Mentoring as leadership and career development in Swedish companies - An exploratory study

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Abstract

The aim for this study is to investigate what mentees find positive in the process of their mentorship as well as what skills they consider them to have gained. It should all be seen from the mentee perspective. Hence, the research question is; what are the crucial factors for a successful mentorship in Swedish companies and what are the key benefits from the mentee perspective? There are few up to date Swedish studies in the field and for persons considering to participate in a mentor program or engage in an informal mentorship this information is of great value.

Since the goal is to profoundly understand how the mentees perceive their mentoring experience the study is done in a qualitative manner to receive personal and non-abbreviated narratives. Through twelve in-depth interviews large amounts of information was collected. These interviews were performed with employees from four different Swedish companies; Axis Communications, IKEA, Alfa Laval and ST-Ericsson. The data was processed through a data analysis methodology referred to as grounded theory. This includes several steps of reduction of the raw data to extract the essence of the information received. The study resulted in five propositions that we consider to mirror the most important aspects of mentorship as well as the mentoring model which gives a clear overview of the mentoring process as well as mentoring’s effect on the leadership development.

Except for the twelve mentee interviews two further expert interviews with two mentoring experts were carried out. The data received from these interviews were compared with our propositions to check how our investigation is related to their expert knowledge.

The main conclusions of the propositions are that the focus of the mentees is personal development through reflection and discussions and not career climbing. The mentoring sessions often have a relaxed atmosphere which benefits the trust building and with that the openness in the discussions. Most mentees have the ambition to become mentors themselves one day since they consider the relationship to be beneficial for both parties.

Data bits constructing the propositions were found in the mentee interviews and were also confirmed by the information received from the expert interviews.

Due to the nature of qualitative studies with a low number of sample data sources compared to the relevant population the study cannot be considered to be statistically significant. We do therefore welcome a survey to confirm or disprove our propositions as a suggestion for a further study.
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1. Introduction

1.1 Background

Climbing the career ladder is a common ambition among striving managers and emerging leaders. What do we actually mean when we speak about building a career? What is the actual goal and are there ways to speed up this process? Building a career is often referred to as a structured approach of getting in charge of your career path by gathering deep and thorough knowledge about the organization and industry and gradually advancing towards a higher position. Another way of taking an active approach to your career can be to increase the width of your knowledge base; this could enable sideways movement in the hierarchy to a field you value higher.

Being good at what you do and having a great leadership experience is not always enough to get the position that you are aiming for. It is the combination of circumstances that works as a tollgate for the next career step. One important prerequisite to move up the career ladder is to be acquainted with the right people.

Mentoring can be a catalyst to develop leadership capabilities, skills and competence. It might also potentially lead to a broad useful network. One definition of mentoring offered by Noe (1988) describes the network engagement as an effect of mentoring: “The mentor is usually a senior, experienced employee who serves as a role model, provides support, direction, and feedback to the younger employee regarding career plans and interpersonal development, and increases the visibility of the protégé to decision-makers in the organization who may influence career opportunities” (Noe, 1988, p. 458).

This also means that mentoring is not necessarily a learning activity for new employees; it is rather a relation that connects a senior and an aspirant, a more experienced employee with a less experienced one. Hence, all co-workers, managers and leaders could be involved in mentoring at all levels in a modern organisation. More generally, mentoring is a process that connects a desire to learn and grow with a wish and capability to share knowledge and support others’ development.

There are two types of mentoring known – informal and formal mentoring. The first one is an informal relationship that is based on compatibility or a spark between two personalities (DuBrin, 2010). Formal mentoring could mean that a mentor is formally assigned from outside the mentee’s organisation as a part of an exchange program or mentorship program. According to DuBrin (2010), protégés with informal mentors receives greater benefits than protégés with formal mentors. This might be because someone who is able to attract their own mentor is more career-driven and socially skilled to receive higher benefits. On the other hand, an informal mentorship has no competition. A mentor program must be able to sell its services and does therefore have to reach a certain level. Consequently the program will have a higher merit value since the level will be more
obvious for an external person (Rasmusson, 2013).

Mentoring is a prevailing and interesting topic for academic research. According to Allen and Johnston there were already more than 500 articles published in management and education literature by 1997 (J. Allen & Johnston, 1997). Today, 15 years later, there are many more available. At the same time, according to a study done by Bozeman and Feeny (2007), a solid mentoring theory is not formulated and there are persistence problems to develop it. Despite having provided a wide array of valid and useful research findings, conceptual problems have impeded the mentoring studies’ ability to provide compelling middle-range or broad-range theoretical explanations. (Bozeman & Feeney, 2007).

1.2 Research question and objectives

Without aiming to develop new theories how to conduct mentoring but rather being interested in what the mentees find positive with their mentorship and what skills they consider themselves to have earned, we decided to conduct a qualitative study that should cover the research question; what are the crucial factors for a successful mentorship in Swedish companies and what are the key benefits from the mentee perspective? Since we aim to observe mentoring relations in Swedish companies to discover the characteristics of mentoring and the outcome, the objective of our study is to explore the process of mentorship in Swedish companies from the mentees’ perspective and find out if being a mentee is something to strive for.

In business, leaders get involved in mentorship relations as a result of different circumstances and are focusing on developing different fields. Keeping the research question and the objective in mind, we would like to explore the following topics deeper. Which personality traits mentees are interested in developing? How the objectives of mentoring changing along the way and what are the outcomes of the relation? How does mentoring affect the mentees career development speed and their career advancement plans? Have managers of today used mentoring and their mentors to reach positions they have? Finally we plan to conclude if managers and leaders shall consider mentorship as a beneficial activity that will help them to take the next step in their career.

1.3 Process

Considering the fairly open character of the research question and objectives we decided that an exploratory research is the most suitable method to create understanding of the process that we are investigating. We selected the grounded theory as the methodology to analyse the qualitative data
and formulate relevant propositions that could create a base for more a detailed investigation or further explorative studies later on. We applied the systematic research design of grounded theory by Corbin and Strauss (1990) and therefore the process of our research reflects the main steps of their grounded theory methodology and analysis.

The data for our research are taken from the real life business. All 14 interviews, except two expert interviews are arranged through different networks which made it possible to collect data for the qualitative analysis.

### 1.4 Delimitations

To be able to focus on our field of interest the following delimitation are defined for our research: Experiences of the mentorship relations are observed and noted only from the mentees’ perspective. Considering that human relations normally involve at least two participants, we stress that in our work only one side has been taken into consideration. We did not collect any responses from mentors or any other individuals that could be related to mentoring directly or indirectly – for example direct managers of mentees or managers of the human recourse department. We did however decide to explore additional opinions of two experts with long experience in mentorship. We consider their long practice in the mentoring field as valuable contribution to the qualitative data collection and analysis. We conducted these two expert interviews to compare their information to our conclusion and findings.

### 1.5 Structure

In order to fully describe the accomplished work, clarify the research process and discovered findings we apply the following structure on our thesis. We start with introducing the methodology of the research describing our motivation in selecting the grounded theory method in Chapter 2. We explain the advantages of using the grounded theory in qualitative researches in general and the strengths and benefits in applying it to our research in particular. We explain how we collected data and how we analysed them. In Chapter 3 we present the results of our research – the model of mentoring in Swedish companies and five concluded propositions of mentoring relations. Due to a specific of our research method – the grounded theory, the literature review is placed after qualitative findings are presented. Chapter 4 is dedicated to the review of relevant literature and academic researches. We built a theoretical frame for our study. In Chapter 5 we continue an analysis of our results in relation to the theoretical framework. We finalise the work with Conclusions of the study that are placed in Chapter 6 and recommendations for further studies in Chapter 7. The reference list and appendices you can find in the very end of the document.
2. Methodology

2.1 Research design

There are several methods for social science research. They can be divided into two categories; qualitative and quantitative research. Qualitative research asks questions as “how” and “why” as opposed to the quantitative methods which answers “what”, “where” and “when”. A smaller amount of samples is needed for qualitative research but at the same time, it requires a more in-depth analysis. Examples of qualitative research methods are case studies, grounded theory and analytic induction. Quantitative research on the other hand, is based on statistics and computational techniques, therefore surveys is a suitable way to collect data for such investigation. We have chosen to perform a qualitative study since we want to understand what the individual really feel and also to be able to consider major as well as minor subtle aspects of mentorship. A qualitative study will also allow us to discover unexpected conclusions through the large amount of detailed information that will be gathered (Gill et al, 2008).

To maximize the flexibility of the study we will base our research on grounded theory. When using this methodology you begin with collecting information through, for example, observations or interviews. This information is interpreted into conclusions, propositions or theories. Hence, you ground your theories with empirical data (Corbin and Strauss, 1990). By starting with the data collection you minimize the amount of preconceptions from other studies. This methodology was introduced in the sixties by Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss who were very critical to the old groundless methodology. Together they studied the influence of awareness on the interaction with dying people at a California hospital. In 1967 they published the book “The discovery of Grounded theory”.

