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“Leadership in Creative Environments”

- *A descriptive and prescriptive study of perceived norms in leadership -*

*Bengt Olsson, Mälardalen University
Department of Innovation, Design and Product Development
Eskilstuna, Sweden*

Biography:

Bengt Olsson is a lecturer and a doctoral student in Innovation and Design. He has developed and established the Arts Management programme at Mälardalen University. He has a Master of Fine Arts in piano and has been teaching piano and also worked as a musician on freelance basis for several years.

ABSTRACT:

This study brings up three different groups of students thinking on leadership as a phenomenon. By the use of concepts from other leadership studies in a questionnaire the study aims to verify or falsify our pre-conceived conceptions of leadership in three fields of work areas or practices. In the quantitative part of the questionnaire the three groups shows similar tendencies in their preferences and appraisals of leaders characteristics. In the qualitative part respondents' describe what they see as admirable characteristics in role models as well as their own ideal leadership in action, all in their own words. The result is a more balanced and profound picture of similarities and differences between the three groups of respondents.

Keywords: leadership, organizational behaviour, leadership research methodology.

Research objectives

This research project has a future-oriented perspective on leadership striving to say something about the expectations that tomorrow's collaborators might have on their leaders - a relational perspective that highlights the symbiosis consisting of leader, collaborators and their environment. The project is constrained to three leadership perspectives: 1) environmental, 2) motivational and 3) dialogue. It aims, firstly, to investigate what kinds of expectations a creative environment demand on its leadership and, secondly, to increase the understanding of artistic and creative human beings' driving forces. Finally it aims at developing methods for leadership based on dialogue and relationships. In these different perspectives it strives to be cumulative and involve literature and findings from both quantitative and qualitative research.

Questions

The research question tries to capture the specific leadership problems in environments characterized by individuals having tangible and strong internal agendas. What kinds of expectations do these individuals develop when they are being governed or led?

Are there differences in expectancies that might depend upon the characteristics of the environment? If so, what environmental factors might cause these differences in expectations?

As a result of the analysis of the answers to this questionnaire it may be possible to give some answers to another question in this study, one that may be formulated like this: How should leadership be exerted without having a restraining influence on collaborators' creativity and power of initiative?

One hypothesis is that the language used to describe something in a specific area of endeavour is different from that in another area. An organization is an amalgam of values, norms, culture, politics, history as well as the characteristics of different individuals. This complexity and ambiguity is being “worded” in the practice of the specific area of activity. Polanyi (1958) uses the concept of tacit knowledge and Johannessen (1997) uses statement-knowledge, familiarity-knowledge and proficiency-knowledge to describe the process of how knowledge is cultivated in practice. As a logical consequence the question must be posed: what kind of language is used to describe the ideal concept of leadership?

Theoretical perspectives

Research on leadership may be said to be characterized by ambiguity and diversity. Different levels of analysis and conceptualization such as individual, dyadic, group and organizational are some factors contributing to making comparisons difficult. Yukl (2002) has articulated demands for more of an integration across levels of analysis.

In order to obtain a more comprehensive view of such a complex phenomenon as leadership it is important to try several different perspectives. Shifting levels of analysis might offer ways to achieve this. The results from one phase of the project will be validated by perspectives from the other two phases, one set of data being employed to expand upon the other set. In this way the project also strives to be cumulative.

Environment and practice

The environmental aspects in the study are multiple. One fundamental idea might be described in terms of a pragmatic view of knowledge. To understand something about the essence of a concept’s meaning we have to understand the conditions of how and where it is used. This philosophical view on meaning could be described as a pragmatic constitutive hermeneutical perspective on knowledge while recognizing that ‘meaning’ is a concept given several different interpretations, also being philosophically contested. This idea about knowledge implies that the meaning of a concept is developed and redefined in its specific practice (Johannessen 1997, Wittgenstein 1998). In such a language dependent upon practice, the environment’s character or nature is crucial and has to be taken into account when analyzing the concepts used, concepts such as credibility, attentiveness and judge of character.

Leadership and Creativity

A crucial leadership aspect concerns the environment of activity and its effect on creativity. A system perspective on creativity, like the ones offered by Feldman et al. (1994) and Ford & Gioia (1995), strives to take the complexity of field, domain and the individual into account. The amount of creativeness is judged in relation to the paradigm of the specific field.

