Motivation and Work in the Post-Industrial Era Research Conference April 19 - 20, 2016

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Leading Passion: Motivation and Work in the Post-Industrial Era Research Conference April 19 - 20, 2016

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Foreword

The future of work is dependent on our abilities to generate non-material value by creating, sharing and refining knowledge to produce new ideas and innovations. The majority of our organisations are still run based on the principles of organization dating to the early days of industrialization. We fine-tune systems for “managing” “human resources”, strive for maximum steering of “performance” and build elaborate goal-accomplishment and costly incentive systems that accentuate measurement, hierarchy and external motivation.

New work requires new ways of thinking: new approaches to leadership and management, novel ways of motivating and engaging people, and new practices and ways of working that foster innovation and cooperation. We need to develop models and frameworks that nourish cultures of engagement, creation and sharing in all kinds of organisations, companies, public sector organisations, professional and other associations.

Leading Passion (www.leadingpassion.fi) project is a three-year project that studies the differences and similarities between specific management cultures aiming at rich understanding of the cultural elements of engagement both within and between organisations. We invited researchers and researcher-practitioners interested in new insights, practices and tools for new ways of working and leadership of the new era to share their ideas in a two-day interdisciplinary research conference to be held in Porvoo in April 2016.

We received over 20 abstracts for the conference approaching the theme of passion at work from different perspectives. This conference publication includes five full papers of the conference. In their paper Kitte Marttinen and Tuukka Kostamo from our Leading Passion research team highlight the experiences of millennials at work. Continuing with the examination of the young generation, Liisa Wallenius, Ivan Berazhny, Joëlle Hietbrink and Julia Huisman in their paper focus on how pedagogical choices may empower business students to adopt deeper learning strategies. Based on their study among social and health care workers Suvi-Jonna Martikainen and Tuija Oikarinen in their paper discuss what brings pleasure to work and which factors contribute to the creation of experience of purpose at work. Anne Eskola and Liinamaaria Hakola have made a multiple-case study of organisations that have created new types of organisational cultures in the ICT industry. Based on the findings they suggest in their paper that productivity and profitability seem to emerge as a by-product when the other, more favourable conditions, such as strong sensemaking, prevail in the organisation. In order to involve workers of all ages in the transformation of working cultures it is also important that we take into account all generations. In her paper, Niina Jallinoja presents a new conceptual framework to analyse age as a social construction.

I thank warmly all contributors of this publication, all presenters of the conference and the reviewers of the conference abstracts. May the passion be with you in all your future research efforts!

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Contents

What gives fire and what kills passion at work among the Generation Y?

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Keywords: Passion, engagement, Generation Y, leadership

Abstract

In the future working life, employees' creativity and social skills are going to be the organisations' key to success. We argue that with this development, employees' engagement is of utmost importance as engaged employees have been shown to be consistently more creative, innovative, and emotionally invested in their work. However, there is a relative lack in understanding how engagement can be led. In this study, we approach engagement through the concept of passion at work in order to highlight the role of emotions in this phenomenon. We tentatively define passion at work as consciously accessible, intense positive feelings experienced by engagement in work activities that people love or like, or find important, and in which they invest time and energy We study passion in the context of Generation Y, whose members are going to represent the majority of the work force within a decade. In order to uncover the ways to successfully lead the passion of Generation Y, we seek to understand what its members hold important: How they themselves construct the meanings of passion and leadership in their work? To this end, we conduct a preliminary analysis of 30 pilot interviews in four Finnish organisations. Through qualitative content analysis, we study how the members of Generation Y themselves construct the meaning of passion and what enhances or kills their passion at work. Through our results, we gained some tentative confirmation for our initial definition of passion. Our results highlighted the role of meaningfulness, autonomy, and the community in enhancing passion at work. In addition to the lack of enhancers of passion, our results show how the lack of feedback and micro-management can kill passion at work. We conclude by giving some tentative ideas on how to lead the passion of the Generation Y.

Introduction

It is a recurring mantra that the working life is changing but, nevertheless, now it seems that a major disruption is underway. The World Economic Forum argues that "65% of children entering primary school today will ultimately end up working in completely new job types that don't yet exist" (World Economic Forum, 2016, p. 1). Calling it the "Fourth Industrial Revolution" the report (ibid.) highlights, among other things, 3D printing, smart systems, and biotechnology as the harbingers of broader socio-economic, geopolitical, and demographic developments. In Finland, the impact of this coming change has been compared to the change brought by industrialization (Pentikäinen, 2014). In yet another analysis, Frey and Osborne (2013) argue based on their analysis of the US labour market that a whopping 47 percent of total US employment are in high risk of vanishing, largely due to computerization.

What do all these changes mean for people in working life? Because of the scale of the possible disruption, there is considerable debate about what is going to change and how much. One interesting theme is what kind of work will persist and what kinds of workers are needed. Frey and Osborne (2013) suggest that the tasks that are best shielded against these changes are those that require high levels of creativity and social skills. Thus, in order to succeed in the future organizations are going to need highly skilled employees with good social skills.

In this paper, we focus on the challenges these developments pose for leadership. Leading highly skilled people requires different leadership strategies than leading people doing repetitive tasks and thus "traditional models of hierarchical and legitimate power practices are being challenged" (Shuck & Herd, 2012, p. 157). In spite of the recent developments in leadership research, thinking, and practice, commentators argue that in many organizations leadership change is lagging. This clashes with the view of the future of work, where organizations must "inspire and enable employees to apply their full capabilities to their work" (Bakker, Albrecht & Leiter, 2011, p. 4-5). Engaging employees more fully is crucial because engaged employees are consistently and continuously emotionally invested in and focused on creating value for organizations, have higher morale, are more loyal, more creative and innovative, are prepared to "go the extra mile" to delight a customer (Hlupic, 2014), and, most importantly, are more productive (e.g. Bakker & Bal, 2010; Demerouti & Cropanzano, 2009).

Thus, we argue that engaging, motivating, and inspiring people is going to be even more important in future work places. In this paper, we approach people's enthusiasm and engagement through the concept of passion at work. Defined as 'a strong inclination toward an activity that individuals like (or even love), that they find important, in which they invest time and energy' (Vallerand et al., 2007, p. 507), the concept offers a fruitful way to study engagement and emotions. In this study, we concentrate on young adults, or Generation Y. This focus seems appropriate, as they will comprise 75% of global workforce by 2025 (CMI, 2014), so their views about the future of work are paramount.

We seek to understand the phenomenon of passion at work from the viewpoint of the employees. To this end, we focus on the thoughts of the members of Generation Y about passion. Our research questions are: 1) How do members of Generation Y construct the meaning of passion at work? 2) What ignites and what kills their passion at work? Our empirical data consists of 30 semi-structured interviews conducted in four Finnish companies. We analysed the data through data-driven content analysis (Elo & Kyngäs, 2007).

Engagement, passion, and leadership

Kahn (1990) was the first to coin the term engagement in organizational research. He defined personal engagement as "the harnessing of organization members' selves to their work roles; in engagement, people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally during role performances" (Kahn, 1990, p. 694). Since then, there has been a large and fast-growing body of research on engagement (Bakker, Albrecht & Leiter, 2011). The field is still characterized as a novel field, which still needs a lot of work to advance. For example, there is a lot of controversy about the definition of the term itself. Although the most often used definition is Schaufeli et al.'s (2002) definition of work engagement as "a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigour, dedication, and absorption", there are many other definitions drawing more fully from the work of Kahn (Sonnentag, 2011).

Interestingly, the emotional dimension present in Kahn's work is somewhat downplayed in Schaufeli at al.'s approach. Furthermore, work and employee engagement are often conceptualized as separate constructs (Schaufeli & Salanova, 2011).

In their review of the field, Bakker et al. (2011) raise ten issues on engagement that are still to be studied. Here, we present those most important for our approach. In addition to the dilemma of the definition of the term, Bakker et al. (2011) also point out that whether there are fluctuations in engagement over time is not known. In commenting the review, Schaufeli and Salanova (2011) continue with this idea and argue that work engagement and task engagement are different concepts. The examination of task engagement, focusing on whether employees "feel more engaged while performing some tasks rather than other tasks" (Schaufeli & Salanova, 2011, p. 42) moves the research on engagement towards a more "micro" orientation.

Bakker et al. (2011, p. 13) also comment on the research on leadership and engagement by stating that "the role of the leader in fostering work engagement has received limited research attention". They note that transformational leadership has received some attention and call for using alternative models of leadership to understand how leadership affects engagement. In particular, the exact mechanisms or processes by which leaders influence their followers engagement have not been adequately addressed (Bakker et al., 2011). Another theme they raise concerns the possible dark side of engagement. Although the benefits of engagement have received a lot of attention, the possible negative consequences of over-engagement have not been studied in full (Bakker et al., 2011).

Throughout the review by Bakker et al. (2011) and the comments to it published in the special issue of European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology, the relative lack of qualitative research is evident. For example, the questions of possible fluctuations over time of employee engagement, the lack of research on the more micro-level "task engagement", and the possible negative consequences of engagement are prime targets for a qualitative approach aiming to understand in rich detail what is going on in the everyday of an organization.
We seek to highlight the role of emotions in engagement. Emotions are a pertinent, although for scholars often a tacit part of leadership. The picture of a leader capturing the hearts and minds of his/her followers, so common in charismatic, transformational, and, lately, authentic leadership literatures, has its roots in Weber's (1947) ideas on charismatic leader's ability to express 'passionate emotions to attract passionate followers and stimulate social and organizational change' (Thanem, 2013, p. 396). During the last two decades, leadership scholars have started to focus explicitly on the role of emotions in leadership (Gooty et al, 2010). This recognition follows a wider preoccupation with emotions and affect in organization studies more broadly (Ashkanasy & Humphrey, 2011; Brief & Weiss, 2002). Scholars contributing to this 'affective revolution' (Barsade et al., 2003) argue that we must study emotions because 'affect is inherent to any situation in which humans interact with each other and their environment, including at work' (Barsade & Gibson, 2007, p. 51).

The interest in emotions in leadership research is evidenced by, for example, the recent special issue in The Leadership Quarterly (see the introduction to the special issue in Connelly & Gooty, 2015). Studies have examined, for example, the role of emotional intelligence, emotion recognition, and empathy in leadership. As is readily apparent, studying affect in leadership is riddled with conceptual controversies, although on some areas things are looking brighter (Gooty et al., 2010). Again, these developments closely follow those in organization studies more broadly (Ashkanazy & Humphrey, 2011).

In this study, we wish to contribute to the study of emotions and engagement in leadership through the concept of passion. Vallerand and others (2007) define passion as ‘a strong inclination toward an activity that individuals like (or even love), that they find important, in which they invest time and energy’ (p. 507). Vallerand and others (2007) also present two distinct types of passion: obsessive passion that creates an uncontrollable urge to engage in the passionate activity, and harmonious passion that engenders a sense of volition and personal endorsement about pursuing the passionate activity. Recognizing the concept’s similarities with other concepts, such as flow and motivation, Vallerand and others (2007) argue that the explicit focus in the engagement in activity and the recognition of two different types of passion sets it apart. In addition to Vallerand’s research, there exists vibrant research on passion in the entrepreneurial literature. For example, Cardon et al. (2009, p. 517) conceptualize entrepreneurial passion as “consciously accessible, intense positive feelings experienced by engagement in entrepreneurial activities associated with roles that are meaningful and salient to the self-identity of the entrepreneur”.

For our approach, the concept of passion is especially useful for four reasons: 1) because it brings together the concepts of engagement and emotions in a useful way, 2) because of its explicit focus on activity, 3) because, through the concepts of harmonious and obsessive passion, it allows for studying both positive and negative sides of engagement, and 4) because, in contrast to the whole scale of emotions, passion is relatively straightforward concept, related to a *specific* activity, and whether a person does or does not feel passion towards an activity is more easily recognized.

Generation Y

By 2025, Generation Y will comprise 75% of global workforce (CMI, 2014), and therefore the importance on understanding them is acknowledged. There is considerable amount of research on Generation Y, thus they seem to be controversial by character. There is little evidence on real differences among generations, and the academic empirical evidence for generational differences in work values is, at best, mixed (Parry & Urwin, 2011).

Followed by the Baby Boomers and the Generation X, the Generation Y has also multiple definitions, the most common being the Millenials. As this generation was born and been raised in a time of rapid technological changes and development, Millennials have also been labelled as digital natives (Kultalahti, 2015) referring to their capability and willingness to harness technology to serve their needs. It has also being described as Generation Me (Twenge et al., 2010), who value leisure time and extrinsic rewards more than previous generations.

Additionally, the Generation Y has multiple definitions of generational cohorts. There is little agreement between scholars concerning the most apt birth years and a definite time frame cannot be stated (Kultalahti, 2015; Parry and Urwin, 2011). In this study we follow the definitions that many scholars have used, stating Generation Y been born between 1980 and 2000 (Cennamo & Gardner, 2008; Meier & Crocker 2010; Rentz, 2015).

Despite the controversial nature of results according to Generation Y’s values and differences with previous generations, we argue that some common characteristics can be found. Members of Generation Y tend to value highly the contents, interestingness and meaningfulness of work (CMI, 2014; Meier & Crocker, 2010; Myllyniemi, 2013; Rentz, 2015). They value opportunities for progression and having the room for growth at work (CMI, 2014; Kultalahti, 2015; Rentz, 2015).

Additionally, they value freedom (Cennamo & Gardner, 2007) and a good work-life balance (CMI, 2014; Rentz, 2015). However, according to Pyöriä et al. (2013), arguments stating that Millenials are less work-oriented than older generations are not based on fact. Regardless of age, the value placed on work has steadily stayed at a high level during the past decades. Simultaneously, leisure time as well as home and family have become increasingly important, reflecting a trend that applies not only to Millenials but also to older generations (Pyöriä et al., 2013).

From leadership and management perspectives, members of Generation Y want to be seen as individuals (Bresman, 2015.) as well as being respected, valued and heard by their supervisors (Kultalahti, 2015; Rentz, 2015). Additionally, they tend to be extremely resistant to micro-management (CMI, 2014). Based on the literature, we claim that in order to answer to the needs of future leadership among the Generation Y, further research is needed on how supervisors, managers and leaders can support the professional growth, engagement and passion at work, and thus create an organisation culture that answers the needs of work places of post-industrial era.

Leading the passion of Generation Y

Engagement and motivation have been at the heart of much of leadership discussion, especially after the rise of charismatic and transformational leadership theories in the 1980s and 1990s. Hundreds of studies have been conducted where scholars have sought for the best ways for leaders to achieve the goal of engaged or motivated followers. As is true for much of leadership research, this stream has overwhelmingly focused on the leader (see e.g. DeRue, 2011) and produced rather abstract and general findings and advice for leaders: be a charismatic leader (Babcok-Robertson & Strickland, 2010), a transformational leader (Zhu, Avolio & Walumbwa, 2009), or exhibit transparent communication and behavioral integrity (Vogelgesang, Leroy & Avolio, 2013). A lot of this research is quantitative, again mirroring the leadership as a whole (see e.g. Glynn & Raffaelli, 2010). Relatively lacking is a perspective aimed at *understanding* the phenomenon, to *ex*pose meanings of leadership rather than *im*pose them (Bryman et al., 1988).

As we have discussed above, research on the role of leadership in inducing engagement and also its role in affecting the emotions of employees is rather scarce. In particular, there is a dearth of studies seeking to gain a richer understanding about the actual everyday leadership actions in affecting them. In this study, we seek to contribute to this stream of research by conducting a qualitative study about passion at work. In this way, we are addressing some of the issues brought forward by Bakker et al. (2011) discussed above: we seek to provide more granular understanding of passion at work, directed towards specific tasks and not the work as a whole; we want to understand the role of leadership in fostering passion at work; and we address the relative lack of qualitative studies in the field.

We also want to break with the traditional view of concentrating on the leader when considering leadership. This coincides well with the usual arguments about the Generation Y, where they are said to value individuality and freedom and detest micro-management. We seek to understand the locally constructed meanings, the members' understandings (Iszatt-White, 2009) of leadership and passion. Therefore, we do not focus on leaders' actions but instead look at the workers' own constructions of what they hold important. Uncovering the workers' thoughts and valuations, our study provides the first step in understanding how the passion of the Generation Y could be led.

As we study how the workers construct ideas about leadership and passion, we do not start with too strict definitions and instead will let them arise from the data. However, we do need a starting point to approach these many faceted concepts. For leadership, we follow Alvesson and Spicer (2011) and start with a broad definition of leadership as entailing some kind of an influence process and invoking locally constructed meanings. The locally constructed meanings give leadership its form in different contexts. For passion, we draw from both Vallerand (2007) and Cardon et al. (2009) and define passion at work as consciously accessible, intense positive feelings experienced by engagement in work activities that people like or find important and in which they invest time and energy. These are the preliminary definitions through which we look at our data. However, as stated, we will let the final definitions to arise from the data.

Method

The aim of this study is to understand how the members of Generation Y construct the meaning of passion at work, and to understand what enhances or kills passion at work. The research questions are:

1. How do members of Generation Y construct passion at work?
2. What enhances and what kills their passion at work?

To answer these questions the research was conducted qualitatively by using semi-structured interviews, providing themes, but letting space for the interviewees to speak freely and reflect their thoughts and emotions around the subjects. Use of semi-structured interview allows the interviewer to follow some preset questions but also to include additional questions in response to participant comment and reactions (Savin-Baden & Howell Major, 2013). The themes of the pilot interviews consisted of questions concerning Millenials' values of work, their motivation, perceptions of leadership, perceptions of passion at work, and especially what enhances and kills the passion and finally their future dreams.