Used for this study is the Corbin and Strauss version of grounded theory which is more structured and has more focus on systematizing the collected data than the Glaser methodology. With grounded theory you can start with the analysis as soon as you have received your first data (Corbin Strauss 1990). Continuously as you are receiving more information you should revise and expand your model to consider all relevant aspects of the subject. All characteristics brought into the model have to earn its way into the theory by repeatedly appearing in the collected material. The processing of the material starts with the open coding. This means that you generalize the raw data into concepts. In the next step these concepts are grouped into categories that through certain characteristics are linked to each other and therefore seem to belong together. This activity is called axial coding. It is of great importance that you continuously compare already inserted characteristics with the new to generate a consistent interpretation. In this stage, the Corbin and Strauss methodology also recommends to create a “coding paradigm”. This is a chart where you structure how the different categories are related to each other. The last stage in the coding process is the selective coding. In this step you reduce all collected data into a core category. This should
summarize the investigation and represent the drawn conclusions. It might be identified from an already concluded category or it can be extracted as a conclusion from several of the earlier categories.

### 2.2 Data collection

#### 2.2.1 Interviews

For data collection in this qualitative research we have chosen to perform interviews in order to get a high response rate and to increase the understanding of the answers and thereby being able to draw more accurate conclusions. The interviews took place in an environment free from distraction at the company of the interviewees. They lasted between 70-90 minutes and were therefore quite extensive and there were enough time to follow up on interesting aspects that came up spontaneously.

Suitable interview methodologies for grounded theory are unstructured and semi structured interviews (Duffy et al, 2002). We have chosen to perform the interview at a level close to semi structured, this by initially having very general and open-ended question to start the conversation. After conversing freely for a while, the interviewee being able to tell their opinion in the subject, more detailed questions will follow to ensure that certain data from all the interviewees is received. The purpose for this is to be able to perform a more accurate comparison between each interview subject. This is also an effective method to secure that a large amount of data is received from persons that are less talkative and thereby would not have given enough details through a fully unstructured conversation. As earlier mentioned the questions are formulated open ended which promote the interviewees to give a wide spectrum of unbiased answers. Using semi structured interviews as data collection also gives the possibility to follow up on interesting threads that might come up during the discussions. This is very beneficial when new perspectives of the studied field are desired (Gill et al, 2008). Interviews will also give very spontaneous answers since there will be no chance for the interviewee to prepare or reflect on beforehand. The disadvantage with interviews is the effort and time consumption. Asking the questions will also take focus from listening what the participant have to say, interpreting body language and intonation. Since we took notes simultaneously this problem became even more noticeable. This could be avoided with a tape recorder but then you will not be able to include facial expressions and body language in your interpretation.

Since these interviews contain personal thoughts and considerations we have chosen to make the participants anonymous. Namelessness is an effective method to make the interviewee open up. If they know that everything they say can be traced back to them they would most likely have been more restrictive with career reflections and opinions. The disadvantage with anonymity is that it will be difficult for them to maintain ownership of content, meanings and narratives (Richards et al,
Some people even want certain information to be associated with their name to build their own brand.

2.2.2 Participants

All the mentee participants for the interviews can be found in fig. 2.1. They were all between 31-40 years old except for one who was slightly younger than 30 and one who was older than 40 so they are within a fairly small span regarding age. The genders were distributed as four women and eight men. The positions vary from lower management with limited managing experience to middle managers who have worked as managers for some years. The interviewees work in very different fields in the organizations as for example with engineering management, product management, competence management, quality management, supply chain management and retail management. The companies where the mentees are employed are Axis Communications, IKEA, Alfa Laval and ST-Ericsson. The two expert interviewees are both very senior and active within the field of mentoring, they can be found in fig 2.2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Company, Department</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Character of mentoring</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Axis Communication, R&amp;D</td>
<td>Engineering Manager</td>
<td>Woman</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>Mentoring program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Axis Communication, R&amp;D</td>
<td>Engineering Manager</td>
<td>Man</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>Mentoring program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alfa Laval</td>
<td>Product Manager</td>
<td>Man</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>Mentoring program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alfa Laval</td>
<td>Market Unit Manager</td>
<td>Man</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>Mentoring program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alfa Laval</td>
<td>Intranet Manager</td>
<td>Woman</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>Mentoring program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St-Ericsson, R&amp;D</td>
<td>Engineering Manager</td>
<td>Man</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>Mentoring program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IKEA, Product Development</td>
<td>Supply Chain</td>
<td>Man</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>Informal mentoring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IKEA, Shopping Centers</td>
<td>Investment</td>
<td>Man</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>Informal mentoring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IKEA, Retail</td>
<td>Retail Supply Integration</td>
<td>Woman</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>Informal mentoring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IKEA, Quality development</td>
<td>Quality Development</td>
<td>Man</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>Informal mentoring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IKEA, Product Development</td>
<td>Competence Development</td>
<td>Man</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>Informal mentoring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IKEA, Operations</td>
<td>Operations</td>
<td>Woman</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>Informal mentoring</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2.1 Mentee interview overview. Source: Own illustration.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviewee</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Experience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bertil Rasmusson</td>
<td>HR Director Gambro, HR Director CARDO, HR Director Axis</td>
<td>Designer of Mentoring Programs, Lecturer at IFL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Göran Alsen</td>
<td>Consultant in leadership, Adviser on top management coaching.</td>
<td>Development of the executive MBA at EFL, worked with Leadership Development at the MIL institute</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 2.2 Expert interview overview. Source: Own illustration.**

### 2.2.3 Company overview

Axis Communications is a Swedish based IT-company working worldwide with almost 1500 employees. The company is the global leader in network video communication and is driving the shift from analogue to digital video surveillance. Their products focus on security surveillance and remote monitoring. The global headquarter is located in Lund and this is where the Axis- interviews have been carried out (www.axis.com).

IKEA is the leader in life at home with focus on home furnishing products. The company vision is to create a better everyday life for many people. IKEA have more than 300 stores worldwide and employs 139 000 people. The global headquarter is situated in Delft in Holland and the Swedish headquarter in Helsingborg. All interviews were performed in Sweden but with representatives from different IKEA units, where each unit has own specific and purpose (www.ikea.com).

ST-Ericsson is an industry leader in mobile platforms and a joint venture between the Swedish telecommunication company Ericsson and the French-Italian semiconductor chip maker STMicroelectronics. They are supplying mobile device manufacturers with wireless products and semiconductors. They have 5000 employees worldwide and their headquarter can be found in Geneva in Switzerland. The ST-Ericsson interviews were executed at their main Swedish development site in Lund (www.stericsson.com).

Alfa Laval was founded in 1883 and is a heavy industry company that focuses on large scale operations such as the Marine, Energy, and Food industries. Alfa Laval focuses on energy optimization, environmental protection and food production through their technological leadership in heat transfer, separation and fluid handling. They have subsidiaries worldwide and they count...
16000 employees in total. The headquarter is situated in Lund and this is also where the Alfa Laval interviews for this study were carried out (www.alfalaval.com).

Axis Communication, ST-Ericsson and Alfa Laval are all three using a mentor program where a mentee and the mentor never come from the same company. IKEA on the other hand rely on informal mentorship.

### 2.3 Property of study

Since we have found no earlier studies answering our research question or treating the subject with enough level of details and focus on the individual mentee we have chosen to consider this as an exploratory study. Our goal is to gain insight and knowledge in the field and formulate relevant propositions. The exploratory research methodology works very well with grounded theory due to the low amount of preconceptions. The flexibility will be kept to a maximum during the entire research.

We have interviewed twelve mentees (fig 2.1) distributed at four large Swedish companies; IKEA, Axis Communications, Alfa Laval and ST-Ericsson. A suitable setup would therefore be to use our results as a base in a rigorous investigation later including a survey to receive statistically significant results. This means that in this study we will be able to extract some valuable thoughts in this subject but not be able to decide how common and widely spread these thoughts are. We have also interviewed two senior experts (fig. 2.2) in the subject to receive a second point of view.

The unit of analysis (Yin, 2009, p.30) for this study are individuals who are working as managers and presently are -or earlier have participated in mentoring activities as protégé. In this particular case the unit of observation and unit of analysis will coincide since we are interested in how the individual perceive the effect of mentoring. Hence, the level of analysis is therefore going to be performed on micro-level since we aim to find out how each individual manager considers the benefits of mentorship. At the same time we will limit the scope to Swedish companies only.

### 2.4 Data analysis

Very large amounts of data are received from the interviews and it has to be processed and interpreted to make any sense. This consists of trying to find out what part of the data is important and recognize patterns and create propositions from these crucial data segments.
Open coding

After performing a few interviews we started with the first stage in the processing of the data; the open coding. In this step we generalized and categorized the information that seemed important. Below four answers from the interviews are cited. You can interpret several pieces of data from them but one of the conclusions is that they all reflect more due to the mentorship.

“I think and reflect more than before. I am pretty fast to have an opinion and also to communicate this opinion. The mentor program has made me think before I say something and reflect over it afterwards. I have also become better on giving feedback. Another thing I have understood is that a lot of people have the same thoughts as I have. So you are never alone with the thoughts. It is also important to adapt your leadership style to the situation.”

