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Developing the Effectiveness and Cooperation of Virtual Meetings

Case: International Deus Project

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Abstract <p>A need for this thesis became after the start of Covid-19 pandemic, which forced the Deus project and the people around Europe to work remotely. This meant that instead of normal meetings, most of the meetings changed to be done virtually. This created a need for the project also to think about how to develop a learning and training approach virtually and how virtual meetings could be improved.</p> <p>Many employees and students had already experienced virtual meetings before Covid-19, but since nowadays in most European countries, virtual meetings are essential we need to research the experiences of employees about the effectiveness and cooperation during virtual meetings. This research studies the experiences of employees by a combination of interviews and online inquiries.</p> <p>Employees who participated in the research were from five countries in the Deus project. The participants gave useful information on how to develop virtual meetings to be more cooperative and effective. The results were analyzed and reflected comparing the results to the theory framework of this thesis.</p> <p>The theory framework of this thesis consists of cooperative learning and cooperative leadership, which according to the research presented in this thesis are one of the best pedagogic models to motivate a team to work and succeed. The final expected outcome of the thesis is a new virtual meeting concept, which could be used to build better virtual meetings. If a new cooperative concept were built, it should be implemented to study its benefits by any researcher or an organization.</p>		
Keywords Virtual meetings, cooperative leadership, cooperative learning		

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1 INTRODUCTION

Due the Covid-19 pandemic, the environment of working and learning has changed all over the world. The spread of the pandemic has led to employees and students around the world to practice working from their homes. This has led to an increase of virtual working platforms such as Zoom, Microsoft Teams, Slack and many others. Since people have started working from their homes, most people have turned from face-to-face meetings to virtual meetings. This can be a remarkable change in our working lives. On 18 March 2020, schools around Europe had to change to study remotely from their homes. For example in Finland 1,3 million students from 7 – year olds to university students and their 80 000 teachers switched to studying remotely. (Haapakoski & Niemelä & Yrjölä 2020, 169.) On 11 May 2020 according to a survey by an EU agency “The Eurofound”, had found that 37 % of the employees in Europe had begun to work from their homes. In Finland, this figure is nearly 60 %. One other result in the survey was that about 74 % of the respondents in Finland felt negative impacts from being away from their co-workers. These statistics explain how many people around Europe, from employees to students, have encountered an enormous change. Almost all the work and studies require meeting with your peers when you are working remotely. This means that people working from their homes have been forced to connect with their peers through virtual meetings. Many people have already experienced virtual meetings, but now they are essential for most working people. (Eurofund, 2020.)

In this thesis, I will research what kinds of experiences employees have from virtual meetings, and based on the answers, find out how to make meetings more effective and cooperative. The first phase of the research is to interview stakeholders from European wide project called Deus which includes partners from nine countries. The Deus project aims to build new kinds of inclusive and cooperative pedagogical methods to support vocational training in the CCI – sector and creative industry entrepreneurs, which makes it a good research platform.

The statistics made by Eurofund about the impact of Covid-19 for the working life and the aims of the Deus project gave me the motivation to do this research. These insights gave me the motivation to study and research what are the theoretical features of a good meeting, and to solve how to use these theories to develop virtual meetings to support remote work. Since meetings are one part of working and studying and will remain as one, it is important to find out how to make them as good as possible.

The main aim of this thesis is to study how to develop virtual meetings to be more effective and cooperative. The aim can support both virtual meetings and face-to-face meetings in working life. Since the most parts and methods presented in the theoretical framework have been used for a long time in normal face-to-face meetings, they can be implemented easily. The new part, which will be built in through the research process of this thesis is to express how these cooperative methods could be transferred to virtual meetings.

In this thesis, I will have two research questions to support the research. The first research question is *“What are the parts that need to be developed in a virtual meeting?”*, and the second is to reflect on *“How does cooperative leadership work as a possible pedagogical model for better virtual meetings?”* The research process of this thesis started in September 2020 and the results of the thesis will be used to support the Deus project, with its aim to build new inclusive and cooperative pedagogical methods for creative industry entrepreneurs.

1.1 The Deus project

This thesis is commissioned by South-Eastern Finland University of Applied Sciences (Xamk), which is a partner in the Deus project. The main purpose of the project is to co-create a European wide learning and training approach to help the cultural and creative sector in Europe. The role of Xamk is to evaluate the progress and quality of the project. Most of the meetings of the project have been done online since the project has nine countries working together, and it would be challenging to meet every month face to face. The project consists of pedagogical professionals from Austria, Denmark, Finland, Italy, Lithuania, Malta,

Netherlands, Slovakia, and the UK. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, most of the meetings and national project workshops had to be changed to virtual meetings. These are the key issues which describe the need for an analysis of the virtual meetings to research how effective and cooperative they are, and what could be developed. Virtual meetings are an essential part of the progress of the Deus project, which is why it is important to discover how to hold as effective and cooperative meetings as possible.

The Deus project aims to build a new learning approach, and while building, the year 2020 has proven to the world that the future is more unclear than ever with the Covid-19 pandemic. This has led to closing for many universities around the world, which has led to people working remotely from their home. No one knows at the moment how long the Covid-19 pandemic will last, but the whole world as the Deus project needs to adapt to this situation as the project aims to build new learning approaches.

The project has a large aim to recognize and develop a learning approach that supports entrepreneurship and is employability driven. The chosen learning pedagogy is expected to be open, inclusive, and non-hierarchical. It needs to build a safe environment for students who are dreaming about entrepreneurship. A safe environment requires a learning pedagogy, which supports inclusiveness and positive interdependency between the students. A pedagogy such as this could be cooperative leadership, which I have chosen as the theoretical framework of this thesis. One of the aims of this thesis is to find how cooperative leadership supports the effectiveness of virtual meetings and building a safe environment to support the improvements mentioned above.

According to the Deus project plan Creative industries employ over 12 million people, which is 7,5 % of the workforce in the European Union. The people who work in the creative industries consists from freelancers, entrepreneurs, and small companies. This all requires methods for participating the creative industry entrepreneurs, and organize networks to support mutual learning opportunities for creative industry entrepreneurs around Europe to learn from each other. One

of the aims of the project is to leverage the creation of integrated Local Innovation Ecosystems (LIEs) across the European Union. According to the Deus project plan (2019), “LIEs enable educational opportunities in design and innovation, critical thinking and entrepreneurship to find creative and cost-effective ways to connect within and across regional territories.” The background here is to build opportunities through education to access new skills and involve in feedback-loops where creatives, entrepreneurs, and professionals from different fields can iterate, learn and share together. (Deus project plan, 2019.) In this thesis, I will describe how cooperative learning and cooperative leadership can answer to this need of building an education model which supports the needs of the Deus project.

1.2 Structure of the thesis

The structure of this thesis (Figure 1) starts with going through the theory behind cooperative learning, which is one of the best pedagogies on how to build a well-working team which can work in a safe environment. It also describes how a cooperative team manages their meetings with a cooperative leader who understands the theory behind cooperative learning. Based on my own experience and the research made, cooperative learning is a pedagogical model, which is a great example of teamwork that suits the needs of the Deus projects and the overall development of virtual meetings. It also offers a perfect model for a meeting to get everyone in the team involved. In the theory part, I will explain the theory behind cooperative learning and describe what kind of skills a cooperative leader needs to have to build a cooperative and effective meeting. I will also describe what to remember in a virtual meeting and how to take care of cultural differences in a team.

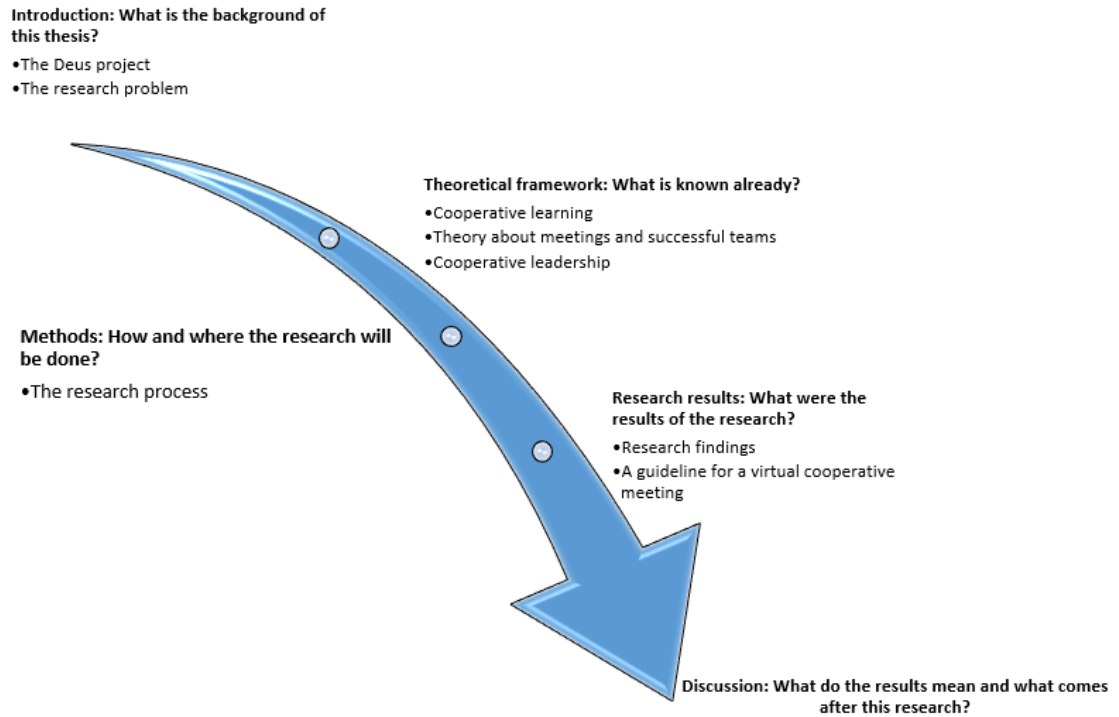


Figure 1. Based on thesis structure made by Kananen (2017, 39).