The interviews were conducted between December 2015 and March 2016 in four Finnish organisations in Helsinki and Oulu. The research organisations provide a good sample of Finnish working life and work realities of Finnish Millenials. Two of the organisations are from service sectors, one from B2B and one from B2C sales. The third is an industrial company and the fourth is an association.

The interviewees were chosen using purposive sampling by asking assistance of the HR managers to provide a list of employees that are born in 1980´s or 1990´s or to directly suggest interviewees that are born in that time line. The total number of interviewees was 30, from which 16 were female and 14 were male. All were born in the 80's and in the 90's. The youngest was 25 years old and the eldest was 35 years old. The total amount of interviews is 30. The approximate length of one interview was 45 minutes, varying from 30 minutes up to one hour and 15 minutes. The interviews were transcribed by a professional organization specializing in transcripts.

Table 1: Information on industry and gender division of pilot interviews

	Female	**Male**	**Total**
Service, B2B sales	7	1	8
Service, B2C sales	3	5	8
Industrial company	2	6	8
Association	4	2	6
Total	**16**	**14**	**30**

The preliminary analysis was conducted by using content analysis (Elo & Kyngäs, 2007; Savin-Baden & Howell Major, 2013) in order to find frequency and patterns of use of terms or phrases, using inductive approach. NVIVO was used in the analysis process. First nodes were constructed inductively in order to understand what kind of themes arose from the data in general. Then, for this study, nodes were constructed according to our research questions regarding passion at work.

Results

As we have started to analyze our data, we can say that our interviews have tapped well into the working life of the members of the Generation Y and their views on passion and leadership. In the preliminary analysis, analysing our data in an inductive way, the general themes that arose from the data concern trust/confidence; freedom and autonomy; the importance of good management and leadership including repetitive notions of feedback and appreciation from the supervisors; as well as the importance of the work community, especially good interaction and atmosphere.

Constructions of passion at work

In order to answer our first research question, how the members of Generation Y construct passion at work, we examined their answers to the following interview questions: “How would you describe passion at work?”, “What does it mean to you?”, “Can you remember a situation, where you have felt passion at work?” and “How does it show in your work?” The analysis of the answers for these questions is summarized in Table 2 below. Our analysis shows that the most common meaning given to passion at work consist notions of strong positive feelings of liking or loving ones job.

> *“That you like what you do. That you like it for real, and not just come to work and count minutes.”*

> *“It means to me that you are enthusiastic about what you do, or you love what you do. It’s like when I am with clients, I have that kind of passion. It’s like that I then love what I’m doing. Like in that moment I understand to be grateful that I can do this job.”*

Meaning for passion at work was also constructed through the ideas of investing energy and effort for the work, because the work itself is meaningful, not any extrinsic sources of motivation. Some additional notions of the concepts of "flow" or "drive" were mentioned as well. Additionally, investing time to fulfil the tasks was pointed out.

> *"It's kind of winning yourself, like kind of giving more of yourself that what you really can."*

> *"It's like drive, that you get into a flow, that you don't think what time it is [laughing] and how long you have to sit here. That you feel attraction and interest on it in general, and the work itself as meaningful. That you don't think that you come here for the salary to sit from eight to four and do what you are supposed to do and then go away."*

The Generation Y also referred to strong positive feelings when describing passion at work, and often they were related to the feeling of competence and success in specific tasks.

> *"The passion comes from when you get the chance to show what you can, that I am able to do this, that I am a bit better than last time".*

> *"Well, that's when you get a huge deal, it's then when you get a really good feeling and like it's really cool."*

Table 2. Constructions of passion at work.

How to construct the meaning of passion at work	**nr of sources**	**nr of references**
Loving or liking the work	16	19
Investing energy and effort	13	16
Feeling of competence and being enthusiastic abt it	11	14
Work identity and professional pride	5	7
Investing time	5	6
Notions of flow and drive	4	4
Not relating passion with work	3	3

What gives fire

In order to answer the first part of our second research question, what enhances and what kills the members of the Generation Y passion at work, we examined their answers to the following questions: "Can you tell what enhances passion at work?", "Can you describe a situation where you have felt passion at work?", and "Summarize with three concepts or short sentences what maintains the fire of passion at work".

The results show that the most common answers were related to the concept of competence referred often as fulfilling the challenges and feeling of success.

> *”Well, I felt this type of feeling of success, that even the client thought, that let her speak now, don't disturb her.”*

> *“Challenges. Can't think of more.”*

The results show also the importance of the interestingness of the work, especially versatile and changing work tasks, *“that are not related to your everyday tasks”.* Well-functioning, positive and supporting work community with a good atmosphere plays an important role when feeling and maintaining passion at work.

> *”Mostly when you feel the positive drive it's also mirroring back from others. That you have a challenging task and nice people around.”*

> *”That it (passion) stays on it's sure when the work community works.”*

The members of the Generation Y also want to be trusted and appreciated in order to feel passion at work. Learning opportunities as well as freedom and autonomy give them fire as well. Good management played a minor role.

Table 3. What enhances passion at work?

What enhances passion at work	**nr of sources**	**nr of references**
Feeling of competence	23	39
Interestingness of the work/versatile tasks	14	18
Work community	13	20
Being trusted and appreciated	11	21
Meaningfulness of work	8	10
Learning opportunities	7	8
Freedom and autonomy	5	7
Good management	3	4

Passion killers

In order to answer the second part of our second research question, we examined how the participants answered to a direct question on what kills passion at work. The results show the importance of a positive and well-functioning work community. If there is poor interaction and a bad atmosphere in the organization, the passion of Generation Y is destructed.

> *“If I couldn't communicate with others, it would kill it totally. And also how colleagues and manager take me and how they take their own work.”*

They are also very resistant to routines, in the means of unimportant and “useless” tasks as well as bureaucracy. Lack of trust and lack of appreciation was a common theme as well. The role on managers was crucial. Both micro-management and managers not giving feedback were often mentioned.

> *”Well, that’s easy, you know. I can tell. I have resigned for that. It sure kills passion… I did a good job and then the management changed. We got a new sales manager, a new supervisor who was a real dick. It didn’t work….. He was all the time breathing down my neck and that kills”.*

> *”Then the continuous control, that someone is looking after your performance, that there is no trust that you can do it, that someone suspects all the time and breaths down your neck.”*

Lack of freedom kills passion and sometimes the fact that there is not enough time and resources to fulfill the tasks destructs passion at work.

Table 4. What kills passion at work?

What kills passion at work?	nr of sources	nr of references
Bad work community	12	19
Routine	11	13
Lack of trust and appreciation	10	10
Bad management - no feedback	9	14
Lack of freedom and autonomy	7	9
Micro-management	7	8
Lack of time and resources	6	7
Lack of competence	2	2

Discussion

In our literature review section, we tentatively defined passion at work as consciously accessible, intense positive feelings experienced by engagement in work activities that people love or like, or find important, and in which they invest time and energy. The results of our preliminary analysis in Table 2 show that the members of Generation Y in our data have similar notions about passion at work. Loving and liking the work, investing time and effort, and feelings of competence and enthusiasm are featured prominently. There were two interesting exceptions to this. First, we have not included the notion of identity, which is present in Vallerand et al.’s (2007) definition, into ours. In our data, people connected passion with identity, especially professional pride. Second, some people did not see passion as a part of working life at all. These outliers will be an interesting research subject in further analysis.

The results concerning the enhancers of passion are interesting. The majority of the most prominent themes presented in Table 3 – feeling of competence, interestingness of the work, meaningfulness of work, learning opportunities, and freedom and autonomy – are strongly related to intrinsic motivation that grows from inside of the person. The work community and being trusted and appreciated were also highlighted. These themes are related to feelings of belonging and relatedness. Here, we note the close resemblance of our results with self-determination theory (Ryan, R. & Deci, E., 2000) and the exploration of this relation will be addressed in further analysis.

Many of the results concerning the killers of passion mirror the results of the enhancers of passion. The themes of bad work community, routine, lack of trust and appreciation, lack of freedom and autonomy, and lack of competence are the opposites of the enhancers in the above. However, these results also highlight the role of management in killing passion with the categories of bad management – no feedback and micro-management. Tentatively, it seems that leadership can only indirectly enhance passion at work but it can directly kill it.

Our tentative results support some of the recent research on Generation Y. Previous studies have argued that interestingness and versatile work are crucial among Generation Y, which is directly supported by our data. Studies have also shown them to be strongly resistant to bureaucracy, micro-management, and routines, which is also supported by our data. Our results also indicate some ideas on how to lead the passion of Generation Y. In order to enhance passion at work, leaders should strive to organise work so as to support workers' passion: giving them interesting tasks and feelings of competence, trusting them and appreciating their work, and giving them opportunities to learn and exercise autonomy. Leaders should also invest in the work community to make it supportive, inspiring and engaging. In addition, leaders should strive to diminish the effect of the possible killers of passion. The effect of dull routines should be addressed, feedback should be an intrinsic part of work, and micro-management should be avoided.

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Student Empowerment in Project-based Learning: a case from Haaga-Helia and Stenden Universities

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Abstract

The paper presents the results of a joint project English at Work between Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences (Porvoo Campus, Finland) and Stenden University of Applied Sciences (Emmen Campus, the Netherlands) that was implemented in autumn 2015 by more than 50 students from the respective universities and 20 companies in the respective countries.

The project focused on implementing pedagogical approaches of Haaga-Helia and Stenden (inquiry learning and problem-based learning) and on developing the so-called meta-competences in the students, including ability to work in teams, leadership, project management, intercultural competences, and similar.

The project managers were two students who led intercultural teams that consisted of both Stenden and Haaga-Helia students. The project created an international business environment where the majority of communication was virtual. The focus was on empowering the students to design and lead the project tasks, and to be responsible for their project, including schedules and learning outcomes. The project managers and team leaders were in charge of motivating generation Y students, while the team members worked in virtual teams on the actual research tasks that investigated how Dutch and Finnish companies use English at work. The students from both universities met on Porvoo Campus, Finland, to finalise the project and present the research results.

The learning achievements of the project include a deeper and more practical knowledge of how English is used in international business environments, a greater awareness of various learning and working cultures, more advanced intercultural skills, improved communication and virtual meeting skills, and greater project management and self-management skills. The students also learned to reflect, to document their work and learning process, assess themselves and their peers, motivate each other, and plan their own professional development.

The challenges of the project were the different learning cultures and backgrounds, and the distance between the students (cultural, psychological and physical). Lack of familiarity with the methods resulted in some confusion and learning at the same time. The Dutch and Finnish approach and remuneration of the project varied, which resulted in different levels of commitment and input, which may explain some tension and somewhat uneven outcomes across the teams.

Suggested solutions for implementing similar projects in the future include involving stakeholders more on both institutional level and on the level of industry partners to motivate the students. Additionally, clearer guidelines and transparency need to be established regarding the project outline.

The instructors' roles might be clarified more explicitly, for instance the instructors could have a coaching role. Furthermore, more attention could be given to the selection of companies and samples of their business communication (such as emails, memos) in the data. For a successful project the participating parties need to benefit equally from it. Further, adding workshops on goal setting, methods, reflection and self- and peer evaluation might be beneficial. This co-operation continues and further topics are sought.

Key words: student empowerment, PBL, inquiry learning, leadership, generation Y, student-to-student teaching

1 Introduction

The paper presents the results of a joint project English at Work between Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences (Porvoo Campus, Finland) and Stenden University of Applied Sciences (Emmen Campus, The Netherlands) that was implemented in autumn 2015 by more than 50 students from the respective universities and 20 companies in the respective countries.

The project focused on implementing pedagogical approaches of Haaga-Helia and Stenden, namely inquiry learning and Problem Based Learning, and on developing the so-called meta-competences in the students, including ability to work in teams, leadership, project management, intercultural competences, and similar.

English at Work was implemented within the learning module of Business English in the degree programme of tourism in Finland and in The Netherlands, the project was integrated in English Business Communication in a 4^{th} year Major programme called IMCCM (International Marketing and Cross-Cultural Management).

The project objective can be seen to be threefold. Firstly, the project set to implement student-led studies implemented via project based learning with the methods of inquiry learning and problem-based learning. Secondly, the objective was for the students to develop their meta-competences and thirdly, to enhance and learn communication and language skills.

2 Framework of the project

The two university campuses, Porvoo and Emmen, are strategic local partners as the campuses resemble one another; they are fairly small and apply holistic and innovative approaches to learning, namely, inquiry learning on Haaga-Helia Porvoo campus and problem-based learning (PBL) on Stenden Emmen campus.

In both universities inquiry learning and Project Based Learning are implemented throughout the curricula in all the programmes on Haaga-Helia Porvoo Campus, as the studies at Haaga-Helia prepare students for work life.

Thus Porvoo Campus and Stenden Emmen both have a practical approach that promotes learning by doing and cooperation with local, national and international enterprises, corporations and organisations.

Semester projects enable learning in authentic situations where students face real problems, which helps them develop problem-solving skills and apply their communication and ICT. During the project work, learning of communication and language subjects takes place following CLIL approach (content and language integrated learning).

The principles of inquiry learning require that the learning should take place in a social setting where problems are solved through study, discussion, testing and sharing. As such, inquiry learning has its basis in the theory of constructive learning, whereby the learner is seen as an active creator of knowledge and where social interaction is a vital part of learning. In inquiry learning knowledge creation takes place through creating solutions via social collaboration and collective problem solving. The six steps of inquiry learning in short are 1) creating a problem, 2) creating goals and content for a project/study/implementation plan, 3) agreeing on work practices and theories, 4) constructing knowledge together, 5) reflecting and 6) sharing the knowledge (Ritalahti and Lindroth 2010).

The pedagogical approach of Problem Based Learning implemented on Stenden Emmen Campus is quite similar to Haaga-Helia's inquiry learning. Stenden University applies Problem Based Learning in seven steps: Students first delineate the problem by formulating a description of the case study. Secondly, students formulate concrete targets in order to, later on, analyse and (re) structure them (3rd Step). Next step should be to define the task objectives (4th Step) to individually, by means of self-study look for additional information and reflect on the findings within the group (5th Step). After having done so, students synthesise and merge all concepts (6th Step). In order complete the cycle students give feedback to each other, evaluate the entire process and draw up points for improvement for the next assignment (7th Step).

Furthermore, in the Haaga-Helia Porvoo curricula for the bachelor level tourism studies, communication skills, social and collaboration skills are among the six key areas of professional competences. Also, project management, research and development, coaching, creative problem solving and innovation make the core of the meta-competences learnt and practiced thought the studies. Hence, most of the Haaga-Helia students involved in this project (English at Work) were familiar with project based studies and had had the chance to participate in two study projects prior to this one as they were third semester students. The prior experience thus gave the students a clear advantage because the exchange students joining the project in Haaga-Helia lacked similar experience and were not accustomed with student leadership, project studies or inquiry learning.

The link between the approaches and learning methods of Haaga-Helia curriculum and English at Work are clear. In a way, the project can be seen as one more implementation of learning by doing for the degree programme students. The project enabled the students to learn professional communication in a business environment created for the project as they liaised with students in another country and in another learning culture, learnt to use and communicate via various software tools especially in virtual meetings and thirdly, via communicating with the businesses that were interviewed for the project.

The social and collaboration skills were practiced and learned in the project since the students designed and implemented the project themselves, from setting their research questions to reporting and presenting the results. This entailed networking and collaboration as well as peer teaching and team work on home campus, online via virtual tools and at various companies.

In Stenden, the project "English at Work" was integrated as part of the Major programme 4th year IMCCM within the Bachelor Programme International Business and Languages.

In order to be successful in the project students had to demonstrate that their research a professional skills, as well as cross-cultural competences were up to the standards of an International Business and Languages professional. These core skills and competences are outlined in the Professional and Competency Profile of IBL programmes, updated in 2010. The updated profile of the programme gives a revised view of what an IBL student should embody; communicate internationally, create and maintain contacts with international relations, set objectives and translate them into plans, adapt to other cultures and understand the behaviour of international partners.

Stenden students who took part in the project had already had international experience and had been operating in international teams for four years, thus some of the competences mentioned above had already been tested and improved. However, few students had experience on virtual collaborations when carrying out a project of these characteristics. They had to perform in joint intercultural teams in two different systems of education; hence different approaches on a task, perspectives and methodologies. It can be said that most students improved their virtual meeting and international presentations skills as well as professional attitude and competences. Furthermore, they were able to generate solutions and communicate them appropriately in an international setting they were not familiar with.

Both methods, inquiry learning and PBL, empower the students to plan, implement and reflect on their learning. The level of instruction and forms of teacher's involvement/control might vary and the teachers might take the role of a teacher, instructor and coach and engage in the advising the students as they proceed through the various phases of inquiry learning and Problem Based Learning. The students are given autonomy to decide and implement learning actions while the teachers' role is only to help them. The students have the autonomy to decide on the input and level of commitment as well.

3 Theoretical framework and methods

This chapter gives a brief overview of the process of project studies implemented in English at Work. It gives an insight to the preparation phase, the execution of the project and, in the end, reflection of achievements.

The preparation phase consisted of planning and organising of work. The project was started with the two student groups getting organised and setting learning objectives and goals. The positions of project managers were open for application and students could apply by emailing an open application with a CV. Two project managers were chosen to lead intercultural teams consisting of both Stenden and Haaga-Helia students. There were eight teams created by mixing the students from both universities. The project created an international business environment where the majority of communication was conducted via virtual tools.