“It has given me the possibility to reflect about what I can do and what I should do.”

“Absolutely. I know myself much better now. What do I want and do not want. What are my values and probably theirs relation to the company values.”

“I get a lot of energy from the discussions with my mentee. Firstly because I get the possibility to reflect on my own approach by analysing her situations and benefit from that. Secondly it develops me further in my leadership role.”

In some of the answers it is expressed directly and in others more indirectly. This does not matter since the characteristics are still the same and they could be categorized similarly. Open coding could be seen as a basic generalization and filtration of the raw data.

When processing our interviews we wrote the open coding keywords in a column to the right of the questionnaire. This gives you a good overview of the coding at the same time as you can easily see the raw data from where the keyword was extracted from. This is important since when you continuously receive more data you have to be able to re-evaluate all the old data as well and see where and how the new and the old data fit together. In figure 2.3 below you can see an example of the open coding.
1. What major changes have mentoring initiated in your professional life? It has given me the possibility to reflect about what I can do and what I should do.
   a) What competence have you gained thanks to the mentorship? Foremost leadership. To a certain degree planning.
   b) What competences do you primarily focus on to develop through your mentorship? Definitely leadership. Also group dynamic.
   c) Have you got valuable connections thanks to the mentorship? How will you use them? Yes. You always get along with some people better than others. I have also met some people internally as well. But the problems you face in your work are often the same regardless what you work with.
   d) How have it helped you in your career development regarding position? That you have been elected to participate in this mentor program is very positive. I think the mentor program prepare you for a career more than it works as a stepping stone. It is also a practical leadership skill to be able to have a discussion with someone. It is also a completely different relationship than with your manager.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>More possibility to reflect</th>
<th>Increase leadership knowledge</th>
<th>Met connections</th>
<th>Well prepared for a career</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Figure 2.3 Sample of the first step in the data analysis, the open coding. Source: Own illustration.
Memos

To summarize the most important data bits Corbin and Strauss (1990) suggest you to write memos. Since the analytical process might not always be a linear iteration but can come simultaneously or even in reversed order the memos is an effective method to incubate these ideas and make sure they are not lost on the way. As more data is gathered the relevance of the memos must be updated continuously since the knowledge in the subject grows. In figure 2.4 below follows the most relevant memos from our data processing.

The primary result of the mentoring process is leadership development of mentee. Both personal characteristics and self-awareness as well as practical skills

The mentees regard relations with people as an important subject to develop. They try to understand these relations, improve and utilize them.

Most mentees have a clear picture of what characteristics they want their mentor to have. The particular attribute does though depend on their purpose and expectations of the mentorship

The absolute majority of the mentees describe the atmosphere during mentoring sessions as opened and relaxed.

The feeling of equality with the mentor is mentioned in the majority of the answers.

The mentee seldom or never focus on a concrete next position in their career planning. The career path contains certain wished direction and seldom desired position two steps ahead.

The standard career approach for the mentees is the initial gap analysis of current competence level versus required for the wished position and further learning and development of knowledge and skills.

Almost all mentee see benefits of becoming mentors one day. Some are already mentors. Expected benefits are connected to further career development.

The mentees feel that they reflect more which give them deeper understanding in the leadership subject.

Using the mentors as a sounding board works as a sanity check to confirm they are on the right track.

The mentees feel they have developed new tools that will help them in their work.
- They feel it is very rewarding to have a vent they can discuss daily issues with without it affects their work relationships.

- The mentorship have improved the mentees self-confidence, partly thanks to the discussions and gained knowledge but also for the fact they were chosen to the mentor program.

- A common feeling among the mentees is that they feel more mature and more comfortable in their role.

- The primary objective for the mentorship does not seem to be the networking even though many mentee have made some connections.

- To increase the challenge/learning some mentees get tasks/homework from the mentor.

- The majority of the mentees wanted a senior mentor so he or she had and an appropriate insight and broad perspective.

- Most mentees do not care if the mentor is male or female. Female mentees do though to a higher degree have a preference.

- Most mentees would consider using the mentor indirectly to achieve a new position.

- The mentor and mentees in informal mentor relations have often worked together in projects or line work for some time to get to know each other before engaging in mentorship

- For the mentorship to be effective both parts need to be able to set aside time to meet regularly and prepare for the meetings. The meetings are almost always initiated by the mentee.

- The mentees in an informal mentorship have to a higher degree a clear career plan compared to the one participating in the mentorship program.

*Figure 2.4 Memo list. Source: Own illustration.*
**Axial and Selective coding**

After the open coding has been performed the axial coding can start. By finding patterns and common denominators among the open coding keywords and memos a number of axial coding categories can be created. The categories are crystallized from the open coding and should be able to contain the essence of the information received from the interviews. In figure 2.5 all the categories from this study can be found.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Axial coding categories</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Mentees characteristics, needs, goals and expectations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Entry point to mentoring.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Perception of the company values and recruitment policy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Mentors characteristics.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Sustainability of relations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Sessions preparations, frequency and atmosphere.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Personal development of mentees via reflection and awareness.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Development of skills.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Improvements of interactions with the people.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Career approach – involvement of mentor or current manager.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Intentions to become a mentor.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Promotion of mentoring and implementation in own business unit</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 2.5 Axial coding categories. Source: Own illustration.*
To further visualize how the categories are connected together Strauss and Corbin strongly recommends you to construct a “coding paradigm” (fig. 2.6). We used a simplified version of the paradigm model developed by Strauss and Corbin (1990), which consist of conditions, action/interaction, and consequences. The coding paradigm creates clarity and structure to the coding process by showing the characteristics in its context (Corbin and Strauss, 1990). It is a tool that helps to contextualise the phenomenon by grouping the interaction of the involved parties. By using the model the categories and memos are combined and concluded in more complete and interlinked propositions.

![Figure 2.6 Paradigm model. Source: Strauss and Corbin (1990).](image)

The last step of data analysis is the selective coding. At this point all categories defined in the previous stage are put together or unified in one common picture or process. The central phenomenon of the study is emerging and logic connections between different categories become clear.

In our study the result of the axial and selective coding are combined in the model that we named the model of mentoring (fig. 3.1) and that is based on the paradigm model developed by Strauss and Corbin (1990) (fig.2.6). In our model the core category Leadership development is presented in relations with other categories that were formulated during the previous step – Axial coding. Different categories are combined under several headings that reflect their contents. Grouped categories are positioned around the core category based on if they are influencing it or are consequences of it. The model of mentoring therefore is a part of the qualitative findings of our study. It is described and presented with our subject in the next chapter.
3. Qualitative findings

The findings are presented through the propositions and through the model of mentoring. The purpose of the model of mentoring is to create an overview of the mentoring process and its effect on leadership development. It shows how different parts of the mentoring process are connected to other parts. The propositions on the other hand, contains more details and explains how the mentees feel about certain aspects of mentoring but do not indicate how they are interconnected to other parts of the mentoring process.

A graphical illustration of the model can be found in fig 3.1. In this chapter follows a detailed presentation of its components. The subchapters are named with the original title from the paradigm model, developed by Strauss and Corbin (1990) and related heading from the model of mentoring that we suggest. Components of the model of mentoring are initial conditions, influencing factors and the session characteristics that influence the leadership development, as well as the career development strategy and other further results of mentoring that are influenced by leadership development.

The concluded propositions are placed in the end of the relevant subchapter and starts with bold text. Before the concluded proposition the used memos are listed to be able to track them back to the list in chapter 2.4 where they are first shown. The memos, which are based on the processed data originally collected from the interviews, become the foundation for constructing each particular proposition. Hence, memos are the essential extract of the data processing that incubates ideas emerging through the analysis. Therefore each memo is the summary of thoughts and ideas from several interviews. This means that even if a proposition is supported by only one or two memos it is still representing insights from many answers.

3.1 Casual conditions – Initial conditions

There are three main casual conditions for the mentoring process and leadership development that have been identified from the respondents’ answers. We title this group “Initial conditions”. Mentee characteristics, needs, goals and expectations summarise the responses where the mentees specified their wishes and plans in connection to mentoring. These are very often individual development goals and ambitions, for example performance improvement or the ability to lead and drive changes. Sometimes it might also be more general expectations on mentoring, for example understanding of leadership, its psychological aspect or getting a broader view on business. The selection of respondents and their characteristics are also part of this category.

Entry point to the mentoring represents two different ways of engaging in mentoring. These are mentoring programs or self-initiated mentorship relations. As mentioned in the data collection
section, 50 percent of the mentees that we interviewed are participant of mentoring programs and 50 percent have experience from informal mentoring.

Company values and recruitment policy represent presence and effects of corporate values on the respondents. Recruitment policy summarises the managers’ opinion regarding promotion of internal recruitment within the company. The majority of the answers reflect positive attitude to company values and have answered that internal recruitment and development is promoted at their work places.