Sahlin (2001) provides a philosophical definition on creative environments; generosity, fellowship, competence, cultural diversity, trust, equality, curiosity, spirit of freedom, small scale. This definition leads to certain implications for how to manage an environment to make it more creativity enhancing. Creativity is hindered as well as inspired by obstacles. Certain rules or frameworks offer the mind an area to be creative in.

Leadership as relation

“Newer theories emphasize the importance of emotional reactions by followers to leader, whereas earlier theories emphasized rational-calculative aspects of leader-follower interaction.” Yukl (2002). Köping (2003) offers a relational perspective on organizational behaviour implying that we create each other in a continually ongoing process. Thus the leader function could not be in one individual’s possession but rather the result of several individuals acting together. This ties in with Buber (1954) stressing the dialogue aspect in relations; a fundamental characteristic in individuals’ interactions. Out of psychology and social sciences emerges a dimension of philosophy. A conceptualization of leadership should offer a balanced explanation incorporating aspects of the leader as well as aspects of the follower. This research project has a relational or symbiotic view of leadership.

Research methodology

A partly separate but crucial aspect of this investigation, relying upon a questionnaire, is to what extent such a method for leadership research is an efficient one compared with alternative methods. For example, to what extent is it possible to combine findings from quantitative and qualitative research? Bryman (2004) suggests that a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods might be useful.

The project is divided into three phases and employs multiple methods, each phase applying different ones. The first phase is a pilot study with 154 students from three different environments. The second phase will be interviews with leaders in cultural activities. The third phase will be a sequence of reflective colloquiums on leadership in a specific environment using a qualitative and philosophical approach to leadership as a phenomenon.

By using a questionnaire it is possible to capture answers from many respondents in different populations and obtain a broad picture of tendencies for a phenomenon. In this questionnaire the respondents are requested to answer in different ways. The different methods are scale of semantic difference, adjective analysis and analysis of text where the respondents provide answers in their own words. The analysis of data will be both statistical and qualitative. The level of analysis will be on an intra-individual one. Using a questionnaire implies several limitations such as stereotypes, response biases and attributions. The use of ambiguous items that may be interpreted differently by different respondents is problematic. Responses may be distorted by stereotypes and implicit theories about what behaviours occur together. Respondents may attribute desirable behaviour to a leader who is perceived to be effective, even though that behaviour was not actually observed. It is also very difficult to determine the direction of causality or underlying causes Yukl (2002).

Selection of respondents

The military group includes 89 officers who are students at the College University of the Swedish military academy. They have been officers for many years and have qualified for positions at the general headquarters. Age distribution: 60 percent are between 25-34 of age and 39 percent 35-44 of age. Three are women.

The group of engineers includes 33 students at the engineering programme at Mälardalen University. Age distribution: 54 percent between 15-24 of age and 27 percent between 25-34; eleven women.

The group within arts and culture includes 22 students at the Arts Management programme at Mälardalen University, age distribution: 45 percent between 15-24 of age, 32 percent between 25-34 and 14 percent between 35-44; ten women.

The respondents are all participants in leadership courses at their university. Completing this questionnaire was a compulsory assignment within the scope of the course. A lecture presenting and discussing different leadership theories and concepts preceded the questionnaire assignment. The respondents were spurred to answer according to their own personal opinions and free themselves from organizational or cultural norms. If they found that a question or a concept did not apply to their ideas of leadership they were requested to express that discrepancy in their own words. The course's questionnaire moment was brought to a conclusion through a seminar a few weeks later. Some of the results were presented and discussed with the respondents. When reading the percentages in the following, the reader should recall the disproportions in size in the groups and note the smallest one consists of 22 individuals.

Questionnaire Analysis: Preference and appraisal of leadership acting

The analysis is performed in conjunction with the presentation of the data.

The first item aimed at measuring *preferences* for leaders' behaviour or personal traits. By being able to define those preferred or admired behavioural and characteristic aspects in a leader the respondent shows his or her awareness of leadership. Selections and rankings reveal an opinion that might be perceived as more or less idealistic and more or less based on experience. The results could be compared with investigations such as those performed by Kouzes & Posner (2002) over a period of some twenty years. They found that 1) honesty, 2) forward-looking, 3) competence and 4) inspiring were the four most admired personal traits or characteristics.

