Roskilde University

Table of content

Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1.1 Leadership Concept

There are as many definitions of leadership as the individuals who have attempted to define it. Northouse (2010) compares leadership concept to other terms such as "love" and "democracy" that people know but they have different meanings for different individuals. Northouse (2010) classifies leadership as a group process whereby the leader is the center of group change and activity. From a personality perspective, leadership entails the characteristics and unique traits that a person possesses. For example, an organization considers individuals with excellent communication, problem-solving and interpersonal skills great leaders. Furthermore, leadership can be defined as a behavior or an act depending on the thing that individuals do to create change in the environment. Leadership can also focus on what a leader does or the process of leadership (Nohria & Khurana, 2010). It can be the power relations existing between followers and leaders. It is, however, important to consider various common phenomenon when defining leadership such as it is a process, it involves influence, it occurs in groups, and it has shared goals. Hence, leadership is a process whereby an individual influences a group of people to attain a common goal (Northouse, 2010). A leader motivates, inspires and aligns people besides establishing direction through vision creation and setting of strategies.

1.1.2 Leadership Implementation in Organizations

Leadership is a crucial element in the success of an organization. It helps a team adapt to its environment through the elimination of ineffective behavioral patterns and replace them with new ones. Leaders create a great sense of purpose in a group by linking efforts to

successful outcomes. They create a condition that enhances the performance of followers beyond their self-interests. Importantly, organizations depend on great leaders to guide, support, direct and assist groups in achieving a common goal (Taylor, Cornelius & Colvin, 2014). Hence, leadership plays a vital role the effectiveness of an organization.

The importance of organizational leadership has created the need for leadership training (Morrisette & Schraeder, 2010). For instance, multinational corporations such as General Motors, IBM, and Unilever introduced trainee programs as a strategy of nurturing their leaders. Such organizations depend on good leadership to shape their culture and influence business performance. Thus, it is important for leaders to empower and motivate employees by aligning to organizational values, identity, and culture.

Particularly, it is the role and responsibility of the Human Resource Management (HRM) to develop and implement leadership programs. Such developmental activities identify and nurture new talent as well as skills needed to develop great leaders. Importantly, the trainee programs emphasize the need for leaders to maintain the values and culture of an organization required to achieve a common goal (Sheri-Lynne Leskiw, & Singh, 2007). Organizations, therefore, go an extra mile to ensure they identify individuals with the potential to influence other employees in achieving organizational goals by conducting periodic leadership training programs.

1.1.3 Leadership in IKEA

I chose IKEA as my case study since the firm conducts a trainee program for 10 years in Denmark. Furthermore, I had access to one of the leaders in charge of the Leadership Trainee Program.

IKEA is among the largest home-furniture stores in the world. In 1943, a young Swedish man, Ingvar Kamprad, established the firm in Denmark. Kamprad produced picture frames, wallets, table runners among other products at an affordable price. His products

became popular the moment he started advertising them in local newspapers. At the end of the 1940´s, furniture was introduced into IKEA which experienced a massive growth not only in Sweden but also worldwide. Today, the firm has 139,000 co-workers in 44 countries generating annual sales of 27 billion euros (IKEA, n.d.).

It is important to conduct a case study on IKEA since it has invested a lot of resources in training leaders (IKEA n.d.). The organization stands out from others as it focuses more on leading the business through people. Therefore, it aims at instilling values in its employees that can help them achieve a common goal. The organization wants individuals who can adapt, learn, inspire and motivate others to improve their performance.

1.1.4 The Kind of Leadership Reflected in the Ikea Leadership Trainee Program

Based on the interview that I conducted with "R," a team leader at IKEA, the trainee program reflects a relationship-oriented leadership. HRM spends a lot of resources on training employees with the potential of becoming team leaders. According to Malinauskas and GanusauskaitĖ (2012), some leaders use coaching to influence the behavior of their followers. The process can involve technical guidance, career counseling, mentoring or training that aim at developing processes which build the capabilities of an individual to achieve both long-term and short-term goals. It is conducted through group interactions and based on mutual trust and respect. Additionally, the leaders and followers partner to achieve a maximum impact. Similarly, IKEA leads its business through people. It, therefore, passes skills from junior to senior managers through training. When asked what a learner needs to do to work in the HR department, interviewee "R" responded by stating that the person has to portray traits of a leader first then demonstrate he or she has the power to influence others in achieving a common organizational goal. Therefore, the training process helps trainers identify potential leaders to nurture their talent and develop their leadership skills. By understanding how the program is developed, as well as its goals, it is possible to understand

some of the views of the firm about leadership, which brings me to the formulation of the cardinal question of this project:

What kind of understanding of leadership is reflected in the IKEA Leadership Trainee Program?

2.0 Chapter 2 Research Design

2.1 Using Empirical Data from a Case Study

This project employed the case study research design to get empirical data. A case study is a flexible design which helps to examine issues related to institutional systems. In this case, it explores the kind of leadership reflected in the IKEA training program. Importantly, a case study helps to investigate particular issues in depth and to use multiple sources of evidence crucial in describing a study (Starman, 2013). The IKEA case study, therefore, aided in the collection of empirical data. This study focused on one case since the aim of the study was to test a leadership theory.

The purpose of this case study was to provide empirical data that can test a theory that explains kind of leadership reflected in IKEA leadership program. The analysis of different theoretical frameworks helped in understanding the case study. Additionally, theory testing helped to derive a logical conclusion and predictions based on a conceptual framework that was compared with empirical data in the case. Notably, the IKEA case study is an instrument that played a significant role in understanding organizational leadership. This study design also helped in determining which of the three leadership theories selected best explained the case. The IEA case study was used to provide empirical data regarding the Trainee

Leadership Programs. The information was then compared with different theoretical frameworks to identify a theory that best explains organizational leadership at the firm. Therefore, the case study will help to relate theoretical concepts to processes, people or relations.

3.0 Chapter 3 Methodology

3.1. The Structure of the Paper

This paper is divided into six chapters. The first chapter introduces the concept of leadership from a theoretical and practical perspective. It also provides an overview of IKEA, an organization which implements a training leadership program, as the case study. It is in this section that the cardinal question, what kind of understanding of leadership is reflected in the IKEA leadership program, is introduced. The second and the third chapters discuss the use of a case study design, hermeneutics research methodology and interviewing as a data collection method in the accomplishment of the research. This section provides a detailed explanation for choosing a case study over other research designs and the choice of theories for the study. It also states the significance of case study and theory triangulation in validating the data presented in the research. Chapter four of this paper is the analysis of leadership theories namely: the leader-member exchange, contingency, and team-leadership theories. The fifth chapter is an analysis of the IKEA leadership training and the comparison of the data with different theoretical concepts. The purpose of this section is to determine the kind of leadership reflected in IKEA leadership program. The last part of the paper provides a conclusion by answering the cardinal question of the research. It concludes that IKEA leadership training program reflects a relationship-oriented kind of leadership.

