Leadership for Co-worker Commitment
– a TQM Approach

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Leadership for Co-worker Commitment
A TQM Approach

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Abstract

A trend in modern working life is related to adjustments to the rapidly changing requirements of the market. The increased pace of and demands for flexibility from globalization cause changes of the organizational conditions. To meet the demands of modern working life, independent, versatile and committed co-workers in a flat, flexible and empowered organization are needed.

The new demands in modern working life also call for an adjusted leadership with more focus on human behavioural aspects. This leads to a need for reduced managerial control and empowered, autonomous co-workers. This in turn might give not only increased responsibility, but also a higher workload, pressure and stress for the co-workers. The increased pressure may lead to an unhealthy working environment and increased costs connected to sickness absence.

The main purpose of this thesis is to contribute to a leadership that is better adapted to the new modern working life and supports co-worker commitment and sustainable health.

The result of this thesis may be described in three parts.

The first part, based on literature study, suggests a model, based on internal partnership, which is based on five factors; core values, personal motives, personal maturity, trust & equity, and communication in dialogue.

The second part is based on a multiple case study of two organizations, which have been successful in establishing a good working environment based on co-worker commitment and have at the same time obtained sustainable health. The organizations are studied with the aim of identifying methodologies possible to adopt by other organizations. The obtained methodologies are structured and analysed using the partnership model from the first part.

The third part is based on a literature study and discusses three identified embedded contradictions in the TQM concept that leaders may have to navigate and balance between in a modern working life. These contradictions are related to collectivism versus individualism, standardization versus innovative learning, and manipulation versus empowerment.
Sammanfattning

En trend i det moderna arbetslivet är förknippad med en anpassning till marknadens snabbt föränderliga krav. Globaliseringens ökade tempo och krav på flexibilitet orsakar förändringar av de organisatoriska förutsättningarna. För att möta det moderna arbetslivets krav behövs självständiga, mångkunniga och engagerade medarbetare i en platt, flexibel och självbestämmande organisation.


Denna uppsats huvudsyfte är att bidra till ett ledarskap som är bättre anpassat till det nya moderna arbetslivet och som ger stöd åt medarbetarnas engagemang och uthålliga hälsa.

Avhandlingens resultat kan beskrivas i tre delar:

Den första delen, som bygger på en litteraturstudie, föreslår en modell baserad på internt partnerskap, som i sin tur är baserat på fem faktorer: grundläggande värderingar, personliga motiv, personlig mognad, förtroende & jämlikhet och kommunikation via dialog.

Den andra delen bygger på en multipel fallstudie av två organisationer, som har lyckats etablera en bra arbetsmiljö baserad på medarbetarnas engagemang och har samtidigt åstadkommit uthållig hälsa. Organisationerna har studerats i syfte att identifera metoder som kan användas av andra organisationer. De erhållna metoderna har strukturerats och analyserats utifrån partnerskapsmodellen i den första delen.

Den tredje delen bygger på en litteraturstudie och diskuterar tre identifiserade motsägelser i TQM-begreppet som ledare kan behöva navigera och styra emellan i ett modern arbetsliv. Dessa motsägelser handlar om kollektivism kontra individualism, standardisering kontra innovativt lärande och manipulation kontra medarbetarskap.
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Paper 1

Paper 2

Paper 3
“New knowledge is established when the artist, philosopher or scientist succeeds in making a scratch in the parasol of routines and established truths we always are forced to live under.”

Gilles Deleuze
1 Introduction

In this chapter the background to the thesis, its purpose and demarcations are presented. In addition the structure of the thesis is presented.

1.1 Background

During the last few decades many organizational changes were made by industrial companies and public organizations based on a number of new managements concepts. Some examples of such management concepts are Lean Production, Time Based Management (TBM), Business Process Re-engineering (BPR) and Total Quality Management (TQM) (Abrahamsson, 2004).

The purpose of many of these modern management concepts is to help organizations to be more flexible and adapted to the rapidly changing requirements on the global market. In order to meet the new demands in a modern working life with independent, versatile and committed co-workers, a flat, flexible and empowered organization is needed (Docherty et al., 2002).

This trend in modern working life has created a need for a new leadership based on “ownership”, business idea, vision and organizational culture. Oakland (1989), states, for example, about TQM, “TQM is concerned with moving the focus of control from outside the individual to within”.

The sickness absence among employees has risen to alarming levels, not least in Sweden (The National Social Insurance Board (2000; 2003). Some people think that this is partly a consequence of the new work environment; see Dolbier et al. (2001) and Docherty et al. (2002). The number of sick absenteees listed more than 365 days has increased by almost 30% in Sweden between 1997 and 2001. The costs for sickness benefits and disablement pensions together were 10% of the Swedish Governmental total expenses in the year 2001 (SOU 2002:5). This trend is also observed in Norway and the Netherlands (Nyman, 2002).

The connection between a psychologically unsatisfactory working environment and a high frequency of sickness absence is also documented; see The Swedish Labour Inspectorate (2000); Dolbier et al. (2001). It is important to find a leadership that is better adapted to modern work life and at the same time does not cause high sickness absence.
TQM is a management concept focusing on the ‘soft’ aspects of human behaviour, such as employee commitment (Björkman & Lundkvist, 1998; Wilkinson, 1999). Seddon (1990) argues that the management focus on ‘hard’ measurable aspects, such as costs and production performance, neglecting ‘soft’ aspects like underlying values and behaviour of employees, can result in failure of the ‘cultural change’, necessary for the implementation of TQM. Sila & Ebrahimipour (2002) also found in an extensive investigation that most of the frequently addressed factors within TQM may be classified as ‘soft’ aspects.

The changed demands in modern working life seem to call for an adjusted leadership with more attention to human behaviour aspects in order to be successful and avoid sickness absence. Old hierarchical traditions of leadership have to be changed towards a more supportive and coaching attitude from leaders, as advocated by, for instance, Deming (1986).

### 1.2 Problem Area

The increased need for higher quality, flexibility and shorter lead times means that all co-workers have to co-operate to reach goals and all the time improve products and processes. This makes the organization more dependent on co-workers’ commitment and motivation.

The necessary changes in managerial control and a transformation to a flat and empowered role with autonomous co-workers also cause increased workload, responsibility, pressure and stress for the co-workers (McKenna & Beech, 2002; McCabe et al., 1998).

This increased pressure also seems to cause unhealthy working environments and increased costs connected to sickness absence; see The Swedish Labour Inspectorate (2000); Dolbier et al. (2001). At the same time, there are organizations that have been successful in creating a strong co-worker commitment, an impressive financial development and a decrease in the number of sick leaves.

There is a need to study what a leadership related to the modern work life really means, and which factors are important to achieve a real co-worker commitment. It is important also to take care of the experiences of successful organizations and identify methodologies used by leaders and co-workers to support other organizations.
1.3 Purpose of the Thesis

The main purpose of this thesis is to contribute to a leadership that is adapted to modern work life and supports co-worker commitment and sustainable health.

1.4 Research questions

In order to fulfil the stated purpose of the thesis the following three research questions have been formulated:

- Which factors are decisive factors for achieving increased co-worker commitment from a leadership perspective?
- What methodologies can be identified from successful organizations to achieve sustainable health?
- Are there oppositions between a leadership based on TQM and modern working life?

1.5 Demarcations

This thesis is focusing on psychological and social factors in the working environment. Physical and technical environmental issues are not discussed in this thesis.

The answers to the research questions above are looked upon in a theoretical and analytical perspective with a focus mainly from the area of Total Quality Management.

1.6 Structure of the thesis

Figure 1.1 describes the structure of the thesis. Chapter 1 contains an introduction including background, problem area and purpose of the thesis and research questions. In Chapter 2 the theoretical frame of reference including Total Quality Management, cultural changes, employee involvement, human behaviour, human motivation and learning, is outlined. Leadership, standardization, learning and quality in working life are also discussed in Chapter 2. The methodology used is described in Chapter 3 and starts with the epistemological perspective of the author. The chapter includes the research approach and methodological perspectives and describes the data collecting methods used. Chapter 3 ends with a discussion of reliability, validity and generalizability. In Chapter 4 the case study organizations are described. The three appended papers are shortly summarized in Chapter 5. The thesis ends with conclusions and discus-
sions in Chapter 6 by showing how each of the research questions have been answered and how these findings together contribute to the main purpose of the thesis. The findings are also compared and discussed by using the theoretical frame of references to provide the general conclusion of the thesis. Chapter 6 includes reflection on and discussion of the studies and ends with suggestions for future research. Papers are appended.

Figure 1.1. The structure of this thesis from introduction to conclusion and discussion. The appended papers contain answers to the research questions.
2 Theoretical frame of reference

In this chapter the theoretical frame of reference will be outlined. Areas such as TQM, cultural changes, employee involvement and human behaviour issues, will be discussed.

2.1 Total Quality Management

2.2 The Evolution of TQM

The definition of the quality concept has been formulated by many authors, but is in general customer-oriented. For instance, Juran (1951) uses the formulation ‘fitness for use’, Crosby (1979) talks about ‘conformance to requirements’, Deming (1986) states that “quality should be aimed at the needs of the customers, present and future” and in the international standard of quality management systems ISO 9000 “quality is the degree to which a set of inherent characteristics fulfil the requirements, i.e. needs and expectations that are stated, generally implied or obligatory” (ISO, 2000).

The ways to obtain quality of articles and services have differed much over time. Frederick W. Taylor’s concept of “scientific management” greatly influenced the evolution of quality activities in manufacturing organizations. His focus was on production efficiency by decomposing jobs into small work tasks in an assembly line without the individual worker having a holistic view. The quality of the manufactured products was the responsibility of the managers and controlled by independent ‘quality inspectors’.

In the 1920s, Walter Shewhart, the pioneer of quality control, introduced control charts, sampling techniques and economic analysis, to improve and maintain quality. He laid the foundation of the ideas of modern statistical quality control, and if just one single person should be called ‘the father of modern quality management’ it should be Shewhart; Bergman & Klefsjö (2003).

After World War II, General MacArthur had the responsibility for the rebuilding program in Japan. Japan was devastated after the war with few natural resources to compete with. The post-war economy was hungry for new products and America had virtual monopoly in manufacturing but had little focus on quality issues. (Evans & Dean, 2003)
As a part of the rebuilding program, Edwards Deming and Joseph Juran visited Japan several times. Deming introduced statistical methodologies and tools, like statistical process control by using control charts, to the Japanese industry. Juran complemented the statistical methodologies with a broader knowledge of leadership. Together they convinced the eager top Japanese managers that quality improvement would be the survival of their nation. ‘The Japanese wonder’ with outstanding products of high product quality during the late 1970s and 1980s then shocked the western manufacturers. (Park Dahlggaard, 2002; McKenna & Beech, 2002; Axelson & Bergman, 1999)

After Deming’s participation in the famous TV program ‘If Japan can - why can’t we?’, broadcast by NBC in June 1980, Deming’s ideas of quality improvements and quality management in general became an issue also at management level in the USA and other western countries; Bergman & Klefsjö (2003).

In 1987, 36 years after Japan established the Deming Prize, the American Congress established the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award (MBNQA) to support the quality work among American businesses (Evans & James, 2003). The MBNQA award has then inspired many other national quality awards all over the world; see Vokurka et al. (2000).

Many authors describe the evolution of work with quality and quality improvements towards the concept of TQM by using four stages; see Dale (1999); Garvin (1988); Dahlggaard et al. (1998).

These four stages are (see Figure 2.1): Inspection (I) with a focus on “measuring, testing or gauging the characteristics of an entity and comparing the results with specified requirements” after production (Dale, 1999). After that the Quality Control (QC) stage was introduced to control quality during the production. The main idea was to try to catch problems earlier and control already during the manufacturing process, instead of just rejecting or repairing afterwards. But still in the mid-1940s, and in many cases much later, quality work through inspection was predominant in many companies (Bergman & Klefsjö, 2003).

The third stage, called Quality Assurance (QA), focuses on pre-production activities. Through the development of suitable organizations, distribution of responsibilities and use of quality instructions, conditions are created for avoiding failures and mistakes as much as possible. In this way quality systems are created, as, for instance, according to the interna-
tional series of standard ISO 9000. This stage implies a change from detection to prevention, according to Dahlgaard et al. (1998).

The fourth stage is what is now called Total Quality Management and involves all aspects of the organization as a system, even including suppliers and customers in the key business processes. The basis is, by working with continuous improvements, to secure that quality reaches the existing customers and preferably delights of their future needs (Dale, 1999).

The four stages have partly replaced each other during the evolution, but to some extent previous stages exist in parallel with the following stages.

Figure 2.1. The four stages in the evolution of Total Quality Management. (From Dale, 1999.)

2.2.1 Definition of TQM

The TQM concept, the fourth level in the development illustrated in Figure 2.1, has been described in many ways. For instance, Dale (1999) states that TQM is “an approach for improving the competitiveness, effectiveness and flexibility of the whole organization”. Shiba et al. (1993) think that TQM is “an evolving system of practices, tools and training methods for managing companies to provide customer satisfaction in a rapidly changing world”. The description by Shiba et al. (1993) has similarities to the description by Hellsten & Klefsjö (2000), which states that TQM is “a continuously evolving management system consisting of values, methodologies and tools, the aim of which is to increase external and internal customer satisfaction with a reduced amount of resources”; see Figure 2.2.

The definition by Hellsten & Klefsjö (2000) is used in this thesis. The main reasons for this choice are that this definition is visible, it gives a structure to the TQM concept and it emphasizes also the importance and role of core values and organizational culture.

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The implementation of TQM is suggested to start with identification of the core values that should constitute the organization’s TQM culture, according to them. They also argue that methodologies and tools should then be chosen to support the values and that the three units, in that way, together form a system. The methodologies and tools presented in the figure should be regarded as examples and not as a complete list.

![Diagram](image)

Figure 2.2. TQM seen as a continuously evolving management system consisting of values, methodologies and tools. Modified after Hellsten & Klefjö (2000).

### 2.2.2 The Core Values in TQM

The concept of TQM is often described as based on a number of core values. The concept of ‘value’ has several interpretations; see Schein (1985). In relation to TQM the concept of ‘core value’ often refers to “guiding principles and/or behaviours that embody how your organisation and its people are expected to operate”; see NIST (2003). Furthermore, “values reflect and reinforce the desired culture of the organisation. Values support and guide the decision making of every employee, helping the organisation to accomplish its mission and attain its vision in an appropriate manner”; NIST (2003).

The term ‘core values’ is sometimes also named ‘principles’, ‘dimensions’, ‘elements’, or ‘cornerstones’ in the literature. In this thesis the term ‘core values’ is used when talking about ‘TQM values’ in an attempt to separate these values from other applications of the concept of ‘values’.
There are several different sets of TQM core values published. For instance, Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award is based on ‘11 values and principles’ (NIST, 2003), the SIQ Model for Business Excellence rests on ‘13 core values’ (SIQ, 2002) and ISO 9000 has ‘8 management principles’ as a basis (ISO, 2000).

As a summary, there are some differences regarding number and formulation, but in general the contents are similar. Hellsten (1997) made a comparison study, including the core values by Tenner & DeToro (1992); Dahlgaard et al. (1994); Oakland (1989); Shiba et al. (1993). The core values in the summary by Hellsten (1997) are:

- Focus on Customers
- Management Commitment
- Everybody’s Participation
- Focus on Processes
- Continuous Improvement
- Fact-based Decisions
- Base Decisions on Facts
- Let Everybody be Committed

These core values are in good agreement with the core values presented by Bergman & Klefsjö (2003) as the foundation of TQM (see Figure 2.3), although Bergman & Klefsjö (2003) have deliberately used an active formulation to emphasize the importance of an active approach.

![Figure 2.3. The values in Total Quality Management as seen by Bergman & Klefsjö (2003).](image)

The top management commitment is an overarching condition for: focus on processes, base decisions on facts, continuous improvement, and letting everybody be committed. The focus on customers is based on these four values. The system view is also an important part of the TQM system; see Deming (1994); Bergman & Klefsjö (2003).

The values in Figure 2.3 will be shortly described.
Focus on Customers
Focus on customers is a basic core value in TQM and should be supported by the other four core values that work as a system. Customer satisfaction is, according to Bergman & Klefşjö (2003), the measure of quality and it is important to follow the customers’ experience of what the organization has delivered. To get information about the customers’ present and future requirements, for instance, different market surveys may be carried out.

The term ‘customer’ includes here both traditional external customers and those who work within the organization and are called ‘internal customers’. The term ‘external customer’ includes consumers, buyers, and other people who benefit from the product, but can also include other organizations, shareholders and parts of the surrounding society, who have interests in the organization.

Focus on Processes
Harrington (1991) defines a process as “any activity or group of activities that takes an input, adds value to it, and provides an output to an internal or external customer. Processes use an organization’s resources to provide results”. According to Egnell (1999), the advantages of working with focus on processes are: decreased risk of sub-optimizing and discrepancy between different functions in the organization, unnecessary activities are reduced, higher work satisfaction, reduced costs, clearer aims and higher inclination to do the right thing from the beginning.

Base Decisions on Facts
Bergman & Klefşjö (2003) and Shiba et al. (1993), among others, advocate the importance of making decisions based on well-founded facts and not on random factors. Data of both numerical and verbal character is needed as well as systematic tools for the structure and analysis of these data; see Deming (1994); Ishikawa (1985). This core value advocates the need for utilizing efficient statistical tools, such as the Seven Quality Control Tools (see; Ishikawa, 1985) or the Seven Management Tools (see Mizuno, 1988; Brassard & Ritter (1994); Andersen & Fagerhaug, 2000).

To improve products and processes it is also necessary to have knowledge of variation and of how to separate random causes of variation from systematic causes; see Deming (1994).
**Improve Continuously**
According to Bergman & Klefsjö (2003), the requirements on the products constantly change. This leads to a need for continuous improvements to fulfil customer needs and expectations. Deming (1986) states that one should “improve constantly and forever the system of production and service” and advocates the use of ‘the improvement cycle’ (also called ‘the Shewhart cycle’ and ‘the Deming cycle’) with the four stages: Plan, Do, Study and Act.

**Let Everybody Be Committed**
For a successful quality strategy it is essential to create conditions for participation for all members of the organization; Oakland (1993); Bergman & Klefsjö (2003).

An assumption in the TQM philosophy is that people want to take responsibility and participate in the organization’s activities; Hackman & Wageman (1995). Kotter (1996) shows, on the basis of research that a lot of companies have failed with their improvement work as a consequence of underestimating the importance of employee participation. If people are given delegated responsibility and authority, this will be stimulating and rewarding, and lead to improved results and top management’s confidence. Everybody’s participation and commitment are also in accordance with the theory of X and Y; see McGregor’s (1960).

Important factors here are communication, delegation and training; see Senge (1990); Bergman & Klefsjö (2003). Interesting discussions about motivation may also be found in, for instance, Kondo (1991) and Kondo & Park Dahlgaard (1994).

**Top Management Commitment**
Few authors would dispute the importance of top management commitment. Joseph Juran has said, “to my knowledge, no company has attained world class quality without upper management leadership”; Bergman & Klefsjö (2003).

Kotter (1996) is one of many authors who emphasise the importance of top management commitment. Kotter (1996) is one of many authors who emphasise the importance of top management commitment. Joseph Juran has said, “to my knowledge, no company has attained world class quality without upper management leadership”; Bergman & Klefsjö (2003).

Furthermore, Dahlgaard et al. (1998) emphasise the importance of managers outlining quality goals, quality policies, and quality plans. The quality goals should, for example, give signals to the employees of the importance of satisfying external customers. Dahlgaard et al. (1998) accentuate the significance of using goals and policies that are clear and meaningful to the employees.
To give credibility to the organization’s quality strategy, the top management’s attitude is of crucial importance for their function as role models. The top management has authority to give support through financial and moral activities and resource issues (Dale 1999). If the top managers do not act in accordance with the mutually agreed principles, it is not likely that the co-workers will embrace them either (Oakland, 1989).

2.2.3 The System View
The system thinking is vital to TQM and the overall view is to be aware of how various processes interact and is an important element for successful quality improvements. Senge (1990) also emphasizes system thinking as vital for creating learning organizations.

An important theme in TQM is the realization that all involved can become winners. In every buyer-seller relation both parties should feel content when the purchase is concluded. The same feelings should also be striven for regarding the employee-employer relation. The system view also includes customers and suppliers as important parts. It is important to always strive for creating a win-win situation, as advocated by Deming (1994).

The general principle of system thinking implies an integration of other fields like social science, engineering and management to give the system different perspectives; Senge (1990). Deming (1994) too looks at the same theme in his system of profound knowledge, based on the four elements (in Deming’s terminology): appreciation of a system, knowledge about variation, theory of knowledge, and psychology.

2.2.4 The TQM Philosophy
According to Hackman & Wageman (1995), TQM has both ‘soft’ and ‘hard’ sides. However, McKenna & Beech (2002) and Wilkinson (1999) argue for greater emphasis on the soft aspects of TQM.

The ‘hard’ side includes methodologies and tools, such as statistical process control (SPC) and the basic quality management tools, respectively. The ‘soft’ side of TQM is related to human recourse issues and cultural changes (Wilkinson, 1999).

Hackman & Wageman (1995) have studied the TQM gurus Edwards Deming, Joseph Juran and Kaoru Ishikawa and from their work made a description of the TQM philosophy. According to Hackman & Wageman
(1995), the focus in TQM is on the preservation and health of the organization, but also values about the community, customers, wellbeing of organization members and recognizes the human side. The TQM strategy is rooted in the four related assumptions:

- Quality is less costly and essential to long-term organizational survival.
- People naturally care about the quality and have instinctive drive for precision, beauty and perfection.
- Organizations are systems of interdependent parts and the problem is to face invariably cross-traditional functional lines.
- Senior management creates the organizational systems and the employees’ work effectiveness is a direct function of the quality of the system.

Sila & Ebrahimpuor (2002) found in an extensive theoretical investigation of 347 articles that the following factors were most frequently addressed in the TQM literature:

- Customer focus and satisfaction
- Employee training
- Leadership and top management commitment
- Teamwork
- Employee involvement
- Continuous improvements and innovation
- Quality information and performance measurements

Most of these frequently addressed factors in TQM, as found by Sila & Ebrahimpuor (2002), may be referred to as ‘soft’ aspects.

2.3 Cultural Changes

2.3.1 Organizational Changes

The purpose of an organization is to create an efficient way to work by distributing power and creating a common culture. The aim is to obtain stability and predictability throughout the structure and a reduction of variation of possibilities and focus on alternatives for action (Jacobsen & Thorsvik, 1998). Lack of organizational stability would cause confusion and uncertainty and lead to paralysis of action (Dale, 1999; Argyris, 2000).
Resistance to organizational changes is a rational behaviour aimed at preserving structure and safety; (Senge, 1990). Motives for resistance may be uncertainty of the unknown, risk of losing identity, increased workload and new social relations. Senge (1990) describes this as subconscious resistance in order to preserve the existing reality. Organizational changes may be seen as a more superficial change process, but a change of the culture might be a more profound change process.

2.3.2 Organizational Culture

McKenna & Beech (2002) describe the culture of an organization as a “collection of values, beliefs, attitudes and behaviours commonly shared by the members.” Bruzelius & Skärvd (2000) state that the organizational culture is hard to define, but argue that some constituents of organizational culture are ideal goals, dominating ideas and values, significant role models, norms and rules, and an informal communication system. Schein (1992) also argues that one essence of organizational values is informal and based on unconscious underlying assumptions, taken-for-granted beliefs, perceptions, thoughts and feelings. Other levels are visible such as artefacts and espoused values that embody the organizational ideology in strategies, goals and philosophies. The individuals’ integration into the organizational culture is through socialisation by accepting the organizational values and action pattern; Bruzelius & Skärvd (2000).