At the end of the thesis, I will describe and reflect on the research process, where I will share the results from interviewing and sending questionnaires to people from Deus project countries to have their opinions about working virtually. While reflecting on the results, I will focus especially on what needs improving in virtual meetings. In the end, I will analyze the results I got from countries and describe how respondents experience an effective online meeting to be held and compare the results to a cooperative meeting. Finally, I will take a look at the future and describe what kind of new research might be made on the basis of the results and discoveries from this thesis.

1.3 The research problem

The research problem of this thesis is the premise of this thesis, which is to study how to make virtual meetings more effective and collaborative. A virtual meeting consists of many practices, which I will analyze during this thesis based on the answers from the research interview and the online inquiry. Since I will get many practices and themes to study from the results, I will need to analyze the chosen theory framework for the thesis widely and focus on many factors in a meeting,

like how people learn from each other at work, and what is the leader's role in a meeting.

This research is limited only to focus on the issues that need developing in virtual meetings. The respondents for the research will describe parts that already work in their meeting culture, but those parts will not be represented in this research. Besides that, the research will not include details comparing the meeting cultures in different countries or generational behavior differences. Lastly, the research will include answers from a small number of respondents, which can make the generalization of the research results difficult.

When thinking about the theoretical framework for this thesis, which consists of the theory behind cooperative learning and cooperative leadership, I use a lot of classic research. This is because the theory behind cooperative learning and leadership is still surprisingly rare. Most of the new research has been written by the same researchers, David W. Johnson and Roger T. Johnson, and the theory is still very similar to the original research made by the same people. The source literature used for this thesis is mostly from cooperative learning and leadership. For a deeper knowledge, the source literature will also conclude the basis of a learning organization and the characteristics of a good team. Lastly, the source literature includes a methodology to describe the research process.

2 COOPERATIVE LEARNING AS A THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The theoretical background for this thesis is a pedagogic model, which was originally built to be used in schools. Any virtual meetings require cooperation and learning from each other in groups at some point. Cooperative learning is a pedagogical model that aims to set each individual in the same line. Cooperative learning is not described the same as normal learning with a group. It aims to build a culture where each individual realizes their input is as important as the others. Table 1 below is a modified model made by Sahlberg and Leppilampi (1994, 39), where they describe cooperative learning by mentioning the biggest differences between cooperative learning and group learning. These examples can be attached to express the difference between normal group working in a

meeting versus cooperative working, and I will reflect on this more at the end of the thesis in the results section.

Table 1. Modified from a table made by Sahlberg & Leppilampi (1994, 39.)

Normal learning	Cooperative learning
Do your own job	Help your teammates succeed
Take care of your own business	Be responsible for yourself and your team also
Don't care what others are doing	Take responsibility of your teams results, discuss with your teammates
Don't advice others	Ask for other people's opinions
Don't ask help from others	Ask help from others
Keep attention only on what the teacher says	Discuss and let everyone have their say
Look only directly at the teacher in a class	Participate in work with others and maintain eye-contact with everyone
Be quiet	Be active, speak

Cooperative learning has been used at schools for a few decades and has proven to be one of the best pedagogies to build a safe environment for any team to support working well together. Sharan and Schachar (1988) made research about cooperative learning and found out that the students who participated more in conversation and used more words – each as many words as the other students survived better than the students who worked in normal school groupwork. (Sahlberg & Sharan 2002, 395.)

Based on the research, cooperative learning is one of the best ways to develop a feeling of unity inside a team. When the team has a cooperative leader who uses the principles of cooperative learning, the team doesn't need the most intelligent people in the field, but instead, together they can make each other intelligent by teaching each other and being positively dependent on each other. (Sahlberg & Leppilampi 1994.)

Anita Woolley (2015) from the University of Pittsburgh made research to find out what makes a group work intelligently. Her background information was that an intelligent group is built from a group of intelligent people. When she started her own research, she soon found out there were three factors that made a group intelligent. 699 participants were included in her research and the test was done tens of times.

She found out that the intelligence of the individuals didn't mean that the team was intelligent. The first part was social sensitivity. If the social sensitivity in the team was high, the team worked better. That meant that the team members were more aware of each other's feelings and could for example use humor in the discussion when needed or guide the discussion in a more constructive way without taking too much room from others in the team. The second part was how many times speaking turns were divided inside the team. Was there someone who spoke more than the others or did everyone speak the same amount? The more the speaking turns were divided, the better the more intelligent the team was in their actions. If one or two people dominated the discussion, the progress was not that good. The third point was the number of women in the group, which according to Woolley is connected with social sensitivity. According to social sensitivity NEO tests made during the research, women are more sensitive. In the end, if all the team members give their action equally, the result will be more diverse and gives a possibility to combine many more ideas than just in a team where one or two people have been speaking. (Hyppönen 2014, 132 - 135.) The principles of cooperative learning are based on to supporting these three factors, according to Woolley and her research team. At the core of cooperative learning is the importance of understanding social sensitivity between team members. When everyone in a team is in the same level and speaks as much during meetings, the team becomes positively interdependent on each other, and starts to learn from each other and succeed. (Leppilampi, 2009.)

A group of Google's HR department made research about the success of their teams. The research lasted for two years, during which they studied what made some of their teams more successful than the others. They conducted over 200

interviews with their employees and studied over 250 attributes from 180 active teams to find out what individual skills some of the successful team members had. It made clear that the individual attributes didn't matter. Instead, it was the dynamics inside the team, and the impact on how the team members interacted and structured their work. The HR departments found out the following five key dynamics that made a successful team:

- “1. Psychological safety: Can we take risks on this team without feeling insecure or embarrassed?
 2. Dependability: Can we count on each other to do high quality work on time?
 3. Structure & clarity: Are goals, roles, and execution plans on our team clear?
 4. Meaning of work: Are we working on something that is personally important for each of us?
 5. Impact of work: Do we fundamentally believe the work we're doing matters?”
- (Rozovsky, 2015.)

These examples show the elements that are required to have an intelligent and successful team. Many experts and researchers mention cooperative learning as the right pedagogy to fulfill these elements. For this kind of pedagogy to get in to use, the team or the organization requires a cooperative leader. Rubin (2009) describes that a cooperative leader is a strategic, logical, and systematic thinker, who understands the steps that make people work together better to plan a process effectively together. Glanz (2006) continues by acknowledging that a cooperative leader needs to lead by focusing on building a team and shared decision-making. According to Wepner (2011), cooperative leaders are born to think that using every possible team member together strengthens educational entrepreneurship and achieving the goal. (Erkkilä 2013, 68.)

Slavin (1997) studied the benefits of cooperative leadership in his studies, which reflect the success of using cooperative methods. The themes were the rise in motivation, the rise in social acting as a team, and the understanding of critical methods. (Erkkilä 2013, 69.) According to the experiences of a cooperative leadership educator Asko Leppilampi (2009, 3), the principles of cooperative

learning suit both the educational and business life. Cooperative learning is suited more for studying and cooperative leadership is a philosophy that leaders working in any industry or business can learn. Leppilampi has been exploring and teaching the principles of cooperative learning with several co-authors and educators for the biggest organizations in Finland since the 1990s.