The initial stage of the project entailed setting the learning goals and creating a project plan. This work was led by the project managers who created a plan as a result of meetings with their teams. After completing the plan and setting eight focus areas with a designated team, the research and knowledge creation could start.

The focus lied on empowering the students to design and lead the project tasks, and to be responsible for their project, including schedules and learning outcomes.
The project managers and team leaders were in charge of motivating generation Y students, while the team members worked in virtual teams on the actual research tasks that investigated how Dutch and Finnish companies use English at work.

The execution phase consisted of creating the research questions, vetting them and collecting data in various companies. Apart from this the students were involved in communicating with the companies, documenting their work and reporting on their work. There would be workshops with instructor's input and feedback sessions on various texts the students produced.

The work process was as follows: 1.The teams worked on their own according to an agreed plan, 2.The team leaders had weekly meetings locally administered by the project manager, 3. Workshops were given by teacher instructors including lecturing, advising and giving feedback on work completed, 4.Local project manager and instructor meetings, and 5. Project manager-instructor meetings. In addition, there would be ad hoc meetings between different teams, students and instructors, and between the instructors.

As self-management and reflection make part of learning, and the instructors encouraged the project managers to collect student feedback. Hence, two feedback and reflection sessions were arranged during the semester in Porvoo. The first took place on week 4 of the project, and the students were asked 1) to identify project goals, 2) to describe their own team and role in the team and 3) to pose any questions related to the project, and 4) to tell about the expectations set on their peers and on the instructors. At this point, in the very beginning of the project, the students indicated that their motivation for the project to be to finish the project, to pass the course, to find out how companies use English at work, to enlarge their vocabularies, to improve professional communication, to improve time management skills and to make new friends. The students' motivation was mostly intrinsic and only few had extrinsic motivation. They could not define the objectives and goals of the project goals as they felt the first weeks had been too confusing. Instead, they asked for more information.

The learning objectives the students had set were somewhat similar to the issues mentioned as motivator and also, similar to the overall course goals and project objective. They were: 1) to improve English language skills in business situations, 2) to improve in communication competence, 3) to learn to use virtual meeting tools and documentation, 4) to learn to work in international teams and 5) to improve project management skills. The expectations the group set for the course participants and instructors, were 1) to respect for each other and the rules, 2) to have readiness to cooperate, 3) be specific about main/side tasks, 4) to give clear instructions; 5) to meet deadlines and be punctual, 6) to help with information and with English language and 7) to strengthen the confidence and promote trust in the project. Despite the early stage, the students felt they had already made some achievements: learned how to do research and interviews, how to use social media and virtual meetings for internal communication.

They were also contented with the- team selection, the face-to-face meetings, and the prospects of partnership with a foreign university. All in all the students were enthusiastic about the project.

During week 8 of the course a second feedback session was arranged at Haaga-Helia and the students gave feedback via an online survey. At this stage some participants were frustrated and lacked input in the project activities which resulted in some of the feedback being irrelevant and out of place. The students differed according to their level of motivation and input: 1) students with motivation, a clear understanding of the project goals and plan, and high-stakes input, 2) students with motivation but unclear understanding and high-stakes input and 3) students with low or extrinsic motivation and low-stakes input. The feedback indicated the need of repeating the goals and action plan within the teams as well as a need for teacher to lead workshops on the English language and business communication and correspondence. At this point the students felt they had achieved quite much and learnt about project communication and research. They were aware of the upcoming tasks to be completed and could identify specific pending tasks. The question of their English language learning goals was repeated in this feedback questionnaire, and most of them had goals of improving their overall proficiency in business communication. Some felt that they had not learnt that much but the students in question did not have clear objectives for the project, for example their aim was to learn vocabulary. They expressed wishes to focus more on business vocabulary and terminology as well as language for meetings.

The help they would appreciate towards the end of the course was guidance and help with meta-skills such as managing meetings, leadership and motivational skills, research skills and skills for social media writing. In the end, they expressed wishes to have workshops on business vocabulary in general, writing business documents, interview and data analysis and learning diary writing. The requested topics would help the students finish the project and give them more opportunities to practice their skills. Most of the requested topics had been partially covered during the course but the students' attention might have been elsewhere at that time. The earlier workshops in writing might have been arranged too early.

At this point the communication across the international teams was not very successful as 63 % of the students admitted not having attended virtual meetings with the partner university students. On the other hand the internal communication in the teams worked well and 85 % of the students felt well informed of the project proceedings. Also, 80 % of the team members took active part in the meeting documentation and had written meeting documentation. All of them had actively participated in the data collection of the research

In the Netherlands, the project was presented to the students in the kick off session IMCCM as part of their course International Business Communication in English and as a requirement to round up successfully their English module. Once the project manager was appointed, a series of meetings with the Finnish project manager and instructors were stablished, and both parties started to fine tune objectives, processes, and products to be delivered. And as explained above, ad hoc meetings among the already mentioned actors were arranged when necessary to redefine the project and address issues. Dutch students collected data from companies they already worked with in IMCCM " Export Carrousel", which allowed them to experience from the inside the use of English in those companies on a daily basis.

Dutch students gave feedback on a weekly basis in the sessions for English, and via the sessions arranged with the project manager, which allowed us to provide a framework needed by the Dutch students, and address issues which might have deterred students from finalising the project successfully. The main issues addressed by the Dutch project manager and instructor were related to work load, lack of clear goals and instructions on the project, and miscommunication within the international teams.

The students from both universities met on Porvoo Campus, Finland, to finalise the project and to present the research results. During the Dutch visit to Porvoo campus the students met in person for the first time. They set to summarise their results to be delivered in the final event. The visit consisted also of Dutch students participating in workshops given by Haaga-Helia students and lecturers towards a deeper insight into the methods and approaches used on campus. The joint activities of the project students during the final week were to create unity and team spirit, and to finalise and polish the final presentation. At this stage, some tension occurred as the students had high expectations when meeting their counterparts and were somewhat stressed with the full schedule of the week. Also, differences in motivation could still be visible as not all students were eager to network, work face-to-face and socialise.

On the second day of the visit of Emmen students to Porvoo another feedback session was arranged, and the students were asked to note down positive and negative aspects of the project work. The positive aspects mentioned in a rank order were: commitment and input by the project managers, hospitality of the Porvoo students and company involvement. Lastly, few students had commented on the opportunity to improve their intercultural competence and learn new approaches to learning and teaching. The comments indicated that the largest source of discontent was the difference in remuneration, the Haaga-Helia students gained credits whereas the Stenden students did not gain as many. The other comments concerned mostly issues that the students had decided themselves in their teams such as schedules, work in virtual meetings. A few were concerned about the quality of the research results as the number of the companied interviewed might not be large enough. The feedback shows that the students were involved on different levels and some benefited from the project as they were using higher-order thinking skills in e.g. comparing and analysing the learning cultures, comparing this research with other research projects.

After the visit, in the end of the semester all students filled in a self- and peer-evaluation form in which they were asked to grade themselves and their peers. The evaluation was to be used as part of the final course assessment. The students were also asked to give feedback to the instructors and the project managers. In the end of the project, the Dutch students shared their knowledge with 1st and 2nd year IBL students (Stenden), and experimented with peer-teaching, in topics related to virtual meetings and Finnish culture, in order to finalise the project.

In the following, some quotes of the final student reflection and evaluation:
The majority of the Finnish students wrote a summary on their learning achievements in the portfolios, and most felt that they had reached their goals. Approximately half of the group reflected on achievements in the fields of communication and language listing the improved skills. A third mentioned leadership and communication skills and the developed project management and research skills. Even some introspection and philosophical reflections on the benefits of self-reflection were given.

The negative accounts and criticism given in the diaries were on project and management matters and were e.g. lack of communication and misunderstandings, complications, unprofessional behaviour and lack of management and objectives. One student found the course nonsensical and felt no value in it, recommending that no such a course should be given in the future.

It is noteworthy that not all the students chose to write a reflective summary in their portfolios. Some students reflect on the course being a pilot project and understand that there might be room for improvements. Nevertheless, all but one student felt that their English skills had improved during the project. The students with no previous experience of inquiry learning seem to have been more confused at the beginning of the project, which might have diminished their eagerness to participate in the activities. However, they reported of making advancements in their language skills. It is also noteworthy that the students were quite diplomatic in their reflections and criticism which demonstrates more sophisticated communication skills and appropriate sensitivity.

In the following, extracts of student reflections at the end of the course:
" … my personal goals were achieved, although the primary one is still to complete. I believe I did my best to fulfil all the duties and complete all the tasks. Thanks to the international cooperation and this pilot project, I have a real experience of working in international team via online meeting tools. Documenting the process is also not an issue anymore, as we had plenty of discussions and practice regarding this topic…Nowadays I am pleased to record constant improvements and personal growth through the learning process."

"I believe that there is always more room from improvement and I wish the lessons would have been more focused into real business vocabulary... I am glad I got to improve my interviewing skills and I was really surprised on how interesting and enjoyable it was."

"The experience from attending the team leader meetings taught me a lot... I had the opportunity to practice what I learnt about leadership and lead my team well…"

"…As a foreign worker, using English as the main language for communicate in Finland, I found information from Finnish employers were very useful so that I could have good preparation for myself in future workplace."

"Some hitches appeared during the work due to misunderstandings and culture differences of my team members."

"…There were several complications along the way for instance lack of communication between both universities and a clear understanding of the responsibilities but overall we managed to wrap up our project given that it was a pilot project involving two partner universities."

"… I almost gained nothing about professional English using proficiency. In fact, I have been improving my English using skills thanks to other courses and projects but Business English. This might be because I was not motivated enough to contribute to the course as well as the project more than I have done. But I still have bad opinions on this course with this kind of project. It is very demanding yet not efficient at all. "

“I was confused at first because I am used to clear guidelines, and instructions given by the teachers. In this project we had to think about them ourselves which was new to me”

“The outcome of the research was interesting because I had expected the Dutch companies to use more English than the Finnish, it turned out to be all the way around”

“ It was interesting to see how difficult is to communicate effectively in international teams on skype specially with people you do not know, it would have been better to meet them first and then start the collaboration”

4 Findings

This chapter will discuss the findings e.g. how the objectives were met and give examples of student reflection over their learning and the project.

The project was truly student-led and both inquiry learning and problem based learning were implemented. Students were empowered since they created a project plan, led the activities, carried out the work assignment designed by themselves and they also adjusted the plans and schedule as needed. According to the feedback the students also felt they were given the opportunity to set their own learning goals and strive after them. On the other hand, they needed to be active and autonomous in the goal setting, and if they lacked initiative, the learning points might have been low, apart from the overall experience of working in a project.

The second objective, developing meta-competences was met by some of the students as exemplified in the feedback summary and examples given in the previous chapter.

The students feel that they now have a clearer understanding of intercultural communication, enhanced awareness of various learning and working cultures, better skills of learning and evaluation and lastly, the team leaders and project managers feel that their management and leadership skills have developed. The project managers can be seen to have made the greatest advances in leadership skills as they met the challenge of leading generation Y students. This is what a student writes in the self-assessment “when I look back I am quite proud of what I accomplished. Yet, I do have a few regrets”. This particular student explains how the goal to learn communication and writing short, to-the-point emails and making safely copies, were met. Also, how the leader’s role in the project taught patience and self-control. At the same time the student expresses a wish to have learnt to motivate the peers and the art of delegating and sharing tasks.

The third objective, enhancing and learning communication and language skills was met. This was evident in the self-evaluation at the end of the course. The students in the Finnish project group compiled language portfolios including self-assessment and sample texts of English language business communication. In the portfolio assessments the students discussed how they feel their language skills had progressed and the portfolio dossier text samples demonstrate their skills.

All in all, the learning achievements of the project include a deeper and more practical knowledge of 1) how English is used in international business environments, 2) a greater awareness of various learning and working cultures as well as more advanced intercultural skills, 3) improved communication and virtual meeting skills, and 4) greater project management and self-management skills. The students also learned to reflect, to document their work and learning, assess themselves and their peers, motivate each other, and plan their own professional development.

In the words of the students, in the final project presentation they summarised that "the benefits of the project were the international networking, communication skills, research methods, enhanced partnership between the universities and the realisation of the importance of English at companies". The students also listed challenges in the final presentation, namely the time difference between the two countries, the different educational systems and the time limit.

The project research as such revealed much about the practices of using English and communication in the researched companies. The students discovered via first-hand contacts how companies communicate as they phoned, email and visited their contacts. Secondly, the students learnt how the width and scope of a company's operations affect its communication strategies. Furthermore, the students discovered how various communication tools are used and experimented with virtual tools. In doing this, they discovered how corporate cultures and national as well as regional cultures might affect communication. In team work conducted virtually, the cultural differences were quite clear – the setting and learning cultures were different for the students.

The different working and learning cultures of the two universities and the universities of the exchange students brought some confusion. Those with the experience of teacher-led studies might have been frustrated and unable to create personal goals and assess themselves and their peers. Even with brief experience of student-centred studies some students such as those representing Asian cultures would still feel uncomfortable of evaluating their peers not to mention their lecturers openly. However, most students who were committed to the project finished the self- and peer evaluation regardless their home cultures.

On the contrary, the instructors were rather familiar with each other's (universities') learning cultures in advance. Yet the personal coaching and teaching styles and the experience in project management and project coaching varied. It is clear that a written outline of project practices would have helped the instructors and in the end also the students.

5 Conclusion

The challenges of the project were the different learning cultures and backgrounds, and the distance between the students (cultural, psychological and physical). Lack of familiarity with the methods might have resulted in some confusion and learning at the same time, and therefore students lacking knowledge of such methods should have an opportunity to learn about them in advance. The Dutch and Finnish approach and remuneration of the project varied, which resulted in different levels of commitment and input, which may explain some tension and somewhat uneven outcomes across the teams.

The Finnish project team's work was conducted in a module of Business English with 6 ECTS. The students had enrolled to a compulsory language course or a free-choice course (exchange students) to learn business communication. Despite the familiarity with inquiry and project based learning, the initial steps were a challenge for most of the students, because, perhaps, they were given more autonomy in creating the very framework of the project. At the same time the exchange students had no previous experience of similar projects. This applied also to the Dutch group that participated in the project. The project was integrated in International Business Communication in English (3ECTS) and participation was a requirement to round up their module for English.

Suggested solutions for implementing similar projects in the future include involving stakeholders more on both institutional level and on the level of industry partners to motivate the students.

Additionally, clearer guidelines and transparency need to be established regarding the project outline. The instructors' roles might be clarified more explicitly, for instance the instructors could have a coaching role. Also, more attention could be given to the selection of companies and samples of their business communication (such as emails, memos) in the data.

For a successful project the participating parties need to benefit equally from it. Further, adding workshops on goal setting, methods, reflection and self- and peer evaluation might be beneficial. This co-operation continues and further topics, as well as third country partners, are sought.

All in all, a framework model for future projects could be created. Such a framework should include an overview of the scope of the project. Also, the framework should include varied opportunities for coaching and advising the students and activities to scaffold language learning and learning of various meta-skills.

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Meaningfully Happy at Work – Pleasure and Purpose in Action

"Happiness is the goal of our lives, and it is a worthwhile, achievable goal."
(Dalai Lama and Howard Cutler (1998): The Art of Happiness)

"Every art and every inquiry, and similarly every action and pursuit, is thought to aim at some good; and for this reason the good has rightly been declared to be that at which all things aim."
(Aristotle: Nicomachean Ethics.)

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Abstract

In the modern work life meaningfulness might be the most important dimension to sustainable, not only longer but also to good-quality, working careers. Experiencing work as meaningful can have great influences not only the individuals doing the work but also on deeper societal problems – meaningfulness of work can quite often be understood as working for some greater good. Understanding intrinsic motivation leads to understanding meaningfulness of work.

At the same time economical scarcity demands organizations to renew and creates feelings of uncertainty among staff. Well-being at work is under a stress in this kind of environment. In scarce, stressful, hectic and sometimes competitive working environment the experiences and feelings of meaningfulness are easily obscured. However quality, well-being and happiness at work could have significant impact also on the productivity of work.

Paul Dolan introduces pleasure/purpose-principle in his book "Happiness by Design" (2014): to be truly happy people need to feel both pleasure and purpose (p. 10). In this paper we use the "pleasure/purpose –principle" to understand factors of meaningfulness, inner motivation and happiness at work. The paper considers peoples experiences of happiness at work examined through the principle. The data is gathered in several occasions, mainly in the workshops organized in "Sitä saat mitä jaat" ("You gain what you share") –project's workshops. The project will take place in 2015 – 2017 and it aims to develop and understand well-being and productivity at work for example through gaining awareness of meaningfulness of work and creating spaces to share the experiences in dialogue among employees. Seven units from social and health care in City of Lahti will participate in workshops.

The paper discusses for example of the questions what kind of things bring pleasure to work? What creates experience of purpose? The data will also be examined through Schwartz´s basic value approach. What kind of values can be recognized behind the factors of pleasure and purpose at work? Also methods used to facilitate awareness used in the project are presented.

Key words

meaningful work, meaningfulness, happiness, productivity, pleasure-purpose-principle, basic value approach, values at work, sustainable work life, development methods

Introduction, objective

In Sitä saat mitä jaat ("You gain what you share") –project, that will be carried out in 2015 – 2017, Lappeenranta University of Technology and Lahti University of Applied Sciences are developing and studying meaningfulness, happiness, well-being and productivity at work through approaches of collective sharing, shared space, dialogue, contemplative and arts-based methodologies. 7 health care units from City of Lahti participate in the project. Project team is multidisciplinary and comes from different backgrounds of expertise: social sciences, business and management, humanities and arts, and social and health care. Project is funded by European Social fund.