The respondent in this study was requested to rank at least ten out of twenty-four adjectives listed here:

Driving force, allowing freedom, focus on results, courage, competence, willingness to compromise, independence, learning aptitude, objectivity, considerate, organizer, attentive, consulting, governing, consequent, decisive, leading, giving criticism, credibility, self-assured, demanding, judge of character and 'focus on relations'.

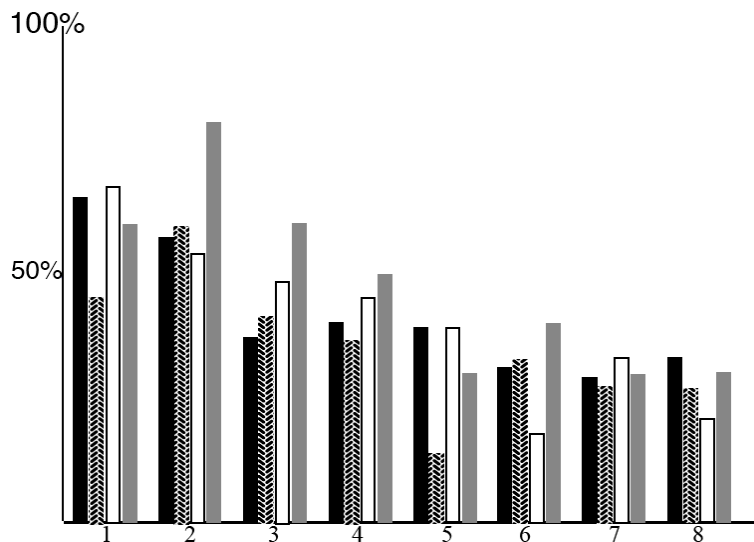


Figure 1.

This bar chart (figure 1.) displays the results for the ranking of the eight most favoured leadership characteristics or behaviours. The eight concepts are:

1) Credibility, 2) Competence, 3) Driving force, 4) Attentiveness, 5) Leading, 6) Self-assured, 7) Judge of character, 8) Allowing for freedom.

Each bar-cluster represents the respondents' top five ranking of a leaders trait, characteristic or behaviour.

The black bar at the very left in each pile-cluster represents the military group. 65 percent of the officer students rank Credibility as the top five character of a leader. The characteristic that received the lowest ranking was "willingness to compromise".

The patterned bar, the second left in each pile-cluster, represents the "cultural" group. 59 percent of the students at the Arts Management programme rank Competence as the top five ability of a leader. The characteristic that received the lowest ranking was "Independence".

The white bar at the second right in each pile-cluster represents the group of engineering students. 67 percent of these students rank Credibility as the top five character of a leader. The characteristic with the lowest ranking was "Demanding".

The grey bar at the far right represents a group of 10 students at the master level at the leadership programme of The Mälardalen Leadership Center (MLC) in Eskilstuna, Sweden. This group is not included in the rest of the analysis.

The second item of the questionnaire aimed at measuring respondent appraisals of their own behaviour and values when acting as leaders. This measure was obtained by using seven scales of semantic differences. Their estimated values are presented in a kinship diagram recently highlighted by Pettersson (2003). The Kinship Diagram makes it easier for a viewer to perceive proportions and relations in complex data. This is not a exact presentation of correlations between individuals.

Below please find three kinship diagrams mapping how the respondents believe that they really would act as leaders. The greyish half of the diagram represents how, according to theory (Yukl 2002, Kouzes & Posner 2002), the characteristics of traditional leadership style plays out, that is; “to have street credibility”, using internal rewards, exchange of thoughts, consultative, expecting initiative, values and vision. The opposite white half of the diagram represents a governing leadership style, that is: keeping one’s distance, using external rewards, exchange of actions, assertive, pushing forward. Each axis could be viewed as a scale of semantic difference where the ends represent the extreme or “pure” meaning of the concept whereas the intervening space is a continuum between those opposite meanings. Each dot is representing one mark from one respondent. A mark precisely in the middle of the axis is a dot in the inner circle of the diagram. Thus, the further out the mark is placed on the axis the more it represents a stronger tendency to behave in that specific way.