2.1 Five principles of the cooperative learning

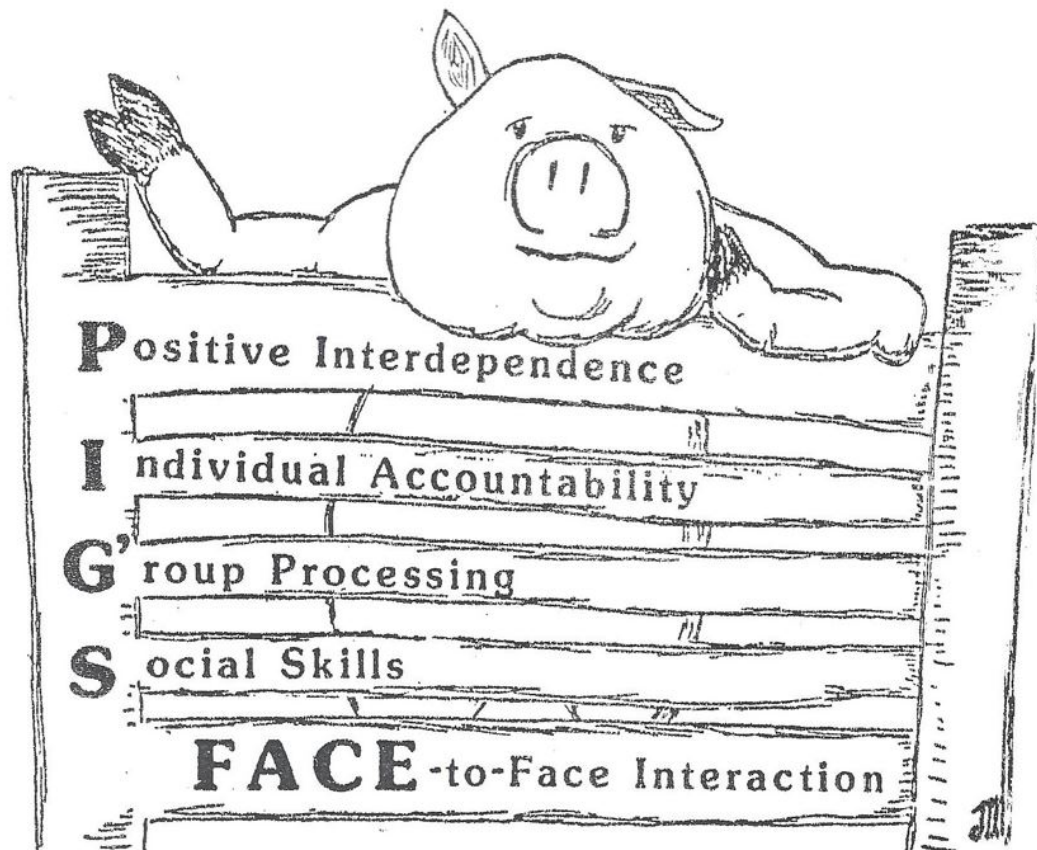


Figure 2. Cooperative learning principles from (Johnson et al.1990, 128.)

Cooperative learning consists of five principles, which are all described in (Figure 2.) These five principles together make a team work together better. The first principle is called **positive interdependence**, which is the foundation of cooperative learning. The basic idea of the principle is that the success of a team depends on the success of other people in the team. In other words, if one team member fails at something, it means that the whole team will fail. When a Deus project group, for example, starts a new process, making positive

interdependence one of the team core values, project workers understand the value that all team members can build. This adds the possibility of creating value for the project customers in the longer run, which in the Deus project are students around Europe. (Leppilampi 2009, 2-4; Johnson & Johnson 2013, 4.)

The second principle is about **face-to-face interaction** in which the project leader's role is important. Face-to-face interaction occurs when the team members want to share their resources and help each other to learn. This can be described as a support system, where anyone is ready to encourage each other in the team. The leader has an important role when building this principle. He or she can set a rule together with the project team, to set a goal of creating a culture that supports personal encounters in the team. When building a culture of open-minded conversation, the project team starts building trust toward each other. The face-to-face interaction can be challenging nowadays because of the virtual meetings and not the possibility of seeing one another. This can be changed if a team makes a game rule together to decide that everyone must use cameras online so everyone can see each other's faces for better interaction. (Leppilampi 2009, 4; Johnson & Johnson 2013, 5.) Educators Hagqvist and Kilpinen urge everyone to open their cameras during meetings. According to them, we are dependable on each other's reactions. If we don't see each other's expressions, we won't get the necessary feedback and possible conversation is not born. This can make us even more tired than in a normal meeting. (Kauhanen, 2020.)

The third principle is **individual accountability**. It describes that people in a project team are responsible for developing their work. If a person acknowledges that something is not working, it is his responsibility to tell that to everyone else in the team. Individual accountability makes sure each team member contributes his or her share of work, and there will be no one doing less work than others. A principle like this is crucial when the team is proceeding forward. This could work virtually so that one team member writes down a message for everyone online saying that we need a quick meeting. When everyone knows their responsibility area and listens to each other, it maximizes the possibility to build

something innovative. (Leppilampi 2009, 4-5; Johnson & Johnson 2013, 5.) Virtual meetings can require a lot of energy from participants, which is why every team member is responsible for taking care of their energy during the meetings. Educators Hagqvist and Kilpinen recommend having breaks during virtual meetings. If a participant feels excited for a long time, it might take lots of energy. A couple of minutes of break would be good. One should not watch the phone during that time, but instead to keep the body moving. (Kauhanen, 2020.)

The fourth principle is about the importance of **social skills**. The project leader should start all the meetings participating all the other team members to discuss since the beginning. For example, if the team leader asks about the last months experiences, he at first wants their team members to discuss with each other and then let each of them present their news. The main point here is that the project leader does not speak only by himself, but instead lets each team member talk as much. The social skills part focuses a lot on the interpersonal and small group skills. A team can learn leadership skills together when each team member is responsible for teaching one another at a time. Cooperative working also teaches decision-making skills, trust building, and conflict managing when the team is processing and reflecting as a group. (Leppilampi 2009, 5-6; Johnson & Johnson 2013, 5.) Participating virtually can work by using meeting software like Zoom and Microsoft Teams, which both have a “Breakout Room” option, which makes it easy to divide all the participants into smaller groups for a discussion. The use of the “Breakout Room” option will be introduced later in the text.

The final principle is **group processing**, which describes reflecting the progress. This principle should be one of the cornerstones in the project groups work. Reflecting on the work lets the team discuss what happened in the previous month. In addition, it allows the team to reflect deeper on their progress discussing questions like, “*why did it happen*” and “*how did it feel to do it like that?*” An important part of the group processing and reflecting is to discuss how the team is achieving their goals and maintaining good relationships in a team. The team needs to discuss together what actions are helping them, and what kind of behavior needs to change. The team can discuss together their success

and failures in their work or even the experiences from virtual meetings and share together what they had learned from there and how they progress from the current situation. (Leppilampi 2009, 7; Johnson & Johnson 2013, 5.)

2.2 Learning while working

Cooperative learning and cooperative leadership models were chosen as theoretical frameworks for this thesis because continuous learning is essential in working life. An organization consists of social communities that move well-working models, actions, and traditions from a working generation to another. It is important to develop new thinking models and learn new ways of working to reach the best practices from older generations in the organization and combine the practices with new generations in the organization. (Sarala 1988, 131.)

An organization keeps changing constantly, which requires employees to adapt to the constant change and learn from each other while progressing. An organization like this can be called a learning organization. All actions start from the current phase in the organization and the future expectations. If the action changes, the organization needs to learn, and learning requires that people are involved. This requires a working community, which supports learning. (Moilanen 2001, 13-14.) The founder of Pixar, Ed Catmull describes that leaders could think of themselves as teachers who try to build a culture in their teams, which values the importance of teaching one another. In the best-case scenario, the team becomes dependent on each other like in the research mentioned earlier, made by Google, and starts to learn from each other's successes, failures, and all other work-related experiences. (Catmull & Wallace 2014, 123.)

When a team starts working together and having virtual meetings, one essential phase is to get the team to learn from each other and learn what kind of experiences the team has about the topic they are working on. Experiential learning concludes two dimensions of learning. Conscious and unconscious understanding and the two phases that emphasize learning in different ways. Reflecting on the theme immediately builds a base and a lifecycle for learning, which is described in Figure 3. The motivation to learn rises when a person

recognizes his own personal interest and purpose for the study, which is the theme. This comes from the individual's own immediate, personal experience. When the theme is processed and discussed with other people in the team, and everyone has had a possibility to discuss critically, and had the possibility to evaluate and reflect the discussed theme, the team gets to understand the meeting theme even deeper. It builds a possibility for an abstract conceptualization of the phenomenon and helps structure individual experiences more. After that, it's turning for active, experiential learning action to test the discussed themes in the meeting and how they work in action. The experiential learning model emphasizes learning as a cycle, in which the length changes. That is why learning is a never- ending deepening process, where the team members' own information and skills are in a decisive state. (Kolb 1984, 42; Leppilampi & Piekkari 2001, 9.)