A popular metaphor for the relation between formal and informal organizational structure is an iceberg. Just a tip of the iceberg is visible, as most of the iceberg is beneath the surface of the water, referring to the informal culture of the organization; see, for instance, Hughes et al., 2002).

Morgan (1997) and Hatch (2000) also acknowledge the informal part of cultures. Hatch (2000) notes that sub-cultures are formed by individuals whom they believe to be similar to themselves. These sub-cultures can support, deny or exist in parallel with the general culture’s central values. Morgan (1997) notes the incongruence between what people say and what they actually do. Noticing the leadership style in connection to the organizational culture may give valuable insights into how the organization works; Morgan (1997).

An organization’s culture may also be seen a reflection of the surrounding society’s culture, i.e. the context the organization is influenced by; MacCoby, 1983; Massay, (1979).
2.3.3 Cultural Changes

Cao et al. (2000) argue that achieving a lasting change in organizational behaviour requires changes in organizational structure, in work tasks, and in social environment, as well as changes in the individuals’ attitudes and behaviour.

According to Miconnet (2001), a new common set of core values based on mutual agreement must be formulated to establish the quality culture proposed in TQM. According to Hill (1991), it is the task of the top management to design a structure and establish a culture that will maximise the effective participation of all employees in the pursuit of quality. Dygert (2000) claims that the development of a quality culture in an organization most often requires a dramatic change in the way people in the organization see the world and their roles in it.

To create a successful culture requires a sense of ownership within the organization and a cooperative environment among the co-workers; Oak-land (1989). To accomplish this, the process demands absolute and total commitment; Dygert (2000). Dygert (2000); Cao et al. (2000) and Hill (1991) all state that a cultural change requires a change of individuals’ understandings, ideas and values.

According to Schein (1985) the organizational change relies on ‘preliminary’ and ‘secondary’ mechanisms. The preliminary mechanisms are:

- What matters the leaders pay most attention to. (This will also be prioritized by subordinates!)
- How leaders react to crises and critical incidents. (This could be reflected in the type of situation that is seen as a crisis and the nature of the leader’s response.)
- How leaders are acting as role model, teachers and coaches. (This reflects the leadership style.)
- What and how rewards are handled. (What criteria are used?)
- Criteria in use for employee selection, promotions and termination of employment. (An important consideration is the visibility of different criteria in the various decision-making forums.)

The secondary mechanisms are:

- The organizational structure, system and procedures. (For instance, like in the flexibility and administration.)
- Artefacts and physical spaces. (What image is shown?)
- Stories and legends about people and important events. (This will give present employees guidance on what the organization appreciates.)
• Formal statements of philosophy and policy. (These statements should be congruent with reality to have credibility.)

2.3.4 Values and Core Values

The use of the concept of ‘value’ is not unproblematic since the term is used in different contexts with different meanings. The concept of ‘core value’ in the TQM literature is described as a way to emphasize chosen statements (principles, dimensions, elements or cornerstones), and ways to act. To have an impact, the core values in TQM must be supported by quality activities, economically, morally and with other resources, by the management (Bergman & Klefsjö, 2003). The values must all the time be supported by suitable methodologies and tools; see Hellsten & Klefsjö (2000).

Successful TQM implementation must therefore be built on the management’s continuous involvement to give credibility to the work. Deming (1986) states, “if the leaders do not act according to the agreed core values, it is not likely that anybody else will”. And further, to have an impact on everybody’s commitment, the core values must be well communicated, understood and accepted by the co-workers. Organizational strategies, goals and philosophies are, according to Schein (1992) espoused values, in other words accepted values. According to Eriksson (2004), these espoused values may be regarded as congruent with the core values of TQM.

Senge et al. (1994) argue that values should be an important part of the organization’s shared vision as a guiding symbol for behaviour towards that vision, and suggest the formulation ‘agreed-upon values’. Core values may therefore be seen as a general agreement from the members in the organization. In this respect core values may be considered part of the organization’s formal culture, to be distinguished from ‘personal values’.

The use of values in other contexts, such as in politics, ideology or religion, is often referred to as basic intrinsic ethical and moral issues; see Hughes et al. (2002). From this angle these personal values must be seen as a vital part of the organization’s informal and tacit culture.

The personal values are mental models guiding patterns of behaviour. Massey (1979) and Senge et al. (1994) claim that each person’s values reflect inputs from family, peers, education, religion, media, science and technology and current events. Hofstede (1997) claims that personal values can change, but they are relatively firmly established during young adulthood and does not change substantially after the age of ten. How-
ever, Hofstede (1997) thinks that the personal values adapted to the organizational contexts form the basis of the organizational culture.

When the organization’s ‘agreed-upon values’ are not congruent with the personal values, a dissonance is created that tells people that something is wrong. Disharmony between agreed-upon values and people’s personal values may therefore be counterproductive to the organization’s purpose (Senge et al., 1994; Axelsson, 2000).

The author of this thesis agrees with the view of ‘agreed principals’ presented by Senge et al. (1994) and Schein (1992). However, it is important also to add ‘mutuality’ to avoid misunderstandings.

‘Mutually agreed principles’ may be a more appropriate concept than ‘values’ or ‘core values’. However, due to the well-established nomenclature we will use the commonly used names also in this thesis.

The mixture of different interpretations of the value concept may be one cause of the different opinions about cultural changes.

2.3.5 Core Values and Cultural Change

Continuously improving products and processes to satisfy customers’ changed needs is vital in TQM. This means that the organization must be equipped for constant changes and at the same time able to provide stable conditions for security and innovation.

“All the literature on TQM indicates that to be successful TQM requires a cultural change. That’s usually where the literature stops. In pursuit of cultural change, organizations will invest heavily in educational programs, in old-fashioned management development methods and so on. Often the strategy is one of hit and miss.”; Seddon, (1990).

Dale (1999) states:

“a perspective based on assumptions that the organization comprises a group of people with a single set of values and loyalty and with management’s ‘right to manage’ seen as rational and legitimate – is an underlying theme. Implementation is seen as a matter of motivation, with the correct attitudes being instilled by simple training programs and education. Possible conflicts of interest are not addressed.”

Dygert (2000) advocates a team effort to create a culture of success and is of the opinion that it begins with developing a sense of ownership in the
employees and in a quality culture where everyone is intrinsically concerned about the success of others, and that the change process requires an absolute and total commitment. Dygert (2000) further points out that moving to a quality culture is a long journey (about 3 to 7 years) and requires both time and capital, and that “developing a quality culture in an organization most often requires a dramatic change”.

However, the use of core values to manage a cultural change is not unquestioned. For example, Senge et al. (1994) argue that individual changes must come from inside rather from outside. Eklund (1997) and Hackman & Wageman (1995) argue that the initiative to change the organization’s culture according to the TQM philosophy in general is a top-down approach. Argyris (1998) notes, “if you challenge the change agent, you become an enemy of change.”

One conclusive observation made by authors discussing changes of organizational cultures is the importance of employee involvement. McKenna & Beech (2002) argue that respect for people is crucial in cultural changes for creating commitment. They also add the importance of trust from open management style and participative management. This is in accordance with Bruzelius & Skärvad (2000), who state that leaders must be able to ‘walk the talk’.

### 2.4 Employee Involvement

Employee involvement is one fundamental core value in TQM. Inviting the co-workers to be more actively involved in an organization’s activities can create more benefit from their knowledge and the resources available. This has been emphasized by, for instance, Deming (1986) and Hackman & Oldham (1976). Co-worker involvement is also an effect of new requirements in modern working life, which does not function with vertical control when the practical and customer-near knowledge is on the operational level; Axelsson & Bergman (1999).

Employee involvement can be structured in different ways depending on what is required from the business. Some small knowledge-based organizations are more or less fully dependent on individuals, and personal turnovers might jeopardize the existence of the organization.

Dygert (2000) argues that people will support what they help to create and that people need to be involved in decisions affecting them. The best way to get the co-workers to care about the success of an organization is to involve the employees in as many decisions as possible (Dygert, 2000).
Whatever concept for employee involvement is used, there are three pre-
conditional characteristics that will be essentially antagonistic in the
foundation of employment, and can lead to discontent, according to Pruijt
(2000). These are:

- ‘Subordination’. The employee is subordinated, which is often
  regulated in the employment contract.
- ‘Asymmetry’. The employee is more dependent on the employer
  than the employer is on a particular employee.
- ‘Employees are instrumental’. One role of the managements is to
  reduce labour costs, to intensify the pressure of work or to make
  employees redundant through rationalization or automation.

2.4.1 Empowerment
Compared to several modern management concepts, TQM emphasizes
employee participation. McKenna & Beech (2002) claim that TQM advo-
crates reduced managerial control by removing layers and pushing deci-
sion-making further down in the organization. This flattening of the or-
ganizations with delegation of authority to teams is usually the descrip-
tion of empowerment advocated in TQM literature (see, for instance,
Ishikawa, 1985). Kinlaw (1995) advocates influence based on compe-
tence in his description of empowerment.

An empowered organization with autonomous co-workers in teams can
also cause increased workload, responsibility, pressure and stress for the
co-workers (McKenna & Beech, 2002; McCabe et al., 1998). This in-
creased pressure may also cause unhealthy working environment (The
Swedish Labour Inspectorate, 2000; Dolbier et al., 2001). Hoonakker et
al. (2000) argue that employees involved in teamwork have higher organ-
izational identification but feel higher work pressure and job strain, which
may lead to less efficiency and alienation caused by stress. Argyris
(1998) stresses the importance of internal commitment from employees to
reinforce empowerment from real influence. The use of only external
commitment, as contractual compliance, can undermine the empower-
ment idea and the credibility of the top management.

2.4.2 Manipulation
The change of individuals’ understandings, ideas and values, as discussed
by Dygert (2000); Cao et al. (2000) and Hill (1991), might imply some
manipulative undertones, in the management’s effort to achieve every-
body’s commitment that is advocated in the TQM philosophy. Flood &
Jackson (1991) also criticise TQM for ideological control, manipulation and mistrust.

The increased autonomy, personal responsibility and development caused by empowerment are appreciated by most people. However, McCabe et al. (1998) state that American and European quality efforts are characterized by intense workload, control, responsibility in front of the management, surveillance and pressure from customers and colleagues. At the same time the scope for recovery, reflection and learning is reduced. This means that, in spite of all the good intentions, the organization can be seen as greedy and exploitive through manipulations and indoctrinations and can therefore be questioned (Lindgren, 1999; Rasmussen, 1999).

Some authors argue that leadership is about making people do something defined by someone else (the leader), and that leadership is always more or less manipulative (Bryman, 1996). But Hackman & Wageman (1995) warn about practicing pseudo-participation and manipulation by managers and state: “pseudo-participation is ill-advised, because people almost always are able to tell when they are being manipulated”.

2.5 Human Behaviour

The main focus in TQM is often on satisfying customers’ needs and expectations, but this is hard to achieve without satisfying the needs of the internal customers needs first (Bergman & Klefsjö, 2003). Maslow’s theory (1943) of human motivation based on human needs is well accepted and often referred to. The theory is based on a hierarchy of human needs from physiological needs, security needs, social needs and ego or esteem needs and self-fulfilment needs (see Figure 2.4).

The theory is based on reducing tensions from unfulfilled needs. When a need is fulfilled it loses its energy as a motivation factor and gives room for motivation from the next level in the hierarchy as a possible drive for fulfilment. The principle is that the lower level in the hierarchy, the more important the need is. Needs may also be seen as personal characteristics. Some people have, for instance, more needs for social interaction and other people have a greater interest in social status.

The physiological needs are defined as basic or untaught needs and are life supporting, such as the needs for sleep, food, air and warmth. When the physiological needs are fulfilled, the safety needs, such as trust, freedom from assault, ability to foresee consequences, can be fulfilled. The social needs come from needs such as belonging, and giving and receiv-
ing love. Status, acknowledgement and acceptance are examples of ego or esteem needs. The need for fulfilment is not always possible for all, since it means to be able to utilize one’s personal abilities fully and possible causes may be lack of self-awareness or not having the right conditions. Sometimes other needs, such as security needs or social needs, are obstacles. It might, for instance, be hazardous to give up a steady job and identity in order to develop one’s talent as an artist with much uncertainty about success and income. (see; Maslow, 1943)

Figure 2.4. The hierarchy of needs based on Maslow’s theory (1943), to the left, and a modification by Kondo (1991), to the right. From Bergman & Klefsjö (2003).
In the modified hierarchy to the right in Figure 2.4 by Kondo (1991), he describes how all needs are present all the time and are maybe only partially fulfilled, but some needs are dominant depending on how the individual experiences the current situation.

### 2.6 Human Motivation

#### 2.6.1 Commitment

One core issue in this thesis is what makes co-workers motivated to be committed. Deming (1994); Covey (1992) and Senge (1990) all agree that organizational transformation processes start with the individuals as the first step, even if they use different terminologies. Park Dahlgaard (2002) defines high personal commitment as “a state, where a person is fully motivated to devote oneself for a certain task or an organization,” with focus on the intrinsic motivation.

Axelsson (2000) argues that the goals of the individual and the organization must be integrated. He refers to McGregor (1969) and Argyris (1957) and their discussion related to Maslow’s (1943) theories of human needs.

Besides what individuals feel as motivating, the situation or the system is a decisive factor for motivation. The system will provide both rewards and punishment and give conditions for the individual to perform within the set frame of working methods, tools and organizational structure.

Hertzberg (1969) advocates that intrinsic factors related to emotional needs are considered as motivators. However, he also discusses extrinsic factors, considered as hygiene factors. According to Hertzberg (1969), hygiene factors are not motivators themselves, but if they are unsatisfactorily fulfilled, they can result in dissatisfaction. Such factors may be salary, work conditions, personal policy, leadership or work environment.

Covey (1992) refers to the ‘central paradigm’ when arguing for the intrinsic factors as drivers for action. Every individual has personal desires and priorities based on earlier experiences (see also Maslow, 1943). Both Ishikawa (1985) and Deming (1986) also advocate that recognition from others is a strong motivation factor.
According to Hackman & Oldham (1976), the motivation for work depends on how the work is designed. To obtain a high motivation the work should include five dimensions:

- The use of the individual’s competence, i.e. to what extent the individual can make use of his or her different skills when work tasks are performed.
- To what extent the individual can see her/his own performance in a holistic perspective.
- What importance the work has to other people inside and outside the organization?
- To what extent the work tasks are self-governed.
- To what extent the individuals can receive recognition and feedback for performance.

These factors influence the psychological experience and the extent to which the work is meaningful, gives responsibility and knowledge of results. From that the individual receives psychological rewards that result in higher motivation and commitment. This will result in higher quality and productivity and lower personal turnovers and absence; Hackman & Oldham (1976) and Payne (2000).

McGregor’s theory of X and Y (1960) may be seen as an example of how leadership expectations can control people’s behaviour. If a leader controls details, the co-workers will lose motivation with deteriorated results, which will lead to less confidence on the part of the leaders and continuing control of details (theory X). On the other hand, if the leader delegates responsibility and authority, the co-workers will be motivated and perform better and the leader will get increased confidence (theory Y). In theory Y trust is a keyword.

One conclusion that can be drawn from the theories referred to on human behaviour and motivation is that intrinsic rewards are most important for motivation, but how individuals experience this can be very different and they will therefore respond in different ways.

### 2.7 Leadership

According to Bennis (1985), there are over 350 different definitions of ‘leadership’. Mintzberg (1973), for instance, argues that what managers have in common is: a formal position and status in the organization, they
are interacting with others, they deal with information and make decisions.

The formal position of a leader is often an area of responsibility and authority to make decisions and have influence to execute necessary actions considered to be justified with or without the acceptance of subordinates. Kotter (1996) describes leadership as “a process for influence, without forcing, one or several groups of people in one direction”.

Wiberg (1992) discusses the difference between management and leadership. Management, according to Wiberg (1992), is to orientate an operation in the surrounding world. Leadership is personal and deliberate influence on co-workers to perform a work result. In this thesis leadership will be used in accordance with Kotter (1996) and Wiberg (1992).

Modern management concepts, such as TQM, are built to a great extent on co-worker involvement. One role of the management is to create conditions for facilitating involvement from all members of the organization in, for instance, decision-making processes, empowered work teams or through delegated authority.

Leadership is built on three foundations, according to Hughes et al. (2002). The leader must have somebody to lead. They talk about ‘followers’, meaning people subordinated to the leader. Furthermore, the situation gives the conditions for the leadership (see Figure 2.5). Examples of decisive factors for the situation are, for instance, the nature of the work tasks, the structure of the organization, such as formal and informal, the environmental conditions. The ability to exercise leadership depends very much on the individual leader’s character and traits (Hughes et al., 2002). The leadership-follower-situation framework proposed by Hughes et al. (2002) is used to illustrate the basis of leadership in Figure 2.5.
Kelley (1988) uses the term ‘effective followers’ for people, who manage themselves well, are committed to the organization’s purpose and principles, are courageous, honest and credible. He also describes the essential qualities of effective followers as very much the same qualities as those appreciated in leaders.

The potential to have an influence on other people can also be defined as ‘power’. Leadership power can be exercised and sorted in five different areas in the leader-follower-situation framework (Hughes et al., 2002) as illustrated in Figure 2.6:

- The leader can have influence from using the power of knowledge as an expert.
- The influence can also be exercised as referent power from interpersonal ties with followers as role model, from admiration, respect and trust.
- The legitimate power depends on the person’s role in the organization.
- The reward power to distribute, for instance, raises, bonuses, promotions, and to select people to assignments and recognitions.
- The coercive power involves the potential to influence others through negative sanctions or in other words to control others through fear of punishment or loss of valued outcomes.
2.8 Standardization

Standardization is formalization and specification of routines and is advocated in TQM according to Hackman & Wageman (1995); Eklund, (1997); Deming (1986), to reduce variability. Another reason for standardization is quality assurance through process control advocated by, for instance, Ishikawa (1985). In addition to this, Imai (1997) claims that standardization and discipline also are necessary conditions for innovation and improvements, and therefore a platform for learning processes.

On the other hand, too much standardization and formalization in routines may be an obstacle to learning, if they are too narrow and do not leave enough scope for learning. Critics like Hackman & Wageman (1995) and Eklund (1997) argue that overspecification may lead to bureaucratization, loss of motivation and employee autonomy. This might be illustrated by the earlier version of ISO 9000 from 1994, which got criticism for creating too much bureaucracy; see Bergman & Klefsjö (2003). Cassidy (1996) even claims that many organizations have abandoned TQM because of rumours of “bureaucracy and over-focusing on process, cultural mismatch, and financial pressures”.

Figure 2.6. The figure illustrates the leader’s power set in the leader-follower-situation framework. From Hughes et al. (2002).
2.9 Learning

Employee development is defined as a methodology in TQM by Hellsten & Klefsjö (2000). Employee training, continuous improvements and innovation are also included among the most frequent factors addressed within TQM (Sila & Ebrahimpuor, 2002).

Learning is consequently a fundamental notion in TQM, as well as in most modern management concepts (Abrahamsson, 2004). According to Ellström (2001), opportunity for reflection, alternative thinking and questioning the established routines are necessary conditions for developing learning. He describes this as a ‘system in the shadows’, since it is often something that the management have not consciously created scope and conditions for. In addition to that, he also claims that higher demands for time rationalization (which usually is the purpose of organizational development) can also counteract innovation and learning.

Säljö (2000) argues that learning is a continuous process – the question is only what is learnt. He also strongly emphasizes the important influence on learning of the social context. Different situations can give different interpretations and different kinds of learning from the same information.

Communication is a key element in the learning theory, according to Säljö (2000), and we understand the world as it is mediated and from our own references. What and how we learn are controlled and supported by the people around us. Learning is a question of relation between the collective and the individuals. According to Säljö (2000), learning is based on interaction through people’s knowledge and skills and proceeds by internalization through appropriation to developed skills as mastery.

Marton & Booth (2000) advocate the importance of variation for learning. What is understood is how this varies from our paradigm; based on earlier references they call it “paradigm paralysis”. The ability to be creative is connected to the ability to break these paradigms and find new knowledge, deBono (1992). To do so we have to question the present and what we take for granted. This means to look first at what are the different parts and then how they interact.

A learning organization must be built on learning on the individual level. Senge (1990) describes a learning organization as “a system that is flexible and adjustable to incorporate, develop, transfer and practice knowledge”.
According to Senge (1990), leadership in learning organizations is much about being a designer to structure a system for future use, an administrator of the business and a teacher to stimulate and educate co-workers.

### 2.10 Quality in Working Life

Peters & Waterman (1982) stress the importance of workers’ autonomy in quality in working life. Schabracq & Cooper (2000) also suggest that investing in human potential may be the most profitable approach. Hammer & Champy (1994) also advocate the importance of growth and learning as rewarding for employees and increasing their experience of quality in working life. Womack et al. (1990) also add problem solving as an important aspect of any job.

But Docherty et al. (2002) argue that the development toward growing autonomy and flexibility is not free from problems. The disappearance of bureaucratic boundaries without creating structures, processes or resources to replace those, leaves people much to their own judgement. The importance of balance between work and private life is advocated by Docherty et al. (2002). Schabracq & Cooper (2000) claim that loss of control in everyday working life causes stress and that too many and too rapid changes can both provide foundations for ill health and lower productivity. The growing autonomy may lead to endless choices and possibilities causing stress. The increased intensity is named ‘the kiss of death’ or ‘the spice of life’ by Docherty et al. (2002).

Benders & van de Looij (1994) advocate four general characteristics to perceive quality in working life: work content, labour relations at the micro level, employment conditions, and work environment. They claim that the leadership style has an important impact on employees’ satisfaction.

Furthermore, Lewis et al. (2001) claim, related to the quality of working life, that, what they call ‘intrinsic rewards’ are key predictors of productivity, efficiency, absenteeism and turnover. They argue that the intrinsic rewards include traits such as: task content, skill level, autonomy and challenge. They further argue that important traits in an organization for obtaining quality of work life are: salary, benefits, supervisor style, communication and discretion. Dankbaar (1997) argues that quality in working life is the same side of the coin as socio-technical systems design.
As mentioned in Section 2.4, Pruijt (2000) is also critical of how foundations of employment is overlooked and can lead to discontent (subordination, asymmetry and employees are instrumental).

To enjoy working life, Csíkszentmihályi (2003) claims that it is essential that people find individual meaning. He further argues that conditions like clear aim, good feedback, balance between challenge and skill, sense of control and flexibility are key issues. He talks about ‘flow’ when there is a balance between challenge and ability, when the person’s total ability is needed to meet the challenge successfully. One important characteristic to reach flow is also the immediate feedback.

The content in the described issues of quality in working life is much in accordance with earlier discussed ‘soft’ aspects of the TQM philosophy; see Section 2.2.4. There is also a close connection to the theories of human motivation; see Section 2.6 and especially the theory of intrinsic factors formulated by Hertzberg (1969).
2.11 The Internal Partnership Model

Partnership is a common concept for cooperation in different situations, but not often concerning co-workers in organizations. Often partnership is used when referring to ownership or cooperation for creating mutually beneficial outcomes based on win-win situations between organizations.

The concept of the partnership is supported by Trickett (1991) to improve quality within an organization. He has identified three crucial design aspects for partnership: recognition of individuals’ needs; encouragement of people to communicate and work together; providing tools which extend people’s capacity for work.

However, partnership may also have drawbacks and has been questioned. One is that it can create misunderstandings since the definition is multitude. Lucio & Stuart (2002) advocate the partnership concept including employees, but warn about the loss of influence from the trade unions. Suff & Williams (2004) have identified four key ingredients of partnership: employee voice, job security, quality of working life, job satisfaction and trust. They found in their assessment of employee perception of partnership that trust designed to improve communication is a foundation, but mutuality is inadequate from the reality of the market relations and imbalance of power and is not likely to be obtained in practice. The partnership concept was questioned in their study, since it was viewed as a management device more than an attempt to build genuine mutuality.