In this paper we discuss the questions of happiness and meaningfulness of work through data collected in two workshops at the beginning of the project. We use Paul Dolan´s pleasure-purpose –principle to gather knowledge about experiences of happiness at work that includes deeper meaning, i.e. purpose. We then use Schwartz´s Basic Value Approach to analyze values underlying in the experiences. The multidisciplinary methods (contemplative, meditative and arts-based) used in the development work and data gathering for this paper are introduced.

Key concepts and theoretical framework

Paul Dolan suggests in 2014 book "Happiness by Design" a theory for happiness that stresses feeling pleasure and purpose as main constituents of happiness – not for example experiencing emotions of being happy or sad. Happiness constructs of moments where pleasure or purpose is *felt,* and the amount of happiness in one´s life could be changed by changing the balance of pleasure and purpose experienced. Thus moments of pleasure contain happiness as do moments of purpose, and the ultimate experiences of happiness contain different amounts of both (ibid.) The opposite of feeling pleasure and purpose would be feeling pain (anger, worry, stress) and pointlessness (boredom, futility) (Dolan 2014, p. 12). Dolan calls this the pleasure – purpose – principle, or PPP. He also stresses the meaning of moments, meaning that moments of happiness are in fact happiness (he highlights "meaning of moments" instead of "meaning of life" (Dolan 2014, p. 9) – and attention drawn to those moments is one key factor of becoming aware of one´s own happiness. Also time spend on and attention paid to things that create pleasure and purpose is a way of "designing" a happy life. (Dolan 2014.)

Dolan´s distinction of happiness as pleasure and purpose is related to understanding happiness as hedonic or eudaimonic, a distinction that firstly Aristotle outlined in his Nicomachean Ethics. Hedonic happiness is a form that stresses sensual pleasures as the foundation of happiness, whereas eudaimonic happiness is formed by meaning of action, virtues: "the happy man lives well and does well; for we have practically defined happiness as a sort of good life and good action." (Nicomachean ethics, Book 1, Chapter 8). Ryan & Deci (2001) elaborate hedonic and eudaimonic happiness to broader understanding of well-being.

Well-being in a hedonic sense is subjective and concentrates on avoidance of pain or unpleasantness and gaining more life satisfaction (Ryan & Deci 2001), whereas well-being in an eudaimonic sense is an psychological concept (ibid.) and as McGregor and Little (1998) define, consists of “happiness + meaningfulness”: “Happiness, which is usually considered the gold standard of well-being, refers to satisfaction with life, positive affect, and freedom from negative affect. Meaning refers to feelings of connectedness, purpose, and growth.” (McGregor & Little 1998, 508).

In addition to Dolan´s pleasure-purpose-based definition of happiness we base our definition of happiness on Martin Seligman´s PERMA –model of well-being. In his 2011 book *Flourish* Seligman elaborates the topic of positive psychology to well-being (instead of happiness – that is “one-dimensional” and “about feeling good” (Seligman 2011, 24)). PERMA –model is a five pillar well-being theory that includes both subjective and objective elements that each contribute to well-being. The five pillars are positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning and achievement. (ibid, 24). Both Dolan´s and Seligman’s models are comprehensive and applicable especially in a work life context, since they stress that happiness is not to be confused as merely a positive feeling.

In this paper we are interested especially about happiness and well-being in a work life context – as have been quite a many scholars in the recent years. Happiness and well-being have been under a growing interest in the work life and organizational research. In organizations, hedonic component is often connected to job satisfaction and eudaimonic component to engagement and meaning of work (Grant, Christianson & Price 2007). The interest is due to the fact that link between being well and happy and being productive seems to be very valid. Happy employees have been linked to high-performance, being more productive, creative and engaged to their work, overcoming challenges easier, avoiding stagnation and creating better states of psychological energy (Spreitzer & Porath 2012; Achor 2012; Wright & Cropanzano 2004; Rego, Ribeiro & Cunha 2010); positive thoughts, feelings, behaviour and job satisfaction have been linked directly to organizational outcomes (Lavy & Littman-Ovadia 2016); organizational virtuousness to higher levels of desired outcomes (Cameron, Bright & Caza 2004) and positive emotions to enhancing performance on many levels and on various aspects of organizational life, such as “decision making, turnover/absence, prosocial behavior, negotiation, conflict resolution, team behavior, leadership” (Barsade & Gibson 2007.)

Also it has to be emphasized that interest to the relation of happiness and work has risen because new understanding of things we hold valuable is under a growing interest in transforming world on a quest to find new, sustainable models of work and economy. Concerning this transformation of work happiness as a concept raises worthwhile, meaningful questions: is happiness at work only interesting from an instrumental point of view because it makes people more productive or could happiness be an achievable goal in itself? Or more widely reflected: what is the purpose of wealth: is wealth an achievable goal in itself and is it satisfactory, or should wealth be an instrument in creating more well-being and happiness?

Happiness at work is certainly an existing phenomenon that for a good reason has raised interest. Dolan´s definition of happiness is applicable in this context. Especially thinking about work meaning and meaningfulness, i.e. *purpose* has a crucial role in happiness and well-being.

Meaning in, of and at work, meaningful work, meaningfulness of work

Meaningful work life, as well, has been under a growing interest in the recent decades and is thus defined in several ways from several disciplines.
Thus the various concepts of meaning and work, meaningful work and meaningfulness of work and so on are a bit of a tangling jungle. Hackman an Oldham define meaningful work by the job characteristics that have an impact on meaning of work. The job characteristics that build meaningfulness are skill variety, task identity and task significance, and together with responsibility and knowledge of performance these building blocks of meaningfulness create internal motivation. (Hackman and Oldham, 2010.) Chalofsky (2003) distinguishes meaning *of* work, meaning *at* work, and meaning *in* work – meaning in work being an intrinsic perception of meaning and purpose of the performed activities (p. 73).

Finding a source of meaningfulness of work has also been seen as a burning issue of our time due to the transforming societies, functions of work and careers and motivational matters that encourage employees (Martela 2010).

Meaningfulness of work is both a psychological and a philosophical question (ibid.). When meaningfulness is considered in a philosophical paradigm, questions are ethical in nature. Michaelson et al (2014) distinguish a different kind of discourse between meaningful work as it is understood in organizational studies and as it is understood in business ethics: in organizational studies there is an assumption of meaningful work being a good thing whereas ethical approach asks why is it a good thing (p. 85). Bowie (1998) manages to answer this question from an individual point of view in his Kantian definition of meaningful work that stresses ethical contents of meaning. Bowie recognizes six characteristics of meaningful work:

1. Meaningful work is work that is freely entered into.
2. Meaningful work allows the worker to exercise her autonomy and independence.
3. Meaningful work enable the worker to develop her rational capacities.
4. Meaningful work provides a wage sufficient for physical welfare.
5. Meaningful work supports the moral development of employees.
6. Meaningful work is not paternalistic in the sense of interfering with the worker's conception of how she wishes to obtain happiness. (Bowie 1998, 1083.)

When trying to develop work life in a sustainable way meaningfulness of work should be understood both as a subjective perception of one´s work that creates a sense of purpose for the worker but also as an ethical and moral construct: the sense of purpose comes from working to some greater good. We define meaningful work also as work that contains joy and pleasure in actions and in quality of operating as well as purpose of actions. Since purpose doesn´t necessarily mean serving a larger purpose than for example one´s own subsistence, we add experiencing ethical worth to our outline of meaningfulness of work (figure 1).

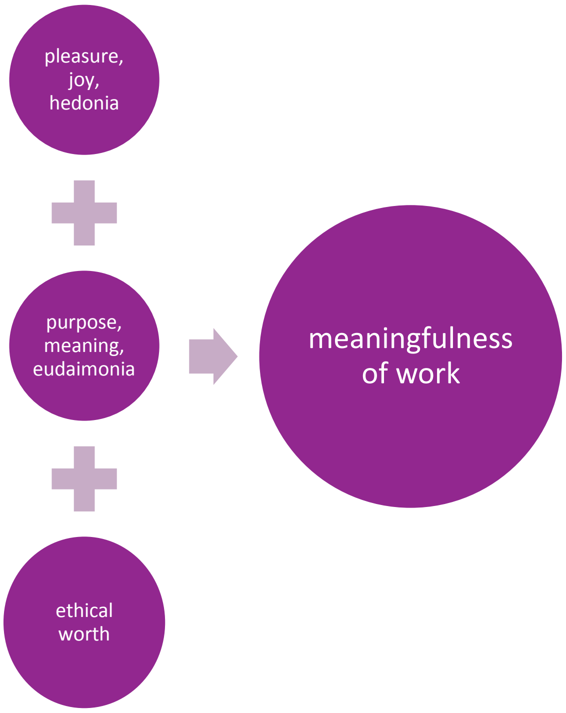


Figure 1. Meaningfulness of work as a construct of pleasure, purpose and ethical contents.

All of these elements of meaningfulness at work have to be taken into consideration when the objective is to develop work life into more sustainable direction. Workers have to perceive work then as sustainable for themselves, experience resilience, well-being and sensibility in their work – but there also is a bigger ethical concern: how can work, works contents and even industries as whole have a purpose that adds to the good of the people and the planet without taking advantage of the future generations? As Ryan and Deci point out:

> “Perhaps the concern of greatest importance, not only for psychological theorists, but also for humanity, is the study of the relations between personal well-being and the broader issues of the collective wellness of humanity and the wellness of the planet. It is clear that, as individuals pursue aims they find satisfying or pleasurable, they may create conditions that make more formidable the attainment of well-being by others. An important issue, therefore, concerns the extent to which factors that foster individual well-being can be aligned or made congruent with factors that facilitate wellness at collective or global levels.” (Ryan & Deci 2001, 161.)

Methods

At the beginning of “You gain what you share” –project we organized start workshops for all the working communities that participate in the project. All together we organized eight workshops in February 2016 (two workshops are still due in May 2016). Participants were from hospitals, home care, dental care, school nursing, maternity and child welfare clinics. We chose the data from two workshops – (1) dental care & (2) school nursing and maternity & child welfare – as the sample for this paper. We are going to concentrate especially to the pleasure and purpose experiences in this paper.

In the workshops we used a variety of methods to meet different objectives of development work in question. In the workshops the main objectives were aimed to begin forming a "space of common sharing". The concept is called ´ba´ in Nonaka´s and Konno´s work (1998). There ´ba´ is defined a shared space for emerging relationships. Ba´s can be physical, virtual, and mental or combinations of the previous and it provides a platform for knowledge creation. (ibid.). All the methods used in the first workshops are listed in table 1.

Phase	Method	Description of method	Objective of method
1	**Theoretical background of "you gain what you share"**	Some theoretical notions from the background of the project were introduced. For example the importance of dialogue (Bohm 1996), trust (Helkama 2009) and cherishing emotional intelligence (Goleman 2009).	Communicating some of the basic background values of development in question through reasonable and relevant theoretical notions.
2	**"How are you?" by pictures**	Participants were asked to pic two pictures: one that illustrates "how am I at work right now?" and one that illustrates "what I wait, expect or hope for?"	Bringing out the individual experiences of work at the moment. Bringing out the wishes and needs of development for our common process.
3	**Lines**	Lines with opposite ends were formed, for example: "I leave work at work place" – "I take work at home with me"; "I have methods to help my own well-being at work – I have no methods"; "I can impact my own work – I have no way of impacting"; "I feel I work alone – I feel I work in an community".	Bringing out different experiences among the working community and creating a dialogical state between these experiences.
4	**Meditation**	A basic observation meditation was introduced and trialed.	Introducing a functional method to use for well-being and awareness at work. Create self-awareness.
5	**Contemplative mental image association**	Participants were guided to let images rise to their minds in the meditative/contemplative state. Image associations of three themes were instructed: The Spark, the Pleasure & the Purpose (see further).	Producing self-awareness of experiences of pleasure, purpose and about the "calling" and self-motivation to one´s own occupation.

6	**Pleasure-Purpose Cards**	Participants were asked to describe their spark-, pleasure- and purpose – experiences in writing on cards.	Phrasing the previous experiences.
7	**Exercise of conscious speaking and listening**	Participants were divided into pairs and decide who is A and who B. By turns they had the chance to talk about the previous task without another one interrupting.	Sharing a) the experience of meditation b) the thoughts of spark, pleasure and purpose c) anything in mind at that moment Experiencing a) conscious speech b) listening without reacting c) giving another person the possibility to speak without interruptions d) the usual conventions of interaction through observation of oneself
8	**Blue Oceans Matrix**	Still in groups (of two and of four) participants were asked to write down needs for their well-being. Needs were categorized under subtitles: "More", "Less", "New" and "Cut out".	Troubleshooting/Present state of the working community.
9	**Promises and Wishes**	The participants were asked to write a "work well-being promise" that they take with themselves back to work. The participants were asked to write down one wish for the working community.	Bring out knowledge of the needed process in the working communities in question. To give the participants a concrete provision from the workshop.

Table 1. Methods of the first workshops.

Concentrating on the themes of pleasure and purpose happened in phases 4 – 6 of the workshops. The main methods used at this phase were meditation and contemplative practices. The participants were introduced a basic meditative practice where you sit in a state of not doing, not reacting, observing first the sounds in the space, then your own body´s sensations and your breathing. In Buddhist tradition this kind of meditation is called ´vipassana´ or ´insight meditation`, ´vipassana meaning "seeing things as they actually are" (http://www.vridhamma.org/VRI-Introduction). The recent mindfulness trend also has remodeled this basic insight meditation and freed it from religious content. In mindfulness meditation attention is focused on the present moment without making judgements or evaluations of it (Laneri et al 2016; Kabat-Zinn 2003.)

The meditation we used approached the mindfulness meditation since we tried to stress that meditation is suitable for everybody no matter the values or religious background of the practicing person.

We reckoned that meditative and contemplative practices were obvious and necessary methodological choices to use in development for several reasons. First reason was very practical. We wanted to introduce an easy (yet not very common in the everyday work life context) method that the participants could carry on as a method for quieting the mind and reducing stress during hectic and demanding work. From this viewpoint meditation works to help coping and as a method to enhance wellbeing. In organizational research mindfulness practice is noticed to predict positive emotions, engagement and so called "organizational citizenship" behavior (Avey, Wernsing & Luthans 2008), which is behavior is characterized by "altruism, conscientiousness, sportsmanship, and courtesy" (Organ 1988).

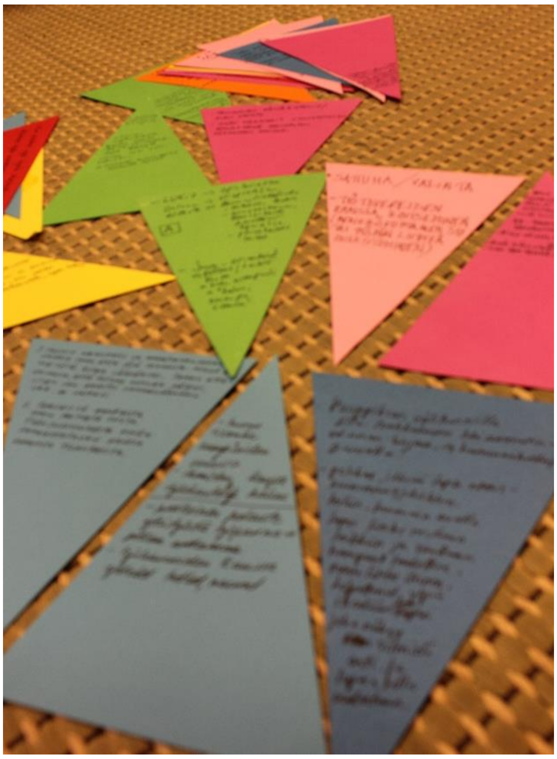
Secondly, we needed a method that would raise (self)-awareness. One of the main objectives for the first workshops was raising awareness and consciousness of one´s own work, of themselves as a part of working communities and of their working surroundings, practices and circumstances. Daniel Goleman has described self-awareness as one important component of emotional intelligence and for example of leadership competencies. Self-awareness means reasoning, thinking and inter-acting with other people, and being aware of yourself helps in identifying with for example client or patient (http://www.danielgoleman.info/daniel-goleman-how-self-awareness-impacts-your-work/). Emotional intelligence is an important aspect of happiness at work – it helps to recognize and regulate one´s reactions to the unpredictable, sometimes very hard things that happen at work. Insight meditation is a working method to practice self-awareness – the meditation is based on noticing what happens in one and cultivating the reactions to those things happening within oneself (for example noticing an emotion or an affect – letting that emotion/affect exist as it is but just observing it, not reacting nevertheless acting from that emotion).

Thirdly, we wanted to use meditation as an example of a way to facilitate positive transformation. As studies show meditation has influences on brain structure (Lazar et al. 2005; Laneri et al 2015) and it for example helps build new neural pathways (Hanson & Mendius 2015). This is substantial knowledge when we think especially about learning new mindsets and unlearning negative attitudes and ways of thinking. As Rick Hanson and Richard Mendius propose in their 2011 book *Buddha's brain*, brain structure can be changed by what flows through the mind – "mind can change your brain for the better" (Hanson & Mendius 2015, 19; translation by the author.) This means that regular practice concerning the mind and the brain, in this case meditation, can mold the brain in more aware, resilient and in a more wisely reacting, i.e. more positive, direction.