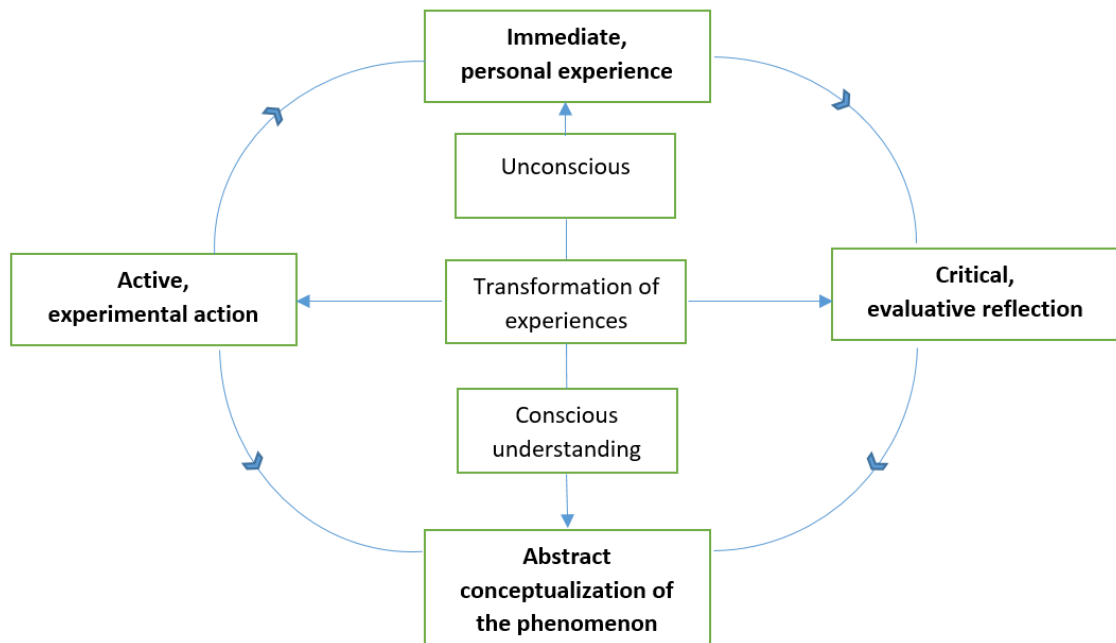


Figure 3. Experiential learning model (Kolb 1984, 42; Leppilampi & Piekkari 2001, 9)

The best way to reach the person's interest is to wake the team members interest in studying or working, and let themselves participating in aiming and studying the problem, which is why experiential learning works as a great example to start a meeting. Using these methods to raise the experiences in a team motivates the

team to start the meeting, but the leader has many more duties to get to know of. This is why the next part of the theoretical framework is to describe the move from the pedagogy of cooperative learning to describe cooperative leadership. (Leppilampi & Piekkari 2001, 9.) A cooperative leader guides his team by working side by side with each team member, asking thought-provoking questions and showing sincere interest towards the team members. This kind of working from the leader of the team shows that the leader is interested in how the team is learning, and also that the leader can be vulnerable and show a need to learn from the whole team. In between a leadership like this, the team can take risks and fail securely. A learning organization understands the importance of conflicts, and the development actually starts from solving conflicts constructively. (Leppilampi 2009, 9.)

2.3 Virtual working and the role of the cooperative leader

The role of the team leader and especially the project leader in an international project is crucial when building trust between all the teams. The project leader needs to lead by example in being available and responsive. He is the one who opens up the discussion about the ground rules relating to virtual communication. The leader decides the schedule for virtual meetings together with all the teams and is responsible for starting the discussion, but remembers not to micromanage other team members. It is very easy to guide virtual meetings and forget to involve all the people, but the leader should still remember to let everyone in the team speak the same amount to keep the motivation high. (Giles 2017.) A computer animation studio Pixar is an example of an organization that supports everyone to be on the same level in the team. They have a culture which allows anyone in the organization to have their say regardless of their position. This kind of a culture maximizes the creative engagement of people and on best scenarios brings unexpected responses that would not have been seen in a culture which doesn't have a similar open culture. (Catmull & Wallace 2014, 163.)

Virtual meetings might bring a challenge when there is a need for showing empathy. The leader's role should be to serve and listen to all the team members and remove all obstacles from their work. Moving to work from home offices

might bring more administrative work, but the leader cannot be the authoritarian person who demands too much. Instead, the demands should come from the team members, who have learned how to work in a self-disciplinary way. The team members know what their responsibilities are, and know that their individual success is related to their team's success. The leader is the one who makes sure that each team member has the best environment to take care of his or her work. He also makes sure that when working virtually from home offices, the team members have the right knowledge, the right equipment, and the right goals for working from the home office. The leader must also accept that he or she doesn't know everything that is happening in the team, and actions might develop without the leader being involved in the progress. If the leader says that he trusts his team, it needs also to be shown, and the team must know that the leader knows that he accepts mistakes as part of life. (Martela & Jarenko 2015, 94 - 199.)

When the leader has made clear that the team could use the philosophy of cooperative learning and leadership, they can start thinking about the vision that they want to reach. Together with the team, the leader sets the goals, which they want to achieve together. When the goals are set, the leader lets the team know what kind of great things he or she expects from them. If the team understands their leader's expectations, they can individually reach the expectations. This needs to be said clearly, so the team will understand this. (Kaufman 2010, 335.) The leader also has an essential role as giving the example of what kind of meeting culture he or she will bring for the team. When the participants come from different countries like in the Deus project, it is important to focus also on the cultural differences and understand the differences each team member brings to the meeting.

2.4 Differences with culture and personalities

Since the international Deus project team, which I mentioned in the beginning of the thesis includes people from nine different countries, it is easy to understand that the project workers have lots of different backgrounds. People in the Deus project team have a different cultural background and most of them have a different educational or working life background. That is why it is important for us

to realize our differences as human beings. This also gives the need for a pedagogy like cooperative learning, which is a method that makes sure everyone is on the same line positively interdependent on each other no matter the cultural background.

Respecting different kinds of personalities and their backgrounds is a basis for a working synergy. In a group as big as in the Deus project, it builds a need to respect the psychological, emotional, and intellectual differences that lay in the team. Each team member needs to realize that people do not see the world as it is, but instead, they see it from the individual's own perspective. If the project group understands this and respects the personalities and the cultural basis of our colleagues in the project, the project group can remove many trust barriers. (Covey 2006, 290.) This requires the whole project team from each country to spend lots of time together and try getting to know each other through virtual meetings. The team needs to decide together the game rules and plan non-work related meetings, which is an essential part of trust-building and maintaining open communication. One example would be that the team schedules a date for a meeting, which is only for non-work related conversation. The team can make up a ground rule that it is forbidden to speak work-related things in this meeting, but instead, encourage having fun and even celebrate together virtually. (Caramela 2018.)

2.5 Cooperative meeting

Meetings can be often one of the biggest time consumers for any company, organization, or team. They are rarely planned well, they take time, and disturb other participants if other participants arrive late. If the meeting has not been planned well, and it doesn't have a clear structure on speaking turns with the length of each of them, the results might suffer. This might be seen in meetings, where only a few team members join the discussion, and other team members are just silent observers without knowing their purpose for the meeting. In a cooperative meeting, every participant has the possibility to participate in meetings in each phase, and even the planning of the meeting. One main aim of participating team members is to excite them to be present during the meeting.

Each team member has a possibility to participate in each phase of the meeting, and planning of the meeting. (Hellström et al. 2015, 165.)

Before going to the topics of the meeting, the participants of the meeting could check together if the meeting agenda is okay for everyone and if someone has to leave earlier, everyone would know about that and wouldn't get nervous if someone leaves the meeting before them. What is especially important for everyone to acknowledge is that if some theme doesn't have time to get discussed during a meeting, it will be discussed in the next meeting. All the aims of the meeting should be read through clearly with the whole team to motivate the participant from the beginning. One of the most important things to remember is that the meeting ends at promised time. A good way to start a meeting is to give 5-10 minutes from the beginning of the meeting for a pre-chat about anything to orientate on the meeting, which starts on an exact time that is chosen together. If the participants know that the beginning of the meeting is used for chatting and the exact meeting starts on time, it helps to relax from all the other time pressure when they can chat at first and then continue with starting the meeting. (Hellström et al. 2015, 165 - 167.)



Figure 4. Modified cooperative meeting model (Hellström et al. 2015, 168–169.)

After the pre-chat discussion is over, the team can start to work cooperatively by defining their goals that are divided into three sections that are highlighted in Figure 4. The first part is to start with notification matters, and agree together that every possible matter, which relates to the meeting theme will be written down for the meeting agenda, and only the most important questions will be taken into discussion during the meeting. The questions and comments that have come beforehand will represent the second part, which includes all the matters to be decided. This is a part, where a leader of the team can use smaller group discussions for cooperative working, and agree with the whole team a ground rule that everyone is ready to report on the team's progress at any time, which makes sure that everyone's opinions have been heard. In the last part, the team can discuss about the decided matters, make an assessment of goals, and rules from the meeting to develop the next meeting. Lastly, planning the agenda for the next meeting is an effective way to build clear next steps for the team to make sure that everyone will know how to continue. The team agrees together on what matters to discuss in the next meetings. After this, it is crucial to choose, which team members will be responsible for planning the meeting. This kind of participating bonds the team together even better and motivates them to study the meeting themes. (Hellström et al. 2015, 168 - 169.)