3.2. Theory of Science

The study employed hermeneutics research methodology to understand and interpret the meaning of organizational leadership. Hermeneutics aids in the interpretation of social sciences. Interviews are used to obtain an in-depth and holistic understanding of a given phenomenon. Hermeneutic phenomenology focuses on the subjective experience of a group or a person. It is primarily concerned with conveying information as encountered by an individual through their stories (Kafle, 2013). Therefore, an interview was used gain the experience of participant "R" regarding the IKEA leadership training program. The existence of a common language between the respondent and the interviewer facilitated the communication of information since it is a universal medium in which understanding occurs. However, this methodology does not focus on the accuracy and amplification of texts based on prior knowledge but rather in understanding particular texts by creating a deep and rich account of a phenomenon. The research was based on the idea that a phenomenon can have more than one perspective. The texts from the interview were, therefore, interpreted without reference to prior knowledge.

Notably, hermeneutic research methodology does not have specific analytic requirements (Kafle, 2013). Hence, the only guidelines that were followed included investigating the team leadership experience, having an oriented stance toward the question and describing the experience through writing. It is in this way that the study identified trivial aspects from the training leadership program that created meaning and understanding regarding organizational leadership.

Therefore, data was collected by administering an open-ended questionnaire to respondent "R". The information was then analyzed through interpretation, reflective writing, and reading. It was important to maintain the quality of the entire process by ensuring the information given was credible and dependable. Nevertheless, it was quite a challenge to

refrain from being involved in the respondent's world, thus, causing possible biases in interpreting the data. Additionally, the interpreted text may not have expressed the best intentions of the participant.

3.3 Interview

To collect empirical data, a reception analysis method trough an interview was carried out. The goal was to obtain both a qualitative perception from the interviewee as well as a factual, and for that, open-end questions were predominant in order to obtain the biggest amount of information possible by giving the interviewee total freedom to answer. (Mathieu, D. & M.J. Brites 2014)

During data collection, probing questions were used to provide sufficient data about the behavior, opinion, feelings, and knowledge of the respondent regarding IKEA leadership training program. It is through the interview that the participant was able to share his experience as a team leader IKEA. The questions were asked sequentially since he was expected to give facts before giving information on any other controversial matter. Additionally, questions on past and present issues came before those that touched on the future.

3.4 Case study Selection

A case study is a research design that examines one example in a class of phenomenon in detail (Starman, 2013). For instance, researchers conduct case studies on different multinational organization probably to determine their leadership approaches. It is unlikely that the findings of one company may be used to generalize the leadership of the other multinational corporation since every organizational values, culture, strategies, and structures vary. Nevertheless, a purely descriptive phenomenological study can result in scientific innovation without generalization (Flyvbjerg, 2006). Furthermore, a strategic

choice of a case may significantly contribute to the generalization of a case study. This study utilizes a cases study to illustrate organizational leadership theories with the use of empirical data. Through understanding and interpretation of texts, the case study will support the theoretical description of organizational leadership.

The research used IKEA Denmark as a case study since the firm runs a leadership program meant to develop the abilities of trainees to become leaders who can overcome challenges and improve team performance at stores (IKEA n.d). The company invests a lot of resources in nurturing employees with the potential of becoming leaders who can manage and influence other staff to meet organizational goals. Importantly, team leaders focus on empowering employees with the relevant skills and knowledge they need to improve themselves over a particular period.

IKEA case study will help in generating and testing a hypothesis. Case studies are especially useful in testing candidate theories. Additionally, an extreme case is better than an average one since it generates a lot of experience (Starman, 2013). The aim of the research was to strategically select IKEA, a multinational organization running a leadership trainee program and identify the kind of leadership it reflects. Numerous leadership theories were tested using data from the interview to determine how theoretical ideas work in real life context.

3.5 Triangulation

Triangulation is a quality assurance technique that ensures a case study uses a disciplined research approach. It involves combining different theories, levels of techniques, methods, and strategies. Triangulation is particularly useful in the development of a case study as it ensures the validity of the information presented (Yeasmin & Rahman, 2012). Multiple data is used to establish and verify meaning rather than using a broad range of reference to interpret a concept. The study combines different methods to illuminate a case

from more than one angle. This research used a case study as well as theories to derive a conclusion. This technique is beneficial since it ensures the validity of the study.

This research will conduct data triangulation necessary for cross-checking of some information but also in strengthening the knowledge level about organizational leadership by using both a case study and theories. An analysis of the IKEA leadership training program will be conducted through text understanding and interpretation to analyze the kind of leadership approach employed in the program. Some leadership theories will then be discussed in detail. The theoretical knowledge will be compared with that obtained from the case study to create an understanding organizational leadership. The information can also be used to increase the knowledge level of the phenomenon which can result in case study generalization.

Therefore, using more than one method helps to understand organizational leadership very well by giving more insight into the topic. Additionally, triangulation is useful in minimizing inadequacies found in either the case study or theories which improve the validity of the research. Moreover, the use of the technique in the research will ensure comprehensive data is obtained. Lastly, the use of both a case study and theories allow the quick recognition of data inconsistencies, hence, increasing the validity of the research.

3.6 Choice of Theory

The selection of suitable theories to be used in the case study research began with the identification of the investigation area which was to determine the kind of leadership reflected in IKEA leadership training program. Second, the theories to be selected depended on the research goal which was to create an understanding of organizational leadership through the case study analysis of IKEA training program. Putting these factors into consideration before the selection of theories was useful in gaining insight into the relevance of using models to understand the case study.

The selection of models to be utilized was based on a deductive method. A careful review of course materials with leadership content such as books, journal articles, and lecture notes helped in the identification of many theories and narrowing down to the ones that closely related to the case study. The credibility of the reading materials was also paramount as the research utilized peer reviewed articles and academic books whose primary focus were leadership theories and practice. It was important to use credible sources of information to increase the validity of the study. Notably, it was ensured the selected models had leadership concepts similar to the ones in the case study.

4.0 Chapter 4 Leadership Theories

4.1 Leader- Member Exchange Theory (LMX)

Researchers perceived leadership as something leaders did towards their followers before the development of LMX theory. They believed leaders treated subordinates as a group, in a collective manner and by using an average style of leadership. However, theorists such as Graen Dansereau and Mary Uhl-Bien challenged this assumption by conceptualizing leadership as a process based on interactions between followers and leaders (Northouse, 2010). LMX theory, therefore, makes the dyadic relationship between leaders and followers as the key focus of the leadership process as indicated in the diagram below.

