985) refer to as "valid information" and "free and informed choice" – horizontally at the same organizational level and vertically across different organizational levels (Likert, 1961, 1967).

Communication in employeeship. Social ability is not only a personal characteristic; it also depends on whether the general communication is open and free, which often is contextualized by the organizational structure and management behavior. The inquiring style that characterizes management in well-developed employeeship and is supported in the literature (Argyris, 1990; Argyris et al., 1985; Johansson, 2003; Likert, 1961) differs from the imperative style of many leaders. An optimal organizational structure in employeeship favors dynamic and transparent levels to make cross-boundary communication more effective, both vertically and horizontally, by the use of "linking pins" (Johansson, 2003; Likert, 1961). The linking pin theory indicates that the same person can act as a leader in one team and as a subordinate in another facilitating vertical communication, and as a leader or a subordinate in more than one team facilitating horizontal communication. This means that a member in different groupings can spread and receive information independent of conservative and hierarchical levels. Normally these levels hamper communication and decision making since they often work as barriers letting information flow downwards in the organization but seldom upwards (Ekvall, 1999).

The conditions for free and open communication are described by what Argyris and Schön call Model II (Argyris, 1980, 1985, 1990, 1999; Argyris et al., 1985; Argyris & Schön, 1996). For Model II and employeeship to be successful, a person's "espoused theory" and "theory-in-use" must be congruent. Espoused theory is a program of explicit values and attitudes usually affecting a person's behavior very little, while theory-in-use is made up of the governing variables that often unconsciously control and affect people's behavior. Even though the actor usually is unaware of the discrepancy between what is said (espoused theory) and what is done (theory-in-use), co-workers and other people usually are. Communication that is not open and free and behavior that is not congruent with espoused values and attitudes can be devastating for trustful relationships and sustainable employeeship. This in no different

from how it can be harmful for the psychological contract (Rousseau, 1995) as well as for authentic leadership, common understanding, and sustainable growth and performance on all organizational levels as discussed by Avolio and Gardner (2005) and Gardner, Avolio, Luthans, May, and Walumbwa (2005).

Shared leadership and learning in employeeship. Employees with high task and social abilities are encouraged to learn from each other as equals through informal contracts. The person best suited takes the lead and creates what Risling and Risling (1996) call "a learning dialogue" to increase knowledge and awareness, facilitate free and open communication, and decrease control and counterproductive behavior. This is supported by Baird and Kram (1983) in their studies of how peer relationships provide a unique opportunity to develop mutual problem solving. It is likely for peers to share common concerns and mutual understanding so that they can learn from each other's experiences.

Mary Parker Follett was one of the first out to discuss the balance of responsibility and authority, and the complexity of relationships, leadership, and learning (Metcalf & Urwick, 1941). As early as the 1920s, she wrote that logic should determine to whom one should look for guidance based on the individuals' knowledge of the given situation. She suggests that the situation provides the basis for leadership, not the individual. Not only have these ideas influenced the thinking of employeeship and how it supports autonomous employees and teams (cf. Møller, 1994), they have also had an impact on Hersey and Blanchard's (1993) SLT and on the self- and shared leadership literature (Pearce & Manz, 2005; Pearce & Sims Jr., 2002). Employeeship has evolved parallel to these leadership theories. Thus, it is incorrect to say that employeeship is influenced by them, but rather that the leadership philosophy of employeeship can be understood by describing them.

Further Explanation of How SLT Merges into the Employeeship Concept

SLT is based on task- and relation-oriented leadership behaviors as a response to the followers' readiness. The leadership behavior creates the top-down perspective in the employeeship concept. Task behavior is described by Hersey and Blanchard (1993) as the extent to which leaders are likely to organize the roles and tasks, that is, to set the structural aspects of task and role clarity. Relationship behavior refers to the extent to which leaders are likely to maintain personal relationships with members of their group by, for example, providing socio-emotional support. This involves setting the psychosocial aspect of task and role clarity. Readiness refers to the followers' willingness and ability to take responsibility. The level of readiness determines the appropriate combination of task and relationship behaviors for the leader.