2.6 Evaluating the meeting and the ground rules

Each meeting should consist of some ground rules on how to progress during the meeting, and it should end in a discussion where the team evaluates and reflects the meeting process. The ground rules are especially important when developing meeting practices. They are also important, because, with well-structured ground rules, the team can get as many voices heard as possible without giving one participant too much voice, but instead let everyone speak the same amount. The ground rules are important to gather also to help the meeting topic remain on the topic instead of wandering to other conversations or to talk about the same topic for too long. Lastly, they are important for the endings of the meetings to let everyone know what comes after the meeting and why and what is every participant's role in it. When the meeting ends, the team can evaluate together, how the ground rules worked, and how the general atmosphere during the

meeting was. It is beneficial to even add the evaluation discussion for the meeting agenda so the meeting could end by discussing in small groups about how the aims of the meeting were achieved and if the ground rules were followed or if they need to be changed. (Hellström et al. 2015, 168 – 169.)

Nokia Corporation is a great example of an organization that started using ground rules in 2012, which they called the “Golden rules”. It helped them during the chaotic times of the organization to find out what occasions worked in their work, and what needed to be improved. The board of directors in Nokia said that the management board needs to be challenged by keeping in mind that the board of directors is successful only when the management board is. So the basic rules of cooperative learning and positive interdependence were also seen in Nokia’s work. The rules make it possible to respect the principles that have been put on together. The rules change flexibly for different kinds of situations, and they can be suited based on what is necessary on the occasion. Nokia goes through the ground rules each year and they ask each other in the group, do they need to change some of them to suit better for current challenges and what have they learned from past year challenges. (Siilasmaa & Fredman 2018, 179 – 183.)

2.7 The author’s point of view and experiences about cooperative leadership

My own experiences from the use of cooperative learning started during my studies. I started to study the theory and used some of the methods when working with youngsters. Those experiences were so beneficial that I wanted to study the theory more and use cooperative learning as the theoretical framework in my bachelor’s degree. The feedback I got from using those methods led me to practice more after graduating. I used cooperative learning always when working with youngsters as a substitute teacher and cooperative leadership whenever I could in the consulting company where I worked. Due to many experiences with different kinds of working environments, I also reflected on the differences between these two theories and realized that cooperative learning suits better for the school world as it focuses more on learning. Cooperative leadership has the same theoretical background, but due to its focus on helping the leader, it

focuses more on how to build a great team. That is the reason why I decided to describe cooperative leadership later in this thesis instead of cooperative learning since this thesis focuses on how to improve the meeting atmosphere in a team.

I have worked on several RDI projects in Finland and abroad, and always used cooperative leadership methods. From my experiences, it builds a safe environment in any group, which makes group members trust each other and teach their skills to each other. When I was the main trainer in Wales and Spain, I was supposed to teach students the basics of how to pitch your business idea. I started all the lectures by asking the students to answer what kind of experiences they had about pitching, and then asked the students to pair up and choose together three aspects of a good pitch, which were shared along with the whole group and in the end discussed how to be used in their work. This was an example of using experiential learning that was described in Chapter 2.2. When the students learned to give their immediate response at the beginning of a lecture, they got to recognize their interest in what makes a good pitch. We did similar exercises in the Deus project pilot in Finland, where we asked several questions from the participants. Each participant thought about the topic first individually, then with a pair, and in the end discussed.

In the summer of 2019, I was chosen as the main trainer of a Startup Week in Petrozavodsk, where students from Finland and Russia made cross-border teams intending to build business ideas together in a team. The process started by getting familiar with the cooperative leadership principles between all the mentors of Startup Week. We got to know the backgrounds of each other and chose a common aim for the week, which made our **positive interdependence** evolve. When the mentors knew each other's skills, they contacted the students from each country and asked students their business ideas. After all the business ideas had been heard, the mentors chose six themes which were built based on students' business ideas. When the week started, this was told for the students and they joined the team, which was closest to their business idea. The students discussed their business ideas in teams, and chose roles for each other and an aim for their team that they wanted to learn during the Startup Week. This

exercise practiced the students' **face-to-face interaction**. During the week, Finnish and Russian mentors gave lectures for the teams and before each lecture, each team was given a ground rule to support **individual accountability**. The ground-rule was that anyone in the team would be ready to report on their team's progress and tell everyone in the room how their team's business idea would benefit from the lecture. This would require a small discussion at first in their teams on what they learned. The students were forced to participate by examples like this for the whole week, which taught them **social skills** during all the lectures. The week ended with **group processing**, where students and mentors at the same time reflected on what went well during the week, and how to proceed after the week. The mentors helped students by giving them a group contract (Figure 5.) to be filled, which gave insights on how to proceed with their teams.

Group contract

- What shall our team do after these days?

- What kind of knowledge does your team needs?

- Do you know any people who would join your team?

- How shall we keep contact? Which platform shall we use?

- Who is responsible for picking our group together? Other responsibilities, for whom?

- How shall we prepare for meetings, if we want to have them?

Your signatures:

Figure 5. Group contract template from Startup Week in Petrozavodsk

One of the best benefits of cooperative leadership is that it takes into account how to implement the ideas made during any action. For example, during the

Startup Week, each team made a “Group contract” (Figure 5.) with each other, where the students wrote down their responsibilities on how to proceed after the week is over. The making of a group contract is a part of maintaining positive interdependence and individual accountability within the team after Startup Week. The use of group contracts as a method relates to my interests in any workshops or meetings that we have in our organization. Too often, a workshop or a meeting ends so that the facilitator forgets to take care and reflect on how to proceed and implement the work that was brainstormed together. The research process explains how the people who participated in the research see this, and I will continue describing this topic at the end of this thesis while analyzing the results.

In the next chapter, I will start to describe the research process and describe how the respondents around the EU have experienced the virtual meetings they have been involved in. After the research process and the results from the respondents, I will reflect on the answers to the theoretical framework and reflect on how cooperative learning and leadership could work in virtual meetings.

3 METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The research approach in this thesis is both qualitative and action research since this research aims to help to understand and develop the culture behind virtual meetings. In this chapter, I describe the theory behind the qualitative research and action research to reflect and explain the research process. Finally, I will describe how I constructed the interview and the inquiry for the participants, and how I analyzed the results.

3.1 The research methodology

Qualitative research urges to describe a phenomenon or an event and understand a certain action, which can help later to give a theoretical assumption on any action. Since qualitative research focuses on quality, it is important to find relevant participants for the research. The amount of participants isn't as relative in qualitative research as in quantitative research which is why I made clear that each participant involved in this research needs to be interested in the topic of

this thesis. (Pitkäranta, 2014, 98.) The participants for this research were selected from each project manager's project stakeholder list. Each country in the project has its list of participants, which were informed about the thesis research.

According to Erickson (1986), qualitative research works especially when wanting to know about the following parts:

1. When interested in detailed structures of events instead of their natural character and dividing
2. When in certain structures of the individual actors involved in certain events are of interest.
3. If you want to study natural situations that cannot be organized experimentally or where the factors that affect them cannot be controlled, a case study is a good option.

Qualitative research focuses on the process more than the product, the whole environment instead of isolated individual variables or earlier researches and trying to prove them. (Syrjälä et al. 1994, 12 – 13.)

This research process can partly be seen as action research, where an unbiased treatment and interaction build change. The key factor is the experience that comes from employees, which in this thesis are the respondents who participate in the research process. One of the aims of action research is to develop practices based on research results received from studying the participants. One part of the action research is to encourage the participants of the research for development. In this thesis research, the entire interview, and the online inquiry respondents will be encouraged to share their views on how to develop virtual meeting culture. One essential phase of action research is the importance of reflecting. The idea in this thesis is to try to reflect all the time the practice and the theory and in the end to find new kinds of practices to be studied for further studies. (Heikkinen 2008, 17 – 57.)

An interview is a personal interview, where the interviewer asks the questions verbally and writes down the answers. In the research phase of this thesis, the hope was to get as many interviewees as possible since the interview gives so much more time and possibilities to get better answers, but due to challenging

schedule issues the rest of the participants answered for online inquiries. This made the research process a combination of inquiry, and an interview. The advantage of an interview is the flexibility of the occasion, which lets the interviewer repeat the question, fix misunderstandings, guide the interview during the interview, and build trust with the interviewee. The interviewer can also give the questions of the interview beforehand, which gives time for the interviewee to understand the idea of the occasion. These all require good planning and listening skills from the interviewer, but when accomplished the interview becomes successful. (Pitkäranta 2014, 91.)