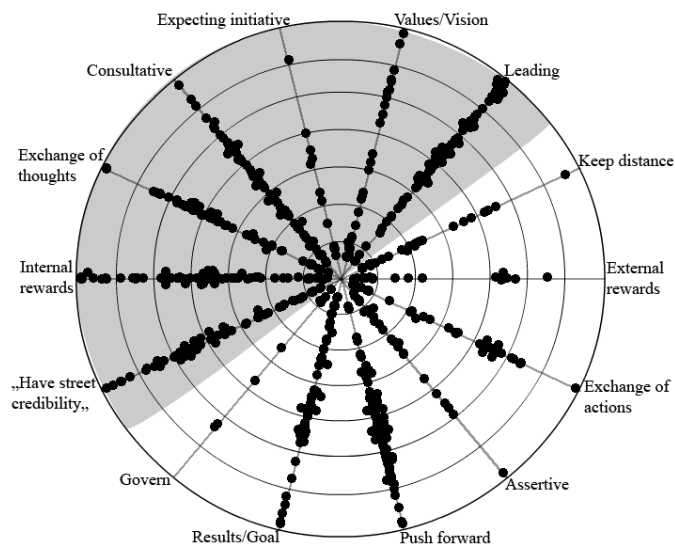


Figure 4. Military group, 89 respondents
Preference: 1) Push forward, 2) Leading, 3) Consultative, 4) Internal rewards.

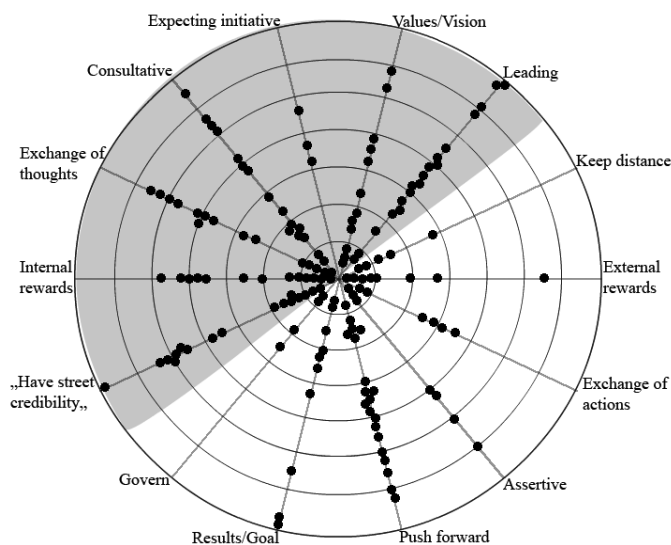


Figure 2. Cultural group, 22 respondents.
Preference: 1) Push forward, 2) Leading, 3) Having street credibility, 4) Consultation.

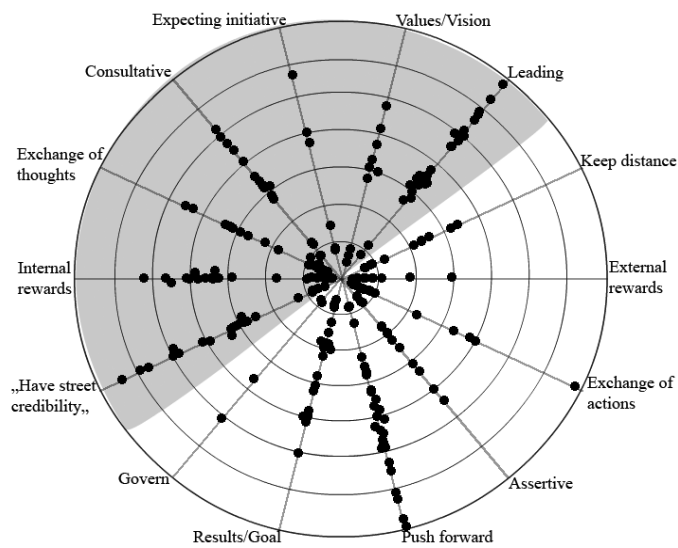


Figure 3. Engineer group, 33 respondents

Preference: 1) Leading, 2) Push forward, 3) Results/Goal, 4) Street credibility.

“To have street credibility” vs. “To keep distance”:

In Swedish the expression “to have street credibility” is used with several different meanings. In this case it is used to describe a person’s intention or wish to be accepted among a social group on an equal basis. It is not meant to describe youth-gangs on city streets or social subgroups like windsurfers.

Internal vs. External rewards:

Transactional leadership may be successful through different types of contingent rewards (Jacobsen & Thorsvik 2002).

Exchange thoughts vs. Exchange actions:

A transformational leadership style inspires and motivates followers through the exchange of thoughts through idealized, influence, intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration, Bass (1985).