3.2 Intervening conditions – Influencing factors

These are additional intervening conditions that indirectly influence the leadership development via mentoring. We named this group Influencing factors. Mentors characteristics are a predefined set of personality traits and professional experiences that are listed by the mentees as necessary and important factors for successful relation. Often soft factors were mentioned as important for creating a positive relation. Examples are similar life-values, hobbies, the importance of being alike and to feel certain chemistry with mentor. Sometimes hard factors like certain professional expertise and experience in mentoring, capability to serve as a role model were highlighted. Many respondents brought up the importance of the ability to build a trustful and open relation. Generally trust was brought up as extremely important aspect of the mentoring.

The mentor’s position in the company is also listed under this category. Often mentees describe their mentors as a very influential and senior person, which in our opinion could be a precondition for an initial respectful attitude towards the mentor. The majority of the mentees wanted to have a senior mentor so he or she had an appropriate insight and broad perspective. Notable is that most mentees have a clear picture of what characteristics they would like their mentor to have. The particular attribute does depend on the purpose and expectations of the mentorship. Generally, mentees do not care if the mentor is male or female. Female mentees do though to a higher degree have a preference.

Sustainability of relation describes the time horizon of the mentoring relation. For the respondents that were participating in the mentorship program the length of the program is predefined to one year. However for managers that were initiating the mentoring process themselves the length and sustainability of the relation is very often a parameter affected by the natural driving forces of relations, like satisfaction of the quality of the process or if the mentor fulfils the requested characteristics. We observed that the mentor and mentees in informal mentor relations often have worked together in projects or line work for some time to get to know each other before engaging in mentorship. Four out of six respondents that experienced informal mentoring characterised their mentoring relations as long lasting or sustainable.
Relevant memos to conclude the proposition:

- The mentor and mentees in informal mentor relations have often worked together in projects or line work for some time to get to know each other

- They feel it is very rewarding to have a vent they can discuss daily issues with without it affects their work relationships

**Concluded proposition - Trustfulness:** For the mentee to feel that he or she can reveal their true weaknesses and thereby be able to improve parts that will benefit the most there must be trust between mentor and mentee. Trust can be built through a long relationship history or through an external mentor so the confidential information will not reach the mentee employer.

3.3 Contextual conditions – Session characteristics

The *Session atmosphere, frequency and preparation* category combine the experiences and actual impressions of the mentees before and during sessions. We call this group Session characteristics. Almost all interviewees mentioned that they were taking the responsibilities for setting the agenda and preparing the discussion subjects. The meetings are almost always initiated by the mentee. For the mentees in the informal mentoring process the agenda was very often driven by their individual need or problem. For the mentees from the mentorship program there were a predefined set of thematic workshops and presentations that work as inspiration for their discussions.

In most of the cases the meetings took place regularly but in some cases sessions were arranged spontaneously, or the mentee and the mentor set a meeting to have a discussion in between scheduled sessions. Sometimes discussions were initiated as ad-hoc when the mentor observed the mentee in actual business situations and they decided to exchange the feedback straight away. Generally we observed that in order for the mentorship to be effective both parts need to able to set aside time to meet regularly and prepare for the meeting.

Relevant memos to conclude the proposition:

- The feeling of equality with the mentor is mentioned in the majority of the answers.

- The absolute majority of the mentees describe the atmosphere during mentoring sessions as opened and relaxed.

- Most mentees have a clear picture of what characteristics they want their mentor to have. The particular attribute does though depend on their purpose and expectations of the mentorship

**Concluded proposition - Equality:** A relaxed and open session atmosphere and a feeling of an equal relationship benefit the discussion and exchange of ideas. A mentor with different experience
will broaden the mentee's perspective and a mentor with experience in the same field will sharpen the knowledge of the mentee.

3.4 Phenomenon – Leadership development via mentoring

Initial, Intervening and Contextual conditions together influence and shape the core part of the model - the Phenomenon, that we titled the Leadership development via mentoring. We named these topics the core part or the core category as it represents the central phenomenon of our research. While processing and coding the answers we realized that the mentoring process have great focus on development of leadership capabilities. This became particularly obvious when we defined the following categories.

*Personal development of mentees via reflection and awareness* covers the growth of the mentee in individual focused characteristics like understanding of self-potential, self-analysis, reflections, thoughtfulness, maturity and broader view. Many respondents mentioned a clearer perception of their own strengths and weaknesses as well as an increased confidence. The mentees experienced mind shifts and insights as well as self-reflections that can hurt. Nevertheless, all mentees indicated that all negative feedback they received they considered to be an effective development opportunity. Another conclusion from the mentees experience is that using the mentors as a sounding board works as a sanity check to confirm they are on the right track. The mentorship have improved the mentees self-confidence, partly thanks to the discussions and gained knowledge but also for the fact they were chosen to the mentor program.

Besides enhanced knowledge about your own personal capabilities, a big part of leadership development is *development of skills*. This category combines different business handling skills that according to the interviewees’ answers came as a result of the mentoring. The mentees feel they have developed new tools that will help them in their work. These are fact-based approach, refining their goal setting, striving to perform today and in the future, communication skills.

*Development of interaction with the people* summarises a developed ability for better, more efficient and fruitful interaction with other people, particularly increased ability to feel and express empathy and build trust. Managers were mentioning their better understanding of underlying motives of other colleagues and consequently improved knowledge about how to “reach” other persons. The capability to influence others comes from better people skills. Generally the mentees regard relations with people as an important subject to develop. They try to understand these relations, improve and utilise them. This category also includes better understanding of expectations from other colleagues and managers.


**Positioning of mentee in organisational landscape.** Answers within this segment are related to the actual position that the mentees reached as a result of mentoring, both with direct support from mentor as well as indirectly, thanks to the recently acquired skills and personal development. Many respondents indicated that they got much better understanding of the formal and informal network in their organisations. They became better aware of whom to involve in certain activities in order to get decisions faster and make things happen. In one case the result of the mentoring was a realization that the current position a person held did not match the fundamental values this person possessed and it was therefore necessary to transfer this individual to another position.

Relevant memos to conclude the proposition:

- The primary result of the mentoring process is leadership development of the mentee; personal characteristics, self-awareness as well as practical skills

- The mentees regard relations with people as an important subject to develop. They try to understand these relations, improve and utilize them.

- The mentees feel that they reflect more which give them a deeper understanding in the leadership subject.

- A common feeling among the mentees is that they feel more mature and more comfortable in their role.

- The majority of the mentees wanted a senior mentor so he or she had an appropriate insight and broad perspective.

**Concluded proposition – Personal development:** Mentorship is focused on developing the individual through reflection and discussions which will result in a more mature and confident personality with a higher degree of understanding for other human beings.

### 3.5 Action strategies – Career development strategy

The next category summarises the codes that describe different strategies the mentees intended to apply in order to make the next step in their career. Therefore we call this group Career development strategy. Normally it arises as one of the reflections during mentoring but at the same time, as we will elaborate later, leadership development and not career management reveals itself as the prioritised focus during the mentoring. When the respondents were asked about their future career plans, the question was often considered as difficult. Still it appears reasonable to combine the answers in the three following categories.

**Position perspective** puts together replies that are related to a definitive assignment or a job name. Noticeable is that no one of interviewees replied that they know which position they would like to take as a next step and that they are working towards this goal. Answers were rather drifting away
from concrete titles. Almost everyone mentioned that they are rather flexible in their career planning; many were answering that they are thinking about a path and not a certain positions and are therefore planning a step after next job. Several mentees clearly stated that a new position is not the goal of their mentoring process. Overall the mentee seldom or never focus on a concrete next position in their career planning. Most mentees would however consider using the mentor indirectly to achieve a new position. The career path contains wished direction and sometimes, desired position two steps ahead. Generally the standard career approach for the mentees is the initial gap analysis if current competence level versus required for the wished position and further learning and development of knowledge and skills.

Ideas regarding possible utilisation of new connections gained through the mentoring are combined in the category Network utilisation. Interesting to highlight and it is in line with the discussion above is that only one person would consider “using” the network to get take the next step in his or hers career. Other mentees considered the new connections as a possibility to get closer to key competences, even role models. Another thought was to get access to another level of information, or to get faster decisions and actions. Hence, the primary objective for the mentorship does not seem to be the networking even though many mentees have made some connections.

Mentor or current manager involvement. We wanted to dig deeper and get better understanding if mentees want to involve their mentors in future career design. As we mentioned earlier, only one respondent specified that he or she would like to involve his mentor. Others directly answered that they will not involve their mentors in such direct manners but would maybe consider a more indirect approach. An interesting observation of answers in this category is that quite some mentees are going to involve instead their current manager to plan the next step in their career. It seems to be a clear expectation on the manager to be involved and provide necessary support for the career advancement. Of course a precondition for that must be that the career plan is clearly communicated by the mentee and a development plan is set together with the manager and followed up by both parties.

Relevant memos to conclude the proposition:

- The mentees seldom or never focus on a concrete next position in their career planning. The career path contains a certain wished direction and seldom a desired position two steps ahead.

- The primary objective for the mentorship does not seem to be the networking even though many mentees have made some connections.