In a theme-based interview such as in the research process as in this thesis, the conversation proceeds through the questions, which have been given earlier. The interview can highlight assumptions that the interviewee has gotten from the theme given, and the interviewer analyzes the assumptions and gives meaning for them comparing them with other answers. The theme-based can give the interviewer possibility to analyze the answers already during the interview. For example, if an interviewee talks about the cooperation of a team during a meeting, the interviewer who knows that cooperation is one of the core themes of the interview can go deeper into the interviewee's thoughts and ask more about the interviewee's thoughts on cooperation in meetings. (Pitkäranta 2014, 92-93.)

An inquiry instead is considered as a method, where the participants fill the questions either in a guided occasion or individually by themselves (Pitkäranta 2014, 91). When making inquiries for a research process and while editing them, the inquiry maker must be careful because the questions build a basis for successful research. The form of questions might cause failures for the research results if the person who is answering the inquiry doesn't think the same way as the maker of the research. The questions cannot be misleading. One challenge, when making the questions in this thesis is that it is difficult to measure the social impact during the virtual meetings. This requires the questions to be open so that the answerer can express his feelings clearly to help me analyze the results. It also needs to be acknowledged that since the inquiry is done online. That means that online inquiry needs to be done easy to use. The instructions need to be

clear so that people of any age understand how the inquiry works. When the instructions are clear, the answerer understands that his answers and opinions are important, and might give the answerer more time to use for the inquiry. (Valli 2018.)

3.2 The research process

The research process concluded several phases. It started by contacting project managers from five countries that promised to be involved in the project. The countries that participated in the research process were Finland, Italy, Malta, Slovakia, and Wales. I explained the thesis idea for the country project managers and asked them for a possibility to contact at least two interviewees to be interviewed for the research. When the right interviewees were found, the project manager gave my contact details for the participants to set up a date for the interview. Each participant contacted me and we scheduled the interview to be done through Microsoft Teams or Zoom calls, which were chosen based on what the interviewee found more suitable. It was not possible for some of the respondents to be interviewed, which made me change the original research process plan. If some of the respondents were busy with their schedules, they could do an online inquiry instead of participating in the interview. The online inquiry was done by using a service called Webropol, where the questions were the same as with the interview.

The research process started in September 2020, and I did my first interview on 21 September 2020. I continued with three other interviews at the end of September and sent the online inquiries on 13 October 2020 to the rest of the respondents. Since the number of answers from some of the countries was so small, I decided not to compare the results by country. I didn't ask about any personal information either, which is why I decided only to be focusing on the virtual meeting theme in these results. All the respondents got an email from me after they responded that they would receive the results of the thesis, which will be sent for them. The respondents for this research process were chosen based on their background in working with creative industries and experience in the business world. One of the main aims of the Deus project work is to build new

learning approaches for creative industry entrepreneurs so it was easy to find the respondents with the project managers from the Deus project countries. The best scenario was to find respondents that had experience both in working as a leader and as a participant in a meeting. Lastly, the aim was to reach respondents who had the interest to discuss their experiences in virtual meetings and a will to develop the virtual meeting culture.

When the interview started, I asked for permission to record the interview to analyze the data better afterward. I continued by getting to know each other with the interviewee discussing about our backgrounds while at the same time trying to build a safe space for discussion. After the pre-chat, I introduced the idea of the research, and started the interview. I aimed to use cooperative leadership methods during the interview by asking each interviewee to find a solution without helping or guiding them too much. I didn't give any answers straight, but instead used open questions that helped the interviewee to think carefully to find the right answer. Using open questions gave a lot of interesting data especially from the interviews. The interviews lasted a maximum for an hour. The data from each interview was analyzed by listening each recordings and typing down the most important parts. Since the main aim of this thesis was to study what to develop in virtual meetings, this meant that all the meeting parts that needed developing were written down. After all the development parts were found, they were divided into themes to be compared to the results that were to come from the online inquiries. The results from the interviews and online inquiries were combined into four themes that are described in the next chapter.

Since cooperative learning and leadership is the theoretical framework, the questions for the interview and the online inquiry were built based on the five principles of cooperative leadership. All the participants would answer the questions and give further comments on how they would develop meetings themselves. The first question was an open question for the participants to express their general feelings from online meetings. After that, the questions were asked one by one and the participants could grade their feelings from 1 to 5. I aimed to guide the discussion and change questions during the interview so

that it would be easier for the interviewees to answer. That is why I started by asking the interviewees to answer from 1 to 5 and after that ask the interviewee to go deeper and answer why they chose that number and so on. Since the core of this thesis is to find out what things need to be developed in the virtual meetings, I decided to ask more questions from the answers that needed developing from the interviewee's point of view. The final question with each theme concluded a question about what could be developed with this theme according to the answerer.

All the questions are based on cooperative leadership pedagogy, and they are modified from a company Asko Leppilampi Oy. The theory is based on David W. Johnson & Roger T. Johnson's research about cooperative learning (1989). I used the theory I found to come up with the questions but also thought about what kind of questions are beneficial when doing research about the effectiveness and cooperation during virtual meetings. For example, one of the five principles in cooperative leadership is face-to-face interaction, which can't happen in a virtual meeting since we don't see each other fully virtually. That is why I changed some of the questions to be more related to a virtual meeting. Finally, all the questions were related to the five principles in cooperative learning and leadership.

The Appendix 1 in the end of the thesis shows a screenshot describing the online inquiry that was made by Webropol. It shows the information for the respondent about the online inquiry and includes two first general questions for wider answers and a question related to cooperative leadership principle "Positive interdependence". The same questions were used in the interviews. All the questions that were used in the interview and the online inquiry can be seen in Appendix 2.

4 RESULTS FROM THE INTERVIEWS AND INQUIRIES

In this chapter, I will reveal the results of the interviews and online inquiries. I will describe the research findings first and then analyze them to see what needs to be developed in virtual meetings. After analyzing, I will reflect on how cooperative

leadership could be used to tackle the issues that need development.

Cooperative leadership works only when the five principles of the pedagogy are taking into account. I will describe solutions to the parts that need developing uniting them with all the principles and after that give an example of a guideline for a cooperative virtual meeting. At the end of this chapter, I will reflect on the reliability and validation themes for the whole research process.

4.1 Research findings

The answers from the research process changed a lot. Based on the answers, most of the participants were fairly happy with virtual meetings, but there is still a lot to improve. I analyzed the results and divided the answers into four themes, which can be seen with quotes in Table 2:

- Getting to know each other
- Improving presence in the meeting
- Reflection and group processing
- The meeting leader needs to be on track and tell the meaning of the meeting

The people who participated for the interviews and filled the questionnaires gave many interesting insights based on these four themes. In Table 2 are some notable quotes from the respondents, which I will first analyze, and after that reflect how the pedagogy of cooperative learning and leadership could help to develop them during virtual meetings. I will also attach graphs from the online inquiries to support the reflection. The graphs are summaries from the online inquiries made by Webropol. Every participant could answer for each question and statement by rating their answer from the number 1, which meant they didn't agree with the question to number 5 that meant they agreed. The Webropol software made possible for the participant to set their cursor and their result beneath numbers 3 and 4. This means that in the figures mentioned in the next chapters the results described in decimal numbers such as 1,4 means that the Webropol software calculated that position as the place where the participant left their cursor. The number of participants in the interview research was four respondents and the online inquiry had seven respondents.

Table 2. Four main themes from the research results with quotes from respondents

Getting to know each other	Improving presence in the meeting
<p>“This is the biggest difference that we can’t observe each other all the time.”</p> <p>“There are a number of "social moments" in a meeting in presence that are normally used to build relationships and know other people more. This is missing in virtual meetings.”</p>	<p>“Very difficult to stay focused or to understand if people are 100% in the conversation. High risk to have people doing other actions”</p> <p>“I’m more tired during a virtual meeting. My attention is much better during the normal meeting.”</p>
Reflection and group processing	The role of the leader
<p>“I sometimes wonder how much we would have improved, if we would have started to reflect our virtual meeting progress since the beginning of lockdown.”</p>	<p>“The effectivity of the meeting depends on the facilitator”</p> <p>“The manager is responsible of building a safe environment”</p>

4.1.1 Getting to know each other

This was the part, which most of the participants in all countries agreed on. In meetings where the group already knows each other, the discussion might occur clear but if the group is filled with people who don’t know each other, it is more challenging to build a conversation from just asking opinions. One teacher mentioned that virtual meetings work when having a small keynote or a lecture to teach something, but when it comes to discussing or networking, things can turn difficult.

Almost every respondent talked about technical issues. When the meeting participants don’t have their cameras on and the mic is switched off, it makes it difficult to talk when some might feel they are interrupting others who might be

speaking at the same time. Some respondents required a need for better planning to fix the technical issues.