The Internal Partnership Model (see, Harnesk, 2004) in this thesis is a result of a literature study in an effort to identify decisive factors for achieving increased co-worker commitment from a leadership perspective. The identified decisive factors from this study were: core values, personal motives, personal maturity, trust & equity. These four factors depend on communication in dialogue, as the fifth factor and bridge, in the Internal Partnership Model; see Figure 2.7. The factors identified in the Internal Partnership Model are briefly described below, except for core values, which were discussed in Section 2.2.2; 2.3.4 and 2.3.5. Personal motives are discussed in Section 2.6.

2.11.1 Personal Maturity

The term ‘personal maturity’ used in this thesis has not been explicitly found in the studied literature. It is developed from other authors’ views on similar concepts and more than 20 years of professional experience by the author of this thesis. Personal maturity in this thesis is based on the
maturity people achieve from life experiences that provide self-confidence from inner security without unnecessary self-assertion, personal authority, integrity, transparency and trust. The ability to establish honest relations from social competence, interpersonal skills, low prestige attitude and understanding of human behaviour, is recognized as associated to personal maturity.

In accordance with the discussion by, for instance, Hughes et al. (2002), personal maturity is recognized as to what extent leaders’ decisions are made on the basis of feelings or facts together with the ability to build relations with other people

Both leaders and co-workers are mutually dependent on each other, even if roles and the balance of influence are different. “Independent people, who do not have the maturity to think and act interdependently, may be good individual producers, but they won’t be good leaders or team players”, according to Covey (1992). To make synergy, people must combine talents and abilities and create something greater together (Covey, 1992).

Authority is often mixed up with being authoritarian, especially in decision-making processes. Hughes et al. (2002) discuss the importance of ethical and moral issues and state that leaders often face ethical dilemmas and that doing what is right often requires moral courage. Furthermore, leaders who do not honour truth themselves do not encourage other people to talk the truth. Ethical behaviour is, according to Hughes et al. (2002), connected to values discussed in Section 2.3.4 and 2.3.5.

2.11.2 Trust & Equity

In partnership it is important that mutual trust is established. Deming (1986) argues for the understanding of people by studying human behaviour theories like psychology. According to Park Dahlgaard (2002) “trust is a prerequisite for communication and dialogue, building people relationships, building competencies and for building a cooperative culture.” In the suggested Internal Partnership Model equity and trust between individuals is defined as a decisive factor for partnership.

According to McGregor (1960), the leaders’ assumptions about subordinates have a great influence on subordinates’ behaviour. People tend to act the way they are expected to. If leaders do not trust the co-workers, this will easily become a self-fulfilled prophecy. An organization with leaders who trust co-workers will, on the other hand, have responsible
and reliable co-workers. According to McGregor (1960) leaders must, by their behaviour, confirm that they trust people.

Furthermore, when people do not know what is expected of them, they will hesitate in order not to do anything wrong. A change often means going from something known to something unknown leading to a situation of uncertainty. Sometimes it also leads to a personal risk. Lack of trust may therefore be counterproductive in change processes, if people feel the situation is not comfortable; Argyris (2000).

Deming (1986) formulated, ‘Drive out the fear’ and means that people should also be allowed to make mistakes when improving their work. It is important to sort out all sources of hesitation in responsibilities and authority so that mutual expectations can be understood. Feelings of insecurity and hesitation will often not support people’s efforts to be creative. Argyris (2000) states this as: “Subordinates are often embarrassed to admit they are hesitant to take initiatives that they have been invited – and have agreed - to take. This puts them in a double bind. But if they expose them, they will be admitting that they are bypassing their earlier agreement and acting as if they were not doing so.”

For social reasons, people may not always express themselves honestly since they do not want to offend others or cause problems. According to Argyris (2000), people’s real intentions are often revealed anyway. He also argues that any form of ambiguity will create confusion and lead to lack of trust and lack of action, because people do not know what they are expected to do.

Deming (1986) and Ishikawa (1985), for example, advocate win-win thinking and equality, from mutual honesty and respect, to support good relations in the organization. In addition, leaders who have personal authority do not need to be authoritarian to maintain their position.

Democratic principles and equity are core issues of partnership without unnecessary hierarchical emphasis. Payne (2000) argues that “the gap between rewards paid to top managers and those paid to lower levels of employees has increased enormously in the last ten years”, and that this is inconsistent with the culture of colleagueship. Unnecessary hierarchical emphasis creating ‘we and them’ situations is not recognized as congruent with the views of good leadership in modern working life.
Invitation to participate in decisions without actual influence and disinformation are examples of pseudo-democracy; Hackman & Wageman (1995)

2.11.3 Communication in Dialogue
The word ‘communication’ has its origin in the Latin words ‘communicatio’, with the meaning ‘mutual interchange’, and ‘communis’ meaning ‘transformation of information’; Nationalencyclopedin (2004).

Bergman & Klefsjö (2003) have emphasized communication through dialogue between people as a key issue for the development of people and organisations. Core values have to be communicated as a first step in order to be part of the organization’s culture. Communication is also of vital importance when leaders try to understand and respond to co-workers’ personal motives. Trust & equity must also be mediated to have any meaning. Basic psychological theorists agree that people reflect their identity in the eyes of other people (see, for instance, Payne, 2000) and have a basic need to be confirmed, especially by people whose opinions are highly valued. Based on experience, people tend to present themselves and choose acting and appearance, as they want to be understood, not necessarily as we actually are understood. An honest communication is based on a feeling of security and it is hard to accomplish in a situation of lack of mutual trust.

Communication is a key element in the learning theory, according to Säljö (2000), and we understand the world as it is mediated and from our own references. All human communication is situated and dependent on the present context. Without communication nothing is learnt or developed. The learning is connected to the social cultural conditions. And further, the thinking and what is expressed by words is not the same, since thinking and doing are not from the contexts. The formulation in words is an oral picture and simplification of the thinking.

According to Säljö (2000), understanding is limited to people’s imagination based on earlier experience or knowledge. To understand, people tend to interpret selectively and look for things they know and recognize. Every individual has personal experiences that build the framework for interpretations of and how these experiences influence the perceptions and way of behaviour. Communication is a key condition for learning, according to Säljö (2000). In Säljös’ (2000) view it is no wonder that misunderstandings are so common.
The word communication is used here in another sense than information. Information is related to a one-way spreading of facts. Communication in this thesis advocates the use of dialogue in accordance with Bergman & Klefsjö, (2003) and Senge (1990). Dialogue has its origin in the Greek word ‘dialogos’ meaning ‘friendly exchange of opinions’, ‘inquest/analysis’ through conversation and was used by the ancient Greeks; Nationalencyclopedin (2004). Dialogue in this thesis concurs with the ancient Greeks meanings and advocates dialogue through open-minded and active listening trying to really understand the message and together come to mutual understanding. This is to avoid misunderstanding, which is a common source of conflicts.

Well-functioning communication depends on people and their abilities and interest in communication, but also on their ability for oral and written discussions and the technical support systems. As illustrated in the model (see Figure 2.7), communication in dialogue is identified as crucial for partnership as the bridge between leaders and co-workers to establish the other four factors included in the model. All decisive factors are considered as interdependent for successful partnership.
2.11.4 A Visual Picture of the Model

The identified decisive factors in The Internal Partnership Model: ‘core values’, ‘personal motives’, ‘personal maturity’, ‘trust & equity’, and ‘communication’, and their connection, are illustrated in Figure 2.7.

The ability to communicate is recognized as a social skill, which is influenced by the personal maturity. As argued earlier, partnership is based on win-win situations, mutual trust, equity and interdependency. Since people have individual intrinsic motivators, these should be communicated to be coordinated with the organisation’s core values, vision and mission. It is the responsibility of the leaders to build the infrastructure and framework, for the necessary communication in dialogue is the bridge to achieving co-worker commitment and successful internal partnership.

![Diagram of Internal Partnership Model]

*Figure 2.7. The Internal Partnership Model illustrates how a number of decisive factors for partnership depend on a communication in dialogue between leaders and co-workers. From Harnesk (2004).*
3 Research methodology

In this chapter an overview of some different research methodologies is presented. The chosen research methodologies are also described and motivated.

3.1 Epistemological perspectives

The experiences of an author influence the choice of approaches in different decisions during the research process, according to Denzin & Lincon (2000). Therefore, a short description of the background of the author of this thesis will initiate this chapter.

With a Bachelor degree in Social Sciences as theoretical background, human related problems have been on the agenda in different fields for about 15 years; as a social worker, counsellor, head of social welfare office and refugee office. The work as counsellor was often complemented with teaching assignments in upper secondary schools.

The time as a social worker became more and more frustrating and the impression of working at the wrong end of problems grew stronger. Finally, a new career as consultant with an approach to supporting leaders in human related issues began. Over the years, the experiences from other supervisors and exercised leadership seemed to swing from bad to worse and the question of why people behave and act the way they do was recurrent. The basic knowledge of human behaviour seemed to be absent among most leaders. In some way, there must be a better leadership to be exercised.

A period of studying the subject of leadership started and a draft for a book was written. The book project changed to working as a hired consultant and the leadership studies gave substance to a booklet about partnership to support organizing developing and change work (Sjöberg & Harnesk, 1998), and other consultant assignments. In the year 2000 the experiences opened a new career as a teacher and research student at Luleå University of Technology. The genuine interest in human behaviour accompanied both the teaching assignments and the different studies of leadership as a topic. There was also a recurrent interest from students and colleagues whenever the subject of human behaviour came up. This further motivated continuing efforts to increase the knowledge of human
behaviour and pass this further on to interested students as future leaders and to practitioners through published articles.

### 3.2 Research Approach and Methodological Perspectives

#### 3.2.1 Research Purposes

According to Zikmund (2000), research may be classified on the basis of its purpose. Historically, there are three major purposes of research: to explore, describe or explain the phenomenon of interest; Marshall & Rossman, (1999).

Marshall & Rossman (1999) state that exploratory and descriptive studies try to create descriptions of complex situations that are unexplored in the literature. Zikmund (2000) states that explorative studies are performed in order to clarify the nature of vague problems. Furthermore, Zikmund (2000) argues that descriptive studies are based on some previous understanding of the nature of the research problem and try to describe some characteristics of a phenomenon or population. Explanatory studies try to show relationships between events and the meaning these events have (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). According to Yin (1994), the explanation of a phenomenon is made through the stipulation of a set of causal links.

#### 3.2.2 Induction, Deduction and Abduction

Discussions of methodological choices often differentiate between induction and deduction. The two approaches are illustrated in Figure 3.1.

According to Molander (1983), induction is a generation of a general conclusion from a specific case. Induction can also be described as going from empirical findings to theoretical explanations. Wiedersheim-Paul & Eriksson (1992) explain induction as follows: “from separate phenomena in reality we derive general statements”. One weakness with inductive reasoning is the limited number of empirical data used as construction for theory and model building.

Deduction deals with the explanation of a specific case from a general rule and goes from a theoretical assumption through empirical studies to an interpretation of reality. Wiedersheim-Paul & Eriksson (1992) think that “from theory we form hypotheses, which are testable statements about reality. Through logical conclusions we derive the result”. One
weakness in deductive reasoning is that the approach establishes the rule, instead of explaining it; see Molander (1988).

According to Alvesson & Sköldberg (1994), in many cases neither deduction nor induction is used as research methodology, but instead more of a combination of the two. This combination is often called abduction. Abduction departs from empirical facts, just like induction, but does not dismiss a conceptual theoretical framework and is closer to deduction. Abduction is, for instance, applied in medicine in order to make diagnoses (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 1994).

![Diagram of Inductive and Deductive Reasoning](From Wiedersheim-Paul & Eriksson, 1992).

### 3.2.3 Qualitative or Quantitative Approach

Information that is conveyed by words is called ‘qualitative’, while information that is conveyed by numbers is called ‘quantitative’ (Merriam, 1988). Quantitative research emphasizes the measurement and analyses causal relationships between variables, not a deeper understanding of processes (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). In qualitative research one is interested in the meaning and understanding of the studied process (Merriam, 1988).

According to Miles & Huberman (1994), a qualitative approach is useful for exploring, describing and explaining phenomena with questions like ‘what characterizes…?’, ‘how are … described?’ and ‘what is causing …?’ Miles & Huberman (1994) further claim that a key feature of qualitative sampling is that the researcher usually works with small samples of people in their context and the study is made more in depth.
A quantitative approach is suitable for identifying patterns and causal connections through quantifying and comparing different categories of phenomena by answering questions like: ‘how many?’, ‘how much?’ or ‘to what extent?’ The results can be expressed in numbers and are suitable for statistical methods (Bjered et al., 1999).

The main purpose of this thesis is to increase the knowledge of leadership by describing and discussing the content of successful methodologies, decisive factors for internal relations and examples of possible leadership difficulties. From this perspective a qualitative approach was chosen as more appropriate for explaining and discussing causes and content, rather than a quantitative perspective for identifying patterns or answering questions based on numbers.

3.2.4 Chosen Strategies
This thesis has a qualitative approach answering descriptive and explaining questions. It includes both an inductive and a deductive approach.

A deductive approach was used for Research Question 1. To identify important factors in the relation between leaders and co-workers a literature study was chosen. Literature study is a form of archival study that is suitable for answering research questions including ‘who’, ‘which’, ‘where’, ‘how many’, or ‘how much’, see Yin (1994).

To answer Research Question 2, an inductive approach was used based on a multiple case study focusing on methodologies used by the studied organizations.

To answer Research Question 3 an inductive approach based on a literature study was chosen for the same reasons as for Research Question 1. The focus was on identifying contradictions between a TQM leadership and the modern working life and from the theory discussing how these can be handled by leaders.

The strategies used for the three research questions are further discussed below. We start with Research Questions 1 and 3 and then turn to Research Question 2.

3.2.5 Literature Study
Yin (1994) advocates literature reviews on a topic to determine questions that are most significant and for exploratory research questions focusing
on ‘what’ questions and developing hypotheses and propositions for further inquiry. The choice of a literature study is also supported by Yin (1994) when an explorative approach is needed.

In accordance with the arguments given by Yin (1994), a literature study approach was selected as an appropriate research strategy in order to answer the first and third research questions.

- Which factors are decisive factors for achieving increased co-worker commitment from a leadership perspective?
- Are there oppositions between a leadership based on TQM and modern working life?

The first literature study started with reviewing basic literature by authors discussing motivation. From their discussion new topics came up like, for instance, human needs by Maslow (1943) and Kondo (1991), system thinking by Senge (1990), individuals personal mindset discussed, for instance, by Covey (1992) and general human relation issues, discussed by, for instance, Hertzberg (1969) and Hackman & Oldham (1976). By studying these and other different topics new angles and issues came up causing new questions to be discussed with supervisors and colleagues leading to new literature and authors. Partnership, internal customers and employees, in different combinations, were later on used as keywords in searching for articles and publications. The main purpose of the literature study was to explore how different authors discuss the relation between leaders and co-workers and from that to identify decisive factors. The literature study was motivated by a need for an orientation and overview. Alternative research strategies like, for instance, a case study would not be possible to cover and provide the same overview of the field.

The second literature study started almost in the same way as the first by reviewing literature by authors discussing leadership and TQM, obtained from discussions and brainstorming sessions with colleagues and supervisors. One purpose of this second literature study was to identify examples connected to leadership issues emanating from modern working life that could nourish a fruitful discussion of contemporary leadership issues related to TQM.

The selection of literature was in this second study further extended by also including different angles of the TQM concept in order to expand the discussion. For example, what one author considered vital for implementing TQM was noticed and then how this was supported by arguments.
This was then discussed by referring to other authors discussing the same issue from another angle.

Much help was given to find authors by looking at references in the articles and books. By reviewing how different authors discussed and referred to other authors, different angles of an issue could be discussed by using identified contradictions. From that perspective in particular, three contradictions appeared in the literature study, although other problems were of course touched upon too. To support leaders, these contradictions were discussed from a theoretical perspective.

3.2.6 Case Study

A case study is used to study phenomena in their own context and can be either a single case or a multiple case study (Yin, 1994). A case study methodology is recommended by Yin (1994) in order to understand complex phenomena within their real-life contexts and when the boundaries between a phenomenon and its context are not evident. In general, a case study methodology is preferred when solving research questions including ‘how’ or ‘why’ (Yin, 1994).

The multiple-case study should be considered when different experiments are needed for comparison reasons. The difference of the two views between or in experiments is revealed by the different rationalities underlying the replication (experiment) as opposed to sampling (survey) logic. A single-case study may be appropriate when studying extreme or unique cases. Another rationale for using a single case study is when the case is revelatory, but has not been accessible for scientific investigation and a new opportunity is given to a single case study.

Single-case and multiple-case studies can both be designed as either holistic or embedded design depending on whether different units of data are used within the study. Further, a theoretical frame as guidance is recommended to navigate in the flood of information and impression from case studies (Yin, 1994). A cross-case analysis of studied cases is recommended by Miles & Huberman (1994) to broaden the explanation when answering research questions.

In this study a multiple-case study was chosen as the strategy for answering research question two.
• What methodologies can be identified from successful organizations to achieve sustainable health?

The evidence from multiple-case studies is considered more compelling and therefore more robust than single-case studies (Herriot & Firestone, 1983). Since the case study performed in this thesis used different units (tree diagrams, interviews, observations and literature studies of documents) for data collection within the organizations, the study design is a multiple-case embedded study (Yin, 1994). The multiple-case embedded approach was used to increase the total knowledge by using the different units for data collection. This also provides an opportunity for triangulation by comparing information from different sources from the same case.

Any use of multiple-case study design should follow replication logic and the use of a few cases, two or three, would be literal replications, i.e. predicting similar results, according to Yin (1994). A selection of case study organizations with assumed similar results can, from this argument, provide comparison benefits.

The selection of the case study organizations was based on recognition as successful organizations and recipients of the Alecta Award in 2001. The Alecta Award comprises leadership, empowerment, work environment and profitability. In 2001 two organizations, Fresh AB in Gemla and SÖS Emergency in Stockholm, got the award in their size categories. Accordingly, these organizations were chosen for the study. The organizations are described more in Chapter 4.

The two studied organizations differed in size and business field (public health service and traditional manufacturing business) and the selection was made for complementary and comparison reasons. The fact that they were both selected for the Alecta Award made it possible to compare the results and give a more exhaustive understanding in the end.

3.2.7 The Case Study Process

The case study was performed by a research team consisting of the author of this thesis and Karin Schön and Ingela Bäckström, both postgraduate students at the Division of Quality & Environmental Management.

The case study started with a document study of articles, study reports and internal documents, to obtain an overview of the organizations. Then a visit to each of the chosen organizations followed, first at Fresh AB in August 2002 and then at SÖS Emergency in January 2003. The main
The purpose of these visits was to present the project and utilize the project by building relations. Another purpose of the visits was to get an overview of the organizations and together with the documents studied build a foundation for the planning of the project.

The case study process is illustrated in Figure 3.2 and described in the following text. The process follows the improvement cycle ‘Plan-Do-Study-Act’ (Deming, 1986).

*Figure 3.2. The figure describes the case study process.*
The Tree Diagrams

The research team tried to identify a tool that would inspire creativity and be a support in structuring qualitative information. A couple of different data collection methods were discussed before brainstorming and tree diagram (see Mizuno, 1988, for description of tree diagrams) were chosen after a pilot study at the Division of Quality & Environmental Management at Luleå University of Technology in Sweden.

The tree diagram tool was considered a suitable tool for utilizing the synergy from interactive brainstorming sessions, first based on individual answers and then followed by a consensus process in which the common groups’ answers were formulated. The interactive process with brainstorming and tree diagram was chosen to help to give a holistic view and identify vital causes from a complex situation. The information needed was on a detailed level and probably embedded in complexity. It might also be considered too obvious in everyday work to be noticed.

The process of brainstorming and tree diagram production was carried out as follows:

1. All tree diagram participants first wrote on post-it notes separate answers to the question: ‘Why are you among the best workplaces in Sweden?’
2. All the different notes with suggestions were placed on a whiteboard to be seen by everybody.
3. From this point one of the tree diagram participants acted as a secretary, writing down suggestions from a consensus process on post-it notes and placed on the whiteboard.
4. The group then gave suggestions on how each of these individual suggestions answered the first question.
5. From that, the group in consensus wrote suggestions to the question ‘why’ on the previous answers.
6. The next step was once again for the group to answer: ‘what is causing this?’
7. Each step generated several suggestions referring to the previous suggestions and a picture like a tree grew in front of the group.
8. The procedure was repeated when the group answered the question: ‘how have you worked to achieve this?’
9. Each tree diagram session concluded with an evaluation of the answers at the lowest level in the tree, the most detailed methodologies, to find out which issues were considered most important by the group.
During the tree diagram process, one of the members of the research team had the role of observer. The observer also tried to follow up what the members of the group said, in order not to miss anything, and sat in the back of the room to observe and take notes of the process from the outside. This person interrupted the work only when a sidetrack started to take too much time, or to explain difficulties when working with the tree diagram. The other two members had the roles of facilitators during the process. The actual writing of the post-it notes was done by one of the group members from the organization. For more details, see Bäckström et al. (2004a; 2004b).

At Fresh AB one tree diagram made by a group with six co-workers took one day (8 hours) to produce. Because of the generous amount of time, the group created four levels in the tree, which resulted in a few very detailed methodologies at the lowest level of the tree.

At SÖS Emergency two different tree diagrams were produced since this organization was larger. Each group included four co-workers and the work took approximately three hours to conclude. With fewer people in the groups the discussions did not take as long as at Fresh AB.

The participants of the produced tree diagrams were selected on the grounds of availability and to cover as many departments as possible, and therefore the selection had to be made by the organizations themselves. At Fresh AB all departments/work groups were represented in an even mix of men and women. At SÖS Emergency a mix of nurses and staff nurses, all women, was represented. No men or other co-workers such as doctors or cleaners were represented at SÖS Emergency.

Interviews
The process of brainstorming and tree diagram production was complemented in each organization with a long interview with the leader, mentioned as the driving force, concluding the data collection in both the studied organizations.

The interviews with the two leaders ended with a separate tree diagram to have as complement and comparison with the co-workers’ tree diagrams. The process of creating these tree diagrams was the same as with the co-worker groups. To avoid bias in the interviews as much as possible, the member of the research team who was to perform the interviews avoided studying background material from the organizations in advance.
In the first leader interview, at Fresh AB, all three members of the research team participated. One was observer and responsible for recording the interview and one was responsible for the questioning. The third had the role of coordinator and sometimes intervened to complement some questions and to follow up other questions in order not to miss anything considered relevant. In the other interview at SÖS Emergency, only two members of the research team participated, which meant that none had the role of coordinator. Both interviews were taped and then written out. For details, see Bäckström et al. (2004a; 2004b).

3.2.8 The Case Analysis Process
Miles & Huberman (1994) argue that analysis of qualitative data consists of three activities: data reduction, data display, and conclusion. According to Merriam (1988), the analysis and data collection are made at the same time in qualitative research. The data collection in a case study with a qualitative approach is, however, limited to what the research is concentrated on, and without a continuous analysis and reduction of collected data, the results may turn out to be either what is already known or to be too extensive to be possible to analyse.

According to Yin (1994), there are two main strategies for the analysis of collected case study data. The first is to rely on theoretical propositions, and the second is to develop a proper case description. Both have propositions direct attention to something that should be examined within the scope of the study. Studies aiming to explore a topic do not have any specific propositions, but should still have some purpose, as well as criteria by which the exploration will be judged (Yin, 1994).