- The primary result of the mentoring process is leadership development of mentee. Both personal characteristics and self-awareness as well as practical skills

Concluded proposition – Small career focus: The reason for entering a mentorship is seldom directly focused on climbing the career ladder or using the mentor as a steppingstone.
3.6 Consequences – Further results of mentoring

Additionally to the direct result of the mentoring process – leadership development, we identified other consequences of the mentoring process and specified two categories that reflect the answers about this topic. This group is named Further results of mentoring. *Become a mentor* is the category that specifies responses and opinions if the current mentees would consider to become a mentor one day. The replies disclose a picture that some participants are already mentoring other managers and others express a clear wish to become a mentor. The respondents see positive effects on their own careers and their personal development in case they are involved in mentoring as a mentor. They feel they will develop further as leaders, they will be up to date regarding new ways of thinking and competences, and they see benefits in including their future mentees in their professional network. We observed that almost all mentees see benefits of becoming mentors one day. Some are already mentors. Expected benefits are connected to further career development.

*Promotion and implementation of mentoring* is the last category and summarises other reflections of mentees regarding their experience of mentoring. Generally all mentees are very positive about their journey and results. Worth to mention is that several respondents highlighted an importance of taking own responsibility in initiating a mentoring relation and finding the right mentor. According to their opinions only by doing that a perfect match will be secured and the best result of the mentoring will be achieved. One responded shared her reflection about the necessity of implementation mentoring in all business units, as she realises that this is the best way to address and find solutions for own business development challenges as well as securing your own growth as a person and leader.

Relevant memos to conclude the proposition:

- *Almost all mentee see benefits of becoming mentors one day. Some are already mentors. Expected benefits are connected to further career development.*

**Concluded proposition – Mentor ambition:** The mentees consider mentorship to be beneficial for both parties and want to become mentors themselves.

The presentations of the results through the proposition and through the model of mentoring allow us to give the whole scope of our findings. The model offers more structural description of the mentoring process that we observed. The concluded propositions highlight qualitative attributes of emphasized aspect of the mentoring.
Initial Conditions

- Mentees characteristics, needs, goals, expectations
- Entry point to mentoring
- Company values and recruitment policy

Session characteristics
- Sessions preparation, frequency, atmosphere

Leadership development via mentoring
- Personal development via reflections and awareness
- Development of skills
- Interaction with people
- Positioning in organizational landscape

Career development strategy
- Position perspective
- Network utilization
- Mentor or current manager involvement

Influencing factors
- Mentors characteristics
- Sustainability of relations

Further results of mentoring
- Become a mentor
- Promotion and implementation of mentoring

Figure 2.7 The model of mentoring. Source: Own illustration.
To create a solid base for further analysis, we define the theoretical framework that includes the terminology and concepts needed for understanding mentoring and leadership development.

**Mentoring as a part of leadership development**

Planning career development in an organisation today is closely related to the development of leadership skills and capabilities. The definition of leadership suggested by DuBrin is that “Leadership is an ability to inspire confidence and support among the people who are needed to achieve organisational goals.” He argues that leadership is needed at all levels of organisations and can be practiced to some extend also by persons not assigned to a formal leadership position (DuBrin, 2010). It assumes that the chance to be promoted is higher among professionals that are focusing on developing their own leadership and are successful doing it. DuBrin describes several ways of leadership development; some are based on focused personal development like self-awareness and self-discipline, others are influenced by life and work experience, like education, experience as a leader and mentoring.

DuBrin defines mentoring as a way to be coached by an experienced, knowledgeable leader. Quite often this person is a mentor, a more experienced person who develops a protégé’s abilities through tutoring, coaching, guidance, and emotional support (DuBrin, 2010). According to DuBrin, mentors enhance the career of protégés in many ways, such as by recommending them for a promotion and helping them establish valuable contacts.

According to Kram (1983) a mentoring relationship has the potential to enhance career development and psychosocial development of both individuals. Through career functions, including sponsorship, coaching, protection, exposure-and-visibility, and challenging work assignments, a young manager is assisted in learning the ropes of organizational life and preparing for advancement opportunities (Kram, 1983). In her work Kram suggests a structural presentation of the phases of mentor relations, their definitions as well as the psychological and organizational factors that cause the movements into the next relationship phase. The phases of the mentor relationship are Initiation, Cultivation, Separation and Redefinition. Each phase is characterized by certain affective experiences, developmental functions and interaction patterns that are shaped by individuals’ needs and surrounding organizational circumstances (Kram, 1983).

**Mentoring for network**

Another way in which mentors support the development of potential leaders is to help them understand the political aspect of the organisation. Many career professionals search for ways to navigate through the tough and competitive terrain of business, but such navigation can be difficult without being mentored. In an environment where promotions are not predicated on performance...
alone and plum assignments do not always go to the next professional in line, mentors and sponsors are key components of the career strategy (Harris W, 2007).

The study performed by Apospori E. et al, (2006) confirms that a broader network and visibility are benefits of mentoring. The authors examined the concept of mentoring as a career-strategy tool in Greek organizations from a protégé’s point of view and the effect of mentoring on women’s career advancement (Apospori E. et al, 2006). The results of the study support the complexity of mentoring as career strategy and career advancement. A broader network characterizes the latter with peers and superiors inside and outside the organization as well as visibility and exposure through better communication.

**Mentoring as a personal learning forum**

One more common perception of mentoring is that it is an exceptional opportunity for personal development. A study done by Kleinman G., Siegel P. H. and Echstein C. (2001) examined how learning forums contribute to individual professional growth, performance and attitudes. In the conclusion of the study, the mentoring relationships were identified as a very important forum for learning. The mediation relationship between socializing, personal learning and important professional attitudes such as job satisfaction, organisational commitment, intention to leave, role stress and job burnout were examined. Kram (1996) defines "personal learning" as knowledge acquisition, skills, or competencies contributing to individual development, including the interpersonal competencies of self-reflection, self-disclosure, active listening, empathy, and feedback. Such development invokes a greater understanding of oneself "as increasingly connected to others" (Kram, 1996: 140).

The effect on personal growth appears to be more significant when the mentoring is more focused and is addressing individual needs of the mentee. Results of the study done by Lester et al, (2011) showed that the targeted mentorship intervention increased the protégés’ level of leader efficacy more than a comparison intervention that was based on a more eclectic leadership education program delivered in a group setting. Leader efficacy then predicted rated leader performance. Both protégés’ preferences for feedback and trust in the mentor served as important moderators in contributing to the development of leader efficiency.

**Determinants of successful mentoring**

Indeed, there are conditions of the successful interactions, especially those that are aiming for attitudes and behavioural changes. Several studies confirm that trust is an extremely important aspect of mentoring. In a mentor–protégé relationship, allowing for vulnerability requires that the trustier (protégé) feels able to disclose personal information and openly expose shortcomings and weaknesses as a leader, while feeling confident that the mentor has his or her best interests in mind and will be discreet with that information. Trust is thus necessary for the creation of psychological contracts that one would expect in an effective mentor–protégé relationship (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005; Robinson & Morrision, 2000).
However the actual output of any interactions could have both positive and negative effect. Obviously it is beneficial for organizations and for the participants to secure positive experience and desired output of the mentoring. Noe (1988) made a study to investigate the determinants of successfully assigned mentoring relationships. Factor analysis in his study suggests that mentors do provide two functions, a career function and a psychosocial function. Mentoring relation that provides the complete range of career and psychosocial functions are considered to exemplify the “primary” mentoring relationship. Such relationships are characterized by increased levels of commitment by both the mentor and the protégé and are seen as more critical for the personal development (Noe, 1988). At the same time mentoring relationship could have negative aspects as well. There are researches describing incidents in which the mentor-protégé relationships become destructive over time. Eby & Allen (2002) identify two categories that summarise negative mentoring experiences – Distancing/Manipulative behaviour and Poor Dyadic Fit. Specifically, the experiences associated with the first category of Distancing/Manipulative behaviour reflect unethical behaviour on the part of the mentor, e.g. deceit, credit taking, abuse of power. In contrast, the experiences constituting the second category, Poor Dyadic Fit, are ethically neutral, e.g. mismatched values, personal problems (Eby & Allen, 2002). Whether the protégés experiences were classified in the first or second category, all reported less job satisfaction, voluntary turnover, and psychological distress as a consequence of negative relationship.

**Mentoring for career benefits and career development**

Generally mentoring is associated with certain career benefits. Researches have been done to specify the perceived career benefits both for mentees and for mentors. A meta-analysis made by Allen et al, (2004) focused on the career benefits associated with mentoring for the protégé. The results provide some evidence that objective career success indicators, such as compensation and promotion, are more highly related to career mentoring than to psychosocial mentoring. Mentoring behaviours, such as sponsorship, exposure and visibility, coaching, and protection, are more directly related to enhancement of the task-related aspects of work that facilitate objective career success. The results also indicate that behaviours associated with psychosocial mentoring, such as role modelling, acceptance and confirmation, counselling, and friendship, were more highly related to satisfaction with the mentor than career mentoring was.