Figure 1: Leadership Dimensions
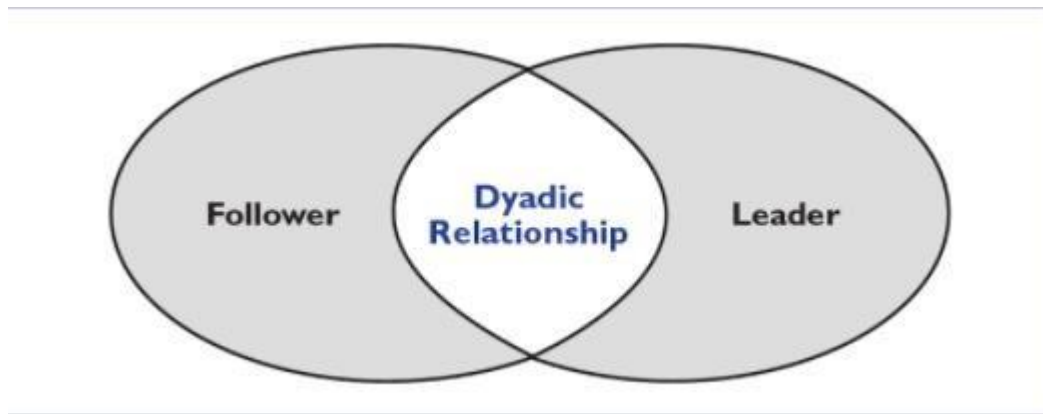
Source (Northouse, 2010)

Figure 2: Vertical Dyads
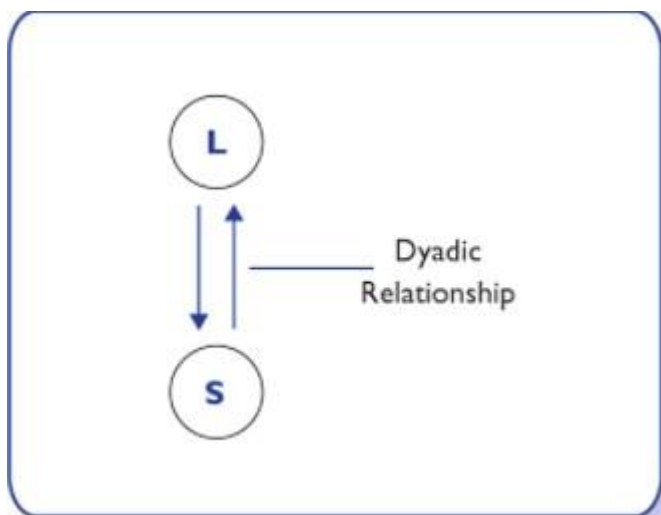
Source (Northouse, 2010)

Figure 2 is an illustration of a dyadic relationship that leaders form with their subordinates. The leader establishes a close working relationship with each subordinate through the exchange of content and process. For instance, a supervisor can develop a dyadic bond with a member of a group by allocating them extra roles, thus, forming an in-group. On the other hand, out-group members have a weak relationship with their supervisors. Their relationship is entirely based on defined contracts such as an employment contract.
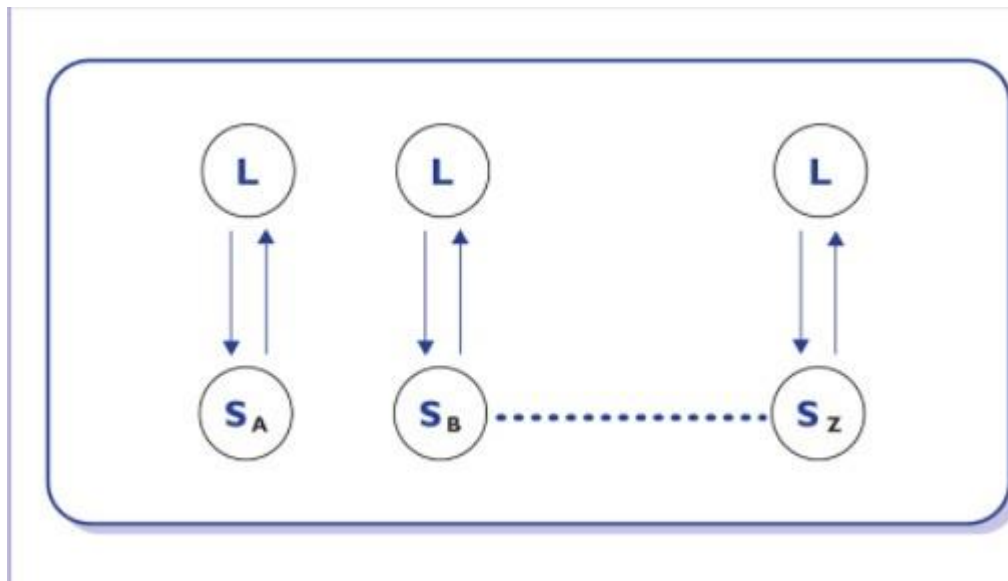
Source (Northouse, 2010)

The diagram in Figure 2 shows the unique relationship that a leaders forms with all their subordinates. A member of a group becomes either an out-group or in-group depending on how close he or she is with a leader. Some juniors experience minimal challenges creating a positive work relationship with their superiors. Leaders may also experience the same problem when working with employees. The personal characteristics and the personality of an individual determine if a member becomes part of an in-group or an out-group. In other instances, however, the involvement of subordinates in expanding their roles also influence the nature of the relationship between a leader and a follower. For example, members of a group can negotiate with their leaders on the things they can do to become part of an in- group. However, the individuals who do not show interest in taking extra roles become part of the out-group. Hence, leaders are more compatible with subordinates willing to do extra things for their leaders while they also do the same for them.

According to the LMX theory, individuals who establish a strong leader-member relationship experience heightened work-related communication, increased performance and preferential treatment (Northouse, 2010). Contrariwise, leaders who have a weak relationship with their subordinates receive less support regarding accomplishing additional roles and

have little trust of their followers. On the other hand, the members lack adequate support from their supervisors which is vital for their performance and growth. This theory, therefore, suggests that leaders who practice leader-member exchanges express trust, respect, and obligation as they support each other.

LMX theory contributes positively to the existing knowledge on leadership process. It has provided an accurate description of individual relationships between leaders and followers in a workplace. The theory helps to understand how people relate to each other and their leaders in an organization. Second, LMX identifies the dyadic relationship as the primary focus of a leadership process while the theories focus on characteristics of leaders, context, and subordinates. Lastly, the theory reveals that communication is vital for all leaders since it creates, develops and sustains useful exchange.

However, critiques argue that LMX theory causes division at the workplace due to the formation of in-groups and out-groups. Arguably, this leadership approach encourages inequalities among subordinates which may affect the performance and growth of other individuals due to lack of teamwork and corporation. Notably, the theory fails to provide a comprehensive and detailed explanation of the creation of a leader-member exchange. Therefore, the model needs further development and clarity of concepts and definitions.