Merriam (1988) and Goetz & LeCompte (1984) suggest developing categories as a systematic analysis approach in case studies. This is described as an intuitive process but controlled by the case study purpose and focus. The structure of categories is based on finding themes and regularities and relations in the obtained information. Merriam (1988) and Goetz & LeCompte (1984) advocate that this process should be based on convergence and divergence thinking. Convergence is to decide what is connected to what and to what category and theme. Divergence is to fill out the categories with more information as soon as they are named. The named categories should be homogeneous and distinct to be possible to be separated from other categories.
This thesis has a qualitative and explorative approach and the main purpose is to contribute to a leadership that is adapted to modern work life and supports co-worker commitment and sustainable health. The focus of the case study was on methodologies that the two organizations themselves define as successful. All data collection was concentrated on exploring how the organizations have worked. One assumption was, however, that many of the methodologies were complex and part of every day routine and therefore not easy to identify by the participants. The criteria for successful methodologies were based on the judgement of the organizations themselves.

The theoretical framework used in the analysis was based on the Internal Partnership Model obtained as a result of Research Question 1, by Harnesk (2004), when the interview guideline was worked out, and during the analysis.

The analysis process started by gathering the three members of the research team in a workshop together with an external facilitator, who had no previous information about the two studied organizations. This was to have one person with no pre-understanding being as objective as possible.

The analysis process may be defined as development of categories, as described by Merriam (1988) and Goetz & LeCompte (1984) and was executed as follows:

1. The five decisive factors from the Internal Partnership Model were written as headlines on top of each note pad to simplify the structure of the collected data.
2. The analyses were first made separately with one organization at a time.
3. The collected data from the most highly valued methodologies from each tree diagram was selected from a consensus session under each decisive factor headline.
4. When all the collected data from the particular organization was analysed, a cross-case analysis was conducted by combining similar suggestions.
5. Methodologies that did not fit under any of the five decisive factors in the Internal Partnership Model were written on a separate notepad under a headline named ‘Other’.
6. Other specially mentioned methodologies from documents and the leader interview also complemented the list.
7. When all the suggestions from both organizations were structured and sorted under each related headline, a selection of methodolo-
gies considered possible for other organizations to adopt was made through a consensus procedure in the research team.

8. When this was done, the selected methodologies were again grouped, but now under four new headlines considered more appropriate than the previously used decisive factors. These were: ‘General Attitudes’, ‘Leadership Attitudes’, ‘Methodologies’ and ‘Organizational Structure’.

9. The identified methodologies considered adaptable for other organizations were analysed and gathered in a common list.

10. The work of documentation and perusal of the workshop material followed directly after the workshop.

The case study process is illustrated in Figure 3.2. The tree diagrams obtained in the two organizations and in the different analysis steps constitute together a rather comprehensive material. The author has therefore not included that material in this thesis. All this material, together with the interviews, is documented in Bäckström et al. (2004a; 2004b).

3.3 Validity, Reliability and Generalizability

3.3.1 Validity
Validity in qualitative studies has to do with description and explanation, and whether or not a given explanation fits a given description (Janesick, 1994). Wiedersheim-Paul & Eriksson (1992) argue that validity is based on an instrument’s ability to measure what is supposed to be measured. Can the different data collection units provide a correct picture using the chosen data collecting tools and analysis method? In other words, has the researcher done what he or she was supposed to do from the statements made? To increase validity the researcher can, for instance, triangulate data, and check that the presented data is linked to the emerging theory.

Case Study
Validity in this case study is a question of whether or not the chosen measurement methods reflect the true description of the two case study organizations’ methodologies. The tree diagram participants were selected by the organizations themselves on the basis of availability and the criteria of being as varied as possible and covering as many departments as possible. A more random form of sampling might have been preferred but was, however, not possible to carry out. On the other hand, there are no indications at all that the persons were chosen with any form of bias.
At SÖS Emergency two different tree diagrams were used because of the larger size of the organization. In that way many departments got an opportunity to participate. One may, of course, speculate whether different compositions of people in the three tree diagrams produced could have led to different results. However, experiences from different brainstorming and consensus sessions support the view that if the groups are put together with sufficient variation the results of the groups will be quite similar; Klefsjö (2004). The results of the other tree diagram at SÖS Emergency together with the interview and studied documents were largely presented the same picture.

To create a positive attitude and motivation for the brainstorming and tree diagram process, all the data collections were preceded by a study visit, explaining the purpose of the study and how the tree diagram sessions should be executed. The point of time for the data collection in the organization with tree diagram and interviews was chosen by the organizations themselves in order to further support a positive attitude.

When the tree diagrams had been produced, the three different groups had an opportunity to reflect together on whether the results were correct. All groups were also encouraged to think about the tree diagram sessions and the results and complement the given picture afterwards. All participants also had the opportunity to read the documented results afterwards and correct any misunderstandings.

To ensure validity, the questions in the interviews with the leaders were open-ended, to give the respondents an opportunity to freely describe in their own words their views of the methodologies used. The interviews were written out afterwards and an opportunity for correction and complementation was given to the interviewees. The interview questions were also tested in advance to avoid incorrect formulations and misunderstandings. A pilot tree diagram session was also executed in advance, testing its utility as a data-collecting tool.

**Literature Studies**

The first literature study was made to identify decisive factors for how to achieve increased commitment from co-workers. The study was conducted on the basis of a literature study. One weakness of this study may be the selection of authors. Many relevant views from other authors may have been considered. The partly subjective selection of authors and arguments may be another weakness of this study.
One weakness of the second study could be the selection of authors, as well as in the first literature study. Another weakness might also be the selection of discussed issues. The selected issues are examples of leadership difficulties and were selected since they were apparent from the literature and considered possible to have an argumentative discussion about. There may be other relevant issues to discuss.

In the literature studies only English and Swedish publications were analysed. A great deal of relevant literature published in other languages was left out. The author’s position at The Division of Quality and Environmental Management may have influenced the selection of publications and other approaches. The set of articles and literature does not include all texts about the chosen issue. But the selection is considered a satisfactory representation of authors discussing the studied issues.

To secure the validity of the literature studies, the author has tried to write the thesis in a clear and honest manner, and the selected authors’ views are described as correctly as possible, in order for the readers to make their own judgement of the presented arguments. The author’s background has been described to give an epistemological perspective. The findings from the literature studies have been discussed with colleagues and supervisors in an effort to reduce the author’s bias. However, many of the findings from the first literature studies have been confirmed by the case study and the second literature study, which should contribute positively to the validity of the literature studies.

3.3.2 Reliability

The goal of reliability is to minimize errors and biases in a study. This means that another investigator should be able to carry out the same study, following the same procedures, making the same findings and drawing similar conclusions (Yin 1994). Wiedersheim-Paul & Eriksson (1992) and Miles & Huberman (1994) discuss reliability and argue for keeping the process of the study stable over time and not being dependent on the researchers or methods used. Miles & Huberman (1994) advocate taking actions to increase the reliability of a qualitative case study, such as clarifying the research questions and designing the study in congruence with them. They further recommend using triangulation, which means using several data sources and see if the findings are congruent.

Case Study

Are the results reliable in the studies in this thesis, that is, would other studies come to the same results? From an ontological and epistemologi-
cal view, this would not be possible to accomplish fully. Individual paradigms, perceptions and interpretations, together with other uncontrollable factors, would always in some way give different results. This includes both participants in the research team and the representatives of the organizations. The issue of the research team members’ unintentional influence and intervention on the results cannot be neglected. It is impossible to attain total objectivity in any research, according to Denzin & Lincoln (2000). However, a great deal of effort was made to design the case study in congruence with the research questions.

One might discuss whether the reliability was influenced by the fact that only female nurses participated and that no men and no other co-workers, such as doctors or cleaners, were represented at SÖS Emergency. However, there were no indications that the results reflected any specific category of co-workers.

This study has been carried out at the Division of Quality and Environmental Management, which has a strong focus on Total Quality Management. This has most certainly influenced the approach and unintentional decisions from the choice of literature and references to general pre-understandings. One way of handling these matters is to describe the work processes and explain as much as possible of the intentions, and leave to the reader to judge from the reported documentation in reports and presented information from the study. A triangulation of the different sources, interviews, tree diagrams, observations and document studies was used to minimize bias.

Other data collection methods might probably come to different results, but not necessarily closer to a more correct picture of the methodology used by the organizations.

**Literature Studies**
To secure the reliability of the literature studies, a list of references is appended to this thesis for other investigators to follow up. The references to other authors are also made as correctly as possible. The sort of triangulation made through two separate literature studies and a case study supporting each other’s results should contribute positively to the reliability of the literature studies.
3.3.3 Generalizability

Generalizability means the extent to which the researcher can draw wider conclusions on the basis of the results of the conducted studies, see Mason (1996).

Case Study

The generalizability of the case study means, in other words, whether the results can be applicable, not only to the studied organizations but relevant to other organizations as well. This is provided that the cases are thoroughly and correctly described.

Many of the results of the case study can, according to the author, be generalized. The results defined as successful methodologies and used by the studied organizations are in most cases considered adaptable by other organizations. The main argument for this is that the methodologies are supported by the existing theory.

However, some characteristics must be seen as unique to the studied organizations, for example, when the personal characters of the leaders were mentioned by co-workers.

Literature Studies

The reviewed authors were consciously selected so as not to be specialised in any business field. The generalizability based on the reviewed authors in the literature studies may therefore be considered satisfactory.
4 Description of Case Study Organizations

In this chapter the organizations studied are described.

4.1 Fresh AB

Fresh AB develops, manufactures and markets ventilation products for indoor environments. The company was established in 1969 and has developed to become a market leader in Sweden. The company is located in a small village called Gemla in the south of Sweden, not far from the town of Växjö. The customers are wholesalers and retailers all over the world. In 2002, Fresh AB had 54 employees. The company is to 95 % privately owned and the remaining 5 % is owned by an employee foundation. Fresh AB has deliberately worked to have an equal mix of men and women and both young and older employees. More than 20% are disabled in some way. Fresh AB is a multitude organization with 15 people from seven countries represented. The average age is 40 years.

The areas surrounding the company are beautiful with a small river running near the factory and with an open landscape around it. Also, much work has been done to turn the redesigned mill building into a modern factory, with a personal interior design. According to the co-workers, they have been very much involved in the development of the physical working environment at Fresh AB.

Picture 4.1. Exterior picture from Fresh AB.

In 1990 the present owner bought the company. The decreasing market nearly caused a bankruptcy in 1993 and in 1994 a new executive manager
was appointed. The new manager’s assignment was to make the company profitable in two years. Since 1995 the turnover has increased by an average of 22 % per year.

All co-workers at Fresh AB are organized in customer teams. The teams are divided into customer-controlled teams, internal customer-controlled teams and leader teams. At the time of the study (during spring 2003) two persons also worked as executive managers. The leader teams and the executive management support and coach the other teams when they need help with major problems, see Picture 4.2.

![Picture 4.2. Co-workers discussing with management.](image)

All teams have full responsibility for all activities from order to delivery and invoicing to customers. The members are together responsible towards their customers with no hierarchical levels.

Every co-workers is also a member of a cross-functional development group. There are about ten development groups in different areas, for example comfort for the co-workers and quality improvements. Every group has at least one member from every team. They have their own budget and a responsibility for reaching predetermined targets. The co-workers can choose a development group on the basis of interest.

In a document called ‘Sjökortet’ (‘the Marine Chart’) Fresh AB has compiled vision, values, policy, and strategies; see Bäckström et al. (2004a). It is a compilation of five years of improvement work together with the co-workers and the theoretical parts for “how to navigate the ship in the
right direction”. The purpose of the Marine Chart is to give the co-workers guidance during their daily work.

Figure 4.1 describes the cornerstones of the organizational structure and culture of Fresh AB, which is designed to be as flexible as possible and built up of five areas; teams, development groups, co-worker conversations, communication/information, guided by the Marine Chart. Much effort is spent on getting an informal approach with open and easy-going communication.

Every co-worker has regular development conversations with someone in the management team twice a year. The regular developmental conversations are not limited in time. If necessary, they can be continued the next day. During this conversation the co-worker also discusses the salary from a specially designed salary system. Different accomplished activities and developed competences form new steps for the salary and are directly influenced by the co-worker.

Every Monday all the staff has a meeting where they exchange information about orders and team capacity. Together they plan the work of the week and help each other between the teams if necessary.

To achieve broader competence and flexibility, Fresh uses a program in which everybody performs other duties in the company. This also gives the co-workers a broader understanding of the other co-workers’ working situations. Five days every year they try another job than their own. The time, work and experience are also documented on individual co-worker cards.

Figure 4.1. The cornerstones of the organizational structure and culture at Fresh AB.
In the beginning of 1995 all co-workers participated in a training programme given by the employment service agency for new entrepreneurs. The purpose, on the part of the executive manager, was to give everyone a holistic view of the company’s conditions and in that way achieve better competence for supporting the development of Fresh AB.

For more details, see Bäckström et al. (2004b).

Table 4.1. Some Important Events in the History of Fresh AB

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The year of the activity</th>
<th>Activity at Fresh AB</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1969</td>
<td>AB Gemla Plast was established to make plastic components to order for the industry.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1975</td>
<td>Fresh AB starts developing its own products for ventilation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>Changes name to Fresh AB.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>New owner at Fresh AB.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>Decreasing market and Fresh AB nearly bankrupt.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>New manager starts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>All co-workers participate in a program for new entrepreneurs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>Cross-organizational development groups are established</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>Introduction of salary system based on all co-workers' involvement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>All co-workers have to participate in a &quot;start your own business&quot; course.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>All co-workers are organized in customer teams, two internal teams and two leader teams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Fresh AB receives the Alecta Award “Sambandet” for their work with work environment issues.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Fresh receives the “Veckans affärer” (a national business magazine in Sweden) Award as &quot;Best workplace in Sweden&quot; among nearly 70 competing organizations.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.2 The Department of Emergency and Accidents at South Stockholm General Hospital

The South Stockholm General Hospital (‘Södersjukhuset’) has been a corporation since the January 1 2002. The owner is the Stockholm County Council. For 2002 the turnover was 2.2 billion SEK (approximately 200 million Euros) for the whole hospital with 3600 employees (nurses 42%, staff nurses 22%, doctors 17%, administrators 7%, medical secretaries 6%, other personnel 6%).

Picture 4.3. Exterior picture from The South Stockholm General Hospital.

In the following text “SÖS” refers to the whole hospital and ‘SÖS Emergency’ refers to the Department of Emergency and Accidents (“Akutklinikken”), which was included in the case study.

SÖS Emergency provides emergency medical care to 600,000 inhabitants in the centre of Stockholm. Every day more than one million people visit the centre of Stockholm, who the department of emergency has responsibility for in case of emergency. SÖS Emergency is the largest department of its kind in northern Europe and receives some 50 high-priority ambulance cases every day. In 2002 there were 397 full-time employees at SÖS Emergency.
The organization at SÖS Emergency consists of one management group for the department, and four groups that are managed by one head nurse each. In the teams all members are at the same hierarchical level, except for the leader of the team. SÖS Emergency may be described as a flexible and flat organization with short tracks of decision-making and delegated authority. All co-workers also participate in cross-functional work groups dealing with proactive approaches and developing issues.

SÖS Emergency has deliberately chosen to have a multitude organization. They have, for instance, 14 different languages represented and compared to other departments at the hospital they have more male employees (about 20%).

The department uses a model for work time planning that allows the co-workers to make their own work schedules. The working spells have different values. For tough spells they get more “points”, which they can use to work fewer hours some other time. This system gives them full-time pay for part-time work.

SÖS Emergency has introduction programs for all new co-workers, in order to shorten the learning process and guarantee that all new co-workers receive the same information.
After every working spell they gather what they call ‘mirroring’, and discuss the events of the day. Especially traumatic events are debriefed in effort to help co-workers to cope. All co-workers participate, on an annual basis, in regular development conversations.

For more details, see Bäckström et al. (2004b).

Table 4.2. Some Important Activities in the History of SÖS Emergency.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The year of the activity</th>
<th>Activity at SÖS Emergency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>Nursing staff mutiny against management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>An organizational consultant is appointed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>New management chosen by the staff and a new organization is designed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>A new health manager is appointed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>Four head nurses are appointed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>Cross-functional development groups are introduced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>Introduction of a model for work time planning, in which co-workers make their own working schedules.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>SÖS Emergency receives the Alecta Award “Sambandet” for their work with work environment issues.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>The health manager is appointed as the Director of the year by the magazine “Chef “(The Director Magazine) after proposal from the co-workers.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.2.1 Days of Sick Leave

One common way of measuring health is to look at the average days of sick leave in an organization. Figure 4.2 shows how this number has varied over time for the two organizations. For comparison, an average number for Sweden as a whole is also included.

![Average Days of Sick Leave](image)

*Figure 4.2. Average days of absence because of sickness per person at Fresh AB (Case A) and SÖS Emergency (Case B), and also a mean value for Sweden as a whole.*

As the diagram shows, the average days of sick leave at Fresh AB and SÖS Emergency are lower than the average number for all organizations in Sweden. In 2002 the difference between the case study organizations and the mean value in Sweden is about 5 days/person; i.e. the sick leaves at the studied organizations are about 25% lower than the mean value in Sweden. At Fresh AB there were at that time a few co-workers that had to stay home for a number of days because of accidents not related to their work situation. Because of the size of the organization, these particular incidences had a big and misguiding influence on the average number of days absent. At SÖS Emergency the information about sickness absence was not available for the years 1998 and 1999.
5 Summary of Appended Papers

In this chapter a short summary is given of the three papers appended to the thesis. A more comprehensive description may be found in the full papers.

5.1 Paper 1

5.1.1 Background
Partnership has been successfully used as a concept for win-win situations when discussing organizations, but partnership within organizations, through their leaders, to create win-win situations with co-workers seems to be a somewhat disregarded area.

5.1.2 Purpose
The purpose of this paper is to discuss what creates true commitment and clarify and discuss the content of partnership as a suggested concept for increased commitment of co-workers. The paper focuses on decisive factors for establishing successful partnership emphasizing the interaction with co-workers.

5.1.3 Method
The study is based on a literature study.

5.1.4 Main Results
The study resulted in the Internal Partnership Model (see Figure 5.1) based on the four decisive factors for partnership: core values, personal maturity, personal motives, trust & equity, with the fifth factor, communication in dialogue, as the bridge between leaders and co-workers.

‘Core values’ refers to principles that members of the organizations agree upon as guidelines for attitude and priorities. To have an impact, it is important that the core values are in harmony with the individual’s personal intrinsic motivation and that the leader confirms the agreement in action as a role model.

‘Personal maturity’ is based on the maturity people attain from life experiences that mediate moral courage, trust and interpersonal competence. Personal maturity is also about understanding human behaviour and abil-
ity to be an interdependent team player.

‘Personal Motives’ is based on theories about intrinsic factors for motivation. Based on personal experiences, every individual has personal desires and priorities acting as drivers for action. Important factors for motivation are, for instance, to what extent the work is meaningful, and gives responsibility and knowledge of results.

‘Trust & Equity’ means that mutual trust and respect is essential for a successful honest relation between leaders and co-workers. Ability to build relations, credibility and trust is crucial for all leadership. Equity means that unnecessary hierarchical emphasis creating ‘we and them’ situations is not congruent good leadership in modern working life.

‘Communication in dialogue’ is the bridge between leaders and co-workers and defined as a key factor for partnership. Without communication, core values cannot be deployed, personal maturity has no meaning, personal motives cannot be combined with the organisation’s vision and mission, and trust & equity cannot be mediated. All decisive factors are interdependent for successful partnership.

Figure 5.1. The model shows the Internal Partnership Model based on four decisive factors for partnership, which are dependent on the fifth factor as a bridge, communication in dialogue between leaders and co-workers. From Harnesk (2004).
5.2 Paper 2

5.2.1 Background
New demands in modern working life call for adjusted leadership leaving the traditional supervising role, for more supportive approaches in order to create co-worker commitment. At the same time this might result in a higher press and workload for the co-workers, and may be a reason for the high incidence of sick leaves in some countries. The costs connected to these rapidly increasing sick leaves have risen to alarming levels in a number of countries. On the other hand, there are organizations that have succeeded in creating a strong commitment, good financial results and low sick leaves.

The connection between psychologically unsatisfactory working environment and high frequency of sickness is well documented; The Swedish Labour Inspectorate (2000) and Dolbier et al. (2001). The connection between participation and satisfaction is also well described in the literature; Kondo (1991), Kondo & Park Dahlgaard (1994), Hackman & Oldham (1976) and McGregor (1960).

5.2.2 Purpose
The purpose of this paper was to investigate how successful organisations have worked and describe their most important methodologies. The intention was to identify methodologies that are possible for other organizations to adopt.

5.2.3 Method
A multi-case study was performed at Fresh AB in Gemla and SÖS Emergency in Stockholm, which both got the Alecta Award in 2001 for their leadership, internal partnership, work environment and profitability.

The data collection was mainly carried out through brainstorming in groups, and data structured using tree diagrams. Furthermore, interviews and tree diagram construction with the leaders of the organization were performed.

The data analysis was primarily based on grouping in categories (Merriam, 1988; Goetz & LeCompte, 1984) using the Internal Partnership Model, described in Paper 1.
5.2.4 Main Results

Some of the methodologies are unique to the studied organizations and may be difficult for others to adopt (see Figure 5.2). But most methodologies have been considered possible for other organizations to adopt in their efforts to achieve good working conditions resulting in fewer sick leaves.

The results of the case study are structured in four categories (see Figure 5.2) after a cross-case analysis based on all three tree diagrams and the two leader interviews with tree diagrams. The categories presented in Figure 5.2 contain suggestions considered adoptable by other organizations.

The ‘General Attitudes’ in Figure 5.2 are not specific to either co-workers or leaders, but general throughout the whole organization. The ‘Leadership Attitudes’ listed in Figure 5.2 are more closely connected to the way in which leaders behave and act. ‘Organizational Structure’ in is also based on leadership responsibility and organizational structure issues. ‘Methodologies’ is also connected to leadership responsibility and organizational strategies and way of working.

The main conclusions of this paper for managers and practitioners are to be more concerned about building close relations with co-workers, paying attention to the importance of communication in dialogue, mediating how each individual function is important for the performance of the system, observing and respecting that the organization has hired a person with pros and cons that wants to be proud of her/himself and maybe the most important issue – making an effort to establish trust in all directions. For more details see Figure 5.2 and Bäckström et al. (2004a; 2004b).
Figure 5.2. Results of the cross-case analysis based on the findings from the two organizations.
5.3 Paper 3

5.3.1 Background
Total Quality Management (TQM) has become an established management concept used by many organizations in both the private and the public sector to adapt to new market conditions with high demands for flexibility, quality and shorter lead times. Investigations show that a successful implementation of TQM is indeed rewarding, in the sense that the organization that achieve established quality awards have better financial results than those of comparable organizations; see, for instance, Eriksson & Hansson (2003); Hendricks & Singhal (1997).

On the other hand, the TQM concept has been questioned for failures in implementation and mixed results on quality, efficiency and working environment; see Hackman & Wageman (1995); Lau & Andersson (1998); Cao et al. (2000). Some explanations to that might be embedded tensions of incompatible approaches in the TQM concept and the need for a new leadership style better adapted to new demands in modern working life.

5.3.2 Purpose
The purpose of this paper is to describe three paradoxical issues of TQM and to initiate a discussion around the balancing and navigation that is required of leaders using the TQM concept.

5.3.3 Method
The research presented in this paper has primarily been based on a study of literature on leadership, TQM and the demands of working life.

5.3.4 Main Results
Through analysing the literature and discussing with colleagues, three interesting contradictions were found. These contradictions are:

- Collectivism versus individualism
- Standardization versus innovative learning
- Manipulation versus empowerment.

Collectivism versus individualism. The collective approach of TQM, such as using team-based organizations, stem from the Japanese tradition and was later adopted in the West. The adoption of this tradition may be seen as an obstacle in the perspective of the more individualistic Western
culture. Increased individualization due to, for instance, salaries and career development based on individual performance may have negative effects on teamwork and organizational learning.