A recent meta-analysis of career benefits associated with mentoring for mentors (Ghosh & Reio, 2013) supports the notion that there are career benefits related to being a mentor. Mentors tend to be more satisfied and committed than those who had not been a mentor. Providing career mentoring was associated with better job performance and career success. Providing psychosocial mentoring was associated with better job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and career success.

There are some relevant researches done in Sweden as well. Gunnela Westlander has written an interesting article where she depicts the mentoring phenomenon in Sweden; “Mentorskap till stöd
och inspiration i dagens Sverige” (2008). There she describes how mentoring is practiced, documented and researched in today’s Sweden.

Nilsson L (2000) focuses on studying the results of fourteen women engaged in a mentoring program with the focus on self-efficiency, particularly confidence in own capability to handle certain work related tasks that later lead to the choice of a certain career path. The output of the study is that for half of the participants the mentoring program negatively affected their career path and for the second half it becomes positive or at least neutral. The result of the study suggest that mentoring does not always provides the career advancement in the first step, but rather gives some insights regarding personal development, own strength and challenges.

Nilsson T (2003) focuses on comparing mentoring programs run by two different companies and the effect of those programs regarding competence development of the participants. The two companies arrange their programs in different ways – one more standardized program and another one having an informal mentoring or sponsorship approach (from Swedish: fadderskap). The study is therefore focusing on whether there are any differences in the results of the programs due to the different approach of mentoring. The conclusion of the study is that both companies succeeded with their goal to develop competence despite the different approaches. The author suggests that such positive results could be explained by the presence of company culture.

Dovier H (1998) focuses on mentees as individuals and their personal development as a result of a mentoring program. The study investigates further effects on career development. Similarly to the findings in Nilsson’s (2000) research, Dovier argues that despite the fact that the program gave certain personal development to the mentee, its effect on the further career is controversial – for some it was positive and for other rather negative.

**Summary of studies**

Overall, the existing leadership literature and researches about mentoring provide a good base to understand a relationship between mentoring and career advancement. Beside the proven positive effect on a broader network for the mentee, the biggest results are seen in personal development of the individuals, their skills and their capabilities. Hence, the major trend is that personal growth and personal development are the perceived and confirmed output of the mentoring relation. At the same time an objective career indicator like a promotion does not always occur as a consequences of mentoring.
5. Analysis

In this chapter we perform the analysis of our findings and their connection to the reviewed studies. As the grounded theory method implies constant comparative analysis during the work with the data processing, a big part of our discussion is already specified in Chapter 3. Here we will try to directly relate the most remarkable outputs to exiting knowledge. Additionally, we support our analysis by referring to expert interviews that were conducted after our main data collection. The purpose of these expert interviews was to get professional opinions from practitioners in the area of mentoring. It seems feasible to use their information as one more reference source, additionally to our collected data and existing academicals researches.

Model of mentoring and concluded propositions

This study suggests that the mentoring process in an organisation can be understood as a complex process with focus on the essential leadership development of an individual, the mentee. As mentioned in Chapter 3 the comparative method of analysis of gathered data and their conceptualisation resulted in the creation of the model of mentoring. During our data analysis we realised that certain prevailing trends were emerging. As a result we concluded five propositions of mentoring relations.

In the proposed model, leadership development is the core focus of the mentoring. As mentioned in Chapter 5 there are plenty of literature and many studies that conclude similar results. The leadership development is affected by the combination of the initial phases of the process, which in its turn are influencing the consequent phases of the process.

Initial conditions

We have defined certain preconditions that affect leadership development. These are mentees needs, goals, and expectations as an entry point to mentoring (formal or informal mentoring), as well as company values and recruitment policies. In similarity to the work of Kram (1983) we could see that mentoring relationships are shaped by both individual needs and organizational circumstances. The scope of our study does not cover deeper investigation of the preconditions for successful mentoring. From our data we just extracted a list of them. There are however researches that give a better understanding of some of these parameters. For example Noe (1988) highlights in his work that the personal characteristic of mentees like self-efficiency influences considerably the effort protégé will make to gain career and psychosocial benefits during mentoring relations. He also warns about possible differences in output depending on the entry point to mentoring. The result of his study suggests that organisations should not expect protégés to obtain the same type of benefits from an assigned mentoring relationship as they would receive from an informally established, primary mentoring relationship (Noe, 1988). In our work we observed different levels of readiness for the mentoring from the mentees, e.g. protégés in an informal mentorship have a clearer career
plan than those ones participating in the mentorship program. There is a need to perform quantitative research to scale the precondition parameters and their effect on the benefits of mentoring.

**Influencing factors**

Other affecting parts of leadership development are the intervening conditions or influencing factors. These are mentoring characteristics and sustainability of relations. Since we made an attempt to create a conceptual model, the parameters under the headings are generalized based on the summary of all interviews. In some stages of the process, strong similarities of the answers were observed. In such case, as already mentioned, we were combining those tendencies into separate propositions. In this particular stage of the observed process, the trust was mentioned as the most important aspect of the successful relation. It is certain mentors’ characteristics and the length of the relation that make it easy to trust. Therefore we concluded a proposition regarding **Trustfulness:**

*For the mentee to feel that he or she can reveal their true weaknesses and thereby be able to improve parts that will benefit the most there must be trust between mentor and mentee. Trust can be built through a long relationship history or through an external mentor so the confidential information will not reach the mentee’s employer.* Similarly to already cited works of Cropanzano & Mitchell, (2005) and Robinson & Morrison (2000) we see that trust is an intervening condition of the mentoring relations. Additionally both experts that we interviewed highlighted this part of the mentoring specifically. Rasmusson (2013) specifies it in the following way: *Trust, it is of vital importance to create trust. There should not be any doubt at all that the information will spread to the mentee’s manager. Usually I do not even have any mentors at all from any of the mentee companies in the same program.*

In the interview with Alsén (2013) we see the following: *A trustful relation is the most important. It is advisable to met a couple of times to see how you fit together before you decide to engage in a mentor relation.*

In the organizations we used for our studies, both conditions for the establishment of trust were followed. In companies with formal mentoring (Axis, ST-Ericsson, Alfa Laval) mentors and mentees were employees of different organizations. In the company with prevailing informal mentoring (IKEA), interviewees were mentioning that they knew their mentors before their relations started. Normally they were working on the same project or had manager-co-worker relations before.

Consequently, to avoid any possible negative experience from the mentoring, the big focus should be placed on this part of the process. According to Eby&Allen (2002) possible negative experience as Distancing/Manipulative Behaviour is usually associated with unethical behaviour in the mentor part of the relation. In our study we did not focus on this part of the relation, however the attention should be given to this side as well.
Session characteristics

The characteristics of the sessions, surroundings and an atmosphere are another aspects that affect Leadership development. Sessions preparation, frequency, atmosphere are the context that has effect on the Leadership development. Noe (1988) suggest that in order to facilitate the development of the relationship, organizations should consider weekly meetings between protégés and mentors. Perhaps protégés would have received more career benefits from the relationship if opportunities to interact with the mentor were not restricted. Overall the dilemma is how to arrange the surrounding that secures the best interaction between mentor and mentee.

Generally our interviewees were very positive about their mentoring session experience, partly due to the lack of hierarchy and command. We concluded one more common proposition, Equality: A relaxed and open session atmosphere and a feeling of an equal relationship benefit the discussion and exchange of ideas. A mentor with different experience will broaden the mentees perspective and a mentor with experience in the same field will sharpen the knowledge of the mentee. It is relevant to refer to the interview with Rasmusson (2013). He indicates that to further strengthen the creative atmosphere both parts must be able to say what they want and have different views and experiences on aspects of work and life. There are some statements from an interview:

Independence, mentor and mentee must be entirely independent of each other.

A mentee from one kind of company will get a mentor from an entirely different kind. This is to increase creativity and also increase the amount they have to learn from each other.

Leadership development

As mentioned previously the result of our study confirms that leadership development is the core focus of the mentoring process. Aspects of personal growth of the individual that we include in the Leadership development stage in our mentoring model exist in other studies. Personal development via reflection and awareness as well as development of the skill is found in other works. Kram (1983) defines the developmental function of the mentoring. And as mentioned in Chapter 4, she suggest definition of the “personal learning” knowledge acquisition, skills, or competencies contributing to individual development, including the interpersonal competencies of self-reflection, self-disclosure, active listening, empathy, and feedback (Kram, 1996). Kleinman et al (2001) define mentoring as a key forum for learning. Lester et al (2011) confirms the development of leader efficiency as a result of mentoring, especially in the situation of targeted mentorship, which later contributes to a greater leader performance. Nillsson T (2003) confirms by her study that mentoring supports successful competence development.

Other parts of the Leadership development are Interaction with people and Positioning in the organisational landscape. Similar effect of mentoring could be seen in the study of Apospory et al
(2006), where the authors confirm the presence of a broader network inside and outside the organisation as well as visibility and exposure through better communication.