4.2 Contingency Theory

Fred Fielder invented the first situational leadership approach. The theorist firmly believed that leadership styles are reflective of an individual's personality and he or she does not change their style. Therefore, contingency theory explains the extent to which a leadership style fits the context. It also determines whether a style of leadership is task or relationship-oriented. A task-driven leader is primarily concerned with attaining an organizational goal. For instance, he or she ensures that members meet deadlines and deliver high-quality work. On the contrary, a relationship-oriented leader is mainly concerned with

creating interpersonal relationships with his or her subjects (Northouse, 2010). This leader strives to understand his or her subordinates and mentor them.

Furthermore, the theory characterizes situations based on the position of power, leader-member relations and task structures. A leader-member relationship focuses on issues of loyalty, the degree of trust and the level to which an individual is attracted to his or her leader. It is at this point that in-groups and out-groups are formed. Second, a task -oriented leader primarily focuses on clearly articulating the requirements of a job. A leader who uses structured tasks has more control than the one who focuses on unstructured duties. Third, the position of power is a situation that determines whether a person can delegate tasks, punish, reward, hire of fire a subordinate (Hanisch & Wald, 2012). Thus, the more the power the favorable the situation. A leader can, therefore, change unfavorable conditions to meet their leadership style.

This theory has been used for many decades as a reliable and valid approach to achieving effective leadership. It also emphasizes on the fact that a leader does not have to change his or her leadership style but to the changing demands in different situations (Hanisch & Wald, 2012). Contingency theory, therefore, provides adequate knowledge that organizations can use to develop leadership profiles for human resource planning. Nonetheless, critiques argue that it is challenging to change some situations. Arguably, a changing leadership style is easier than changing a situation. For instance, it is challenging for a leader to develop a close relationship with subordinates who can do additional roles if their leadership of style does not promote interpersonal relations.

4.3 Team Leadership Theory

This theory takes a different approach to leadership as compared to others since it does not reciprocate a leader-subordinate process. Although a leader is an individual in the group, he or she does not hold a permanent position (Dugan, 2017). A leader is any member

of a group with the knowledge and skill needed to handle a particular situation. The contribution of every member of a group is perceived as important, and everyone is equal. Therefore, a team does not discriminate between a member and a team leader in a group. The theory emphasizes on a high level of team effectiveness. It is upon the individuals to identify the various ways they can improve their performance and demonstrate leadership which will benefit the group. According to the theory, the first stage of creating an effective team leader is the creation of a team. Potential leaders are selected and provided with a clear direction on the objectives of the team. The second stage involves the development of a team through supporting and mentoring the members. It is during the performing stage that team leaders use results to determine the members of strong leadership and those who are not able to lead. The last stage involves sustaining high performance by bringing together individuals and ideas.

Team leadership theory helps to understand organizational leadership. For instance, some organizations instill leadership skills on employees, thus, allowing them to step up and accomplish certain tasks in situations where others are incompetent. Therefore, there are situations where a leader-centric approach is more appropriate than team leadership. On the contrary, critiques argue that the theory can only be applied in groups that are highly motivated and are responsible for the team performance (Dugan, 2017).

4. 4 Relating the Theories to Processes, People or Relations

The three models play a significant role in analyzing the IKEA leadership training case study as they explain organizational processes, people, and relationships between leaders and subordinates. The LMX theory will be used to analyze the interpersonal skills IKEA team leaders develop with their trainees since it is based on the interaction between followers and leaders. The method will help to understand how the processes involved in recruiting and training of potential leaders. It will also examine the personalities and personal characteristics

of the team leaders and the trainee to gain an understanding of the leadership training program. Lastly, the leadership concepts of LMX theory will help in the interpretation of relationships established between IKEA team leaders and the trainees.

Contingency theory takes a situational leadership approach. This model applies to individuals who lead not by changing their leadership style but by altering situations. Contingency theory will explain that IKEA leaders have improved the organizational processes by introducing leadership training programs. It will also define the nature of relationship leaders develop with their subordinates and how it affects the success of the organization. Importantly, the theory helps to determine whether leadership in IKEA is task oriented or relationship-based.

Team leadership theory is different from other theoretical concepts since it does not take a leader-centered approach. Therefore, it will determine whether all individuals in a group are equal or particular people are set as leaders. Moreover, team leadership theory will provide knowledge on the processes involved in selecting leaders. Lastly, it will be easy to understand whether trainees and team leaders perceive each other as equal based on how they communicate, cooperate and accomplish tasks.

5.0 Chapter 5 Analysis

The purpose of this section is to determine the kind of leadership reflected in IKEA leadership program. It involves an analysis of the respondent's texts and the making of conclusions supported by theoretical evidence. The leadership will be analyzed based on processes, relationships, and people.

5.1 Leadership Process in IKEA

Leadership is a process whereby an individual influences followers to achieve a common goal (Northouse, 2010). In IKEA, team leaders select people who undergo training

for eighteen months after which they may or may not lead. During the training process, they are introduced to functions of the organization, its policies and team leaders in the Human Resource department. Trainees also learn organizational values, culture, and beliefs as a process of shaping their perception and gaining knowledge about IKEA. The training process provides trainees with an opportunity to grow since team leaders schedule meetings on a weekly basis to get feedback on their progress. Individuals with high leadership traits take the chance to interact with their team leaders and receive extra roles which help them to be part of an in-group as discussed under the Leader Member Exchange theory.

Responded "R" also stated that the organization makes decisions based on situations. Trainees receive skills and knowledge on how to effectively respond to any arising issue in the firm. It is, therefore, evident that the organization's leadership process depends on situations. According to the contingency theory, situations are based on the position of power, leader-member relations, and task structures. A leader-member relationship focuses on issues of loyalty, the degree of trust and the level to which a member is attracted to his or her leader. Trainees can only become good team leaders if they have the ability to establish a close working relationship with the subordinates, be trustworthy and use a task structure that works well with the other employees.

The IKEA leadership training programs require team leaders to evaluate trainees before they are hired and track their progress during training. This process is important since it helps to determine trainees with the potential of being team leaders by comparing their performance. Team members also ensure the learners accomplish tasks and achieve organizational goals. For instance, respondent "R" stated that trainees needed to analyze the business performance of the firm and identify the reasons leading to insignificant sales. Based on the contingency theory which categorizes situational leaders as either task or relationship oriented, it is arguable that the IKEA uses both approaches since leaders emphasize the

accomplishment of jobs as well as the creation of interpersonal skills with the subordinates. Overall, the IKEA leadership training program strongly reflects a relationship-oriented leadership process since it encourages interactions between team leaders and the trainees.

5.2 Leadership and People

From a personality perspective, leadership entails the characteristics and distinctive traits that a person possesses (Northouse, 2010). Participant "R"explained that he uses the first week of the training to understand the different personalities of trainees. He also urges them to know traits of each member by relating on a personal and work level to connect to each other quickly. Additionally, respondent "R" stated that he easily learns the personality trait of individuals by just observing the way they work, interact or walk. The different characters of trainees may, therefore, determine if they become team leaders or work as other employees. According to LMX theory, leaders can develop dyadic relationships with group members by allocating them extra roles, thus, forming an in-group. On the other hand, leaders create, outgroups, a relationship with their followers that is entirely based on defined contracts such as an employment contract. The personal characteristics and the personality of an individual determine if he or she becomes part of an in-group or an out-group (Northouse, 2010). For instance, a team leader will choose a trainee who shows skills of conflict resolution, accountability, transparency and efficient communication over trouble-makers and the individuals who need close supervision to accomplish simple tasks.