Transactional leadership interprets the relation between leader and follower as a social transaction with collaborators exchanging labour work for rewards e.g. money (Jakobsen & Thorsvik 2002).

Consultative vs. Assertive:

This makes for a distinction when it comes to leaders’ willingness to involve collaborators in the process of decision-making. Consultation stands for coming to an understanding through dialogue and compromise. Convincing describes a striving to pursue one’s own opinion and by persuasion convince of its superiority.

Expecting initiative vs. Push forward:

A distinction pertaining to leaders’ willingness to delegate tasks. Expecting initiatives equates with confidence in collaborators’ expertise and creativity, trusting their ability to realize what has to be done. ‘Pushing forward’ describes leaders’ efficiency when striving to obtain results by means of collaborators’ efforts. The distinction parallels McGregor’s (1960) theories X and Y as to consequences of leaders’ ways of treating subordinates.

Values/Vision vs. Results/Goal:

A distinction between transformational and transactional leadership. The transformational leader motivates followers through visions and the permeation of moral values. A transactional leader motivates followers by appealing to their intellectual and material interests in order to get results.

Leading vs. Governing:

To understand one’s leadership as being as role model and staying close to collaborators in contrast to serving as an administrator managing subordinates from a distance.

Questionnaire Analysis: Leadership ideal and perceived efficiency

The **third item** aimed at measuring the respondent's own models of leadership. A description of a role model could mediate a more holistic view of the individual's ideas of leadership, of the concept of leadership. In addition to describing such role models respondents were requested to motivate their choice and describe in their own words which of the model's characteristics that seemed particularly attractive. Just as an example: Leaders could form the idea that the function of leadership in general is to realize a "higher cause". Did the model leader symbolize a higher cause?

The concepts Symbolic, Relational, Strategist and Structural have their origins in different theories. *Symbolic* – a sign for something abstract. The leader represents values and visions. Distance relation corresponds to Shamir's (1995) concept of distant charisma.

Relational – the empathetic leadership. The leader functions as a manager of humans. This characteristic may be compared with the Shamir et al. (1993) theory of self-concept and leadership as identification, internalization and augmentation of individual and collective self-efficacy.

Strategist – the political leadership. The leader is a flexible diplomat, a "*strategic producer*". This characteristic could be linked to James McGregor Burns' (1978) concept of transactional leadership.

Structural – the administrative leadership. A leadership style based on tradition and formal authority. The leader organizes and delegates by virtue of expertise.

The military group tended to find their leadership models "nearby", such as among other leaders in the armed forces. They had personal experiences of situations where the models had had a strong impact on them. Their descriptions are noticeably lively and powerful.

They used expressions like:

Strategist – 35%; tactical, daring in making decisions, eloquent, adaptive, grasping situations.

Symbolic – 25%; radiating competence, inspiring, enthusiastic, pioneering.

Relational – 19,5%; listener, empathic, attentive, caring about the individual.

Structural – 19,5%; experienced, structured, objective, demanding.

The 'culture' group tended to choose leadership models from an even wider spectrum of activity fields than the engineer group, such as theatre, entertainment, sports, trade and industry. This group displayed more of an even balance, sex-wise, than the other groups. Their models might be distributed over a scale from familiarity to celebrity such as father or supervisor to Swedish celebrities. Their descriptions are somewhat more distanced and existential than the other two groups of respondents.

They used expressions like:

Symbolic – 44 %; infusing respect, strong-willed, integrity, values, conviction.

Strategist – 22 %; courageous, flexible and learning.

Relational – 17 %; to have street credibility, humble, attentive.

Structural – 17 %: organized, successful.

The engineering group seems to pick leadership models from many different fields of occupations such as sports and industry. Their models are more distributed on a scale from familiarity to total strangers than within the military group, such as mother or supervisor to Nelson Mandela or Jean-Luc Picard (Star-Trek). Their descriptions are noticeably more existential and fellow feeling than the military group.

They used expressions like:

Relational – 48%; solidarity, good work environment, listener, supportive, honest, social.

Symbolic – 45 %; credible, fellow feeling, establishing focus, charismatic, enthusiastic.

Strategist – 30%; authoritative, pushing forward, responsible, ability to talk.

Structural – 18%; gets things done, goal-oriented, delegating, successful.