The meditation exercise carried on for a while before it was modified into a contemplative mental image association exercise. The participants still stayed in the meditative state while they were instructed to bring three images to mind:

1) The primary motivation of finding one´s way to the present profession (aka "The Spark")
2) The moments of joy and pleasure experienced / felt at work. (aka "Pleasure")
3) The moments of purpose ("experiencing something a bit bigger than self, moments of meaning") experienced / felt at work. (aka "Purpose")

After mental image association participants were asked to still stay in the quiet conscious state and to write down experiences that previous exercise had brought to mind. We asked the previous three questions again and participants wrote down their experiences asked. Everyone could write down their answers as freely as they themselves defined, so there was no quantitative limitations to answers. Also the style to describe experiences was free.



Picture 1. Sample of pleasure–purpose -cards.

After gathering the pleasure –purpose data with this meditative and contemplative method, we decided to use Shalom Schwartz´s Basic Value Approach to study the values that lie behind the pleasure and purpose experiences. Basic value approach is a comprehensive classification and identification of the ten basic values that are recognized in all cultures (Schwartz 2012). Values according to Schwartz are beliefs (infused with feeling) that refer to desirable goals that motivate action. Values guide selection and evaluation of actions (ibid., 4; Rokeach 1979). We were interested to know what kind of values lie in the background of the pleasure and purpose –experiences and would the recognition of and paying attention to these values help to make work life happier, more pleasurable and especially more meaningful.

Findings

All together we analyzed data from two workshops for this paper. This meant 264 experiences of pleasure and purpose all together – 154 experiences of pleasure and 110 experiences of purpose. Ten basic values from Schwartz´s Basic Value Theory the data was analyzed by were:

- Self-Direction. “Defining goal: independent thought and action--choosing, creating, exploring.” (Schwartz 2012, 5).
- Stimulation. “Defining goal: excitement, novelty, and challenge in life.” (ibid., 5).
- Hedonism. “Defining goal: pleasure or sensuous gratification for oneself.” (ibid.).

- Achievement. “Defining goal: personal success through demonstrating competence according to social standards.” (ibid.).
- Power. “Defining goal: social status and prestige, control or dominance over people and resources.” (ibid.).
- Security. “Defining goal: safety, harmony, and stability of society, of relationships, and of self.” (Schwartz 2012, 6).
- Conformity. “Defining goal: restraint of actions, inclinations, and impulses likely to upset or harm others and violate social expectations or norms.” (ibid.).
- Tradition. “Defining goal: respect, commitment, and acceptance of the customs and ideas that one's culture or religion provides.” (ibid.).
- Benevolence. “Defining goal: preserving and enhancing the welfare of those with whom one is in frequent personal contact (the ‘in-group’).” (Schwartz 2012, 7).
- Universalism. “Defining goal: understanding, appreciation, tolerance, and protection for the welfare of all people and for nature.” (ibid.).

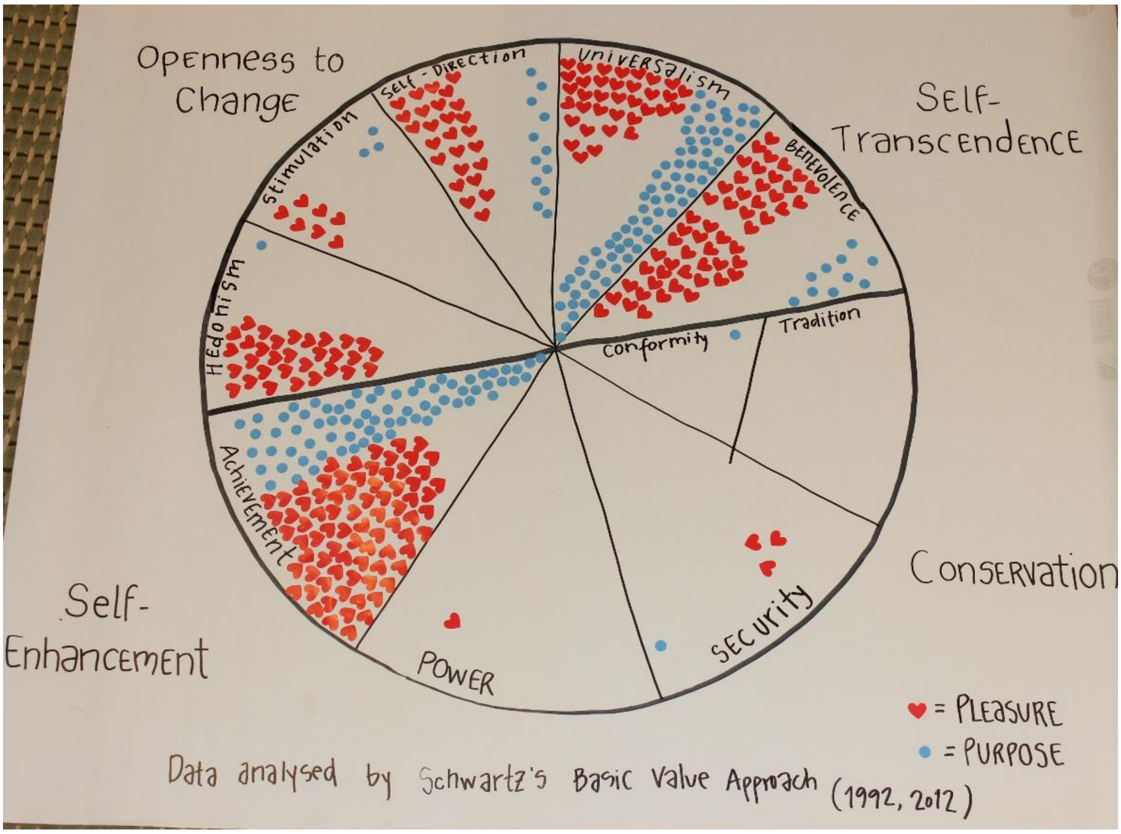
The answers were first interpreted on which of the ten basic values´ defining goals they portray. Because answers were freely phrased some answers were obvious about the values they portrait, but some needed more interpretation and more precise definitions. Recurrent answers not as obvious about their values concerned the themes of:

- succeeding; because it wasn’t always clear what success meant: meeting one´s own standards / self-development (this would illustrate “self-direction”) or meeting extrinsic standards / development in e.g. demands of the occupation (this would illustrate “achievement”)
- enhancing well-being; because it wasn´t always clear whether the well-being meant the well-being of the in-group, the working community or doing good in a larger context – concerning for example the patients. We decided to interpret the answers so that happiness and well-being of the community one is part of illustrates “benevolence” and happiness and well-being provided in larger context – to patients, for example, illustrated “universalism.
- belonging in a group or experiences about connection. There isn´t a value that would unequivocally comprehend a need to belong or to sense connectedness to another person or a group. Yet this was one of the most recurrent answers. We decided that connection felt in one´s working community and colleagues illustrates “benevolence”, whereas connection felt with a patient or the in a larger social context illustrated “universalism”.

We also interpreted that many of the answers portrayed several values as next samples show. For example:

- “overcoming challenges (client + self) ” – self-direction, achievement, universalism
- “humour and time spend with the team” – hedonism, benevolence
- “motivated employees” (we interpreted this as a comment of a leader) – benevolence, self-direction, achievement

The analyzed answers were placed to the pie chart of Basic Values (see picture 2). The (blue) dots are experiences of purpose and the (red) hearts are experiences of pleasure.



Picture 2. Data analyzed by Schwartz´s Basic Value Approach (1992, 2012).

The most frequent answers, both concerning pleasure and purpose, in the data were ones that concerned themes of:

- success and accomplishment (101 answers of 264)
- relation and connection to other people (147 answers of 264).

Emphasis on these themes can clearly be seen on the Value chart. Values of achievement, benevolence and universalism are the one´s getting stressed. A surprising matter is, that when asked about moments when pleasure is felt, the answers relatively seldom portrayed hedonic experiences. Achievement and connection to other people arise over the hedonic experiences, even though the participants had been instructed in the workshops to honestly describe "moments of pleasure" at work, and they were told, that these moments don´t have to illustrate productivity or usefulness.

Discussion

Happiness as a concept has roused justified criticism in research. Critical notions have been stated for example about happiness being a "hedonic treadmill" (Brickman& Campbell 1971; Diener et al 2006). Including the aspect of meaning into definition of happiness as happens in the pleasure–purpose -principle is a radically functional insertion. Meaning is at least as relevant aspect to happiness as are hedonic pleasures. As Viktor Frankl, the most noted thinker on meaning and a concentration-camp survivor, states: "…this striving to find a meaning in one's life is the primary motivational force in man" (Frankl 1992, 104).

Thus the definition of happiness at work has to include the aspect of purpose and meaning. Arnold et al. (2007) conceptualize meaningful work from a transformational leadership point of view as “finding a purpose to work that is greater than extrinsic outcomes of work”. This definition also confirms our notion from the workshops: meaningful work can be defined by the workers as the quality, ways of working and attitudes they form individually towards the extrinsically defined tasks or the outcomes. Meaningfulness of work in our conception has to be defined so that it takes the inner experience worlds and the socio-emotional factors of the workers to consideration. Perceived meaningfulness is also an emotionally constructed concept, which is a seldom taken stand on considerations of meaningfulness. The notion of affect and emotion behind meaningfulness of work also calls for further research.

The findings from the data suggest that happiness, when understood as experiences of pleasure and purpose, in work life context is mainly formed of experiencing accomplishment and achievement (so. success at the task) and sense of belonging to a community or connection with other people. Ryan and Deci (2000) name similar experiences of autonomy, competence and relatedness as basic human needs that facilitate intrinsic motivation. So it can be suggested, that experiencing happiness at work understood as pleasure and purpose is very much linked to intrinsic motivation. Well-being and intrinsic motivation is a two way street, and intrinsically motivated, well people at work could be experiencing high-quality work life while being productive. As Ryan and Deci state “people in their healthiest states are active, inquisitive, curious, and playful creatures, displaying a ubiquitous readiness to learn and explore.” (ibid., 56).

The findings might not be a big surprise since the data is collected from health care sector, from a humane line of work. However the findings give valuable insight on what the people at work find valuable and meaningful. When experiences of the reality in the health care sector were shared in the workshops, a concern is unavoidable – how possible it is to experience moments of accomplishment, achievement or connection and sense of community in the pressured circumstances of everyday work? Do the structures of the line of work support these positive experiences? Encountering other people is one of the core values of health care, but is encountering possible when there is too much to do, too little time and quite often not enough appreciation?

A question remains: how can happiness at work be a sustained phenomenon? Who has the power to influence well-being, happiness and meaningfulness of work? To make working careers better in quality, not only longer in duration, the questions of meaningfulness, happiness and well-being need to be taken very seriously in the emerging work-life. Already at this very preliminary stage of “You gain what you share” –project it has come up that a contradiction of well-being is present in the modern work life. There is a dominant, oversimplified narrative that emphasizes that happiness at work is a thing that everyone can achieve just by changing the one´s own mind, ways of working and attitude (Henttonen & LaPointe 2015). However people at work are often at a mercy of great change, uncertainty and pressure that cannot be solved only by increasing coping mechanisms. Having said that, it has to also be acknowledged that individual coping and personal reacting to the over-all situations and realities at work also have great power in transforming the experienced quality of work and life in general. In the Buddhist tradition there is a metaphor of “first and second arrows” (Hanson & Mendius 2015). First arrows are the experiences and happenings that cause pain, suffering or unpleasantness, and they are unavoidable. The second arrows, however, cause pain as well, and they are the reactions we ourselves generate and quite often keep up by dwelling in the things happened, or rather our own interpretations of things happened.

Cultivating the awareness of second arrows and the actions based on reactions can have great influence on well-being – but we also need to stay critical and aware in a constructive way about work life's development and transformation.

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Life behind Trophies: What is Everyday Work Like in the "Best" Workplaces

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Abstract

This study explores organizations that have been able to simultaneously combine high job satisfaction with good productivity and profitability. The focus in this study is in the organizations that consciously have rejected many traditional organizational practices and are able to operate profitably while being recognized as the best work places in Finland. This study aims at describing the ways of working and management practices in these organizations.

This study was realized as a multiple case study involving three companies in the information technology business. The data was collected using theme interviews and there are five interviews altogether. The data was analyzed by classifying it according to the themes. The analysis produced a description of the ways of working in organizations which have abandoned the traditional management practices.

The organizations in the study have consciously removed rigid hierarchies and organizational charts and replaced them with a systemic organization. The organizational culture is free. The ways of working in these award-winning organizations lean on continuous learning and improvement, customer orientation and collaborative development. These companies continuously ensure that they are on the right track in customer projects and they let employees take initiative and responsibility.

Studied organizations have only a minimal amount of administration and they have consciously given up pursuing order and control. This is reflected in the ways of working both externally and internally. A strong sensemaking is also a distinct feature; it requires interaction and social interaction is in a remarkable role in these organizations. The importance of shared objectives is recognized and people are brought together to figure out the shared purpose. Usually the work happens in self-organized teams.

The importance of productivity and profitability was highlighted in the data, but they did not represent the aim of the organizations as such. They seem to emerge as a by-product when the other, more important conditions prevail. The most important conditions are the satisfaction of employees and customers. The key themes identified in the data are: trust, influence and equality, appreciation of diversity and shared objectives. They can be seen affecting the job satisfaction of employees. The satisfaction of customers is ultimately ensured in one company giving customers a 100% satisfaction guarantee. This reflects the fact how serious these companies are with customer orientation. Thus, customer orientation is not verbiage at all - everyone knows that customer satisfaction is always very important and doing great job is demanded from everybody.

Even though the primary target is not formulated as any financial measure, it seems obvious that an employee's billing rate is an important indicator of company performance. Ultimately, it ensures the financial success of the company.

These organizations show that successful business is possible even during poor financial times and that there are alternative ways of running a company instead of traditional management practices. The important question in the future is how to expand, execute integration processes and still maintain these features without becoming a rigid corporation. Therefore these organizations continue to be intriguing targets for study also in the future.

Key words: self-organizing systems, far-from-equilibrium, innovation, iterative

1. Introduction

Various kinds of competitions on the well-being of employees have grown popular among companies. By focusing on examples set by "great" workplaces the target for these competitions seems to be making a change in the quality of work life. Presenting novel practices and giving examples of tremendous working conditions is a way to get more companies interested in developing their culture.

Already in 1993, Daft & Lewin stated that redefining organizational practices means moving away from mass production efficiencies, hierarchical organization and central control. They described the need for flexible, learning organizations that constantly change and solve problems through interconnected, self-organizing processes. (Daft & Lewin, 1993.)

Empowering the organization's members to participate in making creative ideas for continuous improvement is the essence in Japanese Kaizen strategy. This management philosophy was introduced in Masaaki Imai's book The Key to Japan's Competitive Success (1986). The strategy has been effectively used for instance in Toyota where they established a strong corporate culture of continuous improvement (Stewart and Raman 2007).

Increasing global competition, ever growing service sector and the development of technology have all contributed to the fact that businesses have started to emphasize the ways of working and possibilities to renew them in order to keep up with the competition (Boxall & Macky 2009). Many studies have investigated how the productivity of organizations could be improved by new ways of organizing working (Appelbaum, Bailey, Berg & Kalleberg 2000; Cappelli & Neumark 2001). Also, the new social innovations and new ways to manage work have been of importance according to prior studies. They have contributed to the productivity either as such or in combination with product innovations or production innovations. (Barney & Wright 1998; Kauhanen & Maliranta 2011; López-Cabrales et al. 2009.)

According to prior studies, highly productive ways of working are such that they decentralize the organizational decision making and problem solving and thus increase the employee commitment (Edwards & Wright 2001). The practises that enhance productivity vary in organizations depending on the size of the business and the field of industry. For example, companies producing expert services should focus on committing people. (Boxall & Macky 2009.)

This study contributes to the organizational research literature by describing work life in organizations which have been able to combine people’s well-being and an organization’s profitability. More specifically, the studied organizations have deliberately wanted to back down on the traditional management practices and leadership theories. They have been able to achieve these all: productivity, innovation and the quality of working life. Improving the productivity is a question of organizational learning process.

Self-organizing has a big role as all employees are involved in the development, which also helps in dealing with the changes and insecurity. People working for these companies feel that their achievement level is high and that they get support from their fellow workers and from the management. The benefits of work are spread out evenly and possibilities brought by new technology are utilized when creating new solutions or services. (Työelämän kehittämisstrategia vuoteen 2020, 2013.)

This study aims at describing work-practices and management of award-winning organizations in Finland. The authors had an opportunity to study three successful companies and try to shed light on what is life like behind trophies. Prevailing conditions in these organizations are independent decision making, equality and co-operation rather than targets that are deduced from productivity or profitability. The research problem of this study is formulated on the basis of these targets as follows: *What is everyday work like in these organizations?*

2. Key Consepts and Theoretical Framework

Traditional leadership models with top-down, bureaucratic paradigms have been effective for business of physical production. For a more knowledge-oriented businesses these models do not seem to suit as well. Different paradigm for leadership has been suggested by complexity science. In that paradigm leadership is framed as a complex interactive dynamics from which adaptive outcomes such as learning, innovation and adaptability occur. New leadership treats organizations as complex adaptive systems that enable continuous creation and capture of knowledge. (Uhl-Bien, Marion & McKelvey 2007.)