Notably, IKEA team leaders encourage employees to first focus on developing themselves then their careers. Some of the areas that may require development to become great future team leaders in the HR department include possessing personal values such as respect, understanding, patient and emotional intelligence. They also need to have excellent communication and interpersonal skills and take criticism positively. Importantly, they need to learn to be responsible and work without supervision and ensure they portray a good image

of IKEA. An individual with these personality traits can quickly become a team leader. Team leadership theory emphasizes on a high level of team effectiveness. It is upon the individuals to identify the various ways they can improve their performance and demonstrate leadership which will benefit the group (Dugan, 2017). Learners who become members of an in-group due to an excellent relationship with their supervisors become team leaders. Hence, they enjoy equality. According to respondent "R", trainees who become team leaders are involved in hiring new employees just like the other HR officials. However, only the people who are willing to negotiate with the team leaders on getting extra roles lead the other group members who do not show signs of leadership at the end of the training become part of the out-group. This selection criterion can cause division among the trainees and impact on organizational performance. IKEA should consider identifying other areas of competence for out-groups as a way of motivating them to improve their performance.

5.3 Relationships

When the interviewee was asked about how trainees spend the three weeks before the training program begins, responded by saying that was the time for trainees to interact with each other and other subordinates in the company. The interaction should not only be amongst themselves but also with the team leaders, and it can either be informal or formal. For instance, "R" revealed that he even invites them for a beer after work or calls a thirty-minute meeting just to talk with them at an individual level. During that time, he asks trainees how they are doing, the challenges they are facing and the things that should be changed. This strategy creates a dyadic relationship between a leader and a follower as suggested by the LMX theory. It encourages mutual trust, respect and promotes commitment (Northouse, 2010). A leader who supports an open communication creates a close relationship with his or her subordinates.

IKEA has incorporated team building activities in the leadership training program to create a bond among subordinates and improve their relationship with team leaders. Respondent "R" notes that besides getting to know each other, team building activities help trainees gain knowledge on the kind of company they are working with, the goals of the training and the different learning needs of each. At the end of team bonding period, they focus on other issues such understanding the practice of Human Resource Management and the organizational culture. The interaction time allows trainees to understand the uniqueness of each member such as their strengths and weaknesses and learn the personality traits of the team leaders to better fit in as a member of an in-group rather than an out-group.

The LMX theory suggests leaders who have a weak relationship with their subordinates receive less support regarding accomplishing extra roles and have little trust of their followers. On the other hand, the members lack adequate support from their supervisors which is vital for their performance and growth (Northouse, 2010). As the IKEA team leaders interact with the trainees, they identify and select individuals who have excellent interpersonal skills, are self-motivated and show a high level of responsibility. The chosen people receive more guidance, mentoring and support as compared to the rest of the members. In return, trainees who are part of an in-group help team leaders in doing extra roles such as hiring employees and managing other trainees.

6.0 Conclusion

An analysis of the IKEA case study leads to the conclusion that leadership training program reflects a relationship-oriented leadership. Contingency, leader member exchange, and team leadership theories were used to understand IKEA leadership. These models fitted the case study since they are all relationship-oriented models of leadership. Contingency theory suggests that situations are based on the position of power, leader-member relations,

and task structures. This theory fitted in the IKEA case study since the organization makes decisions based on situations. Trainees receive skills and knowledge on how to effectively respond to any arising issue in the company. Members who were identified as fit for team leadership positions are treated as other leaders as supported by the team leader theory. This model recognizes leadership, not as a position that a particular person holds alone, but any individual can take it for as long as he or she has knowledge or skills required for a given situation. This study, however, identified LMX as the most appropriate theory to use in understanding the kind of leadership reflected in the IEA leadership program. LMX theory illustrates a dyadic bond between leaders and subordinates. Team leaders at IKEA focus on understanding the personality traits and personal characteristics of every trainee by interacting with them both formally and informally through team bonding activities, social events, and brief private meetings. They, therefore, select team leaders among members who are self-motivated, responsible and emotionally intelligent. IKEA takes a relationship-oriented leadership approach to lead in business.

References

Dugan, J. P. (2017). *Leadership theory: Cultivating critical perspectives*. New Jersey: John
Wiley & Sons.

Flyvbjerg, B. (2006). Five misunderstandings about case-study research. *Qualitative
Iquiry*, *12*(2), 219-245.

Hanisch, B., & Wald, A. (2012). A bibliometric view on the use of contingency theory in
project management research. *Project Management Journal*, *43*(3), 4-23.

IKEA. (ND). *Become a manager trainee at IKEA Retrieved* April 15, 2017 from:
http://www.ikea.com/ms/da_DK/this-is-ikea/working-at-the-ikea-
group/ledertrainee/leder-i-IKEA-index.html

Kafle, N. P. (2013). Hermeneutic phenomenological research method simplified. *Bodhi: An
Interdisciplinary Journal*, *5*(1), 181-200.

M. Taylor, C., J. Cornelius, C., & Colvin, K. (2014). Visionary leadership and its relationship
to organizational effectiveness. *Leadership & Organization Development
Journal*, *35*(6), 566-583.

Malinauskas, Z., & GanusauskaitĖ, A. (2012). Executives coaching
conceptualization. *Management of Organizations: Systematic Research*, (62), 69-79.

Mathieu, D. & M.J. Brites. (2014). *"Expanding the Reach of the Interview Method".*
In Revitalising Audiences: Innovations in European Audience Research, Frauke
Zeller, Cristina Ponte & Brian O'Neill (eds.). New York: Routledge.

Morrisette, S., & Schraeder, M. (2010). Leadership development approaches. *The Journal for
Quality and Participation, 32*(4), 32-34.

Nohria, N., & Khurana, R. (Eds.). (2010). *Handbook of leadership theory and practice*.
Massachusetts: Harvard Business Press.

Northouse, P. G. (2010). *Leadership: Theory and practice*. Los Angeles, CA: Sage.

Roskilde University

Yeasmin, S., & Rahman, K. F. (2012). Triangulation' research method as the tool of social science research. *Bup Journal*, *1*(1), 154-163.

Sheri-Lynne Leskiw, & Singh, P. (2007). Leadership development: Learning from best practices. *Leadership & Organization Development Journal, 28*(5), 444-464.

Starman, A. B. (2013). The case study as a type of qualitative research. *Journal of Contemporary Educational Studies/Sodobna Pedagogika*, *64*(1), 28-43.