SLT focuses on operational leadership behavior and in that way is suitable to be included in employeeship as a counterpart to the follower behavior. The followers' assumed readiness in SLT is replaced with task and social abilities in employeeship. Task and social abilities are, in common with *follower's assumed readiness*, conceptualized as one factor going hand in hand on the same scale. This is of course not the case at all times in applied settings and thus a possible weakness. But it is also a matter of simplifying. If task and social abilities were separated into two factors, it would create a highly complex, three-dimensional model with limited practicability. Still, this adds the follower and peer perspectives to the leader perspective acknowledging that leader-follower relationships are not isolated but co-exist relative to other relationships. It also enables the study of what situations are managed by the

followers on the operative level, and what situations call for leadership support. To compare leader and follower behaviors with equal emphasis on both, and admitting that followers, like leaders, dynamically contribute to work relationships, is to take a second step towards a participative leader-follower process and task and role clarity. Hence, it grants the possibility to study the effects of congruent and discrepant leader-follower behavior. In employeeship both the leader and follower are supposed to match their behaviors relative to each other. Traditional leadership theories, SLT included, do not address this, which restricts the understanding of leadership (Hollander, 1992a) and work relationships.

The Employeeship-Leadership-Relationship Model (ELR)

This section addresses the third purpose of the paper presenting the Employeeship-Leadership-Relationship Model (ELR). The ELR Model in Figure 1 illustrates that the employee behavior is on a continuum ranging from work-orientation focusing on the assignments to be performed, to person-orientation focusing on interactions between people. The Model also illustrates that leadership varies from task-oriented (low follower readiness to perform) focusing on the assignments, to more relation-oriented (high follower readiness to perform) focusing on leader-follower relationships. Person-oriented employee behavior is characterized by co-workers that are able to collaborate fully, while work-oriented employee behavior is individual in nature with a high focus on the specific relationship between the co-worker and the assignment.
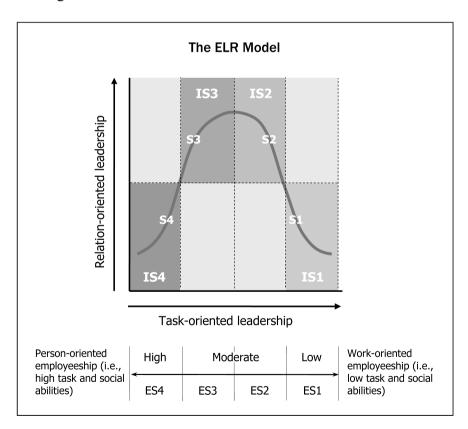

Figure 1. The Employeeship-Leadership-Relationship Model (ELR). The employee styles ES1 = task-professional, ES2 = collegial-professional, ES3 = social-collegial, and ES4 = socio-emotional correspond to employee behavior in work relationships based on task and social abilities. S1 = telling, S2 = selling, S3 = participating, and S4 = delegating correspond to the leadership styles of the SLT (Hersey & Blanchard, 1993). The interaction styles IS1 = task-professional, IS2 = collegial-professional, IS3 = social-collegial, and IS4 = socio-emotional are the four grey areas that indicate congruent leader-follower behavior.

The interpretation of the four interaction styles of leader-follower behavior is that work-oriented employee behavior does not have the full benefits of communication, shared leadership, learning and sharing relationships according to Model II, empathic relationships, the balance of responsibility and authority, as well as participation (see Ackerman, 1982; Huselid, 1995; Zwick, 2004). Developed employeeship is intended to facilitate efficient and productive work processes and socio-technical systems aided by psychosocial aspects. This is achieved by increasing the levels of task and social abilities which results in a shift of focus: 1) from the assignments to the employees performing them (i.e., sustainable growth, shared mental models, and common understanding), 2) from authority being primarily on a higher organizational level and responsibilities on an operational level to integrating responsibilities and authority with the employees' training and development, and 3) from task-oriented leadership style to relation-oriented leadership style. Still, even though interaction styles 1 and 2 in Figure 1 are not as advantageous as interaction styles 3 and 4 considering long-term growth and effectiveness, leadership style 1 and employee style 1 are the most appropriate styles in order to attain congruent leader-follower behavior or well adapted peer employee behavior when approaching a co-worker with low task and social abilities.