The operating environment in this knowledge era is more complex and multipolar. There is a clear need for a new kind of operating logic: self-organizing and constant renewal from within. Self-organizing refers to collective action and intelligence which manifests itself in the operations of a community like swarm intelligence in the animal world. (Ståhle & Kuosa 2009.) In systems thinking there is a paradigm which focuses on the spontaneous dynamics of systems. This includes the complexity viewpoint and it reveals the extreme complexity of systems, the significance of a non-equilibrium state and a system’s capacity for spontaneous renewal and change. The most theoretical contributions to this paradigm come from Ilya Prigogine’s theory of self-organizing systems. (Ståhle 1998.)

Chemist Ilya Prigogine explained complex behavior in physical and chemical systems and based his findings on thermodynamics and chemistry. He found out that conditions that facilitate structure are far from a state of equilibrium and fluctuations together with feedback can create order out of chaos. (Prigogine 1980.) Even though the research was conducted in physics, Prigogine also considered the aspect of social change in his works “Dissipative Structures and Social System” (Prigogine 1976) and “Self-organization in Human Systems” (Prigogine & Nicolis 1989). He stated that most biological and social systems are subject to much the same self-organizing forces.

Prigogine's and his co-authors Nicolis' and Stengers' work has been adopted also in social complex systems and these studies have been analyzed in studies of systems capacity for self-renewal (Ståhle 1998; Ståhle & Kuosa 2009).

Eve Mitleton-Kelly's description of co-creating an innovative environment offers interesting viewpoint to analyzing the characteristics of complex systems. Complex social systems have characteristics which they share with other complex systems. Human systems are, however, fundamentally different as we are able to reflect and act with intentionality. (Mitleton-Kelly 2003.)

Prigogine's work gave systems research a new perspective on how a system reorganizes itself without external control. The central themes for self-organization are Far-from-Equilibrium, Entropy, Iteration and Bifurcation. Here is a brief description of these themes.

Far-from-Equilibrium. Originally in Prigogine's chemistry research this meant that when open systems are pushed far-from-equilibrium they are able to create new structures. Far-from-Equilibrium means the state in or near the chaotic condition. Systems self-organize only in this state: stability does not create any kind of self-renewal. (Prigogine & Stengers 1984). Chaos is seen as a source of order. In social systems this means moving away from established norms and ways of working. Often there is a rhythmic cycle of recurring stable and chaotic periods, because in no workplace there is turbulence and chaos all the time. Also complexity theory recognizes this: in order to be creative, it is needed to move away from the usual way of thinking and/or norms of behaviour. In other words: to move away from equilibrium. Being able to move into a different way of thinking allows innovative solutions to be found. (Mitleton-Kelly 2006b) Peters has also written about chaos stating that those who enjoy chaos and constant change, succeed, not those who try to eliminate the need for change. Winners value and develop their sensibility. (Peters 1987.)

Entropy. This concept has to do with the quality of information: One does not always know in advance what is crucial information and there is always some amount (often a lot) of waste when finding this out. To tolerate with this state of uncertainty in accumulating entropy is a challenge. Creating entropy means that one needs to keep options open long enough and appreciate different opinions. Entropy decreases with prioritizing and value judgments. Dissipating entropy is, however, important: it means setting priorities and making decisions. The key in entropy is not to be too hasty in judging what aspects are more valuable than others. (Prigogine & Stengers 1984.)

Iteration. Prigogine identified sensitive internal interaction dynamics: iteration. In self-organizing social systems feedback is very important. Persons react to each other sensitively and respond to what they really hear – not holding to own biased opinions. People are receptive, alert, well aware on what goes on and ready to give and receive positive and negative feedback. (Prigogine & Stengers 1984.)

Bifurcation. This means the point when a system has a genuine chance to make a choice. This is possible only when the time is right, not any time whatever. The right time is when there is enough entropy and sensitivity within the system. In an organization this means that a person or a team acknowledges the point of bifurcation: when it is time to make a decision. This is the time the system jumps to a new level and creates a new order. The self-organizing feature requires an organization to be very sensitive and receptive to what happens inside the system and in its environment. This is demonstrated in bifurcation and chaos.

Choosing the right time is possible only when there is sufficiently entropy and sensitivity. If decisions are made without proceeding through the bifurcation zone, there might not be mutual acceptance for them: e.g. the people are not committed to such decisions. (Prigogine & Stengers 1984.)

Prigogine's theory suggests prerequisites for organizational self-renewal. One basic prerequisite is abundant communication and mutual feedback. This requires the structure to be networked and people inclined to tolerate uncertainty and conflict. A traditionally managed organization is often quite the opposite and it is often harder to create new structures and self-organization in them.

When creativity and self-renewal are required, Prigogine's prerequisites for organizational self-renewal can be applied. (Ståhle & Kuosa 2009.) The real power of self-organization is the iteration because it repeatedly compels the new structure and carries the effects throughout the whole system (Ståhle 1998).

Main concept	Far-from-equilibrium	Entropy	Iteration	Bifurcation
Characterization	State of the system	Knowledge creation	Interaction	Decision making
Contribution to self-renewal	Pre-condition for change	Creation of new structures	Cumulative power	Possibility for innovation and new solutions

Figure 1 Prigogine's main concepts (modification based on Pirjo Ståhle's (1998) characterization on the subject)

Eve Mitleton-Kelly (2003) states that understanding the characteristics of complex organizations can help to stimulate innovation in organizations through the co-creation of an enabling environment. This environment enables connectivity, emergence, self-organization, co-evolution, feedback, exploration of the space of possibilities and working far-from equilibrium. This way organizations can become more innovative by creating new order, for instance new products or culture. Connectivity and interdependence are central concepts in Mitleton-Kelly's analysis of complex systems because emphasis on relationships both internally and externally contributes to the success of complex systems. When enhancing this, making connections should be encouraged for instance by letting everyone talk to anyone. This has resemblance to Prigogine's concept of Entropy.

Self-organization, emergence and the creation of new order the other key characteristics of complex systems. With connectivity come emergent structures which arise from the interaction of individual elements. These cannot usually be predicted and they appear as a result of interaction at a lower micro level. They are not only the sum of existing ideas, but can be something new and unexpected. Encouraging connectivity in multiple ways can have unpredictable, emergent outcomes. Facilitating connectivity and emergence in physical office environments makes it possible to increase creativity and innovativeness in a workplace. It can also contribute to changing the office culture. (Mitleton-Kelly 2003.)

Co-evolution involves reciprocal influence and change within a co-evolving system. In organizations this can mean working in a collaborative way sharing ideas very early and getting them to change and co-evolve through discussion. Connectivity, emergence, co-evolution and exploration have all the important element of feedback. It can be described as reinforcing (i.e. amplifying) and balancing, since positive feedback drives change and negative feedback maintains stability in a system. Complexity theory summarizes that when an organization is faced with a constraint, it finds new ways, because far-from-equilibrium systems are forced to experiment and explore the space of possibilities. This helps them discover and create new structures and patterns of relationships. Innovation is about creating the enabling environment to generate ongoing stream of ideas. If individuals have the capacity, the support and the power to think in a novel way they will continue to explore. The minor personal initiatives can lead to major initiatives involving other members of organization. (Mitleton-Kelly 2003.)

An example of methods highlighting self-organization is the Agile management. It is a highly flexible and interactive method of management that has been used especially in information technology development projects. It emphasizes communication, self-organization and team dynamics and recognizes the contributions of individuals as fundamental in relation to productivity. The role of management is to facilitate and coach the teams. Scrum is an agile software development method where a team works in close co-operation to reach a common goal. The method is very empirical and flexible comparing to the traditional sequential product development methods and it emphasizes learning and individual decision making. The basic idea of the method is to recognize that in the course of the project the customers cannot fully understand the requirements of the end product and thus quick changes are needed because of emerging requirements. The work happens in self-organizing teams that work in close physical distance and communicate effectively both online and face-to-face. In applying Scrum, there is an emphasis on skills as an opposition of knowledge and there are few rules. (Pelrine 2011.) The studied organizations produce digital services and apply Scrum in their work-practices and self-organized teams are a central part of everyday work in studied organizations.

3. Methods

This study was carried out as a multiple case-study. The purpose of case-study is to map, describe, interpret and explain cases as precisely and thoroughly as possible and to learn as much as possible from the case companies and form a descriptive material that allows alternative interpretations. The purpose is not to produce results that are generalizable but instead the results should be transferable. Transferability is ensured through thorough documentation. (Jyväskylän yliopisto Koppa 2014; Kvalimovt 2014.)

Choosing the cases is one of the most important phases in a case-study. The essential criterion effecting the choice of cases is what we can learn from them. Since the number of cases under scrutiny is limited, the cases should be such that they contain essential elements of interest concerning the study in question. (Eriksson & Koistinen 2005, 23.)

The research problem in this study was to find out organizational work practices in companies which have been able to combine job satisfaction and profitability. The data for the present study was collected from three companies. The total number of the interviews was five. All interviews were individual interviews with always two researchers present. The companies are described in table 1.

Company	Turnover in million euros	Number of personnel	Operating in how many countries	Operating in how many cities in Finland	Year of establish-ment	Number of interviews	Number of people interviewed in the company
1	43	226	4	4	1997	1	1
2	28	300	2	3	2000	1	1
3	9	112	1	2	2007	3	3

Table 1 Case companies

All companies in the study are limited liability companies in the field of information technology. They all share an interest to be part in the process of improving working life by implementing the new ways of working. The organizations share the following features:

- Although they differ from size they all base their operations on expert work
- They organize themselves in an atypical way and use the new ways of work and management
- They have done something differently comparing to other organizations in the same field of business
- They are valued as good work places by employees
- They are profitable

The theme interview was chosen as a method of data collection. Theme interview is a suitable method in situations where we need to get information on topics that we know little about or when the research design cannot be defined precisely in advance but it is better to complement it in the course of the study. The idea of a theme interview is to give space to the interviewee’s own interpretations, experiences and free speech. The themes are chosen carefully on the basis of the topic because the themes are the link between the data and the research question. The interviewees should be chosen on the basis of their appropriateness, i.e., those people who best can give information on the topics that are of interest. Prior studies give a guideline for the themes that are common for all interviews although they do not necessarily appear in the same order or in the same extent. (Kvalimotv 2014.)

The data consists of material that was recorded. Informative questions were asked first and the actual themes after them. The themes embody issues like how people work both on personal level and on organizational level, targets, responsibilities, co-operation, networks, the role of customers, the interaction and the challenges of the company in the past, in the present time and in the future. Free speech was also given space in the course of the interview. The interview material was transcribed verbatim.

The analysis started with an in-depth phase using full transcripts to search for common themes and to gain a deep understanding of the organization. Both authors of this article read each transcript. The analysis concentrated on highlighting the key points and on finding out the most interesting or important issues so that patterns started to emerge one by one. These were listed in an Excel spreadsheet and evidenced with a quotation. In the second phase of the analysis findings were discussed and the main themes were agreed in order to avoid bias and to provide a deep understand of the issues. The themes were then clustered. (Mitleton-Kelly 2006a.)

4. Findings

In this chapter the main findings are described. The main themes found in the data are presented in figure 2.

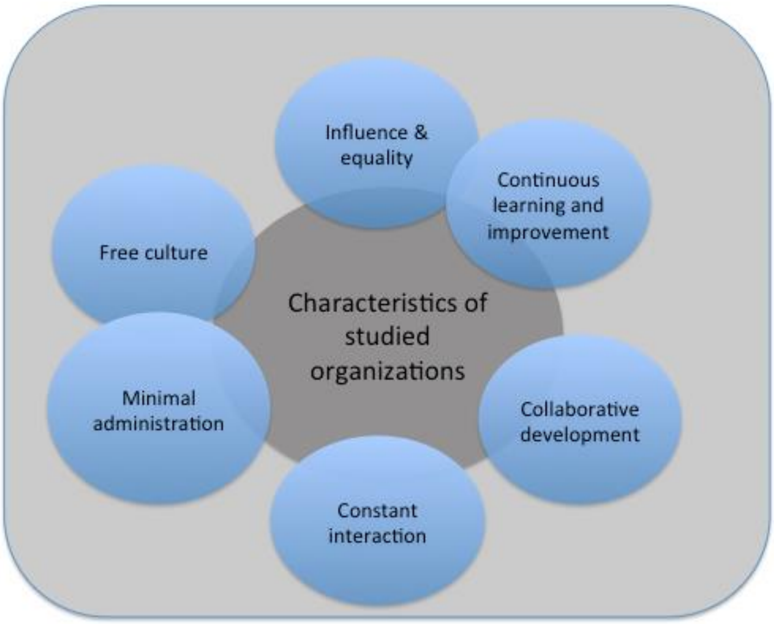

Figure 2 Main themes in the data

4.1 Minimal administration and free culture

The organizational culture is free and the common factors describing organizational culture are freedom, responsibility, independence, belonging, trust, the appreciation of colleagues, the building of own role in the company, personal branding, the building of own targets in the company, self-management, individuality, team spirit, communality, atmosphere, well-being at work, sociality, excitement, experiment, development, courage, ability to stand uncertainty, openness and transparency.

> *Although it may seem that there are no boundaries for the actions of employees, this is not the case in reality. There is no need to set boundaries, because the customers take care of that when they set budget, schedule and the tasks to be accomplished. 3*

There is a long list of things these organizations declare not having. Among these are hierarchy, charts of organization, line organization, job description, management practices, bureaucracy, documents, instructions, processes, control, meetings, targets, problem solving or personal incentives. The absence of these may implicate that these organizations have consciously wanted to conceive and do things differently than has traditionally been done in the field of management. Instead of the traditional organizational model they have got something else. These organizations describe themselves as systemic and networking and the position of teams is emphasized.

We have abandoned difficult processes, like that we should wait for a management team to accept this and that – a management team that has a meeting in two weeks. We don't want that kind of bureaucracy. 1

Indeed, we have customer teams but they do not report to anyone. And the management is not controlling them; the power and the responsibility are in the team. 2

We have removed unnecessary bureaucracy. This allows us to spend our time in tasks that are really important. 3

The way of organizing is reflected in the way how the organization is managed or actually how the organization is non-managed. Since teams exhibit a relatively independent position in the company and since they are built around the problems the organization is tackling, the power and responsibility are in the team. This means that the role of management is to facilitate the teams by knowing whether they have problems and reacting quickly if they do.

In traditional management the decision making is usually separated from work, which is really weird if we think of knowledge work. 2

We have no strategy or such… Or we don't have a separate operative side and strategic side. Making decisions is integrated to work, to normal life at work. 2

We need to react rapidly to situations. We tender all the time for more projects than get realized. We never know which of the tenders get accepted and we just cannot keep workers on hold while the tendering process is still going on. We make final resourcing decisions once the deal has been finalized. At that moment, the resourcing occurs in a rather chaotic and ad hoc manner. We investigate, among other things, who is available and to what other tenders the potential worker is attached to. 3

These organizations realize and admit that they are not suitable for all.

We aren't good for everyone. – A person who needs instructions and procedures is not fit to work with us because here it's more about applying than taking the best possible decision in that situation. 3

This company is quite hectic and dynamic, employees have a lot of responsibility, so you have to be able to manage yourself and you have to have a bit entrepreneurial spirit if you work with us. 3

4.2 Continuous learning and improvement

Themes connected with learning and continuous improvement are highlighted in the data. These themes include factors that were described in the data with expressions like science, research, testing of theories, literature, top-level skills and know-how, professionalism, learning, continuous improvement, making the world a better place, doing things by oneself and the mastering of big picture. Learning is seen as an integral part of daily job instead of formal learning events. There are active daily discussions on working methods and different technologies.

> *This way one could hear what others may have done and then get an inspiration on how to improve his or hers own work. This we have tried and also we have shared information on what technologies people can use – in the chat there are different channels for different technologies or different topics so that you can always join a conversation there. 3*

The function of management is very much in supporting the self-management of employees and to enhance the communality. In building such conditions the sense of equality and trust are in an important role.

> *For example, we don't watch over how our personnel use company benefits or spend company money. We trust that people are reasonable and follow one of our simple rules: Do as you need to do and spend money as you would spend your own. 3*

> *We give every employee an opportunity to take one decision that will be put in practice automatically, there are no limitations. It can be any decision and it will be realized. The only rule is that it must improve well-being at work. It's a method that helps people to learn how to take decisions. It's a small thing but symbolically important. 3*

4.3 Constant interaction and communication

Features connected with interaction are discussion, listening, dialogue, communication, visualization, narratives and own language. The organizational culture of these companies is vital and it is connected with recruitment; it is very important that new employees fit in.

> *It is the everyday communication that is very open, I think it is the most important method here. 3*

Agile project methods are based on constant dialog and feedback. There are for instance daily meetings at the same time, each day, standing up for 15 minutes. Each team member reports to the rest of the team answering three questions: "What did I do yesterday? What will I do today? What impedes me?"

The teams meet the customers on a regular basis in order to give the experts an occasion to present their work and to get direct feedback. Customer feedback is discussed in public in personnel meetings and successful projects are celebrated.

4.4 Collaborative development

Teamwork and agile methods are typical in information technology companies. In the studied workplaces there is also a lot of freedom to choose the methods of working and the tools used. Besides internal, the collaboration is often also external. The external co-operation in the organization is described by expressions like customer insight, co-operation with the customers, partnership, co-operation with competitors and networking. Putting the customer in focus is essential and finally the only thing that gives the targets for the company. The satisfaction of customers is ultimately ensured in one company giving customers a 100% satisfaction guarantee. This reflects the fact how serious these companies are with customer orientation.