Appendix 1 – Interview

1. **As you stated before, the relationship between the trainee and trainer is very important. Is HR that decides who is hired?**

   R – Basically, when we hire we have this introduction day or job interview day called Assessment Day. And in the Assessment Day, all the bosses are there, all the people from HR, and there can be also some team leaders if they are able to be there.

2. **Does that happen on the very first day?**

   R – Yes, this happens before the new trainees are hired. So, what they do there is, that they have a picture of each person that is coming and they evaluate the person through different interviews, and they evaluate them in different things like how they work in groups, how they work in a video, and how they present themselves. And of course, they talk about what experience they have, what they come with, but really, we don't really focus so much on the background, we focus more on what kind of person they are. It's an evaluation more personality wise.

3. **So, the person has been filtered? Goes to tests, and then they are finalists. Do you, as a Leader, decide together with HR?**

   R – Yeah, during that day, they go through Assessment Day, they get analysed, and in the end of the day, we sit with all the people of HR...

4. **So, you interact with them?**

R – Of course, but in the end of the day, we sit down with the people from the HR, and we decide who did very good, who is going to get this job, and where should we place them. And then you place each person in one area because you already knew before which areas needed which kind of people. And not all team leaders can have a trainee. You need to have a certain amount of experience, and you also have to be good at teaching and have enough knowledge about IKEA at the same time.

5. **So, a Team Leader that has been a Leader for one year could not have a trainee?**

R – No, it could. It depends on how the team leader has been performing. I mean, you would never put a trainee together with a team leader who hasn't had an easy time, or hasn't developed results. I mean, I got a trainee after six months of being a team leader, and I guess, I would also say now that it wasn't too fast, because when you are doing good as a trainee, and you been through the whole program than you also have a certain knowledge, and it's a lot easier to identify yourself with the new trainee because you have been through the same program.

6. **Can you tell me about this chart that we see here (chart provided during the interview)? After you decide which trainee goes to which department, you need to have certain features of their personality in order to place people in a certain department. Can you give an example? For example… the department you are right now, which is?**

R – That's the bed department, and closets department...

7. **What would a good trainee need to have to work in your department?**

R – I mean, it really depends because, I mean, all people are different, and some people might come with a lot of knowledge about leadership before, because maybe they were coaches at a football club or maybe they have been doing different thigs, they maybe had volunteering jobs, but what you look for, what I look for in a trainee is - "Can I see this person become a Leader first of all?", and "Can I see this person be a part of the department?" and that depends also in which state your department is in. Is it a "healthy" department or not? What does the department need... Sometimes, it can also be a good idea to choose the opposite of my personality because maybe I need a little support on my development points and then it's a good combination, and good choosing according to that.

8. **And so, the trainees are chosen. It says here that on the first of September they go to Gothenburg (Sweden).**

R – No, no. That's a day in a meeting room. All the rooms in our store are called after Swedish cities. (Laughs) No, they are not going to Gothenburg. They go to a meeting where they receive an "intro" where they learn how it is working in IKEA.

9. **That introduction happens from 5th to 9ᵗʰ of September?**

R – yes, where they get knowledge on IKEA.

10. So, after one week…?

R – After a week they go to something called "Kick Of" together with all the other trainees.

11. So, this happens on the 27th of September and the program starts on the 1st. What happens in between this period?

R – Well, in the first month, of course you need to get to know IKEA, and it might not be just the first month, but it depends on if you already know IKEA, for example, if you already work there or if you were externally hired... And if you were externally hired you need at least three months to get used to all the things that happen in IKEA, and how it works. I mean, there are very different functions, is a very big house. For example, you need to know where to go if something happens, and you need to know all the people working there (functions and hierarchy), because what you are trying to do is become a leader, and to become a leader you need to know the people you are working with, and also get to know what are they good at, and not good at, so you can start developing them as a team, and individually wise.

12. So, between this, there is a gap of three weeks. What do the trainees do? Do they observe...?

R – No, they start... it depends on where they are located, but what I do is, I sit down first with the trainee during the first week, I give them a paper with my expectations, which is basically like a development plan, saying what are our goals for this year, and how should we reach them, what should they focus on the first month, then from the first to the third

month, the third to the sixth month, so there is a clear path and gets a lot easier for the person to know what they are doing.

13. Like for example?

R – For example, always tell the person that they should focus on getting to know that people that are working there, and I always give them assignments saying: "Try to get each person's personality, try to get knowledge on the person", not just work wise, but also on a personal level, so you can relate to the person a lot more and create thrust. Then, if you are able to do it, then it's going to be a lot easier being a trainee doing...

14. Can you give me an example…?

R – An example could be to show IKEA your interest to be a trainee, that you want to learn, and that you want to know all the colleagues that are there.

15. But how do you do that? By inviting them for a beer after work or...?

R – Yeah, and it can be small things like just taking a talk with everybody for 30 minutes in a meeting room telling them "ok, I want to hear, what are your expectations for me as a leader, and what can I do to make things better?" for example.

16. So, this is what you do on the first month, you focus on advancing people to get to know the people they will be interacting with?

R – Yes, and also to get to know the business side, because there are two sides: The people side, and the business side.

17. What would be an example of "what is to get to know the business side?

R – It could be to start looking at numbers, how much are we (IKEA) earning, why are we not earning...

18. Sales?

R – Yes, it could be just to move a bit closer to a place where we have costumers walking, and see the development, what that does, just to get the small…

19. Strategies?

R – Yes…

20. So, this is what happens in one month, do you have a chat every morning with them?

R – No, not every morning, I have a chat with the trainee, I would say… a private chat happens once a week.

21. So, its continuous monitoring, weekly...?

R – Yes, so once a week, I have a private chat that lasts 10 minutes or maybe lasts one hour, and then we just talk about how are things going. But I think when you are a trainee

you really focus really, really, really a lot on your personal development, instead of focusing on the department development. This at the beginning. But the longer you get in this program, the more you start shifting your focus from your own development to your department development, and that should be very clear. It should be very clear that shift during the process.

22. So, they go to work, they have their normal schedule for work, they start interacting with this people, and then there is this here (policies), the Kick Off…?

R – Yes, the Kick Off.

23. So, they have been working for a month...?

R – Yes, so then they are taken to a place, to Fynn... and then we sit down with all the trainees from all over Denmark, and then of course, you learn about the values of Ikea, what values are we working after…

24. How long does it take?

R – It takes two days.

25. They sleep over there?

R – Yes, and then they talk about the program as a trainee, and they focus a lot about… still, at the same time, and very early in this process, about individual development. So

here, in this two days, you really get a lot of things err... you get pushed a lot to develop yourself, to be open to get a lot of feedback, and how to handle feedback.

26. Ok, so there are team building activities?

R – Yes, of course, there are a lot of team building exercises there, but I think the main part is to get knowledge on what company you are working right now, and how is this program made like it is, and how the development for each person is different and you need to learn differently, and that's what you talk a lot about.