The Four Styles of the ELR Model
An employee can act according to the different employee styles depending on the level of task and social abilities attained. Relative a co-worker where no formal leadership is involved the employee style is called peer employee style. This style is best described as an amended horizontal peer-leader perspective of Hersey and Blanchard's (1993) vertical leadership perspective in the SLT. Relative a formal leader the employee style is called follower employee style. Peer and follower are the same style but it describes the direction of the behavior whether it has a horizontal or a vertical perspective. It is the follower employee style together with the leadership style that constitutes the reciprocal perspective of leader-follower interaction style. Congruent leader-follower style is indicated by IS1 to IS4 in Figure 1. These four are assumed to be the most adequate and effective interaction styles in organizational settings. The four white fields denote interaction styles that are considered to be less adequate and effective in ordinary organizational settings. Measuring and combining leader and follower styles are steps towards understanding the complexity and effects of collaboration.

It is always important for organizations to have "good leaders" and "good followers" just as it is important for engines to have pistons and cylinders of high quality. But according to our standpoint it is even more important to have congruent collaboration between the leaders and follower in order to minimize friction. Otherwise it would be no more than a heated engine with oversized pistons.

There is also the issue of adaptability. Employees with high task and social abilities need to adapt their style given the situation. Consider such an employee: this person can in collaboration with co-workers with the same level of abilities take responsibility for their professional and personal development (Møller, 1994). Together they can facilitate organizational development. But when the same person interacts with a co-worker with low task and social abilities, the same positive effects cannot be generated. There will be less mutual sharing and more instructing and peer leading.

Both employee style and leader-follower interaction style are based on the same theoretical background when describing work behavior, hence there is a close connection between them in the ELR Model. Not only do employees with highly developed employee style have better

prospects to fully participate and contribute in horizontal relationships, but also in vertical relationships with their formal leader. This possibility to study both horizontal and vertical relationships is increasingly important in today's complex and flat organizations. The fewer line managers there are in an organization, the more essential it is for operative employees to handle operative problems. If managers are to focus on short-term firefighting at the operative level, this will most likely be at the expense of the long-term tactic and strategic level. The four employee styles and leader-follower interaction styles are described as:

- *Task-professional employeeship* is high on task-oriented leadership (leader behavior) and work-oriented employee behavior recognizing the relationship between the individual and the assignment. Relationships are characterized by high level of task support, but low levels of task and/or social abilities, trust, sharing, personal support, and empathy. Communication is imperative in nature and the participative aspect undeveloped with a negative impact on collaborative learning. Task-professional employeeship is applicable for employees with low task and social abilities that are in need of instructive formal leadership and/or peer support.

- *Collegial-professional employeeship* is high to medium on task-, and relation-oriented leadership and work-oriented employee behavior. Relationships are characterized by collegial collaboration but still demarcated to given assignments. Task and/or social abilities are more developed and a sense of trust, sharing, and personal support start to arise in the relationships. Communication is imperative in nature and the participative aspect undeveloped with the same negative impacts as described for task-professional. Collegial-professional employeeship is applicable for employees that are about to create a professional identity but still need guidance.

- *Socio-collegial employeeship* is medium to high on relation-oriented leadership and person-oriented employee behavior. Relationships focus on collegial collaboration but with an increased coverage of all social aspect of the professional self. Task and social abilities are rather high as are trust, sharing, and personal support. Communication is inquiring in nature and the participative aspect has a positive impact on the balance of responsibility and authority, collaborative learning, shared mental models, and common understanding. Assignments and relationships are permeated with shared values, attitudes, and perceptions influencing the professional self. Employees applying this style have the required abilities that mutual sharing facilitates professional development and efficiency.

- *Socio-emotional employeeship* is medium to low on relation-oriented leadership and high on person-oriented employeeship recognizing the relationships between all staff members, co-workers and their assignments, and significant external parties. Relationships have evolved to cover personal aspects as well as professional collaboration, uncovering the emotional level of the personal self. Relationships are characterized by highly developed levels of task and social abilities, trust, sharing, personal support, and empathy. Communication is inquiring in nature and the participative aspect fully developed with a positive impact on the balance of responsibility and authority, collaborative learning, shared mental models, common understanding, and the congruence between espoused theory and theory-in-use. Assignments and relationships are permeated with shared values, attitudes, perceptions, and emotions influencing the personal self. Employees applying this style have the required abilities that mutual sharing facilitates personal and organizational development and efficiency.

According to the ELR Model, work-oriented employee behavior and task-oriented leadership are expected to be favored in newly established teams with rather low levels of task and social abilities. Furthermore, person-oriented employee behavior and relation-oriented leadership are expected ideal in mature teams with high levels of task and social abilities. Other combinations have to be carefully studied to understand the importance of different interaction styles.