Thus, customer orientation is not verbiage at all - everyone knows that customer satisfaction is always very important and doing great job is demanded from everybody.

> *If the customer is not satisfied with our project, he will get his money back, that is, he doesn't have to pay anything, and he will get the source code of everything that has been done by so far. So it means that the customer really gets what he expects and that we understand correctly the needs of the customer 3*
>
> *We wanted to be so good and so well-known that customers come to us and that we can choose what kinds of projects we want to do. 3*

The external co-operation also includes the co-operation and connection with other companies operating in the same field of business, i.e. competitors. However, the case organizations see the co-operation with competitors as an advantage for them.

> *... it doesn't have any negative effect in our competitiveness if we share our practices, but on the contrary, we can both pick up those ideas that are useful for us in our own way. 3*

Traditionally companies are managed by financial figures and the turn-over or profitability is the target itself. In these case organizations, these financial, numerical figures are not the only targets but kind of a natural side-effect that comes when the other premises are in order. These more important other premises are the customer satisfaction and success in a customer project.

> *But there are no such arbitrary numerical targets like +5 or +15 or something. It is common knowledge that these kinds or arbitrary, numerical targets impair the performance in the organization. 2*

To sum up the findings, the studied organizations operate systemically rather than hierarchically and this systemic way of organizing seems to help operating in a complex context. The organizational culture of these organizations is free instead of an rigid one. Productivity and profitability were essential features of studied organizations, but they were considered the outcomes instead of aims. The two prerequisites make it possible to use new ways of working and when those are in use, productivity and profitability come as a side-effect without the need to name them as the targets of the company.

5. Conclusions

Many of the characteristics of case companies seem to fit into Prigogine's concepts. The themes of self-organization are all present in these organizations and they seem to lead to innovative and creative organizations which give meaningful jobs and have satisfied customers. In this chapter the findings are interpreted by describing what connection each theme has to self-organizing concepts. The results presented in figure 2 can be interpreted using Prigogine's central concepts for self-organizing systems. In figure 3 the findings are combined with Prigogine's concepts.

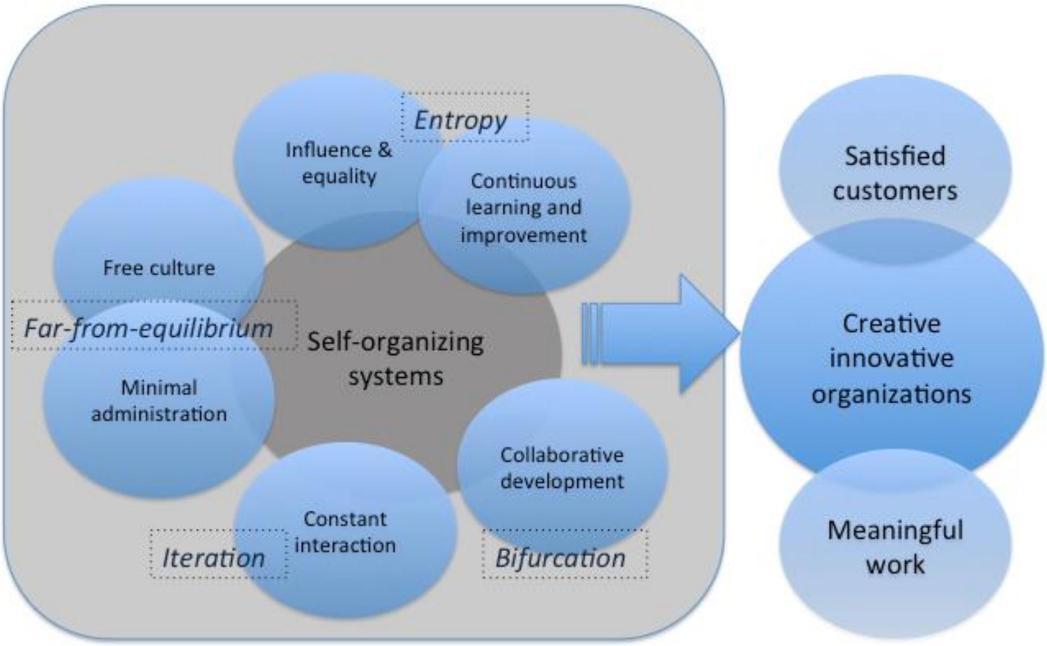

Figure 3 Findings combined with Prigogine's concepts

Findings of minimal administration and free culture are signs of the system being Far-From-Equilibrium. The state of Far-from-Equilibrium (Prigogine & Stengers 1984) can be seen in studied organizations in how they have consciously given up pursuing order and control and accepted the certain state of chaos in their operations. These organizations are not suitable for everybody as people working there need to be inclined to tolerate uncertainty and conflict. According to Prigogine, stability does not create self-renewal. In order to be able to create innovative solutions these companies foster a free organizational culture.

The companies in this study offer all expert services and these kinds of companies are known to use productive ways of working in order to make employees committed. (Boxall & Macky 2009; Edwards & Wright 2001). The studied organizations invest in commitment in many ways and they aim at continuous improvement. They try to keep both employees and customers satisfied. The management does not want to dictate practices but it tries to listen the employees to know to what direction the employees want the company to evolve. This way the commitment to the company and work will be on a high level. This continuous improvement can be associated with Prigogine's concept of Entropy: in order to find the best way to structure actions, one needs to be able to act intuitively without structure. The studied organizations value continuous learning and equality and let employees influence their work a lot. This is also a hint of the elements of knowledge creation, Prigogine's Entropy.

Bifurcation, i.e. the way decision making, is done is shown in the ways of collaboration both externally and internally. Externally it is reflected in integrating the customers in the operations of the company and in co-operating with competitors. Internally it is shown in systemic organizing and in the role of teams. It has been stated that collaboration does not only increase well-being at work but it has a remarkable positive effect on individuals', teams' and organizations' ability to increase productivity and profitability (Sveiby & Simons 2002).

The central elements in Agile methods are cross-functional teams of motivated individuals who are able to manage themselves and constant dialog and feedback. Significant focus on feedback is a clear sign of Prigogine's iteration in these organizations.

These organizations show that successful business is possible even during poor financial times and that there are alternative ways of running a company instead of traditional management practices. The important question in the future is how to expand, execute integration processes and still maintain these features without becoming a rigid corporation. Therefore these organizations continue to be intriguing targets for study also in the future.

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Conceptual model of 'age at work as a social construct'

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to propose a conceptual model of 'age at work as a social construct'. Previous literature provides good understanding of age as an individual and group characteristic, dominantly building on calendar age, but a more holistic and comprehensive conceptualisation of age at work is called for.

The proposed model brings to attention to the importance of studying age and ageing in an integrated way, including relationships between age definitions and the socio-cultural and organisational context. The model builds on Giddens' idea of structuration (1984), and emphasises how actors at the workplace draw on social structures related to their actions and at the same time produce and reproduce age-related social structures.

The model contributes to age and management research in three ways. First; it summarises previously identified relationships associated with definitions of age; second, it introduces socio-cultural and organisational aspects which influence the construction of age at work; and third, it proposes that age can be understood using the lens of structuration theory. In practice, the model increases understanding of age in relation to managerial and human resource management practices at the workplace.

Key words

Age, ageing, social structures, Giddens

Introduction

Age is one of the primitive categories into which people instantly place each other, and age *per se,* is a subject of research in social sciences. In organisation and management research, age has most often been understood in terms of chronological age, because calendar age has been regarded as the objective definition, and data can be easily gathered from official or organisational statistics (Pitt-Catsouphes, Matz-costa, & Brown, 2011). In addition, ageing is a major concern as demographics change and populations grow older in Western countries. Ageing encompasses numerous organisational phenomena, from risk, trust and culture to professionalism, leadership and change (Thomas, Hardy, Cutcher, & Ainsworth, 2014). Therefore, it is important to understand how individuals and cohorts of people grow older in the society and how the organisational context facilitates or nurtures age-related attitudes and effects at the workplace (Riach, 2015).

Studies of ageing at work that adopt individual and behavioural approaches provide valuable knowledge of, for instance, motivation and ageing (Kanfer & Ackerman, 2004; Kooij, 2010), health and ageing (Ilmarinen, 2009; Liebermann, Wegge, Jungmann, & Schmidt, 2013), and retirement age (Kannisto, 2015; Zacher & Griffin, 2015).

In addition, social researchers with a critical approach have analysed the power relationships underlying the construction of age and ageing, as well as the relationships between gender and age (Loretto & Vickerstaff, 2011), gender, disability and age (Zanoni, 2011), gender, ageing and sexuality (Riach, Rumens, & Tyler, 2014), and ageing, class and the masculine body (Riach & Cutcher, 2014). This line of research provides rich knowledge of ageing workers' identity and offers empirical accounts about the intersections between age and other characteristics of an individual. Various research has brought ageinup to date g in relation to organisational goals and practices, such as performance (Bal & De Lange, 2015), an age diverse workforce (Bieling, Stock, & Dorozalla, 2015), age management (Pärnänen, 2012) and older workers' career management (Furunes et al., 2015).

Despite their unquestionable contribution to the theoretical conceptualisation of ageing at work, previous studies also present three major limitations. First, most often research has presented chronological age as a factor, or a moderator, of behaviour or action at work. Defining the 'older worker' numerically and on the basis of psychological characteristics does not actually explain the phenomenon of ageing at work. Thus, even though concepts of age and ageing are recognised to be much more complex and multi-dimensional than just a numerical calculation or an individual characteristic (Fineman, 2014; Thomas et al., 2014), this conceptualisation is not necessarily applied in theoretical and empirical research. Second, the five widely cited definitions of age, namely, chronological, functional, organisational, life span and psychosocial age (Sterns & Doverspike, 1989), have provided a basis for several concepts and respective age indicators (Pitt-Catsouphes et al., 2011; Schalk et al., 2010), but these defitions are restricted with regard to understanding the interaction between them and lack understanding of age as socially constituted, as a social marker at work (Thomas et al., 2014).

Third, mainstream research does not typically include the societal or organisational context in relation to the conceptualisation of ageing. However, it has for a long time been agreed that the concept of ageing is a relative rather than an absolute experience, since the classification 'old' or 'older' is highly contextual, and can depend on the particular organisational setting and combination of social actors (Bytheway, 1995; Zacher, 2015). In addition, various research has revealed the importance of the socio-cultural environment to management and leadership practices and to employee identity, especially attitudes of managers and human resource staff toward older workers (Conen, Henkens, & Schippers, 2012; Loretto & White, 2006). Furthermore, even if institutional practices and legislation promote equality, organisational contexts, both internal and external, can include ageist or age-blind practices (Aaltio, Salminen, & Koponen, 2014). For instance, critical research provides some understanding about 'ageing as performative and as constituted in heteronormative terms within and through organizations dynamically and diachronically' (Riach, Rumens, & Tyler, 2014), but the ontological and methodological approach actually used may not be applicable to mainstream research on ageing.

In summary, the social perspective of ageing is underdeveloped within mainstream management and organisational studies. Current conseptualisations of ageing provide only a limited view of the relationships between different age concepts and lack the socio-cultural and organisational context in conceptulising ageing at work.

In this paper, a conceptual model of 'ageing at work as a social construct' is introduced. It first brings the relationship between context, social structures and social actors into focus when describing ageing at work.

Second, building on Giddens' idea of structuration, the model emphasises how actors at the workplace draw on social structures related to ageing in their actions and, at the same time, how these actions serve to produce and reproduce social structures related to ageing (1984). Even though structuration theory has little to say about formal organisations, as the concern is more with individual agents and social systems (Nicolini, 2013), structuration theory has been successfully applied to understanding inter-sectionalities, for instance, between ethnicity, gender and age (Ortlieb, 2014). Structuration is particularly suitable to understanding age and ageing in social contexts as it allows comprehension of 'age as an attribute' (Riach, 2007), in order to highlight the imperative role of culture and social processes in both identifying a person's age identity and perceiving others' age category.

The aim is to provide a conceptual tool facilitating a more holistic and socially aware conceptualisation of ageing employees, such as, 'middle-aged, 'mature' and 'older', regardless of whether the research emphasis is to analyse symbolic meanings of age within organisational practices, or to use age as an embodied identity within an organisation (Thomas et al., 2014).

Proposed conceptual model

The '*model of age as a social construct'* is presented in Figure 1. It builds on (1) age definitions, (2) socio-cultural and organisational context, and (4) social actors. The construction of age is created by social actors who draw on social structures (3) in their actions and, at the same time, these actions serve to produce and reproduce social structures related to age (Giddens, 1984). The model emphasises the relationships between the definitions of age, the context and the social actors, visualised as two-way-arrows in Figure 1.

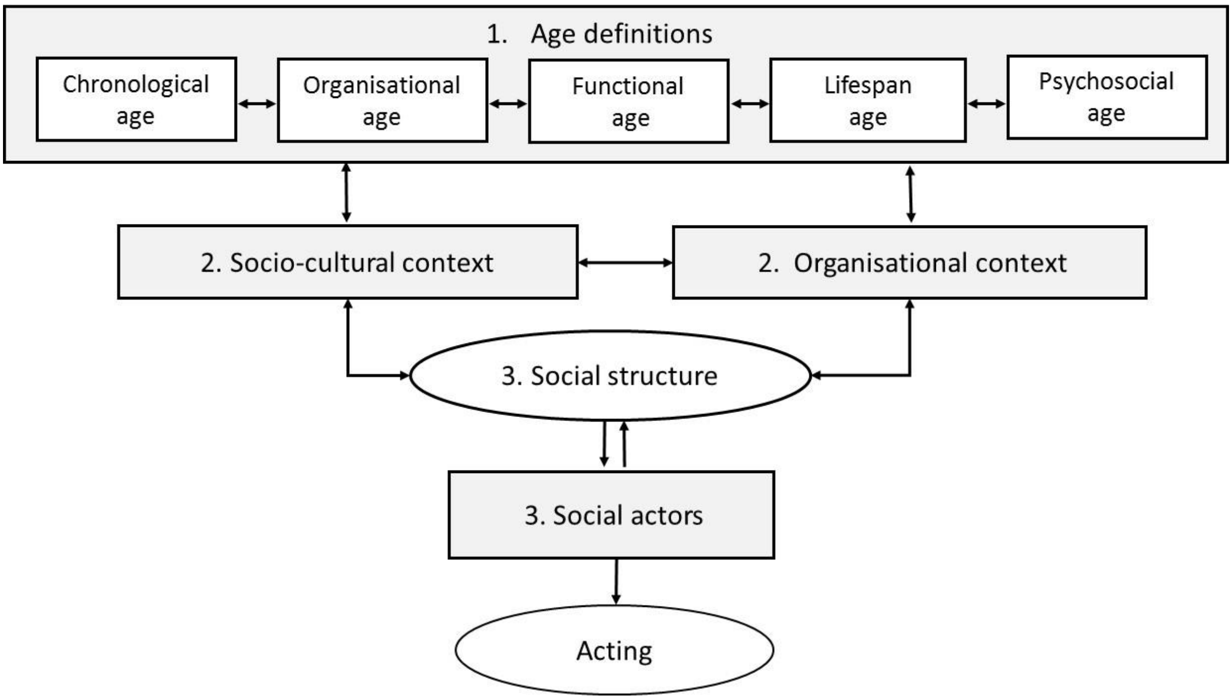

Figure 1 - Proposed '*model of age as a social construction*' applying Giddens' theory of structuration (1984).

1. The relationships between age definitions

The five definitions of age**;** chronological, functional, organisational, life span and psychosocial age; (Sterns & Doverspike, 1989) form a basis for how age is defined in a socio-cultural and organisational context, because empirically they have proved to be distinct in the context of ageing at work (McCarthy, Heraty, Cross, & Cleveland, 2014). Even though chronological age dominates perceptions of age in the work arena, a new range of perspectives, such as, organisational norms, retirement planning schedule and industry norms are recognised as being involved in the construction of age (McCarthy et al., 2014). In addition, relationships between age definitions, recognised in previous research, are visible in the proposed model. In the following the relationships between chronological and other age definitions are presented.

Organisational age and career stage

Even though chronological age, as indicated by calendar age, dominates the age discourse, it has relationships with other definitions. Age is described using organisational age, referring to the length of time that the individual has been with the organisation, the length of the tenure, and the length of the career to date (Sterns & Doverspike, 1989). Indeed a study in the field revealed that a clear majority of manager statements regarding employee age reflected an organisational age approach (McCarthy et al., 2014). Naturally, chronological and occupational age have a strong positive correlation; as an employee grows older, the years in the organisation and in tenure will increase (Kooij, De Lange, Jansen, & Dikkers, 2008). In practice, managers and employees discuss 'work experience', which includes assumptions on the number of years in an occupation, but also on the fact that, timewise, personal calendar age is extensive (McCarthy et al., 2014).

Functional age

Functional age is a medical construct, which is based on the physical and mental changes that may impact on physical and cognitive abilities to perform tasks (Sterns & Doverspike, 1989), but it is often used in conjunction with calendar age. For instance, Ilmarinen (2006) uses work ability (a performance-related concept that captures employee ability to carry out work with respect to physical and psychological job demands), as a rationale for defining an 'older worker' as being 45 years and over. He argues that this is the period when major physical and cognitional changes occur, and that this 'early' definition of ageing employees provides better possibilities to prevent early retirement. However, work ability as a measurement of job-related functional age is highly contextual: There is a negative relationship between [calendar] age and self-rated work ability in jobs with high mental involvement, high job autonomy, and low physical demands (Costa & Sartori, 2007). Moreover, there is a relationship between calendar age and age-related appearance, particularly in Western societies, with a long history of cultural ambivalence towards the aged (Ainsworth & Hardy, 2008).