27. So, when you come back...?

R – When you come back you get knowledge about rules and engagement of basic HR knowledge, ok? And a lot about how many hours can you work per week, what should you do if a person don't come to work. Very basic things like how do you handle if an employee gets late… all very easy subjects that happen every day, but that you need to have a certain knowledge because there are rules about what you can say and what you cannot say. For example, you cannot never say, if somebody "calls in" sick "oh! What's the reason?" So, basic things for a trainee.

28. Then it says Introduction?

R – Yes, the it is made an introduction on how you make a working plan for a co-worker.

29. So, it's the team leader that makes a working plan for the co-workers?

R – No, I mean, it used to be, but now we have a whole department that makes it, but it's quite important, because if you get an employee hired in sixteen period weeks of time, then you need to make it on your own.

30. There is this safety courses?

R – Yes, then there is the safety of IKEA, because, of course, you work in a store where you have almost five hundred employees, and you have an average of seven thousand visitors every day, so, there is a lot of people, and it's a "small" house compared to how many people that go there. So, you need to have a fire knowledge, the you need to have a safety knowledge, a first aid knowledge, and you get that doing this program. You get training.

31. There is now two months after they started…

R – Yes, and you are on this module "Boarding Process of Ikea". So, we have something called "Onboarding", that is a process of getting to know all the different functions of IKEA.

32. How many functions does IKEA have?

R – There is a lot of functions, I mean, you have five modules on "Boarding", and basically they are "working environment, values, how HR is, how is the whole house

function... basically, you go through everything... and also, how is our interior designing, and how do we work with that. You go through everything.

33. So, the module three which is HR...

R – Yes, we also have what we call manual of conduct, and that's how should you act when you are at work, and for example, what should you do, for example, should you drive to work in IKEA's clothes or you shouldn't because… what happens if you get stopped by the police when you are driving too fast and you are sitting in your IKEA's clothes?

34. You affect the brand...

R – Yes, then you affect the brand, and you might not do it on purpose, but you know that IKEA is such a big brand that you are going to end up on a newspaper.

35. Ok, so that's codes, and then…

R – And then there is the introduction to home furnishing, and interior design, and of course the bank.

36. What is that?

R – It is a bank that IKEA actually owns, they have their own bank.

37. Where is it?

R – I mean it's located everywhere.

38. And what is it for?

R – It can be for financing, if the customer wants to buy a couch that costs ten thousand but they are not able to buy a couch for ten thousand at this time, then they can divided up for ten months and pay a thousand.

39. So, at the fifth month, we have Onboard still, it's the model sustainability.

R – Sustainability, you are getting knowledge on sustainability and what challenges there is that IKEA can talk about, and how we can work with, and then you get knowledge again on first aid because when you are a trainee, and when you are ready with the program, then you will get a phone, and that means that you will be responsible for the whole house and for your functions.

40. For the department?

R – No, no. For the whole area. All customer relations, all sales, all logistics or the whole restaurant, and you can be responsible for it… And then we have another module, where you learn a lot about the concept… What is the IKEA concept, and how are the values categorised, and why is important that we use the values in the way we do business.

41. This Onboard program, how long does it take?

R – It takes four hours, every time there is a module, so you can time, four hours five times.

42. So, it takes twenty hours?

R – Yes, it takes twenty hours, and that is not just the trainees. All the new employees get through this program.

43. So, you schedule your trainees for these modules and they still meet with you every week. So, what is SO?

R – You get an intro for the main office.

44. But what does SO mean?

R – That is the Service Office. That's the main office, the headquarters of IKEA, and right now that's located in Taastrup. And then when you are going through the Trainee Program, you also have the HR meeting, where you get to know how to recruit, and how you should do when you have an interview with an applicant…

45. So, let me interrupt you in this. So, when you finish the program, you are expected to be able to identify people to integrate the team?

R – Yes. It is not something that you learn that quickly I think, but...

46. Do all the trainees are able, or have this power to hire after they complete the program?

R – yes, if they finish and get to become a team leader, all of them should be able to hire people.

47. So, can all the trainees after they finish the program, become leaders or there are people who fail?

R – No. I mean, they can be doing the program, but you can maybe at some point see that you recruited a person or maybe two persons wrong, and maybe they don't have the leadership skills.

48. You fire them?

R – No, they don't get fired. You sit down and talk to them, and if they still feel like that they can see themselves at IKEA, then you move them to another department and make them a co-worker.

49. A co-worker, what's that?

R – It's just an employee. And during this eighteen months…

50. Is it eighteen months? It says here, its twelve months.

R – Yeah, yeah, but its eighteen months. So, if during these eighteen months, if you don't get a team leader position, after these eighteen months you will become a normal employee. You are, of course, still able to apply for team leader positions, but if you don't

finish during the eighteen months, then you will become an employee, and that's also quite though…

51. How long does it take for you to know if it's going to go good or not?

R – I think it's quite easy to see it in the first six months, and if you cannot see it in the first six months, then you have to go to the person and say that "this" is not going to work.

52. How can you see it?

R – I think... ahh. Let's say that it doesn't work in these first six months… What you do in HR is that you move the person to another department and give them like another chance because maybe the chemistry between the trainee and team is bad or… maybe they just don't have the talent to be a leader, and that can happen of course. But I think the responsibility is not just the trainee responsibility, it is also the team leader responsibility, and it takes a lot of time having a trainee. It's not easy to have a trainee. So…

53. Well, this (policies) is HR material?

R – Yes. And this is a continuation of the Kick Off. The first time they all go to Fynn with all the other trainees after four months, the you go to the first leadership fundamentals program in IKEA, and here you learn about basic leadership, how is your role as a leader, and much you should work with your self-development, and you also get knowledge on different leadership tools.

54. Do you see any theory?

R – Yes, we use a lot of theory called, I think "making decisions according to the situation"

…

55. And… So… You meet all the Danish trainees?

R – Yes, you meet all the Danish trainees and you talk about how is it going, and you focus a lot on how to develop your leadership, and you ask the person "what made you this person you are today?", and "what are your development points?", and "How can you continue to move on?". Let's say that in this program you don't have the right, maybe you don't have the right development. Well, after this moment you will know if you had the right development or not. You get a lot of feedback.

56. I didn't get it.

R – …. You go there, and you focus about yourself, and your development. And you get so much feedback.

57. From HR or from team leaders?

R – From HR, and from different team leaders. There are different bosses coming and maybe, they have conversations with all of them. This is a program where you really are, where you should go being very open, very open minded, and just try to learn from it. And then you go home and…

58. But can you tell me about one experience or one exercise?

R – One exercise... that could be that you have these four different squares on how you are as a team leader, on how you react, are reacting on emotions? Or reason? And things like that. That could be one of them.

59. And then after this…

R – But one thing that is really really important to say is that this program, I mean, you need to ask sometime "where do I learn to become a leader?". Are you learning to become a leader in the classroom? Are you learning to become a leader when you are on the "floor"? You know... You are learning to become a leader every day when you come to work on the floor, and learning with everybody. And that is very, very important to remember in this process, that the development happens every day. It's not something that just happens when you just go to one meeting. You will, of course, get something out of these meeting, but development is on the floor.