The fourth item aimed at measuring the respondents' opinion of their own personal ideals of leadership. Respondents were requested to write freely, in their own words, their views of how they, ideally, would like to behave and think as leaders. The texts produced contain on an average 130 words. The analysis of the texts demonstrates that almost each respondent displayed some combination of the concepts below.

The concepts describing the ideal traits or behaviours for the respondents' own leadership performance were:

Relational – focus on empathetic processes such as listening, feelings and social interaction. This is an example of the relational perspective and could be associated with Köpings' (2003) descriptions.

Strategist – application of different treatments to influence collaborators or subordinates. The strategist could be associated with Bass' (1996) concept of transformational leaders who transform and motivate followers.

Structural – priority is on results and goal achievement, relying upon organization and technology as tools. This could be associated with Blake & Moutons' (1964) managerial grid and "concern for production".

Expertise – stresses the importance of leaders' experience, skill and knowledge.

Respondents in the military group:

- Relational, Strategist 15 %
- Relational, Structural 15 %
- Structural, Strategist 13 %
- Strategist, Expertise 9 %

15 percent of the military students had "*Relational and Strategist*" as their main text characteristic. Examples: "with a clear self-image to meet and to listen to one's environment... to adapt one's leadership... to gain collaborators' trust...", "... take the opportunity to introduce or anchor my ideas, "... to be very clear when it comes to one's expectations on them."

15 percent of the military students had "*Relational and Structural*" as their main text characteristic. Examples: "A person who is attentive to, and shows great commitment to the individual... with an ability to be influenced and willing to change one's decisions.", "... to give as much information and responsibility as possible to your subordinates, encourage initiative in line with the purpose and a will to reach the goal.", "A happy and open character that can change style when it is needed because he should not forget that it is the group that has to produce."

Respondents in the cultural group:

- Structural, Strategist 32 %
- Relational, Strategist 23 %
- Strategist 14 %
- Relational, Expertise 9 %

32 percent of the students in the Arts Management programme had "*Structural and Strategist*" as their main characteristic.

Examples: "... great self-knowledge... be able to "read" collaborators – be a good judge of character.", "... analysing situations in an objective way.", "If the ability to infuse collaborators with enthusiasm is evident, then the goal will be reached automatically."

23 percent of the students in the Arts Management programme had "*Relational and Strategist*" as the main characteristic of their texts.

Examples: "If one is not genuine and true, collaborators will 'see through it'.", "... as a leader one has to be personal, genuine and true.", "My leadership ideal implies that we do things together. We treat each other with respect.", "... a clear vision has to be mediated, something efficiently and faithfully done if the leader has a 'Soul of fire', Philips (1988)."

Respondents in the engineer group:

- Structural, Strategist 27 %
- Structural, Expertise 22 %
- Relational, Expertise 10 %
- Relational, Strategist 10 %
- Relational, Structural 10 %

26 percent of the students in the engineering programme had “*Structural and Strategist*” as the main characteristic of their texts.

Examples: “It is important to have social competence and to adapt to...”, “One also has to be credible, powerful and pushing.”

21 percent of the engineering students had “*Structural and Expertise*” as their texts’ main characteristic.

Examples: “As a leader I wish to serve as a model for my collaborators and to be pushing and action-gearred.” “...to work hard... and inspired to perform even better.”, “...so that one’s explicitly aimed visions and goals will be fulfilled to a large extent.”

Concluding discussion

Quantitative vs. qualitative research

The results from this study should be interpreted as tendencies only and not as hard facts because of the difference in the number of respondents’ from the three professional fields. In fact, the idea of the questionnaire was never to obtain firm, hard data.

Another reason to be cautious with the results is the respondents’ different interpretations of a concept’s meaning. Similar words may convey different meanings and the same meaning may be described in different words. This tells about the difficulties in interpreting an expression in an answer or a concept. Because of this diversity and ambiguity it seemed appropriate to use kinship diagrams. They give snapshots of rough tendencies and are not designed to give precise data.

Bryman (2004) argues that quantitative research entails a simplification of social processes and that conceptualizations of leadership in a questionnaire have trans-situational relevance transcending space and time. This could be confirmed by the discussions in our closing seminars. On the other hand we might remind ourselves of the definition of personality as “the distinctive and relatively consistent ways of thinking, feeling and acting that characterize a person’s responses to life situations” (Smith, 1993). The leader is of course adapting his or her behaviour depending on many different causes in the environment but his or her personality circumscribes the scope for adaptation in leadership behaviour.