Career stage and lifespan age

Organisational age is also linked to career stage. For instance, worker are perceived as being 'older' because they have either reached the last phase of their careers, or are nearing the end of their careers, or are not seen to be career active (Furunes et al., 2015).

Also lifespan age, which takes into account individual changes in behaviour at different stages across the life cycle; childhood (0–22), early adulthood (17–45), middle adulthood (40–65) and late adulthood (over 60) (Levinson, 1978), not only has a linkage with chronological age, but also with organisational age (McCarthy et al., 2014).

Psychosocial age

By definition, psychosocial age is considered as a subjective assessment of how old or young the individual worker perceives themselves to be. Subjective age is relative in nature and reflects an employee's overall assessment of his/her feeling of being younger or older, including looks and acts, and identification with a particular age cohort. In addition, subjective age can be seen as an 'attitude', and individuals often refer to age reflexively, in relation to who they were and who they will, or would like to become (Armstrong-Stassen & Seung, 2009). Furthermore, the difference between chronological and subjective age increases with ageing, as the older the person is, the relatively younger he or she feels. The experience of feeling younger has been related also to healthy life habits and physical health (Ilmarinen, 2009). Self-categorisation as an 'older worker'is related to negative attitudes towards work (stronger desire to retire early, stronger inclination towards intergenerational competition (Desmette & Gaillard, 2008). Social age refers to the attitudes, expectations, and norms regarding appropriate behaviour, lifestyles, and characteristics for people at different ages. Other views of an individual's age are reported to be a limiting constraint when defining opportunities for older workers (Ng & Law, 2014).

Based on the previous research referred to above, the following proposition can be introduced:

> *Proposition 1:*
>
> *Chronological, functional, organisational, life span and psychosocial age are intertwined and, therefore, age as a social construct draws not only on calendar age, but also on other appropriate age definitions and their relationships.*

2. Socio-cultural and organisational context

Several socio-economic elements impact directly on age-related issues at work, for example, economic cycle, level of un/employment and age relevant legislation. More importantly, cultural aspects such as norms, values, attitudes and beliefs profoundly influence age constructions at work. Psychosocial processes creating stereotypes have also both a subtle and visible influence on constructions of age at work. The social perceptions of age are often based on stereotypes and ageism, but are primarily determined by context characteristics. Recent literature shows that perceptions of older workers can be influenced by organisational contextual characteristics, such as, the line of business, nature of the work, and time perspective (Fineman, 2014; Froehlich, Beausaert, & Segers, 2015).

Economy and legislation

An economic turn in the market seems to impact on the construct of age at work. In an upswing even older workers are seen as the last resort (Billett, Dymock, Johnson, & Martin, 2011), but during a recession workers over 55 often have difficulties to find a new job (Ilmakunnas & Ilmakunnas, 2014). However, after the latest recession in the UK, the situation for older worker employment was better than during the previous downturn (Beck, 2013).

Anti-discrimination legislation and legal obligations according to calendar age, such as the state pension age and unemployment benefit, impact in many ways on the construction of age at work. For instance, age-related legislation promotes a longer working life and organisational policies on ageing, for instance, in terms of training and retirement. The implications of such a direct influence of legislative changes from early retirement to longer working life have been recognised in Europe (OECD,). However, the influence of the legislation is not simple because the practical situation if often more complex. It is a unique mix of ageing-related legislation, including the development of demographics in society and in any given organisation and the economic situation within the labour market (Beck, 2013).

Values and norms

Views on age and ageing are rooted in the memory of societies, and are presented as cultural values, norms and beliefs. For instance, age- related values in Western cultures continue to include more negative than positive socio-cultural beliefs, stereotypes and attitudes (Armstrong-Stassen & Seung, 2009). These beliefs and attitudes turn into culturally-prescribed norms concerning appropriate behaviour at certain stages in the life course interlinked with age. Consequently, age norms produce age effects (Schalk *et al.*, 2010). For instance, societal age grading such as retirement, and social norms about age-appropriate behaviour, create a timetable for an individual at work. For many older employees, the transition to retirement is normative and anticipated, creating a stricter social environment where this transition and retirement activities are planned years before the actual retirement. If there is a norm for early exit and employees retire well before the official retirement age, the actions reproduce the existing norms, and consequently, older workers are also typified by early retirement (Riach, 2009).

Beliefs and stereotypes

Even though many stereotypes of older workers, are empirically proven not to be valid in modern society (Brough, Johnson, Drummond, Pennisi, & Timms, 2011; Kanfer & Ackerman, 2004), they continue to appear at the work place. Posthuma and Campion (2009) reviewed evidence for five stereotypes relevant to workplace ageing, namely, lower productivity, resistance to change, lower learning ability, declining tenure, and higher cost. There is a high risk that negative stereotypes become ingrained in organisational norms and incorporated into human resource systems unless actively challenged. In addition, there are probably more policies and decisions that are implicitly age-biased compared to those that are explicitly biased. Consequently, beliefs carry on the socio-cultural negative stereotypes of older or younger employees, impacting on the construction of social age in the work place.

Line of business

In certain industries, such as finance, insurance, retailing, and information technology age, stereotypes are particularly strong (Posthuma & Campion, 2009). It is noted that when corporate self-interest rests on preserving a team of less expensive, younger employees, older employees may face job stereotypes (Fineman, 2014). In addition, some industries have emerged to target this ‘cultural dread of ageing’ and highlight the meanings of outlook embodied in this particular business (Riach & Cutcher, 2014).

Nature of work
Workers of a certain age are defined as 'older' because the nature of work is perceived to be more 'suited' to those who are younger. In addition, age norms are associated with certain jobs where tasks are associated with the number of older people holding a particular job. That job tends to increase the likelihood that it would be perceived as appropriate for older workers (McCarthy et al., 2014). The construct of age has been linked to performance at work providing an approach, for instance, to age diversity and organisational performance (Bieling et al., 2015) and performance of older workers (Hashim & Wok, 2013). However, it has been argued, that the characteristics of the different age groups have different effects on productivity depending on the type of tasks that have to be performed rather than age (Backes-Gellner & Veen, 2013).

Future time perspective
Age as a concept has a temporal underpinning by nature, but there is also another timing aspect, namely, future time perspective, that is individual perceptions of their remaining time at work before retirement (Lang & Carstensen, 2002). The view for the future originates from societal and organisational schedules. At societal level, definitions of what constitutes younger and older employees are, on the one hand, starting to shift, because of increased life expectancies (Kulik, Ryan, Harper, & George, 2014). On the other hand, this shift does not reflect the compulsory retirement age which the European Commission has set at 65 – 68 years in Europe, 20 years less than average life expectancy.

There is a clear relationship between future time perspective and the organisational context. For instance, employee age distribution within an organisation seems to form an implicit career timetable and employees use their perceptions of this timetable to determine whether their careers are 'on' or 'off schedule', and when it is, for example, time to retire (Ng & Law, 2014). Froehlich *et al.,* (2015) found a relationship between age and occupational future time perspective in their conceptual model of 'age, employability and the role of learning activities. Finally, the relationship between future time and organisational context is presented in a study in which job seeking intensity seems to be linked with expected years at work life (Zacher & Griffin, 2015).

To conclude, based on the contextual elements impacting on the construction of age as a social attribute and category, the following proposal is presented:

> *Proposition 2:*
> *Age as a social construct is a relative attribute and categorisation, which depends on the particular socio-cultural aspects, such as laws, norms, beliefs and stereotypes. Age is in relation also to the organisational setting, with the line of business, the nature of the work and specific future-time perspectives.*

3. Social actors and structures

The conceptual model of age as a social construct relies on the relationship between society, organisation and an individual, in line with structuration theory (Giddens, 1984). The model expresses that social actors, for instance, managers and employees, draw on 'social structures' in their actions and, at the same time, their actions serve to 'produce and reproduce' social structures (Giddens, 1984).

For instance, it has been recognised that, at the same time as individuals, organisations and societies struggle to deal with 'problems' associated with ageing, social actors create those very problems themselves (Ainsworth, Cutcher, Hardy, & Thomas, 2013). In this section, the two final components, social actors and structures, are presented, and some examples of their interaction with contextual components are discussed.

Social actors

Social actors, such as managers, employees and human resource professionals, perceive the age of others in relation to their own age. It is demonstrated that the age of a manager is an important factor when perceiving employee age (Shore, Cleveland, & Goldberg, 2003). For instance, younger managers more often reflect negative rather than neutral or positive stereotypes towards older employees, than managers with the same age as their team (Finkelstein, King, & Voyles, 2015). It could be argued that this is even more important in the work environment, as it has been investigated and shown that manager attitudes are very influential in relation to employee activities (Furunes, 2011). Stereotypes and less positive attitudes are explained using an individualistic approach. First, through social identity theory, where individuals build their identity around their age, or some other characteristics (Tajfel & Turner, 1986), and second, by reflecting more positive beliefs towards the same age group individuals, as the similarity-attraction theory suggests (Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987). The model of age is presented as a social construct that enlarges the perspective, and emphasises, that managers and employees draw on 'social structures' in their actions, and at the same time, their actions serve to 'produce and reproduce' social structures (Giddens, 1984), which interact with contextual components.

It is noted that other demographics, such as gender and ethnicity, may have a strong relationship with age. Younger or older women particularly, are typified by gender embedding conventions, for instance, regarding their life stage (child and parental care, menopause) or are facing 'lookism', which is a prejudice or a discrimination on the basis of appearance (Atkinson, Ford, Harding, & Jones, 2015; Zanoni & Janssens, 2007). However, recent research indicates that masculinity in certain professions contains scripts and norms surrounding the 'male trading body', which are produced and reproduced in social structures in the organisation (Riach & Cutcher, 2014).

It is argued that work orientation, as a socio-psychic pattern of the individual in their relation to work, influences the construct of age. Strong work orientation means that the work related norms the individual has internalised during their career will be applied by them in their daily life at the work place (Vendramin, 2009). For example, older workers may reproduce (negative) cultural age norms, as tenure age, defined as the number of years a worker has been with the organisation, is shown to be an important indicator of the experience and knowledge an individual has of the norms of the organisation (Crawford, Lori, & Jones, 2011). In addition, individual antecedents, such as, political persuasion, education and income, may impact on beliefs and attitudes towards age (Beck & Quinn, 2012).

Social structure

A social structure can be seen as 'an apparatus', which gives form and shape to social life, but gains substance through what people do in the work place. Following the work of Giddens (1984, 17), social structure, on the one hand, consists of 'memory traces which are continuously re/produced by individuals' actions', and on the other hand, 'manifests itself as rules and resources in a material time-space presence'. Thus, age as a social construction not only relies on socio-cultural beliefs, attitudes and stereotypes, but also on organisational practices.

For example, recruiting, training and early exit policies communicate prevalent age stereotypes, which influence employee self-identity (Fineman, 2014). In turn, self-categorisation as an ‘older worker’ is related to negative attitudes towards work, and an employee may see more constraints than enablers at work (Froehlich et al., 2015) leading to a stronger desire to retire early and a stronger feeling towards intergenerational competition (Desmette & Gaillard, 2008).

At work, social structures are continuously being created through organisational policies and the flow of everyday practices. Social structures may include the ways in which ageing workers in society are discursively constructed within limiting conditions, associated with declining health, rising dependency, and a move towards social and economic redundancy (Thomas, Hardy, Cutcher, & Ainsworth, 2014). Therefore, in the organisation, older age is understood to imply lower performance and productivity (Kunze, 2013), because older employees are believed to have low technological skills and lack openness to new ideas (Paloniemi, 2006). Additionally, they are often considered to be more costly, less flexible, and less willing to cooperate and learn new skills (Felstead, 2011). Social actors draw on these social structures, and act accordingly. For instance, some older workers are not willing to participate in training for new social media technology and learning how to use it on the job (Crawford et al., 2011). Consequently, these rejections reproduce negative associations, leading to social structures creating possible constraints for future training being offered to older workers. Even though organisational policies declare age-friendliness, everyday practices such as verbal or written communication and interaction with each other can reveal different social structures (Riach, 2007).
It needs to be noted that social structure is produced and reproduced in a unique context, where socio-cultural and organisational components may have different weightings. For instance, economic circumstances may reduce the influence of stereotypes, and emphasise other aspects of the situation. Employers in countries with low unemployment rates (like the Netherlands, at about 4-5 per cent) are more likely to recruit and retain older employees than employers in countries with high unemployment rates, like France, Sweden and Finland, with unemployment rates between 8 and 10 per cent (Conen et al., 2012).

The model of age as a social construct utilises Giddens’ idea of social structures to understand the mechanisms social actors use in defining age at work. The following proposal can, thus, be presented:

> *Proposition 3:*
> *In the social construction of age, people draw on social structures, including not only socio-cultural age norms and beliefs, but also organisational age-related policies. People act according to social structures, and produce and reproduce these social structures, for example, through communication at work.*

Conclusions

The conceptual model of age as a social construct answers the call for wider patterns surrounding the construction of age and ageing, and may serve as a holistic framework for further research (Riach, 2015). The model brings to attention the importance of studying age, and ageing, in an integrated way including the socio-cultural and organisational context, and the relationships with social actors, rather than focusing only on the individual aspects, as has been done in most previous research.

Based on the model, identification of employees as ‘older workers’ includes not only their chronological age, but also the organisational and possible other definitions of ages. In addition, the cut-off between ‘younger’ and ‘older ‘worker is dependent on laws, norms and beliefs as well as organisational components such as the line of business, the work and the future time perspective. For example, the US policy of having an open-end retirement schedule facilitates longer tenure and less negative beliefs concerning the older worker. This compares with the Finnish compulsory retirement age of 68 years old, which tends to constrain the timetable for working life. Consequently, an older worker in a US bank may mean an employee having 25+ years of experience, whereas in a Finnish bank, an employee with 15 years of industry acumen is considered as ‘older’. The latter is valid particularly in a time of recession, when less experienced, but recently educated and less expensive, employees are available in the labour market. The model is in line with identifications of contextual importance when defining age and ageing at work. While the relationships in this model are formulated on the basis of previous empirical research, it has not been empirically tested, and thus, warrants closer empirical examination and validation.

The model contributes to age and ageing as well as to the management research in three ways. First, it summarises the previously revealed relationships between age definitions; second, it introduces the socio-cultural and organisational aspects which influence the construction of age at work; and third, it proposes that the construction of age can be researched using the lens of structuration. In practice, the model enhances understanding of age in relation to managerial and human resource management practices. For future research, this model can assist as a tool to understand, for instance, what combination of age definitions serves best in the particular social and organisational context, and how those contextual components can be integrated into the research. However, the model allows the researcher to ncorporate important individual demographic characteristics and antecedents as appropriate for the research context. The model can be also used to increase understanding of how age is produced and reproduced through organisational discourse and practices, and why some are perceived as ‘older’ in the work place.

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Appendix 1.

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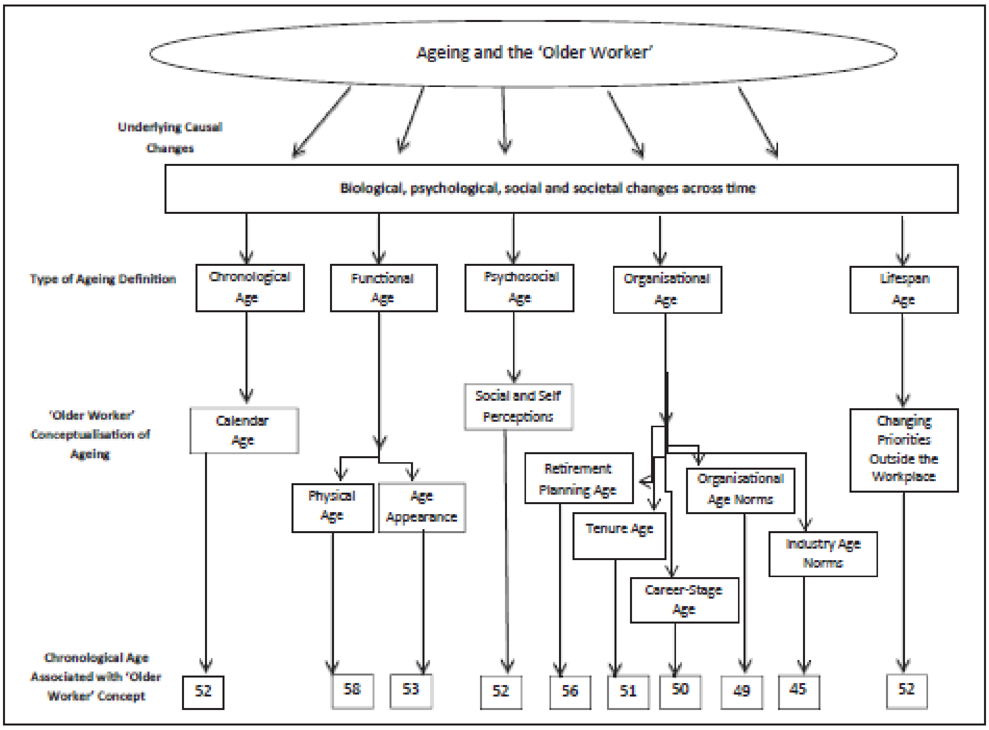
Figure 3 *Extended age model*



Source: McCarthy, J., Heraty, N., Cross, C., & Cleveland, J. (2014). Page 389.