Strengths, Weaknesses and Use of Employeeship

The final purpose with this paper is to discuss the strengths, weaknesses, use, and learning points of employeeship.

Strengths and Weaknesses of Employeeship

The most important contribution with employeeship, as it is advocated here, is how the ELR Model combines leader and follower perspectives. It provides a new angle of how to study interactive leader-follower behavior. Employeeship could very well bring competitive advantages, but it is also fragile as are most other organizational concepts. Successful development requires commitment from all involved, leadership support, proper training, shared responsibility and authority throughout the participative process, and an organizational structure that supports the new way of working. Some of employeeship's fragility can be related to what Hofstede (1984) call "power distance" and the issue of sharing and accepting responsibility and authority. Møller (1994) discusses this in length where he points out that giving and taking responsibility is a necessity for successful employeeship but it takes enormous effort. To change the organizational structure and the work processes that go with it is more than the *product* of the change. It is also about the *process* leading to the change as well as the *transition* of the employees. Hence, it is important to emphasize that all involved personnel own the employeeship process.

Concerning the ELR Model it is a possible limitation that task and social abilities are studied as one variable. Keeping them that way and allowing the Model to be two dimensional, is considered favorable concerning its practicability (e.g., operationalization of the Model and interpretation of the results). It is also easier to interpret the different levels of the Model as more variables increase the complexity of it. On the other hand, dividing them into two variables and making the Model three dimensional, adds a level of detail about how task and social abilities function independently in work relationships. An expanded ELR Model probably has better prospect to accurately reflect what is studied as task and social abilities not necessarily go hand in hand. Thus, it is assumed favorable concerning the theoretical development of the employeeship concept.

Another issue that deserves more attention is how exact the levels of task and social abilities and the employee styles are defined and in what way they discriminate each other. Since this impact instrument development it becomes ultimately a question of validity which is suggested to be dealt with not only conceptually but empirically.

Possible Values from Using Employeeship

The employeeship concept and the ELR Model provide the possibility to collaboratively study both sides of the coin: leadership and its traditional hierarchical perspective, as well as the horizontal perspective of peer behavior and the reciprocal perspective of leader-follower behavior. It is of interest to study how individuals and teams in highly developed employeeship influence organizational performance with new structures of communication, roles, responsibilities, and authority. Keeping leadership at a tactical and strategic level and letting the employees manage the operational level could change the perception of leadership functionality.

When an optimal relationship between leader and follower behaviors is established, it is assumed that this task and role clarity will have a positive effect on organizational climate (Ekvall, 1996). This assumption is based on the employees' willingness, task and social abilities to create and influence their own working conditions, and that they are allowed to do so by management. Greenbaum, Jackson, and McKeon (1998) look at both sides of the coin and highlight the importance that leadership commitment and employee involvement are essential to gain employee buy-in. These aspects facilitate the creation of an effective, specific, and actionable implementation plan based on real behavior changes (Greenbaum et al.). This needs to take place in close collaboration between management and staff in order to evolve employeeship and improve organizational climate. It is therefore of interest to examine the leader-follower relationships on the one hand and organizational climate and organizational change on the other. With sufficient theoretical substance, employeeship and its behavioral input can be of value in the progress of improving climate and implementing change.

Theoretical Propositions to Guide Future Empirical Research

It should be understood that the ELR Model constitutes a framework. To derive a question or problem, the user has to make careful demarcations and definitions of each level of the Model. This may also require adjustments concerning the questionnaires. The questionnaires constitute a framework in which the given situations can be adapted to fit current work arrangements and research questions.

In reference to measured leadership behavior and its effects on, for example, organizational climate (see Ekvall, 1996, 1999; Ekvall, Frankenhaeuser, & Pass, 1995), it is now possible in the ELR Model to study follower behavior for the same situations. The opportunity to compare leader and follower behaviors in order to study the impact of congruent behavior opens up for hypotheses that hopefully generate knowledge to the field. Thinkable hypotheses to guide future empirical research are: 1) the adaptability of employees to match their peer employee style and 2) congruent behavior of leaders and followers have positive effect on organizational climate and change, and 3) congruent behavior of leaders and followers has augmented value to the traditional one-way perspective of leadership and its influence on organizational climate and change. Potential implications like these need further theoretical and methodological development to understand fully the collaborative aspect proposed by the ELR Model.

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