For this phase of the mentoring process we observed the proposition regarding **Personal development**: *Mentorship is focused on developing the individual through reflection and discussions that will result in a more mature and confident personality with a higher degree of understanding for other human beings.*

Referring to the expert interviews, we see similarities in the aspect of reflections and increased confidence as a result of mentoring. Alsén (2013) says: “The mentee will feel more confident in his or her role as a manager. He or she will also become better on reflecting over personal thoughts.” In connection to the reflection process of the individual, Rasmusson (2013) highlights the importance that the mentorship continues over a certain period of time, and this time is needed for personal reflection that later on lead to acceptance in a new behaviour.

**Career development strategy**

In the mentoring model that we suggest, the strategy for further career approach follows leadership development. As suggested by DuBrin (2010) mentoring is a tool to develop the protégés leadership capabilities that later on could lead to career advancement. The latter is a consequence of the former. We see similar findings in other works. Nilsson L (2000) confirms doubtful direct effects of mentoring on the career. The result of his study shows that the mentees got insights regarding personal development, their own strengths and capabilities. Dovier (1998) brings up the controversial effect of the mentoring on the mentees’ careers, despite proven results of the personal development of the mentees. We formulated the following proposition for this phase of mentoring, **Small career focus**: *The reason for entering a mentorship is seldom directly focused on climbing the career ladder or using the mentor as a steppingstone.*

There is relevance of this proposition in the expert interview of Alsén (2013). He explains that it is important that the mentee has realized that mentorship could potentially bring much more than just a career position. Understanding this shows a certain level of maturity of the mentee, and according to him it is a necessary precondition for entering the mentorship. He says: “If the only purpose (of mentee) is to get a job with higher position, he or she is not ready (for mentoring).”

There is a certain interrelation with the stage of Precondition for mentoring. In our study we did not focus on understating of how companies are selecting candidates for the program or how individuals motivate their wish to be mentored in case of informal mentoring. Noe (1988) suggests developing a “readiness for mentoring” indicator, which could be used for organizations to select individuals for participation in mentoring programs meaning those employees who are most likely to benefit from experience. In our opinion, the development of such an indicator is a very relevant investment and could potentially save time and costs for the company, mentors and mentees.
Further results of mentoring

From the data collection interviews, we extracted other consequences of mentoring, defined by mentees. They often would like to become mentors themselves or are already practicing mentoring. Another result is that today’s mentees actively focus on promotion and implementation of the mentoring in their organisation. The proposition that characterised this phase of the mentoring process is **Mentor ambition**: *The mentees consider mentorship to be beneficial for both parties and do want to become mentors themselves.*

Reviewed studies prove mutual understanding of the perceived career benefits both for both mentors (Ghosh & Reio, 2013) and mentees (Allen *et al*., 2004). It is therefore not surprising that mentees realising these benefits would fully like to utilise them in their career planning.

The interviewed experts are also united in their opinions regarding benefits of the mentoring. Rasmusson (2013) confirms that based on his practice, being a mentor is very rewarding as well. Following is extracted regarding this topic:

- The joy of seeing a young person grow seem to be one of the main benefits.
- The mentors learn a lot as well.
- Get a feeling of being knowledgeable, a confirmation.
- Get new networks.

Alsén (2013) brings up the following arguments, specifying the benefits for the mentor: “The mentor will experience an ego boost by feeling that somebody needs him or her. It is also a common feeling that the mentor, who probably has come rather far in his or her career, enjoys the feeling of paying back the luck and help he or she has got through the years. They will also learn a lot themselves since they will get questions they have to answer that they have never thought about before. It is a way for them to vitalise themselves and their knowledge.”

Analysis of our findings and their position in connection to existing academic studies in the area of leadership development shows that mentoring in Swedish organisations has similar aspects and characteristics. References to the practical knowledge of the real life experts could be seen as informal confirmation of relevance of our work and its confirmatory significance. In order to get the full picture of the study relevance, the noted limitations should be brought up. We describe them in Chapter 7.
6. Conclusion

The focus of our work is to understand how mentees in Swedish companies perceive their mentorship. As a general opinion we would say that all the mentees we have interviewed were very satisfied with their mentorship and they believed they had developed their personality as well as their skills. To connect this to our research question; what are the crucial factors for a successful mentorship in Swedish companies and what are the key benefits from the mentee perspective? we have explored the process of mentorship in Swedish companies from the mentees’ perspective and found out what insights and knowledge the mentees consider themselves to have gained. Using grounded theory we have extracted five dominant propositions from our collected data which shall answer the focus of the research question. As earlier mentioned these conclusions are not statistically significant but qualitatively relevant and based on the twelve mentee interviews.

- **Trustfulness** - for the mentee to feel that he or she can reveal their true weaknesses and thereby be able to improve parts that will benefit the most there must be trust between mentor and mentee. Trust can be built through a long relationship history or through an external mentor so the confidential information will not reach the mentee employer.

- **Equality** - a relaxed and open session atmosphere and a feeling of an equal relationship benefit the discussion and exchange of ideas. A mentor with different experience will broaden the mentees perspective and a mentor with experience in the same field will sharpen the knowledge of the mentee.

- **Personal development** - mentorship is focused on developing the individual through reflection and discussions which will result in a more mature and confident personality with a higher degree of understanding for other human beings.

- **Small career focus** - The reason for entering a mentorship is seldom directly focused on climbing the career ladder or using the mentor as a steppingstone

- **Mentor ambition** - The mentees consider mentorship to be beneficial for both parties and want to become mentors themselves.

To further understand the process of mentorship we have created “the model of mentoring” (fig. 3.1) as a structural model of the relationship between the most important factors of mentorship we have observed during our research.

The question whether we would advise managers to enter a mentoring relation or not we would, based on the interviews, recommend everyone who feels they have the time, a lot of questions on their mind and a feeling they would like to discuss this with someone more experienced, mentoring
is definitely something to consider. This does connect to the fact that the majority of the mentees have not had a mentor before which imply that they became managers before they entered the mentorship. Hence, you need to have a fairly clear picture of what you wish to get out from the mentorship before you enter. Using the mentorship well you will become more mature as a person, more aware of your own traits and improve your toolbox of professional skills. It will not automatically qualify you for a higher position but the new insights and knowledge can give you a competitive advantage in the long run. However, at the end of the day, the best way is probably to evaluate all possible alternatives to improve your career as for example education, mentoring, coaching, networking or maybe changing industry to revitalize your inspiration, and chose what fits your purpose and life situation the best.
7. Recommendations for further studies

To be able to study a certain topic deep enough it is necessary to have some limitations not to be overwhelmed by the vast amount of information available. Since our goal was to profoundly understand how the mentees felt about their mentoring program or informal mentoring we had to limit the scope in different aspects.

Since this is a qualitative study the number of sources for the collected data are too few to be considered as statistically significant. The propositions we have generated are based on twelve interviews from four different companies. Considering the depth of the interviews this have given us very good knowledge how these mentees feel about their mentorship but we cannot for sure state that this is representative for mentees in general. Therefore it would very interesting to use our propositions to create a questionnaire for a survey to proof if they are valid or not. Surveys are as opposed to in-depth interviews very suitable to reach out to a high number of individuals so therefore it should be possible to collect a sample size large enough to confirm or disprove the propositions as general facts. A detailed description how to calculate the correct sample size can be found in the article “Organizational Research: Determining Appropriate Sample Size in Survey Research” written by Bartlett et. al (2001). Performing an anonymous survey could also clear out the question if the primary goal is personal development or reaching a higher position since we might have introduced a bias error due to the personal atmosphere when performing the in-depth interviews.

Half of the mentees from our study uses informal mentoring. During our literature search we noticed that the majority of the articles and studies focused on mentor programs of different kinds. This might be because mentor programs are easier to define since informal mentoring might take many different forms and constellations. It would therefore be very interesting with a study on informal mentoring defining the most common forms and also comparing it with formal mentoring in different aspects. Included in formal mentoring could be both external mentor programs and internal mentor programs since they have different characteristics (Alsén interview, 2013).

In this study we have touched the fact that different countries have different levels of hierarchy and different approaches how leadership should be performed. A field inviting for further studies is of course to deeper investigate how this affects mentoring. In one of our propositions we have stated that an open and equal atmosphere during the mentoring sessions benefit the discussions and therefore the impact of mentoring. This is of course related to the small power distance in the Swedish culture. Can this maybe also be a disadvantage? Since the mentors in most cases are older than the mentee the fact that some countries have high respect for the elderly could also greatly affect the mentoring? The question is how? Does it mean that the mentee does not dare to speak his or her mind and therefore it makes the exchange of ideas suffer? Or does it mean the mentee will come more prepared to the mentoring sessions and listen more carefully to the mentor and thereby use the time more efficiently and therefore learn more? Which is the most beneficial culture for
mentoring? It is an interesting subject just waiting to be explored further. A good foundation to start this study is Hofstede’s classical book; Cultures and Organizations: Software of the Mind (2004).