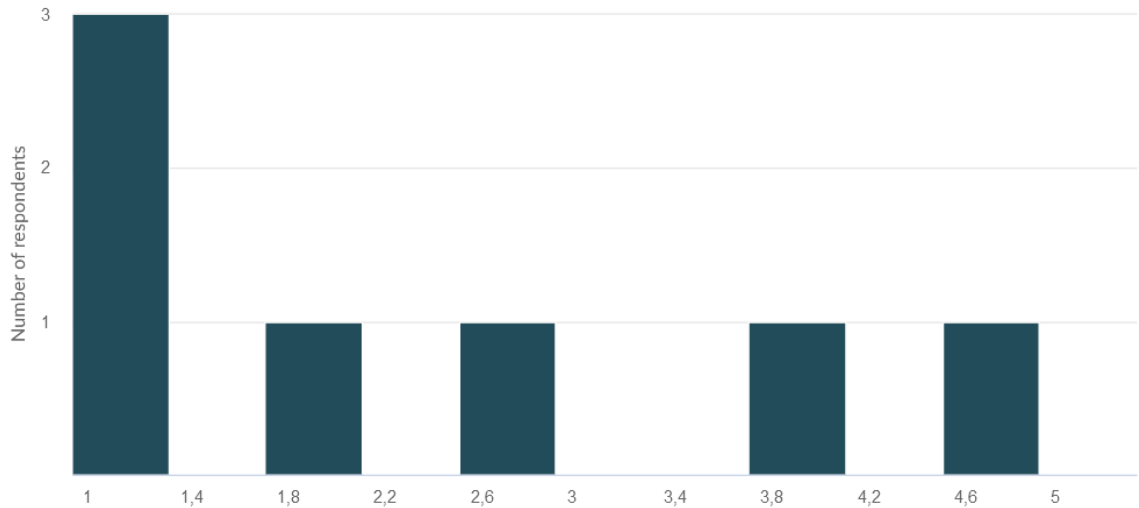


Figure 6. Results from the online inquiry. Question: “During a virtual meeting, do you get to learn to know each other?”

Figure 7 shows the results of the online inquiry and describes how most of the respondents felt getting to know each other during a virtual meeting was difficult. The number 1 represented that they didn’t agree with the claim “During a virtual meeting, do you get to learn to know each other”. One respondent pointed out well that getting to know each other could be more structured. The respondent described more clearly how too many times when the meeting starts with unknown people they are given some time just to introduce themselves. Some people speak more than others and some less, and often the people who speak more might steal time from others telling too much of themselves. This part could be balanced better so that each person could speak as much as others.

“People get to know each other only, when the facilitator let’s everyone to have their say.”

Some of the respondents reflected on the diversity between the meeting participants. Dominant voices can become an issue, which makes it important to include everyone to speak. One respondent shared his thoughts and mentioned that when the participants have had their say, the leader can’t judge the ideas

given in the meeting based on who said it but instead include everyone to give feedback to each other.

4.1.2 Presence during a meeting

If the camera is switched off during a meeting the effect of a social interaction decreases. This is something that almost every participant described in their views. According to some of the answers, this brings distrust towards their colleagues when not knowing what they are doing.

“If the camera isn’t on, the person can do anything he wants”

For some people, this affects their focus, when they don’t know if everyone is 100% involved in the meeting as they don’t see each other. There is a high risk that participants lose lots of important information if they are not present enough during meetings. Figure 8 shows the change between the respondents answers for the question. Here again, the number 1 meant that the respondents do not agree that each participant was present during a meeting and the number 5 agreed.

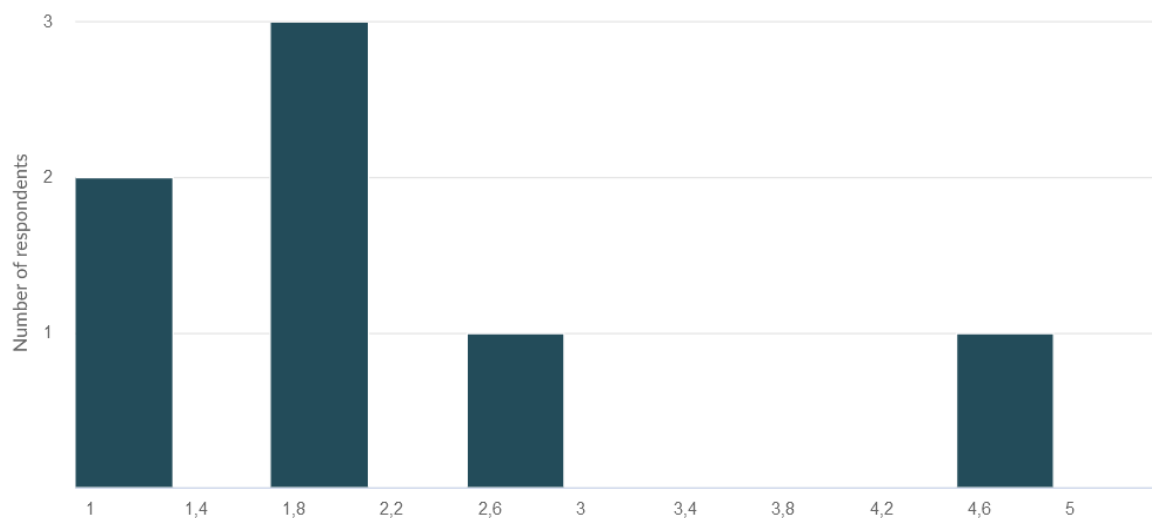


Figure 7. (Results from the online inquiry.) Question: “During a virtual meeting, each participant is 100% present in the conversation?”

Some participants even mentioned that the virtual meeting requires more energy and focus since people during virtual meetings tend to do multitasking more and can pick up phone calls and just mute the mic. An interesting attention with this topic was that some participants felt that all the people in the meeting were present the whole time. This opinion came from more experienced employees as the respondents who represented younger generations felt a need to develop the presence in virtual meetings. One interview discussion made the interviewee develop ideas for further research. One question of the research could be to study what kinds of meetings made people feel involved and what kinds of meetings not.

4.1.3 Leader

One point that everyone agreed on was that the progress of the meeting is based on how the facilitator or the leader of the meeting manages. There are many things to consider when leading a meeting or even a workshop according to the respondents. These include the technical issues, the rhythm and structure, and in the end the meaning of the meeting. One participant mentioned that he needs to understand the value of his presence. If the value is understood, it is much easier to participate in the discussion and help others. If the target of the organizer of the meeting is unclear, it is hard to get everyone involved in the meeting.

“What the organizers want to achieve? Then I can be more focused and think more and be more helpful for them. “

Lastly, almost everyone agreed that getting people involved is important. The speaking turns should be divided clearly. When someone is asked a question, he or she might direct the conversation easily in the wrong direction if not interrupted early or if the meeting doesn't have ground rules for speaking turns. Time is valuable for everyone in meetings so it is important to focus on the topic and not have time-consuming discussions where people are not present.

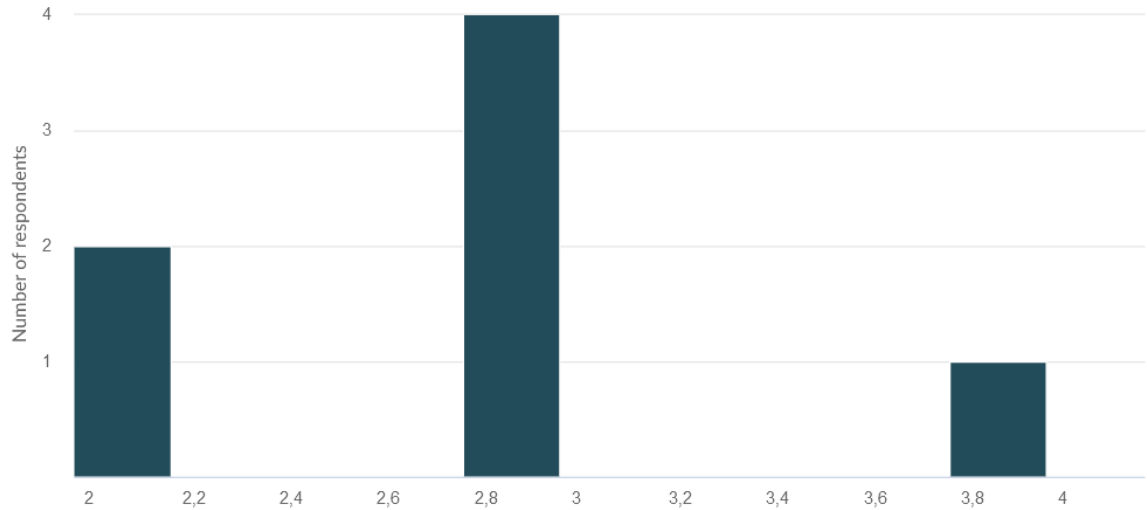


Figure 8. (Results from the online inquiry.) Question: “During a virtual meeting, the meeting is led well?”