The degree of awareness of one’s personal character traits is something that probably is impossible to capture using a questionnaire. Appropriate methods might for instance include real life observations. Employing a leadership style that strives for adaptation requires many skills. Such capabilities are often implicit in descriptions of leaders’ day-to-day work. One such ability is the faculty of analysis. A key prerequisite for this leadership model to function is that the leader has the capacity to make relevant judgement of the status of the work-place as a whole as well as of each individual’s level of maturity. Such analysis must be executed at the same time as the day-to-day activities are carried out.

The starting point of this study was the pre-conceived idea that there are differences in expectations and ways of describing the leadership phenomenon, dependent upon professional experiences. The first and second items are quantitative and seem to imply that the differences between students from the cultural field, from the military and from the engineering field are not as large as our pre-conceived conceptions would indicate. When analysing the third item that is qualitative, some differences seems to appear and are discussed below.

The respondents' experience

There are few difficulties in describing one's own experience of being led through recalling a situation from memory. It seems to be considerably much more difficult to describe a situation of acting as a leader. Probably respondents do not realize that in certain circumstances they have had to act as informal leaders. Respondents do not equate situations where they have been guiding someone or have given advice with serving as a leader.

The awareness of how differences in leadership and management influence daily work life seems to differ between the three groups. This might have a number of different causes such as experience of being in a leading position or working, lack of language capability to express situations according to leadership theories, etc.

When respondents describe their preference for leader characteristics they are influenced both by their own experiences and by cultural norms. The three groups of respondents represent diverse work environments. As students they do not have the same experience of the specific field as someone who has been active there for a long period of time. But several years of study have made them familiar with, have had them socialized into the paradigm of the field. They are learning the practice of the field through the theory route, instead of the other way around, so to speak.

Preference and appraisal of leadership acting

The results from item one and two confirm results from other research performed utilizing questionnaires, Yukl (2002) and Kouzes & Posner (2000).

About 20 percent of all answers were ticked off exactly at the centre of the semantic scale. Referring to Hersey & Blanchard (1984) and the situational leadership theory in their commentary, many respondents pointed out that their leadership behaviour would depend upon different environmental aspects. The military students in particular stressed the situational leadership theory. In our discussions during the follow-up seminars they repeated that their choice of acting would be situation-dependent. The military students held forth that it is impossible to affix degrees between two opposite concepts in some sort of generalized idea.

The leader is expected to make things happen by being the driving force of the organization. On the other hand the respondents seem to expect to be engaged and consulted by their leader. The leader is expected to be credible and the respondents seem to be attracted by leaders who show great competence. It is interesting to see a smaller difference between the cultural group and the other two concerning Credibility and Competence. The cultural group and the students at the leadership master programme seem to rank Competence higher than Credibility whilst the military and the engineer groups seems to do the opposite. This tendency coincides with the results of the Kouzes & Posner (2002) investigation. Credibility and competence received the highest ranking during the whole period and these two concepts changed places with each other as the characteristics highest ranked.

For the least preferred trait, characteristic or behaviour there is a difference between the military group and the other groups of respondents. For the military group, willingness to Compromise obtained the lowest ratings whilst the cultural and engineer groups rated independent and demanding as least preferred leader characteristics.

The respondents in the cultural group seem to prefer to lead their collaborators rather than to govern them. As leaders they are at the same time pushing forward but prefer to use consultation instead of assertiveness. This is a finding that confirms previous studies. According to Yukl (2002) the most consistent finding from questionnaires is a positive relationship between consideration and subordinate satisfaction. In their questionnaire responses as well as in the follow-up seminars the military group respondents were very explicit in their opinion that they did not govern their subordinates. At the same time they agreed on the statement that they led through giving orders. One can get the impression that they avoid the word "govern" because the norms and models in the Swedish defence impose a leading and consulting leadership style. Consultation is more highly valued in the cultural and military groups than among the engineers.

Leadership ideal and perceived efficiency

What are the perceived norms in leadership in the three groups of military, engineers and cultural workers? Are there differences in expectancies that could depend on environmental characteristics?