**Standardization versus innovative learning.** The tradition of standardization and formalization of routines in TQM is a way of reducing variation and ensuring quality, but may be counterproductive to learning and innovation. Necessary prerequisites for learning are time and scope for reflection and alternative thinking, which may be a problem if the frames of routines are too narrow.

**Manipulation versus empowerment.** Empowerment is often used in TQM as a way of giving individuals autonomy and influence. A core value related to ‘everybody’s commitment’ or ‘empowerment’ is usually included in the TQM concept, something which should be generally appealing to most people. However, if there is a lack of a balance between responsibility and authority on one hand and, for instance, resources on the other, empowerment may also result in a higher total workload. Pseudo-participation in decision-making processes, for example, may be seen as an example of manipulative control actions from the management.
6 Conclusions and Discussion
In this chapter the most important results of the research are presented and compared to existing theory. The conclusions are summarized and discussed. The chapter ends with suggestions for future research.

6.1 Introduction
The main purpose of this thesis is to contribute to a leadership that is adapted to modern working life and supports co-worker commitment and sustainable health. This is formulated in three different research questions.

6.1.1 Research Question 1
Which factors are decisive factors for achieving increased co-worker commitment from a leadership perspective?

On the basis of a literature study this question is answered by the Internal Partnership Model is based on five decisive factors. The model is presented in Figure 5.1 and discussed in Section 2.11 and Paper 1.

The model rests on the four factors: core values, personal maturity, personal motives, and trust & equity, with the fifth factor, communication in dialogue, as the bridge between leaders and co-workers.

6.1.2 Research Question 2
What methodologies can be identified from successful organizations for achieving sustainable health?

The multiple case study based on the two organizations Fresh AB and SÖS Emergency resulted in a number of methodologies categorized under the four headlines briefly summarized below (see also Figure 5.2).

‘General Attitudes’ is a category containing issues that are everybody’s concern and not specifically related to the responsibility of either co-workers or leaders. Many suggestions here are also connected to each other. For example, it is important to have fun at work. To enjoy work, it is important to feel comfortable knowing that everybody talks directly to you, not behind your back. This means that an open atmosphere with no prestige or competition is required. Attention to everybody’s influence on the system through a holistic view is also noticed.
‘Leadership Attitudes’ is a category closely connected to leadership behaviour and attitudes. The importance of a supporting and coaching approach is described under this headline as, for instance, understanding of human prerequisites. Trust as an important leadership attitude is also noticed in comments on responsibility and authority through delegation.

‘Organizational Structure’ is more connected to leadership responsibility and concerns organizational matters like the flat and non-hierarchical organization. The importance of infrastructure for influence is also included here.

Many suggestions in the category ‘Methodologies’ are related to leadership influence and concern for co-workers through communication and relation-building activities. Issues related to trust and credibility are also included.

As a summary, the main suggestion to managers and practitioners is to be more concerned to build close relations with co-workers, pay attention to the importance of communication in dialogue, mediate how each individual function is important for the performance of the system, notify and respect that the organization has hired a person with pros and cons that wants to be proud of her/himself and maybe the most important issue – make an effort to establish trust in all directions.

6.1.3 Research Question 3

Are there oppositions between a leadership based on TQM and modern working life?

The literature study identified a number of embedded tensions when comparing a leadership based on TQM values to modern working life. In particular the following three contradictions, discussed in Paper 3, were identified:

- Collectivism versus individualism
- Standardization versus innovative learning
- Manipulation versus empowerment.

The trend in modern working life towards individualism in especially Western culture calls for a closer relation between leaders and co-workers and a supporting attitude from leaders, recognizing the individuals in the organization. But too much attention to individualism can also be counterproductive to the interest of the organization as a collective and over-
arching mission. Organizational learning, for instance, is based on shared knowledge of solidarity. Knowledge and information are then supposed to flow easily and fast in the organization. If knowledge and information are important for individual career and salary development, the solidarity may not work. A leader in modern working life has to be able to balance between both individual and collective needs.

The standardization and formalization of routines is an important part of the TQM philosophy in order to reduce variety and create support for quality assurance. Standardization gives support to discipline and order. But too much standardization can hamper motivation, learning and innovations. Learning is based on time and scope for reflection, alternative thinking and a dynamic environment. Leaders have to balance the frame for standardization to keep discipline and assure quality but also keep that frame wide enough to create possibilities for learning.

The advocated empowerment efforts in TQM, and most modern management concepts, can meet the new demands in modern working life for flexibility and quick response through flat organizations with reduced managerial control and autonomous co-workers. Most people find this development with increased influence, authority and responsibility appealing. But at the same time it may result in increased pressure from increased workload and responsibility causing stress and an unhealthy working environment.

The problem might be to establish a commitment within ethical boundary marks for individuals. To balance between empowerment and unethical manipulative actions requires leaders with trust and credibility through transparency and an open attitude. Leaders as role models may be of even more importance than before. The change of the traditional managerial control to a more supportive approach calls for supportive leaders that can control organizations through shared visions behind organizational core values. The ability to build structures for dialogue and to communicate is of vital importance for leaders in modern working life.

6.2 Results Compared to Theory

6.2.1 Total Quality Management
According to Hellsten & Klefsjö (2000), TQM is a management system consisting of values, methodologies and tools. In this thesis, the TQM approach has mostly focused on values and methodologies.
The discussion about values has especially focused on: Let Everybody be Committed and Top Management Commitment in the first literature study. The main purpose of this literature study was to identify decisive factors for achieving increased commitment of co-workers by focusing on the interactive relation between leaders and co-workers. This study was concentrated on human behaviour issues in accordance with the ‘soft’ side of TQM, advocated by Wilkinson (1999); Bergman & Klefsjö (2003) and from the review of Deming, Juran and Ishikawa by Hackman & Wagemans’ (1995).

The relation between leaders and co-workers based on communication discussed in the first literature study is supported by, for instance, Bergman & Klefsjö (2003). The identified decisive factors for partnership are also supported by the important issues for quality in working life discussed in Section 2.9.

The case study presented in Paper 2 focused on methodologies used by successful organizations. The results of this study verify the ideas of TQM theorists that leaders act as role models and that it is important to act in accordance with the mutually agreed principles. The leadership attitude that was revealed in this case study verifies the importance of a supportive and coaching leadership that is advocated by, for instance, Deming (1994) and Hellsten & Klefsjö (2000). This was, for instance, to increase everybody’s participation, also advocated by, for example, McGregor (1960); Hertzberg (1969), and Hackman & Oldham (1976). Both the studied organizations also had a special focus on customers (both internal and external) and quality improvement initiatives through different cross-functional groups. They also had a system view and holistic approach in accordance with the theories of Deming (1994) and Senge 1990).

Based on the second literature study three contradictions was discussed, as examples for leaders to balance between, using TQM as the perspective. TQM and other modern organizational concepts have been questioned for lack of adjustment to modern working life (Docherty et al., 2002; Furusten, 1999; Rövik, 2000). There are some embedded problems that may cause obstacles for leaders. The contradictions discussed are:

Collectivism versus individualism. The collective approach of especially TQM traditions is not certainly compatible with the trend of individualism. The trend of individualism, on the other hand, may be an obstacle to cooperation and teamwork (Lindgren, 1999; Fältholm, 1998; Harrington, 1998; McKenna & Beech, 2002).
Standardization versus innovative learning. Standardization is advocated in TQM (Deming, 1986; Crosby, 1996; Juran, 1989; Imai, 1997) to control variation and build platforms as quality assurance supporting the quality improvement initiatives. But too much formalization and too many routines are not necessarily in harmony with learning, since this requires scope for reflection and alternative thinking (Ellström, 2001). Another part of this contradiction is the data collection methods for fact-based decisions. The standardized methods such as questionnaires may not be as objective as expected and the validity can be questioned (Deming, 1986; Ellström 2000; Drucker, 1999; Taylor, 1998). Despite all good intentions, distorted decisions may be made.

Manipulation versus empowerment. The approach with, for instance, autonomy and empowerment may lead to increased commitment, but may also be seen as a way for the management to manipulate co-workers (Lindgren, 1999; Rasmussen, 1999; Dale, 1999; Svensson, 1997; Rövik, 2000). The increased responsibility and workload may not be balanced to the influence (McCabe et al., 1998). Hackman & Wageman (1995) too warn about pseudo-participation. There are also some foundations of employment discussed by Pruijt (2000) that are overlooked and may lead to discontent.

6.2.2 Core Values and Cultural Changes

An organizational culture is influenced by the surrounding society (MacCoby, 1983; Massay, 1979) and is a paradigm of values, beliefs and attitudes (McKenna & Beech, 2002). Schein (1985) also notes the informal organizational system’s influence on the culture. Most authors discussing cultural changes recognize the importance of people’s involvement and that leaders must be able to ‘walk the talk’ in cultural changes; Bruzelius & Skärvad (2000).

Hellsten & Klefsjö (2000) also advocate that the core values should constitute the TQM culture of an organization. Consequently, a change of a culture requires a change of values (see Section 2.3).

Core values are often used in the TQM literature and may be seen as emphasized statements of the organizations’ formal structure and official policy. The core value issue is discussed in Paper 1 is also focusing on the tacit and informal structure of the organization. Values in this sense are, according to Hughes et al. (2002) and Hofstede (1997) connected to the person’s ethical, ideological and moral views, as in religion and politics, and are a reflection of individual life experiences. These personal values are firmly established and are often hard to change (Hofstede, 1997).
The change of values advocated in TQM by, for instance, Dygert et al. (2000); Cao et al. (2000), and Hill (1991), may be questioned. For instance, Senge (1990) and Dale (1999) claim that change of personal values must come from inside people and must be respected. On the basis of their arguments, to intervene in personal value systems can be questioned from an ethical point of view as manipulative actions, which lend support to the discussion of manipulation versus empowerment in Paper 3.

Both organizations in the case study presented in Paper 2 have documented the mutual agreements on how management and staff are expected to act towards each other inside the organization and towards other outside the organization, in policy documents.

### 6.2.3 Employee Involvement

The ideas of employee involvement and commitment are discussed by many theorists like, for instance, Oakland (1989); McKenna & Beech, (2002); Wilkinson (1999) and Bergman & Klefsjö (2003); see Section 2.4. Employee involvement is considered essential in most modern management concepts including TQM. Theories about co-workers’ involvement and commitment formed the basis for the discussion of partnership in Paper 1. Bergman & Klefsjö (2003) argue that to achieve commitment it is important to make conditions for everybody’s active participation emphasizing communication in dialogue, delegation and education. The findings of the case study presented in Paper 2 are supported by; Bergman & Klefsjö (2003).

Both case study organizations gave examples of many implemented methodologies for employee participation, such as cross-functional groups, improvement teams and development groups. The win-win situation advocated by Deming (1986) is also well in line with the studied organizations.

The top-down approach of TQM in practice is, according to, for instance, Furusten (1996), not consistent with the TQM philosophy, and this is also in accordance with the paper by Hackman & Wageman’s (1995) reviewing the works of Deming, Juran and Ishikawa. This supports the partnership concept advocated in Paper 1 (see also Section 2.10). The dilemmas with employee involvement and leadership are discussed in Paper 3.

The importance of communication in dialogue, trust and human relation issues may be seen as the common theme in all three papers and is supported by theorists, especially in the TQM area. Examples are Bergman & Klefsjö (2003); Senge (1990) and Dale (1999).
Pruijt’s (2000) views of employment are often neglected obstacles to achieving quality in working life, and can help to understand why organizations fail to establish satisfactory working conditions for employees, causing stress and unhealthy working environments. The discussion about contradictions in Paper 3 is supported by the arguments from Pruijts (2000).

6.2.4 Human Behaviour and Motivation

The fundamental theories of human behaviour and motivation of, for instance, Hertzberg (1969); Hackman & Oldham (1976); McGregor (1960); Bergman & Klefsjö (2003); Maslow (1943) and Kondo (1991), have been used as theoretical framework in all three studies.

Human motivation theories have also been used to build a theoretical fundamental framework in the case study and verify the findings, such as the importance of human relations, communication in dialogue, trust, feedback, positive expectations, meaningfulness, use of competence, system and holistic perspective, balance between work and private life, intrinsic rewards like learning and growth, recognition, influence, responsibility and respect.

The public attention and recognition received by the studied organizations presented in Paper 2 are examples of the pride of the organization advocated by Deming (1986).

6.2.5 Leadership

Leadership has been most focused in Paper 1 and 3. Paper 2 focused on successful methodologies, but leadership style and attitude are, of course, the basis of the used successful methodologies (see also Section 2.7).

The ‘conditions’, advocated by Hughes et al. (2002) as the first foundation for leadership, support the discussion of methodologies in Paper 2 (see Figure 2.5). Both case study organizations put much effort into relation-building activities that provide good conditions both for leadership and for the methodologies used. Both studied organizations gave practical examples of the impact of individual ‘leaders’ character and traits’, mentioned by Hughes et al. (2002) as the second foundation for leadership. The co-workers expressed appreciation of their leaders for being visible, supportive, without false authority, understanding human prerequisites, mediating trust and seeing people as individuals. To see people as individuals also supports the discussion of the contradiction of collectivism versus individualism that co-workers do not want to be addressed as anonymous in a collective. The regular development conversation in the
case study is also a practical example of appreciated face-to-face meetings between co-workers and leaders.

The third foundation for leadership suggested by Hughes et al. (2002) is that ‘effective followers’ have much the same qualities appreciated by leaders, such as being courageous, honest and credible, see also Kelley (1988). Conditions for utilizing this may be through delegated authority and responsibility in empowered working teams, as advocated by most theorists on modern management and used in practice by the organizations in the case study.

The influence of leaders in the leaders-followers-situation framework discussed by Hughes et al. (2002), as ‘experts’, is also positively mentioned by the co-workers in the case study (see Figure 2.6) both as life experience and experience from the ‘shop floor’. The ‘referent power’ of interpersonal ties with followers, stated by leaders in Hughes et al. (2002), supports the discussion about leadership in all papers when discussing the importance of relation-building activities. The importance of taking the responsibility as model, mediating trust, and giving and receiving respect is also verified by the co-workers in the case study, as well as supporting the discussions in Paper 1 and 3 about trust and leaders as models. Trust is defined as a decisive factor for partnership in Paper 1 and is strongly supported by the findings of the case study in Paper 2. According to Hughes et al. (2002), the ‘legitimate power’ coming from leader’s organizational role of giving rewards, raises and selection of people to assignments was not mentioned in the case study.

The flat and empowered organizations found in the case study are supported by the TQM philosophy and rhetoric in, for instance, Deming (1986); Oakland, (1989); Wilkinson, (1999). However, these ways of anti-authoritarian leadership and non-hierarchical structures are not without complication in practice, as discussed in Paper 3. This is also discussed in Paper 1 in terms of ‘being authoritarian in lack of authority’.

The democratic principles discussed by Hackman & Wageman (1995) also support the idea that this is one of the core issues of partnership discussed in Paper 1. The ‘coercive power’ of negative sanctions and fear, stated by Hughes et al., (2002), were never mentioned in the case study in Paper 2. But this latent power of coercive influence supports the implication for the employment relation and situation discussed by Pruijt (2000) in Paper 3.
6.2.6 Learning

The theories of learning were especially discussed in the contradiction about standardization versus learning in Paper 3. The notion of sufficient time and scope for reflection, alternative thinking and questioning the established routines, as prerequisites for learning, is supported by Ellström (2001) and Deming (1994). According to Ellström (2001), the necessary conditions for learning are opportunity for reflection, alternative thinking and questioning the established routines. Standardization, which is advocated by Deming (1986); Crosby (1996); Juran (1989) and Imai (1997), in TQM concepts, may on this view be counterproductive, as discussed in Paper 3.

The theories of learning can also help to explain the difference of understanding between people based on different perspectives from different experiences, as discussed in Paper 1 and in Paper 2. According to Säljö (2000), the key element in learning is communication, which is dependent on the social context. Different situations can give different interpretations of the same information. Language is, according to Säljö (2000), a reduction of thinking. Thinking and what is expressed are not the same, since thinking and doing are not from the same context. Säljö (2000) thinks that language is not just a reflection of the outer world, but also a reflection of the inner world. This theory supports the discussion of communication and personal motives in Paper 1, as well as innovative learning discussed in Paper 3.

Marton & Booth (2000) claim that ‘paradigm paralysis’ from earlier experiences can build obstacles to new learning, and that the ability to be creative is connected to the ability to break these paradigms. Covey (1992) refers to the ‘central paradigm’ in addition to this issue and also supports the discussion of personal motives in Paper 1.

Senge (1990) and Docherty et al. (2002) advocate the demand for a flexible and adjustable system for incorporating, developing, transferring and practising knowledge to adjust to the new demands in modern working life. This is also in accordance with the discussion of innovative learning in Paper 3. People learning from each other through work rotation and cross-functional groups along with flat, flexible non-hierarchical organization, are also methodologies used by the organizations in the case study presented in Paper 2.
6.2.7 Quality in Working Life

The theories presented in Section 2.10 of quality in working life have been of direct relevance in all three papers. The content of quality in working life has confirmed the results of the findings in all three studies. The theory of human needs advanced by Maslow (1943) and Kondo (1991) may be seen as the basis for the theory of quality in working life. The theories of quality in working life are also connected to the theories about participation and satisfaction from intrinsic rewards, by, for instance, Bergman & Klefsjö (2003); Kondo (1991); Kondo & Park Dahlgaard (1994); Hackman & Oldham (1976); McGregor (1960).

Peters & Waterman (1982) advocate autonomy as important for quality in working life and this is in agreement with the results of the case study in Paper 2. The examples of empowered organizations in the case study also verify that problem-solving and personal challenges are important aspects of any job, as advocated by Womack et al. (1990), Docherty et al. (2002); Csíkszentmihályi (2003); Lewis et al. (2001); Benders & van de Looij (1994). This also supports the discussion of contradictions in Paper 3 by arguing for vital parts for quality in working life.

The discussion of decisive factors for partnership in Paper 1 is supported by the investment in human potential and individual growth advocated by Schabracq & Cooper (2000) and Hammer & Champy (1994). Individual meaning, feedback, clear aim, balance between challenge and skill, and control and flexibility are important for people when trying to find quality in working life, according to Csíkszentmihályi (2003). These factors are in accordance with the methodologies used by the organizations studied in Paper 2, and also support the discussion of the decisive factors in Paper 1. The importance of leadership style and relations on the micro level is advocated in particular by Benders & van de Looij (1994) and Lewis et al. (2001) and verifies the findings presented in all three papers.

The importance of communication in dialogue and trust for quality in working life is in accordance with the findings presented in all three papers. Balance between work and private life, as argued by Docherty et al. (2002), were factors for quality in working life appreciated by the co-workers in the case study.
6.3 Conclusions of the Thesis

6.3.1 Contribution to the Main Purpose of this Thesis

The main purpose of this thesis is to contribute to a leadership that is adapted to modern working life and supports co-worker commitment and sustainable health. The three conducted studies described in this thesis contribute to the main purpose from three different perspectives.

The first paper contributes to the main purpose of this thesis by providing suggestions on decisive factors for increased commitment through internal partnership as a concept. Another purpose of Paper 1 was to provide an overview of general influence issues on the relation between co-workers and leaders as a theoretical framework for the case study presented in Paper 2. The Internal Partnership Model was used both at the planning stage, and when analyzing the collected data.

The relevance of the Internal Partnership Model was also tested in comparison with the results of the case study. The results of the case study confirmed the Internal Partnership Model in general.

The case study presented in Paper 2 was conducted to identify the methodologies used that were considered adoptable by other organizations. The purpose of this case study was to lend support and practical suggestions to other organizations and their leaders, (see Section 6.3.2 below).

The last study, presented in Paper 3, was conducted to discuss leadership using TQM as perspective, to increase the knowledge and develop leadership. This paper discusses three different paradoxical issues in TQM that leaders might have to balance between when facing difficulties and dilemmas that they have to manage due to changing demands in modern working life.

6.3.2 Concluding Suggestions to Leaders

Based on the theories and the findings of the conducted studies presented in this thesis, the most important suggestion to leaders to consider is human needs in accordance with the theories of Maslow (1943) and Kondo (1991). The human needs are individual and constitute prerequisites for what people find motivating. What people find meaningful, or motivating, is regarded as another key issue to be addressed by leaders. The individual intrinsic motivators should be considered, in accordance with Hertzbergs’ (1969) theories.
• Use regular development conversations.

These face-to-face informal conversations in dialogue give the co-workers an opportunity to tell the leaders how they find their situation (both at work and privately), their learning ambitions, what responsibilities they would like to take on or not to take on. An organization consists of different individuals and one cannot take it for granted that all co-workers are equally interested in assuming increased responsibilities. Regular development conversations will also give the leaders an opportunity to give the co-worker a holistic view of the company and ensure that the individual co-worker is in a healthy situation.

• Introduce internal partnership with co-workers.

Delegate authority and use ‘management by walking around’ as support and building personal relations with co-workers. Also make a great deal of effort to get rid of ‘we and them’ situations. Focus on roles and responsibility, not on titles and privileges. One challenge for leaders is to deal with possible causes of employment discontent, as argued by Pruijt (2000), that employees are subordinated, and that the employee is more dependent on the employer than the employer is on a particular employee, and that the employee is a cost that can be reduced by redundancy. Internal Partnership could be a way of handling this situation.

• Recruit leaders with competence and provide support for them through education and personal counselling.

Few people have so extensive responsibilities and high demands for knowledge as many leaders have. In particular the requirements on interpersonal skill and personal maturity are high. Therefore, it is important to provide support for leaders both regarding personal knowledge and establishing, for instance, mentorship and networks.

• Plan for social building, health keeping activities and infrastructure for dialogue.

This means that resources, both time and money, must be available. Common social activities can also give leaders an insight into the informal organizational values. These values should be in accordance with the mutually agreed principles as formal core values, as well as in accordance with the tacit informal values of the organization. Suitable infrastructures for dialogue, besides regular development conversations, can be cross-functional teams for coordination and improvements, and meetings for
everybody of a more informal character like, for instance, breakfast at work.

Another very important issue to be addressed by leaders is trust including joy. This means trust by honesty and credibility from ethical and moral values and that the leader act as a role model and guideline for subordinates. Recognize what a leadership attitude is in actual practice.

- Be aware of what attitudes and behaviour the organizational system is rewarding.

The formal system can, for instance, be very different from the informal system rhetoric and actions should tally. Notice what matters receives most attentions. To give credibility to advocated behaviour the leaders must show the way in their own attitude and take an active part. Transparency and honesty are vital for trust.

“You can buy a person’s time, you can buy their physical presence, you can even buy their mental effort, but you cannot buy their loyalty, their trust, and their enthusiasm.” (Harrington, 1998)

Consequently trust is given to you if you are considered to deserve it.

- Provide conditions for learning through time and scope.

This also means to provide resources and not having too much bureaucracy and too many standard routines. Encourage alternative thinking and make sure that suggestions are treated seriously. Learning is observed as an intrinsic motivator based on Maslow’s (1943) theory of human needs and may also give enthusiasm.

### 6.4 Discussion

#### 6.4.1 Reflection Upon Results

In the beginning of this research process, the relation between leaders and co-workers focused on how to achieve increased commitment. As a result of the literature study, the Internal Partnership Model was created and presented. A retrospective reflection on the decisive factors for successful partnership is if they do not include all serious relations.

Leadership as a topic has a huge number of views and the navigation in the flood of knowledge. All this views are filtered by one’s own pre-
understanding and the understanding is limited to one’s own imagination, and much relevant information may have been left out.

The effort of this thesis is motivated by a genuine interest in supporting the development of a leadership adjusted to modern working that also results in sustainable health.