Close to the previous subject is the question how it works in large multi-national organizations. Since the codes of the company culture is written in one country and the majority of the employees at an office can have another nationality, will this cause a problem regarding mentoring? Generally if the mentee and mentor comes from different cultures, is that a problem for the mentoring or an advantage? One could imagine that in some cultures where gender equality has not reached desired level it would be problematic if the mentor was female and the mentee was male. On the other hand the mentee would have incredibly much to learn from this relationship; therefore if it would succeed it would have been a very beneficial mentorship. This leads us to another possible field of study, namely the optimal matching characteristics and combination of mentee and mentor. As mentioned above, the more different two people are the more they have to learn from each other? Or should they be rather similar so they understand each other better and the mentor easier can understand the questions and needs of the mentee? This is a subject where the outcome of the study can be of great value to mentor programs to refine their matching and thereby increase the success of the program.
References


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Appendix

A1 Interview questionnaire

Questionnaire - Mentoring as a factor of career success in Swedish companies

Mentorship setup and preconditions (15 – 20 min)

1. Do you have a mentor?
   a) Have you had other mentors before?
   b) How many?
   c) For how long do you have/did you have mentor?
   d) How did you find your mentor?
   e) Is it a formal or informal relationship
   f) How senior is the mentor
   g) How influential is the mentor
   h) Approximate age of mentor
   i) Is it an external or internal mentorship (from your own company or another)?
   j) Does the mentor relationship have a relaxed atmosphere or more hierarchic?
      How does this affect the communication/discussions? It is very relaxed

2. How often did you meet/or do you meet?
   a) What do your sessions look like?

3. Did you have certain criteria’s for selection of your mentor?
   a) Could you specify those? Professional or life experience, position in the company, personal characteristics, “chemical” match), respect for each other?

4. Do you have a clear picture of your career path?
   a) Did mentoring affect it?

5. Is there any general policy or rule in your company regarding mentorship?
Professional and personal development (50 – 60 min)

6. How is mentoring influencing your daily job?
   a) Regarding performance?
   b) Regarding relations with people?

7. What major changes have mentoring initiated in your professional life?
   a) What competence have you gained thanks to the mentorship?
   b) What competences do you primarily focus on to develop through your mentorship?
   c) Have you got valuable connections thanks to the mentorship? How will you use them?
   d) How have it helped you in your career development regarding position?

8. What effect have mentoring had on you as an individual?
   a) How have you grown as a person due to the mentorship?
   b) Does it help you to become a better leader?
   c) How can it sometimes be uncomfortable/painful to have a mentor? Negative experience?
   d) Have you become more confident in yourself and your actions?

Mentorship influences on the future career (15 – 20 min)

9. Do you plan to work further on your career development?
   a) Do you know your next step?
   b) How will you approach it?
   c) Will you use your mentor to support you?
   d) Does your company promote internal hiring?

10. Do you plan to be a mentor yourself one day?
   a) How do you think it will benefit you?

11. Any other comments regarding mentoring?

Is it ok to ask you a complementing question via E-mail later on if it would be necessary?
A2 Expert Interviews

A4.1 Bertil Rasmusson

Industrial Background

HR director at Gambro, HR director at CARDO and temporary HR director at Axis Communication.

Mentor program organizer.

Have worked a lot with teaching adults through IFL.

The methodology behind mentorship is not very difficult. The difficulties lie in the execution. It is about having people skills and about relations.

The industry can learn a lot from each other.

Important aspects regarding mentorship:

Independence, mentor and mentee must be entirely independent of each other.

Trust, it is of vital importance to create trust. This is why the mentor and mentee should never come from the same company. They must be able to speak in confidence. Usually I do not even have any mentors at all from any of the mentee companies in the same program. This because there should not be any doubt at all that the information will spread to a manager in the mentees own company, all this to ease up the trust building.

Another important factor is diversity. We always try to match together people from different backgrounds. So a mentee from one kind of company will get a mentor from an entirely different kind. This is to increase creativity and also increase the amount they have to learn from each other. There is also less risk one will tempt the other to start working with them instead. We do not want to promote cross recruiting between the companies. We are not building a recruiting network. We do want them to create personal developing networks though.

When choosing a mentor you cannot just walk into a company and saying that we need five mentors. It must be done in the opposite order that you meet somebody that you feel that he or she works in a way that would fit perfectly as a mentor.

An important aspect with mentorship is that it often continues over a longer period of time, our program is for 1,5 year. Since leaders is working with changing behavior this is very important. To learn a new behavior you must be exposed to the information for a longer period of time compared what is necessary for normal information. The reason for this is that you will need time for personal reflection.
There are not so many different versions or methodologies of mentorship. We try to integrate the company of the mentee as much as possible to they get the company more engaged and involved.

The most important things with mentorship are:

- Independence and trust.
- Time.
- Close to reality. That the things they learn should be relevant and easy to apply in their tasks.
- The matching of the mentor and mentee. The mentor should for example be at least 15 years older to get enough knowledge and authority.

What does the mentor get out of the relationship?

- For a long time a thought it was just a cliché but they joy of seeing a young person grow seem to be one of the main benefits.
- The mentors learn a lot as well.
- Get a feeling of being knowledgeable, a confirmation.
- Get new networks.

Any negative sides of mentorship?

- They maybe would have been able to learn more on other ways using the same time.
- You might get very criticized so you must be able to handle that.
- Sometimes the mentor thinks that the mentee is too lacy.

Difference with informal/formal mentorship?

- It will be more difficult to get structure in a spontaneous mentorship.
- It would most likely become more of an ad-hoc situation. You call just for a specific situation when you need that information.
- Informal program have no competition. A mentor program must be able to sell and does therefore have to reach a certain level. Therefore the program will have a higher merit value since the level will be more obvious for an external person.

The relationship will change over time. In the beginning it will be maybe 90% talk regarding work and 10% concerning relations and persons. Over time when the mentor and mentee start to get to know each other the discussions about work will decline and talk about relations and persons will increase. It is a natural step in the development of the relationship.
The mentor program should satisfy the need for development for both the mentee and his or hers company, the priority is the mentee though.

Regarding personal development Sweden have come very far. In France for example they would never talk about personal development.

Important success factors for mentorship:

- Trust
- Learning
- Safety
- Long sightedness – Long exposure

Some companies have an instrumental view on mankind. It has to be humanistic. They treat leadership as it was a transaction when it should be treated as a transformation.

Regarding length of program – Diminishing marginal utility

Ikea have more of a sponsor (Sv. fadder) program and not mentorprogram. The purpose of the sponsor program is so learn the sponsee the values of ikea. A normal mentor program should widen the perspective and increase the creativity of the mentee. Hence, the function is almost the opposite.
A4.2 Göran Alsén

Employed at School of economics and management in Lund and School of management in Blekinge.

Consultant in leadership and adviser in top management coaching.

Participated in the development of the executive MBA at EFL.

Worked at the MIL institute with leadership development.

Which are the most important aspects regarding mentorship?

That the mentee thinks through way he or she wants a mentor. What development they see that they can benefit from a mentorship. It is also very important to learn the difference between mentor and coach. What is the most suiting for someone is a matter of personality of the mentee/coachee.

Who gains from the mentorship?

The mentee will feel more confident in his or hers role as a manager. The mentee will also learn how to pick up learnings faster/ more efficient. He or she will also become better on reflecting over personal thoughts. The mentee will also learn how to handle specific situations.

The mentor will experience an ego boost by feeling that somebody needs him or her. It is also a common feeling that the mentor, who probably have come rather far in his or her career, enjoy the feeling of paying back the luck and help they have got through the years. They will also learn a lot themselves since they will get questions they have to answer that they have never thought about before. It is a way for them to vitalizing themselves and their knowledge.

For the company it is a method to keep a good employee. They will probably also get a more competent and well-functioning employee. The key person is though the mentee, if the mentee is not satisfied or are gaining any knowledge, no one will gain on the mentorship.

Which are the most important success factors for a good mentorship?

A trustful relation is the most important. Important is also to have the strength to terminate the mentorship if the mentor-mentee relation does not work. The mentee should not feel obligated to continue of gratefulness to the mentor. It is advisable to meet a couple of times to see how you fit together before you decide to engage in a mentor relation. It is positive if the mentee have reached a certain level of maturity before entering a mentorship. If the only purpose is to get a job with higher position he or she is not ready. It is also important the mentee dare to speak his or her mind. If the power distance is too high it will just be a monologue from the mentor with no good discussions. One
can say that if the mentee cannot talk about this issue, the distance is too big.

What should a mentor-mentee session look like?

The most common model is the GROW model. Goal, Reality, Opportunities and Reality. There are heaps of different models thought.

Difference between formal and informal mentorship?

It does not necessarily have to be any difference. Both have pros and cons. In an informal mentorship you have to be careful who you chose. I would for example not recommend having your manager as your mentor since that relationship would be very complicated. There are also risks with formal but internal mentor programs since they are not under competition you do not know if they are good or not. Just because someone is a manager does not mean he is suitable to be a mentor. In an informal mentorship it can be recommended to formalize the relationship a little bit so it is clear who have what role and define the relationships purpose. External mentor programs sometimes include educational elements which of course can be seen as an extra bonus. Top managers sometimes have networks, as for example Hjärntrusten, where they discuss certain questions in groups. Another network for female mentees only is Ruterdam.