The respondents' own leadership has a bent towards relation-management and strategy. Their own expertise is not described as detailed as the administrative aspects. The descriptions of leader role models differ between the three groups of respondents in that the military have experience of their own from leading and from having been led by specific leaders. Their descriptions are more lively, colourful and strong. Furthermore, they tend to use more words and describe their leader models from multiple leadership perspectives or situations. The cultural group describes their leader role models in terms of integrity and courage. Leaders should infuse respect and act according to their convictions. The engineer group describes their leader role models in terms of credibility and supportive. Leaders are supposed to establish focus and solidarity.

In the analysis of the respondents' own words describing how they would prefer to act as leaders we found that the texts' contents could be clustered around four categories: concern for relations and individuals, concern for structure and results, concern for strategy and processes and concern for knowledge and expertise. The texts rarely represent one single category but rather combinations of them.

Ekvall & Arvonen (1999); Yukl (1999a) have suggested a three-dimensional taxonomy with independent dimensions for 1) task oriented, 2) relations oriented and 3) change oriented behaviours. Our written descriptions on ideal leadership behaviour, characteristics and models associate with something akin to Yukl's three dimensions. The relational dimension as well as the task-oriented dimension is obvious but the change-oriented dimension is not to be found in the texts. On the other hand respondents describe behaviour and characteristics that might be labelled *Strategist* or *Structural*. Our pre-conceived conception was that leadership preferences in the military and the cultural groups would be each others' opposites or at least contrasting. There seems to be a tendency that the cultural group members are more concerned with issues of strategy than those of the other groups and that those in the military group prioritize relations in their leadership behaviour.

Respondents in the military group describe their ideal leadership behaviour in terms of relations in combination with strategy and producing. The purpose for and the results of defence activity might be described in terms of conflict, confrontation and act of reprisal. That kind of logic may bring out a need for a counterbalance in human dignity and empathy. The officers are to a high degree engaged in something that ultimately involves violence and are forced to influence the results of such acts as well. These conditions may evoke an increasing need for social interaction and understanding. Respondents in the cultural group describe their ideal leadership behaviour in terms of strategy in combinations with relations and producing. It may be that meagre financial resources in the cultural field create an attitude of caution and economy with resources. The cultural managers' primary task is to provide good conditions for and to facilitate artistic activities without interfering with the artistic process as such or maybe even with its results. Such conditions may evoke thinking in terms of strategy rather than in terms of relations.

Respondents in the engineer group describe their ideal leadership behaviour in terms of producing in combinations with strategy and expertise. Engineers involved in developing and managing processes and products seem to direct their focus to technology and tools. This tendency may lead to a lesser development of, and a decreased dependence on, active social interactions.

With reference to what has been said previously, any firm statements may scarcely be made though we may safely claim that several of the previously questions raised have been given some sort of indicative answers. At least one particular question will be addressed in the following summary. That is: How might leadership be exerted without having a restraining influence on collaborators' creativity and power of initiative?

Tentative guidelines:

The consultative and involving leadership finds acceptance in all three groups of respondents.

Collaborators in the military practice favour credibility and competence. Their expectations on the leadership act are that it pushes forward, leading instead of governing, being consultative and employing internal rewards. Leaders are not supposed to compromise.

In this practice the leadership approach seems to be strategic, tactical and relational. Leaders have to radiate competence and dare to make decisions.

Collaborators in the cultural practice favour competence, credibility and driving force. They expect leaders act along the lines of pushing forward, leading instead of governing, having street credibility and being consultative. Leaders are not supposed to act at a distance mediating independence.

In this practice the leading approach seems to be one of courage and infusing respect and integrity. Leaders have to be structural as well as strategists.

Collaborators in the engineering practice favour credibility and competence. The expectations on the leadership act are that they want to be led instead of governed, pushed forward, focused on results and with a good proportion of street credibility. Leaders are not supposed to be demanding.

In this practice the leadership approach seems to be a supportive and social one in a relational sense. Leaders have to be structural and strategists as well as experts.

Future research

This research project will be continued with semi-structured interviews with leaders in cultural activities and a sequence of reflective colloquiums on leadership in specific environments using a qualitative and philosophical approach to leadership as a phenomenon. Approaching the leadership phenomenon with questions such as:

What happens with our conception of the leadership phenomenon if we interpret and describes it in a perspective of social constructivism? Or what happens when those concepts and characteristics that serve as labels for certain individuals in leading positions, for leadership and followership, are applied in different fields of activity and enter the public domain of debate, education and research?

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