6.5 Future Research

A suggestion for future research is to make a follow-up study modifying the Internal Partnership Model that was created as an output of the first literature study. To increase the utility of the model it could be made more precise.

Another question that has been raised in these studies is: What happens if successful organizations have to change leaders? Is the implemented culture so well established that the culture would survive or would it be changed? Furthermore, to what extent is the success of an organization dependent on individual leaders? Maybe a characteristic of a successful organization is a culture independent of the individual leaders? Is it in accordance with the leaders’ interests to establish an organization where the leaders act as coaches in accordance with for example Deming’s (1994) philosophy and not put themselves up as prominent figures?

As argued earlier, one prerequisite for leadership is trust, which is recognized as one of the basic needs in Maslow’s (1943) theory. Another suggestion for a future research project is to study how trust is actually obtained by leaders in practice.

The results and findings of this thesis are not new in the management literature. This thesis is, in many perspectives, supporting earlier research. And an important question for future research is therefore; Why the findings and results of this thesis are not practiced to a larger extent?
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Partnership with Internal Customers – A Way to Achieve Increased Commitment.


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PARTNERSHIP WITH INTERNAL CUSTOMERS – A WAY TO ACHIEVE INCREASED COMMITMENT

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Abstract

An often-discussed issue in the TQM (Total Quality Management) philosophy is how to improve internal customer commitment. To find answers one must look at what the actual commitment is based on. Which decisive factors are contributing and how are they connected? People’s ability to perform and how they interact is to a large extent dependent on their social situation. As an employer one is not only employing just one part of a person but the whole person with personal, social and professional qualities. Many employers do follow “checklists” regarding how to deal with human resource issues, but they often do not really understand the content in the suggested questions of the checklist. Partnership is a way to handle expectations of each other’s performance. The suggested solution is to create a win-win-situation where the commitment of both employers and co-workers are supported.

This paper will include issues from social and behaviour sciences to enter deeper in the TQM philosophy and system thinking concerning co-workers’ commitment. The purpose is to try to stimulate the debate using internal partnership as one way to attain increased commitment of co-workers. A model will be used to view decisive factors for partnership all depending on communication. The content of decisive factors and how they are connected will be discussed. In this paper the term “partnership with internal customers” will be used to stress the necessary mutual agreement between employers and co-workers that are needed.

Introduction

The concept of partnership is a holistic view, usually based on system thinking, and has been adopted into modern management. Partnership can be used to find win-win situations with suppliers, external customers and other organisations. An often-discussed issue in TQM philosophy is how to stimulate co-worker commitment, but this is not usually described in a partnership context. Although the concept of partnership has been successfully used in many
other contexts, partnership between organisation and co-workers seems to be a somewhat disregarded area. A win-win situation is the base of partnership and should have the same relevance when including co-workers. A successful partnership should confirm the sense of unity and remove “we and them thinking”; this will also support a long-term perspective. Bergman & Klefsjö (2001) emphasize that TQM needs to clarify the importance of making all stakeholders of the organisation winners in the long run. The purpose of partnership is to change outside control of people by management into inside control by people themselves. The responsibility for the organisation’s performance would also be deployed to individuals.

Park Dahlgaard (2000) has presented a list, which contains ten identified core concepts that TQM must focus on. Among these ten listed core concepts, one focuses on “employees/teamwork/motivation/empowerment”, and another focuses on “building partnership between suppliers, customers and society”. It is interesting to notice that employees are not mentioned in the second core concept: building partnership. This could indicate a difference in importance to include partnership also with co-workers. It is common among TQM-authors to advocate everybody’s commitment and focus on co-workers, but the next natural step, which could be partnership, is rarely described. Therefore the content of partnership needs to be discussed and clarified.

A difference between commitment and partnership is that partnership is based on equity, responsibility and interdependency in mutual win-win situations. The definition of partnership used in this paper is: “partnership is a relation based on personal visions and desires which are combined to the organisation’s mission and vision”. To accomplish a partnership is a question of interpersonal activities based on human behaviour knowledge. Mutual trust is crucial in a partnership concept.

To find some answers about commitment, one must discuss what a true commitment is based on. In order to find commonalities between modern management theories and Eastern philosophies, Park Dahlgaard (2000) has studied three modern management theoreticians Deming (1982, 1986, 1993), Covey (1992) and Senge (1990) and three main Eastern philosophies Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism. She has found common and central concepts and has categorised them in three categories: system, people and knowledge. Mainly based on her study this paper suggests a number of decisive factors to support leaders in their interaction with co-workers. This paper discusses how these factors can be considered, to reach everybody’s commitment easier, using partnership. Decisive factors for partnership will be discussed, and a model will also be used to illustrate how these decisive factors are connected to obtain successful partnership. Five points have been identified as a common pattern and then used as decisive factors for partnership with co-workers: core values, personal maturity, personal motives, trust & equity and communication (see figure 1). The reformulation and extension of points, in this paper, from Park Dahlgaard (2000), is to
complement her study and emphasise the necessary interaction between organisation and co-workers to implement partnership. The purpose of this paper is to try to stimulate the debate using internal partnership as one way to attain increased commitment of co-workers.

Study approach

The choice of subject for this study is based on twenty years of dealing with human behaviour as a social worker, counsellor and consultant. The experiences have in many ways influenced the approach and angle of this paper. The discussion is however supported by modern management authors.

This study is mainly based on literature studies. Keywords used to search for articles and publications have been: partnership, internal customers and employees, in combination.

Decisive factors for partnership with co-workers

In this section the content of five decisive factors for partnership with co-workers will be discussed. The connection between these factors will also be discussed.

Core Values

Core values are an often-used term in TQM and are, according to Hellsten & Klefsjö (2000), a way to emphasize chosen statements (principals, dimensions, elements or cornerstones), that should work together to constitute the culture of the organisation, and that they accordingly are basic concepts.

The core values of an organisation are general agreements between parties on how to act, especially when standard routines are not applicable. When discussing core values it should be important to also include issues of ethical and moral questions. Core value and character building processes are based on human value issues like religion and ideology. The content of partnership is very much influenced by existing core values in the organisation. Senior leaders’ attitudes are of great importance for co-workers as a guideline. If the leaders are not confirming agreed core values in action it is not likely that anybody else will (Deming, 1986).

To have impact on everybody’s commitment core values must be well communicated, understood and accepted by all individuals. This will also be a way to neutralize counterproductive sub-cultures activities. If the organisation’s core values and vision are well deployed and internalised, they also must be combined with an individual’s personal intrinsic
motivation, so that partnership has a solid ground to build on.

Park Dahlgaard (1998) claims that: “We can say that core values are a precondition for trust, and is the precondition for building the necessary core competences into the organisation. An example of the relationship between competences, trust and core values is the policy deployment process.”….. “People are selfish and practise their own often bad values in order to achieve their individual visions and goals.”….. “… empire will collapse in the long run if these competences are not built on core values.”

A critical issue is that senior leaders begin to practise the core values they intuitively feel are important to their subordinates. Listening with respect to subordinates’ opinions is crucial in this process. If people feel they cannot have influence they probably will give up their effort to participate in the core value development process.

Personal maturity

Both leaders and co-workers are mutually dependent on each other in a symbiosis even if roles and balance of influence are different. “Independent people who do not have the maturity to think and act interdependently may be good individual producer, but they won’t be good leaders or team players”, see Covey (1992). To make synergy, people must combine talents and abilities and create something greater together (Covey, 1992). This statement is emphasising that personal maturity is an important factor in partnership.

Personal maturity, considering partnership, has a lot to do with interpersonal skills and ability to use your own capability, especially to establish honest relations based on equity. There is a well-known mistake to mix up authority with to be authoritarian, especially in decision-making processes. The mistake is probably more common among people with lack of personal maturity.

Experience tells us that not so wise decisions are made, when people are feeling uncomfortable or stressed. Personal maturity and integrity will affect to what extent decisions are made based on feelings or facts. Personal maturity is also well connected to people’s ability to build relations with other people.

Social competence and interpersonal skills are vital for supervisor. One of the 14 points by Deming (1986) is “Drive out the fear”. Fear makes people less secure and will affect their creativity. Security is a basic need, an unsatisfactory disturbance will call upon satisfaction and take effort away from other things less basic needs, like creativity; for more information about basic needs, see Maslow (1943). A relevant question in every change and situation of insecurity should be: “how will this affect me?” It is hardly realistic to think that people will
put much effort acting in matters of no interest for them, or even against their own interests. If people do not feel trust or have no personal motive to co-operate, partnership is hard to establish. Successful partnership is built on common ground and trust. The ability to mediate trust is basic in any leadership philosophy. Therefore personal maturity should be a considered criterion when recruiting leaders.

Personal motives

Hertzberg (1969) advocates that intrinsic factors such as emotional satisfactions are considered as motivators and extrinsic factors, such as monetary systems, are considered as hygiene factors. Establishing partnership starts with people’s personal motives. Deming (1993), Covey (1992) and Senge (1990) all agree that all transformation processes start with individuals as their first step, even if they use different terminology. People’s personal motives should therefore be considered. Bergman & Klefsjö (2001) have identified five important areas that significantly contributes to the development of both people and organisation’s:

- self-confidence
- ability to communicate in dialogue
- consciousness of objective
- ability to contribute
- learning from experience

One important cornerstone of personal mastery is the ability to focus on ultimate intrinsic desires, which are closely related to the purpose and the deep meaning of life (Senge, 1990). Covey (1992) refers to the “central paradigm” when arguing for the intrinsic drivers for action. Every individual has personal desires and priorities based on earlier experiences. Often we are not even aware of the paradigm or our personal core values. According to Hackman & Oldham (1976) other intrinsic motivators are: feeling of autonomy and meaningfulness connected to the outcome of one’s effort. Both Ishikawa (1985) and Deming (1986) advocate that social motivation is incentive provided by recognition from others.

An organisation consists of individuals and they are motivated by personal intrinsic, motives. To be able to combine personal motives to the organisation’s vision and core values, personal motives must be viewed. This is not only important to the organisation, but also to the individual himself or herself to be aware of. Successful partnership must be deeply rooted within individuals so that they can contribute and use their motivations and energy.
Trust & Equity

As earlier argued, trust is crucial for successful partnership. Equity is based on mutual respect and should make trust easier. According to Deming (1986), “Drive out the fear” means that people also should be allowed to make mistakes when improving their work. It is important to clear out all sources of hesitation in responsibilities and authority so that mutual expectations can be understood. Feelings of insecurity and hesitation will often not support people’s effort to be creative.

In the issue of hesitation, Argyris (2000) states: “Subordinates are often embarrassed to admit they are hesitant to take initiatives that they have been invited – and have agreed - to take. This put them in a double bind. But if they expose them, they will be admitting that they are bypassing their earlier agreement and acting as if they were not doing so.”

When people do not know what are expected of them they will hesitate in order not to do anything wrong. Changes often mean to go from something known to something unknown and can create a situation of uncertainty. Sometimes it also leads to a personal risk. Lack of trust will therefore be contra productive in partnerships if people feel the situation is not comfortable.

People also tend to act the way they are expected to. If leaders do not trust the co-workers it will easily become a self-fulfilled prophecy; the co-workers will act as they are expected to. One example of this is McGregor’s X and Y theory, describing how a leader’s presumptions have influence on subordinate’s behaviour; see McGregor’s (1960).

The ability to build relations, credibility and trust is often crucial for all leadership. In behaviour leaders must confirm they trust people. The core values of human ethics will be shown in behaviour of the leaders. The behaviour of leaders is very much influencing the organisation’s culture. Any incongruence between actual and agreed core values will be shown in the organisational culture and performance in attitude.

Mutual honesty and respect is the basis for good relations between people, and “we and them thinking” must not be nourished. The imbalance between influence and authority may be an obstacle, but can be handled by leaders who have personal maturity and do not need to use their authority to maintain their position. Democratic principals are core issues of partnership without unnecessary hierarchical emphasis. Invitation to participate in decisions without actual influence and disinformation are examples of pseudo-democracy. As Hackman & Wageman (1995) are arguing: “Pseudo-participation is ill-advised, because people almost always are able to tell when they are being manipulated.”
In partnerships it is important that mutual trust is established. Lack of information is often a source of misunderstandings and conflicts. Information is not the same as knowledge. However, a model or a theory can help the transformation from information into knowledge. As Deming (1993), states: “Without theory there is nothing to revise, nothing to evaluate, and experience has no meaning. The theory of knowledge helps us to understand that management in any form is prediction.” Theories of human behaviour are essential to understand other people. To be able to establish relations, people need to have basic knowledge of human behaviour. Interpersonal skills will then give them the ability to use what they know. Successful partnership must be based on honest meeting in trust between individuals. Personal maturity would be a good advantage for key persons in partnership to build relations based on equity and responding to other people’s need of trust.

Communication

Bergman & Klefsjö (2001) have pointed out communication as a key issue for the development of people and organisations. Core values have to be communicated in order to be used and the ability to communicate is often depending on personal maturity. Communication is also of vital importance when leaders try to understand and respond to co-workers’ personal motives. Trust & equity must also be mediated to have any meaning. As illustrated in a model (see figure 1), communication is identified as crucial for partnership.

Misunderstandings are common sources of conflicts. The key can be a developed dialogue (Senge, 1990, Bergman & Klefsjö, 2001), which can remove misunderstandings and support expected actions. The dialogue emphasise a two-way communication, including active listening, trying to understand each other’s message and together come to mutual understanding.

People tend not to express themselves honestly because they do not want to offend others or cause problems. Communication is done in many ways, maybe not always consciously. However, people’s real intentions are often revealed anyway. Argyris (2000) is arguing that any form of ambiguity will create confusion and lead to lack of trust and lack of action because people do not know what they are expected to do.

In many ways, people reflect their identity in the eyes of other people and have a basic need to be confirmed, especially by people whose opinion are highly valued. Based on experience, people tend to present themselves and choose act and appearance, as they want to be understood, not necessarily as we actually are understood. Dishonesty often leads to misunderstandings and confusion. An honest meeting is based on a feeling of security and is hard to accomplish in a situation of lack of mutual trust. Equity and insight of human behaviour can support understanding of yourself and others to provide honest meetings.
Sometimes being humble, realizing that you know, that you do not know, can prevent unnecessary mistakes. Understanding is limited to people’s imagination based on earlier experience or knowledge. To understand, people tend to interpret selectively and look for things they have knowledge of and recognize. Every individual has personal experiences that they build their framework for interpretations on and further on how these experiences influence perceptions and way of behaviour. A way to understand what other people understand is the use of a dialogue. The ability to communicate is a social skill, which is influenced by the personal maturity. As earlier argued, partnership is based on win-win situations, mutual trust, equity and interdependency. Since people have individual intrinsic motivators, those must also come to the surface. Personal motives must be communicated to be coordinated with the organisation’s vision and mission. It is the responsibility of the leaders to build infrastructure and framework for the necessary honest meeting for interaction opportunities of partnership.

Measuring communication in a partnership culture is not an easy task to deal with since the interaction is hard to identify and many factors have influence and interact. Measuring quantitative parameters such as the number of different meetings or e-mails gives limited information of the real outcome. Qualitative data can be obtained by, for example, different surveys of attitudes but often with fragments of information and often without holistic view. Individual interviews can also view individual opinions, but can be hard to be used since many other relevant factors are not considered. Understandings are based on and filtered by many different interactive processes such as: experience, context, motivation, tongue, relations, stress and traditions. Good communication is characterised by minor, if any, negative or unintentional consequences caused by misunderstandings. As earlier argued, dialogue can prevent misunderstandings and help to reach a mutual understanding. Infrastructure and conditions for dialogue seem to be inevitable issues for good communication.

An organization’s performance results together with general job satisfaction could to be one indicator of how well communication is functioning. However, that cannot be isolated from other interactive factors. A well-balanced employee satisfaction index could be one complement to other parameters for good communication. If an index for partnership is to be invented, other parameters for organizational performance must be considered, such as for instance: customer satisfaction, processes and economical results. However, any attempts to measure communication as an isolated parameter and from that generalize human behaviour tend to be risky.
Discussion

This section is based on the authors experience and many years of genuine interest for human behaviour. The reflections have to a large extent been influenced by experiences when discussing decisive factors for partnership with co-workers.

It is essential that the work environment can provide opportunities for people to have real influence in their own situations. There is no point in discussing the content of partnership if there are no interactions or honest meetings in a dialogue. Room for reflection is also necessary so issues of human ethics can be discussed. In many ways the attitude of the leaders is crucial for partnership. Personal maturity often means to participate in equity not using ones authority for control. A leader without the acceptance of followers is no leader. Followers will base their acceptance of leadership on their experience and unforced trust. In a pseudo-democracy with a hierarchical structure, partnership cannot be established with co-workers since lack of equity is building obstacles for trust.

All relations are interactive and the mutual interaction is reflecting how we understand and respond to each other. The competence of the leaders, in social skill is vital to create necessary possibilities for interactive co-operation such as partnership. Unfortunately, many leaders are recruited based on their skills as craftsmen or competence in their profession, not from interpersonal skills and personal maturity. This often means a loss regarding two occupations; the one they left as good craftsmen, and the other occupation they entered and do not have the ability to execute.

Like activities in the organisation, all people, including leaders, are dependent on their social context. Poor performance of individuals can depend on social and private factors and is not the responsibility of the organisation, but must, however, be considered. Life is going up and down by natural causes and sometimes you contribute more and sometimes less, all depending on how you feel. The effect of poor performance can be the same if it is caused by bad work conditions or bad private situations, even though the legal responsibility is different. Private life and professional life are interactive. Any imbalance will in some way or another affect an individual’s behaviour. People’s social context is important to consider but often neglected in an effort not to interfere in private business. However, mutual trust must be established so private issues also can be taken in consideration.
Conclusions

This study has focused on decisive factors to make successful partnership emphasizing the interaction with co-workers. All decisive factors are depending on a communication in dialogue between leaders and co-workers. The purpose of this paper is to stimulate the debate of partnership with co-workers discussing the content of decisive factors. (See figure 1)

Without communication, core values cannot be deployed, personal maturity has no meaning, personal motives cannot be combined to the organisation’s vision and mission and trust & equity cannot be mediated. All decisive factors are interdependent for successful partnership. Important issues are knowledge of human behaviour and communication, especially for key persons in partnership. To use partnership as an instrument to achieve everybody’s commitment, it is essential to recruit and train key persons to obtain desirable competences in the organization.
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PAPER 2

How successful Swedish Organizations Achieve Sustainable Health.


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How Successful Swedish Organizations Achieve Sustainable Health

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How Successful Swedish Organizations Achieve Sustainable Health

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Abstract

The costs connected to the rapidly increasing sick leaves have risen to alarming levels in Sweden and, for instance, Norway and the Netherlands. To find out how to handle the situation on an organizational level, a case study has been carried out at two organizations, which have been awarded for their excellence in methodologies for decreasing the number of sick leaves. One is a small manufacturing company and the other one is a large public health care organization. Both organizations are non-hierarchical with responsibility and authority delegated to different groups. The data collection has mainly been carried out through brainstorming in groups, structured in tree diagrams, complemented by interviews. Important methodologies for the managers are to emphasize low-prestige, visibility and functioning as coaches with activities aimed at building relations. On the basis of the result of this study, suggestions are presented which are considered possible for other organizations to adopt.

Introduction

Since about 1980, employees’ sickness absence and the connected costs have risen to alarming levels in Sweden, and also in, for instance, Norway and the Netherlands (Nyman, 2002). The number of people absent for sickness for more than 365 days has increased by about 30 % in Sweden between 1997 and 2001; The National Social Insurance Board (2000, 2003). The combined costs for sickness benefits and disability pensions were 10% of the total expenses of the Swedish Government in the year 2001 (SOU 2002:5).

The connection between psychologically unsatisfactory working environments and a high frequency of sickness is well documented; see, for example, The Swedish Labour Inspectorate (2000) and Dolbier et al., (2001). The connection between participation and satisfaction is also well described in the literature; see, for example, Kondo (1993), Kondo & Park Dahlgaard (1994), Hackman & Oldham (1976) and McGregor (1960).

Docherty et al. (2002) discuss how leadership must be adjusted to the new demand of autonomy and flexibility in modern working life. This means that authority must be deployed further down in the organization in order to create participa-
tion. Because of the complexity and higher pace, it is no longer possible to keep a traditional supervising leadership. Instead a more supportive approach has now become necessary (Docherty et al. 2002).

Abrahamsson (2003) also discusses how work organizations and work environmental problems are approached by modern management concepts for the purpose of adjusting them to the new demands of modern working life. She states that it was primarily during the 1990s that many Swedish industrial and public organizations went through extensive organizational changes. The purpose of implementing some of these modern management concepts is that the organizations should rapidly adapt to a continuously changing market through independent, versatile and committed co-workers and a flexible organization. This trend is still strong. (Abrahamsson, 2003)

The purpose of the paper

The purpose of this paper is to describe and discuss how two successful organizations have worked to achieve sustainable health among their co-workers. Through the description and discussion the intention is to identify methodologies that are possible for other organizations to adopt. Other causes of illness related to the working environment, such as injuries or accidents, are not discussed in this paper.

The Alecta award

In Sweden, Alecta (an insurance company for occupational pensions) has instituted a national award that comprises leadership, internal partnership, working environment and profitability. Every year one or several organizations, in different categories, are awarded on the basis of a process of analysis similar to that of quality awards like, for instance, the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award (NIST, 2003) and the European Quality Award (EFQM, 2003).

Sustainable health and quality in working life

A fundamental notion in this paper is sustainable health. The WHO’s definition from 1946 states, “Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity”. In this study that definition of health is extended to also include ‘sustainability’. Therefore, this paper focuses on the methodologies used by the studied organizations and also on how, in a long-term perspective, these consequently create a high rate of healthy employees compared to the average value in Sweden.

Because of the rapid increase in costs connected to sickness absence, current research in Sweden is looking at the subject from different angles. For instance, in a study of seven companies, Söderlund (2003) presents a theory of ‘health factors’ based on the question: ‘What makes people function in the best possible way, develop and feel good?’ The health factors identified in that study are categorized as: tasks, working team and organization.
Means to achieve the aim of a task are:
- Variation, challenges, belief in the future
- Personal responsibility, flexibility and pride
- Meaningfulness of using one’s competence

Means to achieve the aim of a working team are:
- All help one another, direct communication
- Humour, to get on well together, to be able to see one another outside work
- To have trust in each other, honesty, work discipline

Means to achieve the aim of an organization:
- Short decision making procedures, managers present in daily work
- Positive feedback from managers, explicit guidelines
- Managers ready to listen, balance between demands and resources

Docherty et al. (2002) have studied sustainable work systems and argue that the growing flexibility caused by globalization and information technology in the last two decades increases the pace and demands for higher flexibility and adaptation. The disappearance of bureaucratic boundaries without creating structures, processes or resources to replace those, leaves people much to their own judgement. The growing autonomy means endless choices and possibilities causing stress. The increased intensity has become ‘the kiss of death’ or ‘the spice of life’.

Also Schabracq & Cooper (2000) claim that loss of control in modern working life cause stress and that too much and too quick changes can both provide foundations for ill-health and lower productivity. They also suggest that investing in human potential may be the most profitable approach.

Benders & van de Looij (1994) advocate four general characteristics to perceive quality in working life. These are: work content, labour relations at the micro level, employment conditions and work environment. They claim that the leadership style has important impact on employees’ satisfaction on other job characteristics. Furthermore Lewis et al. (2001) claim, related to quality of working life, that besides the extrinsic rewards, the intrinsic rewards are key predictors of productivity, efficiency absenteeism and turnover. They argue that the intrinsic rewards include traits such as: task content, skill level, autonomy and challenge. They further argue that important traits in an organization to determine quality of working life are: salary, benefits, supervisor style, communication and discretion. This paper presents examples of an adjusted, supportive leadership from two studied organizations caused by the new demands in modern working life.