60. It's in everyday interactions?

R – Exactly, and that's very important. So, and then you get home… Ah! And the you get also knowledge about basic finance.

61. I mean, this is very important for me.

R – Yeah, basic finance is basically… ok, every year, as a team leader you have a budget. And this budget is very important that you keep this budget. For example, how many hours you have to use for the whole year. It means, ok. Can you maybe save some hours on the not so busy times? Can you do it differently, how many sicknesses? How much

sickness cost? Does sickness coast like a half a million or does it cost just 2,5 thousand, it's like… And the you also get the presentation knowledge, because it's, of course, extremely important that you are able to present things as a team leader because you are going to have your PI meetings, and you need to know how to present and talk about it. And the we are in March, and the we get to go to a meeting where you have your HR partner, and that's who is responsible for all the trainees. He is like a mentor for all the trainees. So, he talks with them about everything, they can come to him and ask for advices… and then they talk about like how was the first six months, and how have they been. Is there something they need to work in? And then doing this time, they all get dived into groups, and they have to make a project about changing something in the store.

62. Like what?

R – It could be working on add-ons. What is an add-on? An add-on is a project when… you want to sell a bed.

63. To make it more visible?

R – No, No. You want to sell a bed, but you also want to sell a mattress. So, you want to sell more, ok? And then maybe you can make a case about that for example.

64. How long does it that take?

R – The case? It takes like to weeks to a month, and then you need to go, and present the project, and, of course. You also need to prove.. ah what is it called? You need to defend it! And this is good learning.

65. What happens if you fail with your case?

R – You cannot fail your case, but then you will of course get feedback on how it was, and its honest feedback. Of course, you will get to know if it was not such a good thing or if it was a bad thing. Yes. And then there is also, something called like "Planning, Prioritizing, and Delegating Meeting" where you get to know how to administrate your assignments in time as a team leader.

66. It's six months now. Don't you think that person already learned it now?

R – Of course, but it's always nice to get some tools. Even though you are so good at being a planner, and you have everything "down to the spot", you can always learn something by going to things and get knowledge about it, and that's the good thing. And then you go to the last "fundamental Leadership models" with all the other trainees in June, and the you are there for three days, and here you REALLY, REALLY, REALLY go into how you are as a leader, what can you do better as a leader. Ant that can be, you are doing a lot of exercises, you talk a lot. For example, in the first five minutes you just go there, you can be standing in a room, and the you will get feedback on the first five minutes on how people see you as a person.

67. But you need to do something in order to get feedback from a person?

R – No, no. At most times, you can give really good feedback in the first five minutes of meeting a person.

68. On what do you base those feedbacks? On the way they look? The way they talk?

R – No, no. Maybe the way they are, the way they talk, you can give so easily feedback in the first five minutes, and, actually, very very good feedback.

69. Can you tell me like an example?

R – It can be that you will stand here and I will go and put a stamp on you saying that "Paola is open minded", and the you go to me and say that "R" is not so open minded.

70. But how can you see those things, if you…

R – You can do that very easily, it's very fast, that's how you get those skills, Paola. It's very easy to have a first "accountance" to see it.

71. How do you see it, now that you are a team leader?

R – How do I see it? Ok, I go there and I see how are people working, and what are they doing. Are they being lazy? Are they being open? Are they participating? Are they being motivated? Not motivated? You can read a lot very easily on people…

72. Ok, so that was the last…

R – That was the last Leadership Fundamentals, and now it has been almost a year. Then at the end of the year as a trainee, you will get to analyse about how you are as a trainee.

73. What do you mean with analyse? Is it something from HR?

R – It's something from HR, and what it means is that you go down...

74. And not to the team leader?

R – You go to the team leader, listen! Ok?. So, what you do is: maybe you get fifteen persons from your department together with HR, together with your boss to give feedback on how you have been in the last twelve months.

75. Is that hard?

R – Of course it's hard, I mean, you get feedback about how you have been, how it has been going. If it has been going good… but I mean, of course it's hard for some people, but that's really good cause then you can keep working that way.

76. Do you think there is a pattern in the things that people are doing bad?

R – Yeah, of course there is a pattern because there is always somethings that you need to work with, and that just doesn't disappear after the twelve months.

77. Like for example?

R – Let's say that you are not structured. If you are not structured person, of course you can work with your "structureness", but it will always going to be there in a certain sense, and that is something you have to keep working on until you stop working.

78. Do you think the program lacks something?

R – Hmmm… I think what I missed a lot, and now the program has it, but when I went through the program I didn't know that much about budgets and money and how you should use money as a team leader, and I got a little surprised because in the first year when I was a team leader, my boss said to me "R, we need people. You should just put people", and what I was really good at, what I was really good was at putting people to work, and they were very motivating working, so I had a bunch of people working and nobody told me that I should like, keep it lower than I was. So, at some point my boss comes to me and tells me "R, what are you doing? You have a thousand hours more than you are supposed to", and then I was like "but I did what you told me, I mean, you just

told me to put people", and I had no clue that I had a certain budget or anything. So, now, it's good that they are learning it now because it's extremely important. I mean, this is a business, and when it's a business you also have budgets and have goals, and you need to reach those goals with the budget that you have, and I think that was missing when I went through it.

79. **R, do you know how long has this Trainee program been implemented in Denmark?**

R – Not how long, but I think it has been there, I don't know actually, but I can get back to you on that.

80. **But more than ten years or is it something new?**

R – No, it's been there since, at least 2008, I think.

81. **Ok, so almost 10 years?**

R – Yes.

82. **And it has been changing?**

R – Yes, changing and developing. Since I went through in 2012, it has changed quite a lot. And that's good, it changed for the better, I mean, I think they are very open to listen and develop and make it better all the time, and I can see the budget is now there, and that's very good.

83. So, they have also prioritized?

R – Yeah, yeah, of course, they prioritize. And also, at the end, you get information about how to make salary conversations, development conversations.

84. Wasn't it on the other one?

R – No, no. It's this one. Its inside the house. Of course, you get some knowledge on it before, but now you get a little deeper into it. And then you already to have your own department, you should. If you have been working very well, you should be ready after one year. The program is eighteen months and it's also a good idea to take those six months to take your time getting ready on your own.

85. How do you get ready on your own?

R – It can be that in the first twelve months you were getting very depending on your team leader, and you need to be, like, without the team leader. You need to be able to run the whole department without the team leader. So maybe can be that your team leader goes on vacation for a month or maybe the team leader has other things focusing, and you will have the whole responsibility in a certain amount of time, and you can get ready that way.

86. Can you mention three of the main responsibilities that you have learnt through this program?

R – The main thing is that you learn how to be a leader, and how to be a leader is…

Thank you, "R".