Partnership

From the ‘health factor’ theory, by Söderlund (2003) and the aspects of quality in working life, the relation between managers and co-workers is identified as important for health. This relation is also discussed in a literature study by Harnesk (2004) focusing on how to achieve increased co-worker commitment. Here the concept of partnership was found relevant. The study identified four decisive factors and how they depend on a fifth factor, communication in dialogue between managers and co-workers. Bergman & Klefsjö (2003) and Senge (1990), among others, have also pointed at communication as a key issue for the development of
people and organizations. The factors are illustrated in the Internal Partnership Model in Figure 1. This model was used in this paper, as a theoretical framework, especially when analyzing the collected data.

Figure 1. The Internal Partnership Model shows how decisive factors for partnership depend on communication in dialogue between leaders and co-workers by Harnesk (2004).

Core values have to be communicated in order to be part of a culture, and the ability to communicate is often dependent on personal maturity. Communication in dialogue is also of vital importance when leaders try to understand and respond to the co-workers’ personal motives. Trust and equity must also be mediated in order to be meaningful. A well-developed dialogue includes active listening and efforts to understand each other’s messages to jointly come to mutual understanding (Harnesk, 2004).

Description of Case Organizations

Fresh AB

Fresh AB develops, manufactures and markets ventilation products for indoor environments. The company was established in 1969 and has developed into a market leader in Sweden. The customers are wholesalers and retailers all over the world. In 2002, Fresh AB had 54 employees. The company has deliberately worked to have a diversified organization and an equal mix of men and women including 15 people from seven countries. The average age is 40.

In 1990 the present owner bought the company. The decreasing market nearly caused a bankruptcy in 1993 and in 1994 a new executive manager was appointed. The new manager’s assignment was to make the company profitable in two years. Since 1995 the turnover has increased by an average of 22% per year.

All co-workers at Fresh AB are organized in customer teams. The teams are divided into customer-controlled teams, internal customer controlled teams and management teams. The management teams and the executive management are there for coaching the other teams when they need help to solve serious problems. All teams have full responsibility for activities from ordering to delivery and invoicing to customers (see Figure 2). Every one of the co-workers is also a member of one of about ten cross-functional development groups.
Figure 2 illustrates the cornerstones of the organizational structure and culture of Fresh AB built around ‘the Marine Chart’ with the vision, values, policy, and strategies. The methodologies are designed to be as flexible as possible in four areas: teams, development groups, regular developmental conversations, communication and information. (For more details, see Bäckström et al., 2004a; 2004b).

**Figure 2.** The cornerstones of the organizational structure and culture at Fresh AB.

The Department of Emergency and Accidents at the South Stockholm General Hospital

The Southern Stockholm General Hospital (‘Södersjukhuset’) is a corporation owned by the Stockholm County Council with about 3,600 employees. In the following text ‘SÖS Emergency’ refers to the Department of Emergencies, Casualties and Accidents, which was included in this study.

SÖS Emergency is the largest department of its kind in northern Europe and provides emergency medical care to more than one million people, who visit the centre of Stockholm every day. The ward receives some 50 high-priority ambulance receptions every day. In 2002 there were 397 full-time workers employed at SÖS Emergency.

The organization at SÖS Emergency consists of one management group for the department, and four groups that are each managed by one head-nurse. SÖS Emergency may be described as a flexible and flat organization with short decision-making procedures due to delegated authority. All co-workers also participate in cross-functional working teams dealing with protective and developing issues.

SÖS Emergency has deliberately chosen to have a diversified organization. There are, for instance, speakers of 14 different languages at the department. In comparison with other departments at the hospital there are more male employees.
The department uses a model for work time planning that allows the co-workers to make their own working schedule. The working periods have different values and give full-time pay for part-time work.

**Average days of sick leave**

Figure 3 shows how the number of average days of sick leave has varied over time for the two organizations. For comparison, the average number for Sweden as a whole is included.

![Average sick days](image)

**Figure 3.** Average days of sick leave per person at Fresh AB, SÖS Emergency and the average value as a whole in Sweden. Since no data was available for 1998 and 1999, there is a gap in the curve of SÖS Emergency.

As the diagram shows, the average days of sick leave at Fresh AB and SÖS Emergency are lower than the average number for all organizations in Sweden. In 2002 the average days of sick leave in the studied organizations was about 50% of the average value in Sweden. At Fresh AB a few co-workers had to stay at home for a number of days in 2002 because of accidents not related to their working situation. Because of the size of the organization, these accidents had a big and misleading effect on the average number of days of absence. At SÖS Emergency information about sickness absence was not available for the years 1998 and 1999.
Research Methods

Since the study aimed to explore successful organizations’ methodologies for achieving sustainable health, a case study with an explorative, qualitative approach was chosen. The selection of the two case study organizations (Fresh AB and SÖS Emergency) was based on their recognised status as successful organizations. They both received the Alecta award in 2001 in their respective size category.

The research process

The research project started with two study visits to build relations, present the project and to receive an overview of the organizations. This was also the start of the data collection from relevant documents, articles and various documented studies. Then the data collection was made by using brainstorming structured in tree diagrams by the employees. All documented data from the tree diagrams (Mizuno, 1988) was then complemented by management interviews in both organizations. The collected data was then analysed. The research process is illustrated in Figure 4. The process follows the improvement cycle ‘Plan-Do-Study-Act’ (Deming, 1986). For more details about this study, see Bäckström et al. (2004a; 2004b).
The data collection

The tree diagrams
The research team tried to identify a tool that would structure qualitative information from a complex situation in an easy way for the respondents, as well as inspire creativity. The information needed was on a detailed level and probably embedded in complexity or maybe too obvious in the employees’ everyday work to
be noticeable. Therefore, a tool was needed to help the participants through this process. The tree diagram (see Mizuno, 1988) tool was ultimately chosen on the assumption that the interactive process would give answers that could not be obtained as a result of individual interviews. The creation of the tree diagrams always started with the question: ‘Why are you among the best workplaces in Sweden?’

Different individual suggestions were written down on post-it notes and placed on a white board. The next step was to further explore each of the suggestions in order to find out how it was related to the first question. From a consensus process the group formulated a final answer. By continuing like this, the idea was to guide the group stepwise with new questions like ‘Why?’, ‘What is creating this?’ and ‘How have you worked to achieve this?’ The tree diagram was concluded with an evaluation of the answers at the lowest level of the tree, listing the most detailed methodologies in order to find out which methodologies were considered most important to the group. At Fresh AB a group of six persons, representing the whole organization, participated in the tree diagram creation, in March 2003. At SÖS Emergency two separate tree diagrams were made with four participants in each group, consisting of a mix of nurses and staff nurses, all women, in May 2003.

**Interviews**

After the tree diagrams were completed for each organization, an interview with the CEO of Fresh AB and the department manager of SÖS Emergency concluded the data collection. After each interview a separate tree diagram was constructed with the manager in the same way as by the co-workers to have as a complement and for comparison with the co-workers’ tree diagram.

**The analysis process**

The members of the research team analyzed all the data collected together with an external facilitator. When all the data had been recorded on note pads the analysis process started with developing categories, as suggested by Merriam (1988) and Goetz & LeCompte (1984). The analysis was first made separately for each organization and then as a cross-case analysis. The Internal Partnership Model (in Figure 1) was then used as a frame to sort the data from the cross-case analysis. From that analysis a new set of methodologies considered possible to adopt in other organizations was selected.

**Empirical Findings**

**Fresh AB**

**Tree diagram**

The empirical findings from the tree diagram at Fresh AB resulted in a final assessment of the most important methodologies, made by the co-workers. This
came as a result of a stepwise process down to the lowest level of the tree diagram. The tree diagram started with the question: ‘Why are you one of the best workplaces in Sweden?’. The most important identified activities were:

- Everybody participates in competence development programs
- The co-workers are encouraged and not punished
- The managers listen to the co-workers’
- The co-workers were forced to understand the importance of communication and information.

**Interview with CEO**

The interview with the CEO, Mats Birgersson at Fresh AB, ended with a separate tree diagram and the most important activities performed to reach the epithet: ‘One of the best workplaces in Sweden’ were in his opinion:

- The regular developmental conversations
- The vision process
- Answering the question: ‘Why do you go to work?’ with: ‘Creating value for others’.

When Birgersson started in 1994, the company was in bad shape. “The co-workers didn’t understand anything of what they were doing”… “So the competence of the co-workers was a shock to me”, he said. Birgersson understood that the company had been managed in a highly top-down manner. He started a developmental conversation program with all co-workers to understand the co-workers’ competence situation. He also introduced a program for all co-workers in 1995, performed by the employment service agency for new entrepreneurs. His vision was to increase the holistic view, make all co-workers conscious of the crisis, and bring about a change of attitude. The resistance was widely spread and it was hard to sell the idea. During the interview he said that in the beginning he invested about 50% of his time in building relations with every individual co-worker through walking around in the factory. His belief was that nobody wants to be treated as an anonymous person in a collective, but to be addressed as an individual. “Everything is a matter of communication”, he stated. He also emphasized the infrastructure for cross communication at many meetings, aimed at enabling the employees to exchange information and talk to each other. “The developmental conversations are the basis of the leadership”, as he expressed it.

Another mission he described was to tear down the hierarchy, “because hierarchy will be an obstacle to people talking to each other”. An informal structure creates equity and commitment, he argued. “Trust between managers and co-workers come from conversations, communication and visibility. Practice what you preach”, he also saw as something vital for building this trust.

Birgersson’s idea of good leadership is also to build and communicate visions. He likes to use metaphors to sell his message, like ‘The Marine Chart’. He also describes the organization as ‘a train’ with an engine consisting of the driving forces, passenger carriage for those who just go along and braking carriages for hesitators or “objectors”. His advice is: “Abandon old beliefs, look for engines and don’t waste too much time on braking carriages”. He also mentioned that the policy document “The Marine Chart” had been developed by the co-workers.
alone, on their own initiative, when Birgersson was away on a business trip to Japan.

He advocated some important characteristics of leadership: be authoritarian in combination with situation-based leadership to force things to happen at times, but be a coach to support the co-workers’ own decisions. “It’s a matter of helping people to motivate themselves”. If a suggestion comes up his response is: “Let’s try; if it doesn’t work we can always just go back to where we started.” His comment on the positive sick leave statistics was: “We don’t talk about sick leave; we talk about health presence”.

Birgersson described how he constantly repeated the question: “Why do you go to work?” and like a mantra the co-workers answered: “To create value for others”. “You can only reach your own self-fulfilment through making value for others”, he said. “It can only be reached together with other people.” The development of a diversified organization is another example of an ethical dimension, and it was done in an effort to increase the understanding of other people. His comments about the organizational culture at Fresh AB are: “Culture stands for: cultivation, refinement and education”. The cultivation is implemented by sowing seeds from ideas. We refine them through a high level of communication and competence development. Education is harvesting. It is a sort of self-fulfilment for the organization that people are healthy because then the economy is functioning.”

SÖS Emergency

The empirical findings from the two tree diagrams at SÖS Emergency resulted in a final valuation of the most important methodologies, made by the co-workers (see Bäckström et al., 2004a; 2004b). The two tree diagrams started with the same question as at Fresh AB: ‘Why are you one of the best workplaces in Sweden?’ and the most important identified reasons were:

**Tree diagram 1**

- The managers are visible and available and there is mutual trust between managers and co-workers
- Responsibility and authority are distributed in accordance with interest and competence
- Evaluation is made with inquiries and discussion groups
- The model for work time planning is developed by the co-workers
- The corporate culture is open to new methodologies and ready to solve problems instantly

**Tree diagram 2**

- The managers listen with a sensitive ear and are on our side
- The management group have common missions and the right person on the right spot
- We have an encouraging atmosphere and like to spend time together
- There is a desire to learn and share knowledge from many highly competent co-workers
• Proposals from the co-workers and cooperation groups lead to results and solve problems
• We have agreed on methodologies and tools in a job that is unpredictable
• We have open and straight communication and try not to speak ill of each other/others.

Interview with the department manager
The interview with the department manager, Sören Carlsson-Sanz at SÖS Emergency, also resulted in a separate tree diagram and the most important identified methodologies for being: ‘One of the best workplaces in Sweden’ were:

• Authority followed by responsibility is highly valued by leaders
• There is no competition, but cooperation and decreased work load
• We have influence, for instance through participating in debate programs, articles and lectures
• We carry out science based studies and reflect on society and participate in actions with external resources
• There is forum for decision making and an interest in sharing knowledge
• We have created room and channels for communication and information
• Opportunities for long-term rehabilitation of sick-listed co-workers and use of direct treatment

At most clinics doctors are the managers, but Carlsson-Sanz is a nurse and was selected by a unanimous co-worker group in 1994. He referred to the clinic as “a worn-out work place that raised a mutiny”. He described his vision of good leadership as: visible and working together with the co-workers ‘on the floor’. The leadership abilities he wishes to emphasize are: holistic views, structure, mediation of trust, knowledge of human behaviour, supportive attitude, imparting and showing respect and no false authority. During the interview he, in particular, emphasized the importance of creating a forum for communication in dialogue and competence development.

Through various different, externally financed, preventive projects they try to fight against the sense of meaninglessness often caused by the nature of the work at emergency clinics. They take part in and share, for example, books, lectures, reports and documentary films and, according to Carlsson-Sanz, “the co-workers are growing and feel that they are doing something important”. He emphasizes the importance of reflecting on ethical issues and use direct dialogue to avoid conflicts. “People must talk to each other and not about each other”, he points out. The diversified organization of the clinic is a valued asset in his view. Throughout the interview he returned to the issues of participation and dialogue.

When concluding the interview on how sustainable health can be achieved Carlsson-Sanz advocates: “room for debate and direct communication without false authority”.

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Analysis

Cross Case Analysis

The empirical findings from the two studied organizations were, as a next step, subjected to a cross-case analysis to look for conformity between the organizations. In this analysis, all data collected was taken into consideration, including observations, interviews and tree diagrams. All the data was then sorted under the five decisive factors included the Internal Partnership Model (see Figure 1) plus one factor named ‘Other’, including detected factors, which did not have any obvious connection to those in the model.
Figure 5. Results of the cross case analysis based on the findings from the two organizations.

From this analysis the research team identified the methodologies functioning in the two studied organizations and considered possible to adopt by other organizations. Then four new, more relevant, categories were formulated. ‘General Atti-
tudes’ concerns everyone in the organization, both managers and co-workers. The other presented areas are considered more dependent on the managers’ attitudes. The following paragraphs summarize and comment on the main findings shown in Figure 5.

**General attitudes**

The empirical findings show that communication in the organizations is highly valued. The co-workers verify that the atmosphere is open without prestige, with mutual respect, and based on trust. They use direct communication, i.e. ‘they talk to each other not about each other’. Different opinions are welcome and people cooperate instead of compete. They also get encouragement and are not punished when making a mistake. The co-workers have a lot of direct influence on their current working situation and they can therefore make adjustments according to their own situation. Another attitude, which both organizations emphasized, is that work is judged to be fun.

The co-workers in both organizations gave positive comments on their managers’ personal attitudes. The managers are described as having an understanding of human conditions and meeting people as individuals, which makes it possible for them to receive personal support. The balance between work and leisure is also taken into consideration by the two managers. Every co-worker has regular developmental conversations about their current situation, needs and plans for the future. A great deal of effort is made by the managers to unify the co-workers through visions of a common direction.

The use of ethical dimensions is also described by both organizations. This provides conditions for a sense of ‘doing good’ and stimulates the debate and unity of a common base of values. At Fresh AB they have a strong customer orientation and constantly talk about why they go to work, with the answer: ‘making values for others’. At SÖS Emergency they focus on the patients and what is best for them, but also participate in various preventive societal projects.

**Leadership attitudes**

The managers of the studied organizations were considered by the co-workers to be visible and supportive coaches, with no false authority. Experience and ability to establish trust when coaching co-workers are also valued. The organizations are designed for a balanced delegation of authority and responsibility to the co-workers.

**Methodologies**

Both organizations are characterized by having many cross-functional groups. The focus is on relations and understanding each other in activities like work rotation and learning from each other. Again, communication between co-workers and between managers and co-workers is underlined. If conflicts occur they try to sort them out instead of avoiding them.

Their problem solving methods are described as quick and easy, based on delegation of decision-making processes, which leads to fast and noticeable results. The problem solving methods focus on solving basic causes, even if the problems are caused externally. At SÖS Emergency they also handle recurrent traumatic situa-
tions in their daily work by ‘mirroring’ (debriefing). Various competence development programs are also common in both organizations. The public attention gives both pride and motivation. Recruiting and keeping co-workers is, according to their own information, not difficult in either of these organizations.

**Organizational structure**

Both organizations studied have designed their infrastructure for co-worker influence. The organizations are flat, non-hierarchical and non-bureaucratic. This makes the decision process short and creates an infrastructure for communication. Furthermore, they have regular meetings in different constellations such as cross-functional groups. Processes focusing on the customer provide a holistic approach and characterize both organizations. At Fresh AB, for instance, they have established a salary system and at SÖS Emergency they have a model for work time planning, both developed by the co-workers.

**Cross Case Analysis versus the Internal Partnership Model**

After the cross case analysis was completed a comparison with the Internal Partnership Model was made in order to study the relevance of the model.

Neither organization uses the term ‘core values’, but ethical and moral issues seem to be present in their daily work. Both organizations work towards a diversified organization in order to reflect the society outside the organization and to create a dynamic atmosphere inside the organization. The core values, such as mutual agreements, are also established in the policy documents of both organizations.

The issue of personal maturity is strongly represented when discussing desirable leadership abilities among co-workers, and in the co-workers’ competence development programs. The dialogue with respect in a professional manner may also be seen as an example of personal maturity to clarify mutual expectations. Covey’s (1992) formulation is very much applicable to both organizations; “Independent people, who do not have the maturity to think and act interdependently, may be good individual producers, but they won’t be good leaders or team players.”

Both organizations are designed for co-worker influence and therefore the co-workers’ personal motives should, in such an environment, have good chances of being fulfilled. The regular developmental conversations on an annual basis give the co-workers the opportunity to express personal desires and provide opportunities to combine those with the interests of the organization. The individual competence development programs are also examples of efforts to satisfy individual needs.

Trust and equity are evidently pervading characteristics of both organizations. This is shown in their communicative attitudes and seems to be well incorporated in both organizations’ methodologies. Groups often make their own decisions, and mutual trust and respect between managers and co-workers seem to be estab-
lished. The non-hierarchical, flat structure of both organizations underlines their effort to establish equality.

The empirical findings from the two organizations also strongly emphasize the importance of communication, as suggested in the Internal Partnership Model (see Figure 1). They have both designed a successful infrastructure for dialogue, both as co-worker influence with different cross-functional groups and regular developmental conversations between managers and co-workers.

Cross Case Analysis versus Sustainable Health

The findings of the cross case analysis support Söderlund’s (2003) theory of “health factors”, as indicated by the responses to the question: ‘What makes people function in the best possible way, develop and feel good?’ The conformity of the studied organizations and the presented ‘health factor’ theory is striking. The statistics on the average sick leave rate also support the view that the health factor theory is applicable to both the studied organizations.

There is reason to believe that increased responsibility for co-workers, mentioned at both SÖS Emergency and Fresh AB, can cause stress, as discussed by Docherty et al. (2002). This subject never came up as a negative consequence in either of the organizations during the data collection phase. In terms of the concepts used by Docherty et al. (2002), one may ask whether it is more relevant in these organizations to talk of ‘the spice of life’ rather than ‘the kiss of death’ when referring to trends in modern working life.

Discussion and conclusions

The studied organizations are different in both size and business, but they generally use similar methodologies. The restart from critical situations has most certainly provided special conditions for the processes of change in the two organizations described. It is also hard not to recognize the managers’ influence and their personal approaches to leading the processes of change. The mutual established teamwork based on good leadership together with the co-workers’ commitment, is once again proven to be the essence of success. The public attention that comes from winning awards and receiving other kinds of recognition is a natural proof of being on right track and an inspiration for continued efforts.

The Internal Partnership Model was used as a theoretical frame and seems to be relevant in both organizations. However, the decisive factors in the model seem to be too general and it should therefore be redesigned to a more detailed level for better utility in the future. The ‘health factor’ theory by Söderlund (2003) and discussions of quality in working life by Schabracq & Cooper (2000), Benders & van de Looij (1994) and Lewis et al. (2001) are strongly supported by the results of this study.

There are of course many concurrent methodologies that underlie the success of the studied organizations. Some of them are unique like, for instance, the personal
characteristics of the managers and internal routines that may be difficult for other organizations to adopt. Other methodologies have been considered possible for others to adopt in their efforts to achieve good working conditions resulting in lower sick leaves, such as:
- Infrastructures for direct communication and dialogue (cross-functional groups and development groups)
- Relation building activities and meetings
- Regular developmental conversations
- Co-workers’ influence (on their own daily work, salary and time-tables)
- Delegated responsibility and authority to working teams
- Flat flexible non-hierarchical and non-bureaucratic organization
- Suggestions for improvements dealt with seriously (results and quick feedback)
- Establish holistic view (work rotation and cross-functional groups)
- Mutual respect without false authority or penalty for mistakes
- Balance between work and private life
- Good public attention

From the methodologies used, other managers and practitioners should be more concerned to build close personal relations with co-workers, pay attention to the importance of communication in dialogue, mediate how each individual function are important for the performance of the system, notify and respect that the organization have hired a person with pros and cons that wants to be proud of oneself and maybe the most important issue – give much effort to establish trust in all directions. These suggestions are not new or revolutionary, but already known to be winning concepts in management theory. A relevant question for further research seems to be: ‘Why are these methodologies not used to a larger extent?’

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References


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Leadership in Total Quality Management – an Act of Balance Between Contradictions

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to give support to leaders in their efforts to better utilize the TQM concept, by describing and discussing some difficulties that leaders may experience. By reviewing literature discussing leadership, TQM and the demands of modern working life, three examples of embedded contradictions that leaders can be confronted with, have been identified. The contradictions found that require leaders’ navigation and an act of balance are: collectivism versus individualism, standardization versus innovative learning, and manipulation versus empowerment. There is a fundamental tension between empowerment, individual development and innovation, on the one hand, and the requirement for conformance to tight behavioural specifications, on the other. All of these parts are important and none of them can be excluded. How to find a balance between the defined contradictions, thereby becoming more successful in using TQM as a concept for quality improvement, should be a central question for many leaders.

Keywords: TQM, Leadership, Contradictions.

Introduction

In order to make successful use of Total Quality Management, TQM, leaders need to ’navigate’ and balance between contradictions embedded in the concept. In order to support TQM, and also many other modern management concepts, these contradictions should be examined and discussed. The mixed picture of TQM indicates a strong need for reforms. On one hand TQM is commonly regarded as a major innovation in management practice of the late 1980s and 1990s. It is also widely spread among organisations, ranging from traditional manufacturing industries to service organisations in the public sector. The criteria of many different quality awards, which have proved to be successful tools for organisational and management improvement, have also been based on the fundamental concepts of TQM. But on the other hand, there are several studies showing that there are not always positive results in all respects. In some cases TQM have had very positive effects on quality, efficiency and working environment, but in other cases only marginal or even negative effects have been reported (Wilkinson et al, 1998).

One explanation of the mixed results could be that since the implementation of TQM may lead to considerable changes in organisational structure, in power structures, in attitudes and culture, and also in management style, it is often met by restoration responses from people within the organisation (Abrahamsson, 2000). The tenacity of an existing organisation often

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becomes evident during the work of implementation, when leaders time and again are faced with unforeseen problems. Another explanation is that there has often been a large gap between the theoretical and ‘ideal’ TQM concept and what has actually been implemented in real world organisations. Two reasons for this might be lack of resources and use of unsuitable methods for change (Hansson, 2003). In some cases, however, it seems that rhetoric may be winning over the reality, so the credibility gap grows. It is sometimes claimed that TQM could be seen as just another, although slightly long-lived, managerial fad that is already being replaced by new generations of fashionable phrases and practices (Røvik, 2000; Furusten, 1999; Wilkinson et al., 1998). Yet another explanation could be that the TQM concept has embedded tensions or contradictions of incompatible principles that may not become visible until the concept meets ‘reality’, for example in connection with the organisational and cultural change advocated by TQM. This topic is more seldom discussed, and the purpose of this paper is to describe some of the paradoxical issues of TQM and to initiate a discussion around the balancing and navigation that is required of leaders using the TQM concept in modern working life.

Method
The research presented in this paper has primarily been based on a literature study of authors discussing leadership, TQM and the demands of modern working life. The purpose of the study is to support leaders who use a TQM perspective. Through analysing the literature and discussing with colleagues, three particular contradictions have been identified. These were the most apparent ones found, and they should be able to provide a fruitful discussion of leadership in modern working life.

The changing shape and character of TQM
During the 1980s and 1990s many companies and public organisations in Sweden made extensive changes in their working organisations on the basis of a number of emerging modern forms of organisational or management concepts. TQM was one, maybe even the foremost, management concept during this period. Some examples of other widespread concepts are: Lean Production, Time Based Management (TBM), Business Process Re-engineering (BPR), Balanced Scorecard (BSC), The Boundaryless Organisation, Knowledge Management, The Individualized Organisation and Corporate Religion (Abrahamsson, 2004).

Usually the purpose of implementing a new management concept is that the company should quickly become able to adapt to a constantly changing market. It is generally believed that this could be done with the aid of independent, versatile and committed co-workers and a flexible organisation. The prevalent explanation of this trend of new demands for flexibility, adaptation and higher pace is that it is caused by increased globalization and better use of information technology (Docherty et al., 2002).

In a somewhat simplified manner, the general tendency is towards a flattening of hierarchies and stronger integration. Many recent organisational concepts are based on this tendency and they are also, in some respects, very similar. The different concepts have largely the same concrete contents and often highly uniform normative messages (Furusten, 1999; Røvik, 2000).

The origin of TQM can be found in the writings of American quality experts such as Shewart, Deming and Juran, and in the adoption and development of these thoughts and concepts that were made by the Japanese manufacturing industry. Like Lean Production, TQM is based on
Japanese experiences of the motor and electronics industries and may be seen as an American variety of the Japanese Toyota system.

TQM of today has been described by Hellsten & Klefsjö (2000), as a continuously evolving management system consisting of:
- ‘values’ such as: top management commitment, continuous improvement, decisions based on facts, letting everybody be committed, focus on processes and customers.
- ‘methodologies’ like: quality circles, self-assessment, employee development, policy deployment.
- ‘tools’, for example: ISO 9000, tree diagrams, criteria of MBNQA, and control charts.

The aim of TQM is to increase external and internal customer satisfaction with a reduced amount of resources (Hellsten & Klefsjö, 2000).

Like many of the other management concepts from the late 1990s up till today, TQM is developing towards a cross-disciplinary, holistic concept of what has to be done (Björkman & Lundkvist, 1998). Sila & Ebrahimpuor (2002) found in their extensive theoretical investigation that the following factors were most frequently addressed in TQM definitions: customer focus and satisfaction, employee training, leadership and top management commitment, teamwork, employee involvement, continuous improvements and innovation, and quality information and performance measurements. Some factors such as quality information and performance measurement may be defined as quantitative or ‘hard’ aspects, but most of the other factors may be defined as qualitative or ‘soft’ aspects.

Another trend of development may be seen in the fact that TQM’s parallel and maybe competing management concepts that arose in the 1990s, for example the learning organisation, the boundless organisation, and the individualising organisation, are almost exclusively applied only in the areas of company management and ‘the social system’. To a great extent the central idea of those concepts is to create a new type of human being adapted to the new type of work (Hollway, 1996; Thompson & Warhurst, 1998; Fairclough, 1996). There is a strong trend towards viewing the union contract employees as individuals. This trend may also be described as a transition from control of collectives or groups to control of each individual co-worker in a flat and decentralised organisation. Hence the control of the employees takes place at a deeper level and with more aid of attitudes, ’ownership’, business idea, organisational culture, and emotions (Dygert, 2000; Cao et al., (2000); Hill, (1991); Flood & Jackson, (1991).

Today there is a multitude of concepts and tools that companies and public organisations must take into consideration. TQM alone contains numerous different working methods and tools. Companies and organisations seldom implement a concept verbatim, but select the parts of it that they consider suitable for improving their operations, and in the implementation the concept is often adapted and modified (Røvik, 2000). It is also typical that elements of several concepts and tools are used simultaneously. This is not entirely unproblematic, since the aspects of parallel concepts could collide with each other. Management concepts are, however, generally rather adaptable and changeable to the spirit of the time. TQM has, to some extent, become an umbrella concept including several, sometimes only partly related, methodologies and tools, for example Six Sigma, 5S, Total Productive Maintenance (TPM) and Balance Scorecard. This means that the concept is present in many different varieties and interpretations, and, in addition, it may contain in itself double layers and embedded contradictions.
Three embedded contradictions

Collectivism versus individualism

The first contradiction is the simultaneous focusing on collectivism and individualism. A challenge for leaders is to balance between these two, often conflicting, approaches. By tradition TQM has had a strongly collective approach using quality circles and empowered team based methodologies. Today however, the general trend of most organisations is to focus on creating a strong co-worker culture of individualisation. Focus is directed towards the individuals in an organisation (Lindgren, 1999; Fältholm, 1998). This shift is true for many modern management concepts, including TQM, and several issues are involved in the transition. One of those issues is production control by controlling each individual, for example by means of individual salaries, management by objectives and norms/organisational culture, but also by each individual being expected to control her/him-self in ways large and small, for example by taking her/his own responsibility for making her/himself employable, for her/his health/working environment, pay development and competence development, career, education and training, etc. Employees are supposed to view their greater freedom of action as a challenge and to be stimulated by the element of competition, thereby involving themselves more in both the production and the improvement work. Ghoshal & Bartlett (1997) suggest that companies should develop their systems of benchmarking to also including the achievements of individuals. To make public the results of individuals and groups in certain selected production factors is thought to be sufficient for stimulating self-evaluation and self-correction. Another trend of today is that companies are working more and more on visualising and comparing departments and individuals in their organisations (Sveriges tekniska attacheer (’Sweden’s Technical-Scientific Attachés’) 1999).

Individualisation also exists on other levels of the society, adding to the demands of working life. This could be illustrated by two recent Swedish examples: Pensions were previously placed collectively in large common funds, but now each individual is expected to decide what funds should administer their pension. After the deregulation of the energy market there is now quite a few different suppliers of electricity. Earlier these were State-owned utilities and the prices were regulated by the State. These types of system reconstructions require individuals to make decisions, something which may cause them to feel pressed. The trend towards individualisation is similar in many other Western countries as well. In many ways, USA is seen as a role model for Sweden. This leads us towards a culture with individualistic bias, with a pronounced emphasis on the exercise of individual initiative and performance, and also with a tendency to be preoccupied with the self and the immediate family (McKenna & Beech, 2002).

One result of the first contradiction is that an overly strong emphasis on individualism may lead to stronger territorial thinking. Organisational thinking is based on the loyal sharing of knowledge. Knowledge and information should swiftly and freely be spread to relevant places in the organisation. But the trend of increased individualisation could counteract teamwork and organisational learning. If knowledge and information becomes important determinants for career and income, the incentives to share with others may decline. It may be of interest to note that the notion of ‘rank and file’ over the employees and of rewarding individual achievements was something that Deming (1986) strongly warned against. In his books and lectures on TQM he argued in favour of win-win solutions and also advocated equal pay. It was the work task that should, in itself, be the reward.
Another aspect of the first contradiction is that the new gliding towards individualism appears to be largely unworkable and incompatible with the ‘original’ TQM’s team based philosophy and activities (Harrington, 1998; McKenna & Beech, 2002). When TQM was developed, the concept was strongly influenced by the ‘Japanese wonder’. Some explanation of the Japanese success and organisation culture may be found in a particular ideology. This is the ideology of loyalty to one lord as derived from the Japanese appropriation of Chinese ‘Confucian’ principles and the feudal legacy (Wilkinson & Oliver, 1992). According to McKenna & Beech (2002), the ‘Values at the heart of the Japanese workers’ are: work hard and long hours spent at work, a great need to belong and not to be isolated from one’s community, avoidance of failure to discharge duties in accordance with normal social rules can bring shame, loss of face, and could result in isolation. In societies where collectivism prevails, for example in Japan, individuals function through groups and they assume joint responsibility for the collective output.

Inspired by the Japanese management practice, Ouchi (1981) described what he called ‘The Theory Z’ for possible utilization in the USA. This theory is commented on by McKenna & Beech (2002) as: “a predominant concern for people; a guarantee of long-term employment; decision-making based on shared values and collective responsibility; a ‘clan’ approach to participation, with strong pressure to encourage performance; high trust and faith in the managers’ ultimate judgment; and non-specialized career pathways.” And further, the end result was a “pledge of commitment to the organisation.” However, there could be an obstacle for Western management attempting to transplant the Japanese management practices without adapting them to their particular circumstances in western culture (McKenna & Beech, 2002).

When TQM was introduced in the 1980s, its collective characteristics were fairly well in line with the collective tradition in the Swedish labour market, even if it was a matter of different types of collective. The labour movement in Sweden was influential, and a law was enacted on co-decision in for example the company boards. Issues of pay, employment conditions, and also working environment matters were solved collectively. But in the 1990s this development was halted and the unions’ commitment to and influence on working environment research decreased (Johansson, 1999). In the 1990s the work organisation became seen as a greater extent as an area for strategic means of control, on the part of the company managements (Suff & Williams, 2004). In the USA there is an inextricable link between the collapse of union power in the 1980s and the trend toward individualisation (Milkman, 1998). The link is perhaps not so strong in Sweden, but it points in the same direction. In a study of two successful Swedish empowered organisations by Harneck et al. (2004), one CEO expressed that people do not want to be treated as anonymous persons in a collective but, through trust and relation building activities, as individuals. In the beginning he had been investing about 50 percent of his time in building personal relations and trust with every individual co-worker through walking around in the factory. As a consequence of high trust in the relation between CEO and employees, the union activity was low.

Yet another part of the problem with TQM’s change towards individualisation is that this kind of empowerment and participation does not mean empowerment in all matters or questions. The implicit unitarism of TQM means that customer-defined goals of continuous improvement are asserted as beyond question and that the language of the market is replacing discussions with the labour and unions (Wilkinson et al., 1998).
Standardisation versus innovative learning

The second contradiction is the simultaneous focusing on standardisation and innovative learning. A challenge for leaders is to balance between routine management and managing for innovation and learning. TQM is based, to a great extent, on order (Imai, 1997), effectivisation, formalisation and standardisation of methods and work routines for the purpose of reducing variation (Eklund, 1997). This is due to TQM having some of its roots in Walter Shewhart’s statistical measuring inspections in the 1920s and Deming’s work for statistical quality control and focus on organisational systems in the 1980s (Hackman & Wageman, 1995). Various different quality assurance systems are advocated today as well, such as ISO 9000 standards. They can provide organisations with new platforms to build on, thereby gradually carrying their quality development forward. The standardisation and formalisation of routines and rules may be a good way of assuring quality and creating conditions for further development (according to for example Imai, 1997), but at the same time it may also function as a limitations of learning, flexibility and innovativeness. Ideas and thoughts of individuals learning at work, in cooperation and communication, and of ‘learning organisations’ play a central role in TQM, just as in many other modern management concepts. At least in theory, TQM is built on competent, self-governed and innovatively thinking workers. A prerequisite for attaining this is that there is an organisation with scope for development-oriented learning, questioning of established routines, opportunities for reflection, and alternative thinking. One part of the contradiction is that this may be in direct conflict with high demands for productivity and value creating activities (Ellström, 2001). Severe time pressure in combination with a high degree of standardisation and a slimmed organisation may hinder the necessary dynamics and alternative thinking. Critics like Hackman & Wageman (1995) and Eklund (1997) argue that over-specification may lead to bureaucratization, loss of motivation and loss of autonomy. Cassidy (1996) argues that “many organisations have abandoned TQM because of its bureaucracy and over-focusing on processes, cultural mismatch, and financial pressures”.

Another part of the second contradiction is that the normal procedure in TQM is to first collect knowledge and skills from the co-workers and then establish work routines for best practice. This is an important part of a learning organisation and is also recognisable in the thoughts on Knowledge Management (Sveriges tekniska attachéer, 1999). It is emphasised that the company should decrease its dependence of individual knowledge. In this respect this is no far cry from Taylorism (Björkman, 2002). Like most other modern management concepts, TQM is designed, or ‘packaged’, to be user friendly and saleable (Røvik, 2000). An illustration of this is the various standardized checklists for quality management that are often presented, see for example Dale; Lascelles; Lee; Wilkinson; Shaw; Ferguson; Aldridge; Love; MacDonald in the book Managing Quality (Dale, 1999). The problem is that this could create an aura of superficiality. If companies use standardised questions in their surveys and evaluations, this means that they will only get certain types of information – more or less about the same thing (Ellström, 2000). The selection of data, or the way it was collected, will form a ‘factual basis’ for management decisions, but this basis may be far from accurate or truthful. There is, in other words, a risk of poor validity. If the results that have been gained via the standardised questions are compared with a standardised model of how things should be, this could conceal a great number of different circumstances that exist in all organisations. Such overlooked circumstances might be important forces that are strongly contributing to how and why an organisation develops in a certain direction and why unforeseen problems arise. Deming (1986) warned about management by numbers and suggested that a better name would be management by fear when referring to merit ratings evaluations and appraisal systems. Drucker (1999) claims that what is measured has a tendency to be done. This means that peo-
ple are more anxious to carry out things they have assumed responsibility for, but not necessarily the most important things.

Another contradiction can be formulated as empowerment and detailed surveillance at the same time. TQM emphasizes employee participation through empowerment. It includes decentralisation of the organisation and a redistribution of power, but such an organisation can be very hard to control, and hence there is an increasing need for centralising strategic management, knowledge, information, survey and control. The Balanced Scorecard is considered an aid to fill this need (Taylor, 1998). The sometimes advanced surveillance techniques may represent a low-trust strategy which risks alienating workers and undermining their genuine commitment to quality and continuous improvement. A related problem is that in TQM continuous improvements are advocated in order to adapt to customers’ demands. The training can therefore be found over-simplistic and even patronising by the employees, with a tendency to present a too positive image of the organisation and with a condescending tone in the prescriptions offered; Wilkinson et al., (1998).

**Manipulation versus empowerment**

The third contradiction implies that TQM moves in a twilight zone between manipulation and empowerment. Unlike other modern management concepts, the TQM concept is, to a fairly high degree, based on empowerment and employee participation. TQM clearly advocates a removal of layers and pushing decision-making further down in the organisation (McKenna & Beech, 2002). This results in reducing managerial control over employees in autonomous work groups with their own authority and increased responsibility.

Argyris (1998) argues that only internal commitment reinforces empowerment and is based on a person’s own definition of her/his task, what is required to perform the task, and the importance of the goal. He further argues that there is an inner contradiction, as a destructive force, between management being in control and employees pushing for autonomy. The external commitment as contractual compliance, based on management control will undermine the empowerment idea and the credibility of the top management.

Oakland (1989) states:

“TQM is concerned with moving the focus of control from outside the individual to within; the objective being to make everyone accountable for their own performance, and get them committed to attaining quality in a highly motivated fashion.”

The aim is to motivate people to choose themselves to make a deep commitment with greater responsibility and authority, so that they will act independently, but on the basis of interests defined by the organisation. This is precisely one part of the third contradiction. Simultaneous with the emphasis on empowerment, TQM, like many other modern management models, is characterised by managerialism, the belief that the organisation’s fate is a function of what the management does (Furusten, 1996). The TQM concept has a marked top-down perspective and is based on the commitment of leaders; among other things, it also stresses the importance of the ‘strong leader’ as a model (Hackman & Wageman, 1995), Eklund, 1997). This is thus not in line with the idea of empowerment, according to for example Argyris, (1998).

TQM advocates a unanimous organisation that shares the visions and values of the management, and it proposes a deliberate influence of individual’s values and attitudes in accordance with organisational requirements. One example of the fact that the organisational culture may be perceived as a consciously chosen means of control is found in Dygert (2000), who advo-
cates a team effort to achieve absolute and total commitment to develop a sense of ownership. New ideas must be sold by the management and visions must be ‘shared’. The best way, according to Dygert (2000), is to involve the employees in as many of the organisations decisions as possible, since people will support what they help to create.

The TQM literature has, in this way, an unproblematic attitude to cultural and attitudinal changes, with a perspective based on assumptions that the organisation comprises a group of people with a single set of values and loyalty, and with management’s ‘right to manage’ seen as rational and legitimate as an underlying theme. Implementation of TQM is seen as a matter of motivation, with the correct attitudes being instilled by simple training programs and education (Wilkinson, 1999).

A problem can be to establish absolute and total commitment within ethical boundary marks. The choices for individual co-workers are limited and the pressure for compliance to organisational needs can be hard. Consequently it is easy to end up in decisions you are not fully comfortable with. The use of smaller teams, in an effort to establish a unitary work force by using internal relations and obligations within the teams, is of course powerful but could be questioned. Drury (1997) warns about the possibility that self-directed work teams can turn into ‘tyranny of the workforce’ by themselves. Argyris (1998) also argues that empowerment often enters the realm of political correctness, and if you challenge change you become an enemy of change.

There is always a risk of a sense of manipulation in organisations that emphasize motivation and attitude strategies, such as in TQM. This becomes extra problematic because questions concerning power and conflicts are often hidden by the harmony and unitarist perspective (Dale, 1999; Svensson, 1997; Rövik, 2000).

Possible causes of employment discontent, listed by Pruijt (2000), are:
- The employment relation is subordination of the employee to the employer.
- The employee is more dependent on the employer than the employer is on the individual employee.
- The employee is instrumental in the accumulation of capital. There is a constant drive to reduce labor costs, to intensify the pressure of work, and to render existing workers redundant. (Pruijt, 2000)

Many times these issues seem to be neglected in the discussion of the employee relation.

Thus, the rhetoric around TQM may take on ideological, even manipulative, overtones, providing strong legitimacy for management prerogatives and rendering employee dissent illegitimate. TQM is also criticised by Flood & Jackson (1991) for ideological control, manipulation and mistrust. But, on the other hand, leadership is, according to Bryman (1996), always more or less manipulative. Still, Hackman & Wageman (1995) warn, “pseudo-participation is ill- advised, because people almost always are able to tell when they are being manipulated,” and there is a risk to undermine management’s credibility.

Another part of the third contradiction is that TQM, together with many of today’s modern organisational models, open up for individuals’ independence, freedom of action, their own responsibility and personal development. According to Ishikawa (1985) TQM advocates equal treatment of everybody without privileges – including leaders. Most people consider this a good thing. The form of organisation may therefore be said to be ‘seductive’ for the co-
workers, but it is no far cry from becoming ‘a greedy organisation’ and functioning as the employer’s ‘ideal existence’, a system that can exploit the individual as much as possible (Lindgren, 1999; Rasmussen, 1999). This is an especially great risk in organisations with dwindling resources. Such a situation may create general obstacles to quality work, willingness to make changes, commitment, motivation, learning and innovative power – in other words the desired positive effects of the modern forms of organisation. The consequences for the individual may be greater responsibility without real influence on her/his work (Argyris, 1998). McCabe et al. (1998) also state that American and European quality efforts are characterized by intense workload, control, responsibility in front of the management, surveillance and pressure from customers and colleagues. At the same time the scope for recovering, reflection and learning is reduced.

However, the unions and other labour market actors are all very positive and optimistic about TQM and the other modern management concepts (Johansson et al., 2004). One explanation of this is that TQM does include opportunities for empowerment and participation, albeit often mainly in relation to task-based issues. Ishikawa (1985) advocate delegation as much as possible to establish respect for humanity as part of the management philosophy. Although TQM in practice sometimes involves problematic or limited empowerment, it should thus not be neglected, if only care is taken so that the good idea does not create negative effects when it is implemented. To paraphrase Abraham Lincoln in Argyris’ words (1998):

“You can empower all of the people some of the time and some of the people all of the time, but you can’t empower all of the people all of the time.”

Leadership in TQM requires an act of balance

There are new demands from the global market for flexible organisations adjusted to the increased pace. The response from modern management is often flat, non-hierarchical and empowered organisations in accordance with, for instance, the TQM concept. This calls for adjusted leadership approaches. But one problem with the TQM concept is that there are some embedded contradictions that can lead to unexpected problems. There is, for example, a fundamental tension between empowerment, individual development and innovation, on the one hand, and the requirement for conformance to tight behavioural specifications on the other (Wilkinson et al, 1998). Each of these parts is important individually and cannot be excluded but makes demands on leaders’ ability to strike a balance between them.

To conclude, there are some supportive suggestions and an introduction to a discussion regarding what modern leaders should keep in mind. The first suggestion is that it is not wise to take for granted that all co-workers are equally interested in increasing their effort and responsibility. Employee involvement is considered essential by most modern management concepts including the TQM concept. It is important to create the conditions needed for everybody’s active participation using methodologies based on win-win situations, but it is equally important to create scope and respect for alternative approaches. Invitations to true influence and autonomy, with reduced managerial control through delegation of authority, are, to high extent, questions of mutual trust. The same goes for voluntarily increased responsibility. The new empowered organisations are also changing the role of leaders to have a more supportive and coaching approach. The mission for modern leaders might be to act as honest and transparent as possible supporting the discussion of the organisations’ mission and future.
The second suggestion is to be observant of what the organisation is rewarding. Taking in consideration Drucker’s (1999) argument, that “what is measured gets done”, it might be beneficial to observe what the organisations are actually rewarding and paying attention to. Questions of validity could also be relevant. Evaluations and appraisal system might, for instance, give a false or distorted picture of facts to base strategically decisions on. The point is to have this in mind and not to overestimate the results of evaluations and appraisal systems and be open for issues that are not included but could be of great interest.

Organisational learning is based on solidarity to share information, thereby increasing the organisational knowledge. The trend towards individualism in the western culture may not be consistent with organisational interests. If the salary system, for instance, is based on individual performance, cooperation might not be encouraged. Individual motives and the organisational collective effort may have to be adjusted to each other. We should also be aware of a possible collision between individualistic and collective approaches. The third suggestion is not to choose one or the other but to find a balance between rewarding, both of individual performance and of collective results.

Regular developmental conversations have proved to be a suitable tool for the necessary dialogue between individual co-workers and their leaders for adjustment between individual motives and organisational needs. The system and infrastructure for communication are usually the responsibility of leaders as well as taking the initiative for other collective and relation building activities. The fourth suggestion is to recognize that an organisation is a multitude of many different individuals. It may be wrong to assume that the organisations comprises a group of people with a single set of values, or that it is possible to accomplish visions and core values equally shared by everybody. This can be done to some degree, but a mixture of different views and experiences can provide a dynamic and communicative learning environment. A system of established routines may give a useful infrastructure, creating trust and being supportive to secure the quality improvement work. But if exaggerated, with no divergence, bureaucracy and over-specification may be counterproductive to motivation, reflection, alternative thinking and learning.

Whatever type of leadership approach that is used, it is important that rhetoric and actions are convergent to avoid hesitation about what is intended. Transparency and mutual trust seem to be key factors. To give credibility to mutually agreed principles, leaders should act as role models through their actions. The fifth suggestion is to recognize which type of leadership approach that is actually in use. It is important since the leadership approach influences the general attitude in the organisation and the co-workers might follow you and your example, if they find you worthwhile.

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