Figure 9 shows that based on the inquiries, the meetings are not usually led well. One respondent gave a development idea that the leader of the meeting could answer this problem by asking each meeting participant to give only one answer at a time. The respondent continued by describing how the leader could also direct conversation if it goes out of the topic by asking people to discuss the topic in another meeting after the current if the topic doesn’t involve everyone in the meeting.

One respondent mentioned that the meeting organizer needs to tell the meeting structure even more clearly than in a normal meeting. The respondent told how it can be difficult to understand the purpose of belonging to the meeting, if not knowing the reason for being there. If the respondent would have known the reason, it would have been easier to participate in the discussion and share his experiences.

“I enjoyed Deus workshop, but I didn’t know if we reached the goals of the organizers.”

4.1.4 Reflection

Some of the respondents mentioned the importance of group processing and reflecting during meetings. The reflection discussion was more informative in the interview part of the research since it allowed me as an interviewer to ask further questions from the topic at hand. In some of the interviews, reflecting the progress of the team was mentioned to help to build a better structure for the meetings by asking the meeting participants if they felt involved in the discussion, and what could be improved. One respondent described the importance of reflecting, and mentioned:

“We would have gotten so much more feedback, if we had already started asking for feedback / reflection since the beginning of covid-19 and seen where we progressed.”

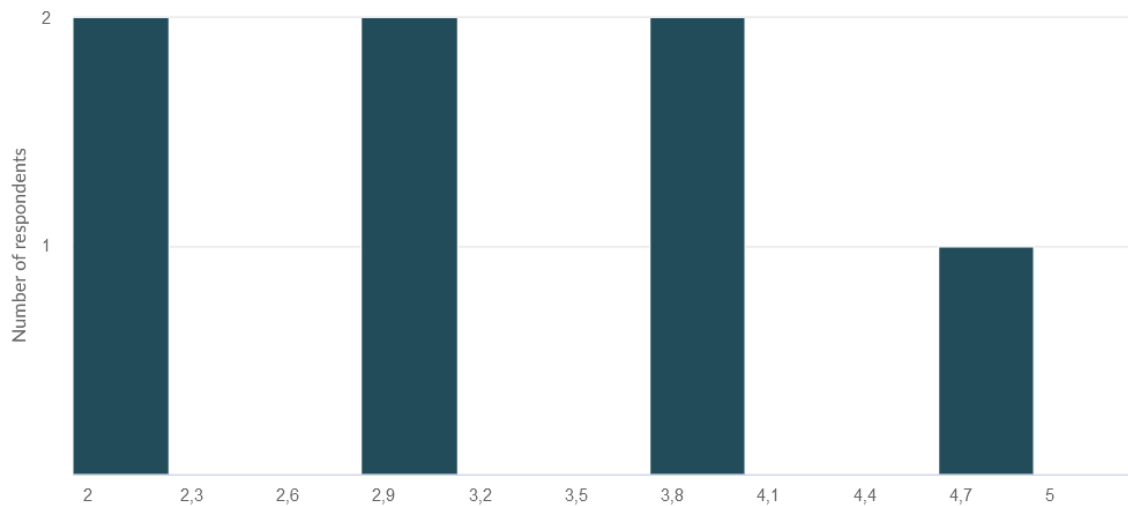


Figure 9. (Results from the online inquiry.) Question: “During a virtual meeting, the participants have a chance to give feedback?”

These discussions during the interviews led me to think afterward that I would have needed a clearer question related to reflecting. Figure 10 shows the respondents answers to the question “During a virtual meeting, the participants have a chance to give feedback?” The respondents had different reactions to this question and one of the themes that came up was that the meeting participants could give their feedback in the chat during a virtual talk. If reflecting aloud was

difficult for some people, it could be done in the chat room of the software that is in use. This idea had an opposite perspective when some of the respondents didn't feel secure due to many quiet parts in the virtual meeting. According to them, it might affect social interaction and reflecting, when people have their microphones off. One respondent mentioned how in those kinds of situations, other people might be waiting for someone else to open their mics.

"I fear often that I'm talking over someone."

Almost all of the respondents in the interviews mentioned how during the lockdown the level of virtual meetings has gone up in each country. Even though, more constructive group processing or reflecting could be done during meetings to help the team to learn and develop. Many respondents mentioned that if there's time at the end of the meeting, reflecting the progress could help to get every opinion heard.

4.2 Virtual meeting with a cooperative leader

In this chapter, I will go through how to develop a virtual meeting to be more effective and cooperative based on the results from the four themes described in the earlier chapter. I will reflect and analyze the results based on five principles of cooperative leadership and the theoretical framework, which was described at the beginning of this thesis. After analyzing, I will explain a modified task list on what a cooperative leader could consider when making a virtual meeting using cooperative leadership methods.

4.2.1 Five principles of cooperative leadership and the theoretical framework in a virtual meeting

Positive interdependence

Almost every respondent mentioned something about how virtual meetings lack the possibility of getting to learn about each other. The facilitator and the meeting leader is the responsible one who makes sure that everyone in the team has had their say. As mentioned in the theoretical framework part, the success of the

whole team relates to the success of every member in the team. When the team realizes this, they understand their importance to each other. A cooperative leader could make a ground rule with the team to make this part work. One ground rule could be that everyone is ready to report on their teams progress by giving only one answer at time. This ground rule would make sure that every member in the team respects each other and agrees to give time to the next speaker.

A cooperative leader should make sure with every team member that they are having a common goal with their team. The leader should motivate team members always to share their background and experience related to a discussed theme. When everyone in the team would use time to share their history from the past, it would help networking and getting to know new people which was a problem according to many of the research participants. This could help the team to know each other's personalities and skills more, and further on become interconnected on each other. If the getting to know each other part is done well, it gives a great boost for the team members trust between each other.

Face-to-face interaction

Many respondents mentioned how the difficulty with virtual meetings is that people cannot observe each other fully during the meeting. According to the research results, this made people feel unaware on what the other team member is doing. In this occasion, a cooperative leader could make a ground rules for everyone to have their cameras open. This ground rule would make sure that everyone sees each other all the time, people are more focused and no one loses important information. One problem here might be though, that the internet connection starts to suffer if the meeting has over 30 people and everyone has their camera's on. If the meeting has that many people, it could be solved with a ground rule that only when a person is speaking, he or she puts the camera and mic on.

By supporting this kind of meeting culture, a cooperative leader makes sure that everyone at least sees a part of each other to help the interaction, and noticing

face postures of each other. A cooperative leader is the one who promotes interactions, and can start a meeting by being the first one to put the camera on. Having the camera on helps the team member during a meeting to give feedback that is more constructive when they see each other during a conversation.

Individual accountability

Based on the answers from the respondents this part requires a lot of focus. This would require the team to agree on another ground rule. This ground rule would be that everyone would be ready to report on their team's progress at any time. This occasion could happen for example, when the meeting team members are divided into smaller groups, and the meeting leader agrees with everyone to report on their progress at any time. When every team member knows that their input is valuable for the whole team, the team members are more motivated and more focused to work. This prevents multitasking that was described in the research results and can even prevent people being tired during the meeting when everyone has an important input.

If the teams are divided into smaller groups during a meeting, it is crucial that the leader gives as clear instructions as possible. The instructions need to be made visible so that each team member understands them and everyone in the team can view them in their small groups if they feel it necessary. When the small group discussions are over, every team member is ready to report their progress and the leader can ask randomly for any team member to report what their team discussed in the small group. This kind of ground rule motivates team members to follow their progress the whole time.

Another issue was to discover from the research results was, how to get the full one hundred percent attention from everyone during the meeting. Since there's a big risk for missing participants to do other actions, a cooperative leader could build a culture in the team, where every team member is responsible to report on their team's progress or in some cases tell everyone if something is wrong. For example, if someone is concerned that other team members are not following the meeting the person could speak aloud, and ask how to get more attention

towards the meeting. This needs to be done in a respectful way without offending other team members.

Social skills

The respondents mentioned how the impact of social meetings and coffee gatherings is missing. I mentioned already in the theory section (Chapter 2.1) the importance of the “Breakout Room” – option with softwares like Adobe Connect and Zoom. A cooperative leader uses the “Breakout Room” option to divide team members into smaller rooms to get them to discuss with each other to decide for example 3 ideas on how to build new social gatherings to be done virtually. After the discussions are over people share their ideas with each other to decide, and vote on what kind of new social gatherings could be done.

How this happens technically is that the leader of the meeting is the one who decides, if to divide the teams already before or during the meeting. If the meeting leader wants to share the team members beforehand, the leader can open a “Breakout Room” – option, when using Adobe Connect, Zoom, or Microsoft Teams, and add the team members into the rooms, he wants them to go. The other option is to divide the team members into random teams during a meeting. In that case, the software divides all the teams evenly, and the meeting leader can decide how many members he wants to have in each team, and finally, the dividing happens based on that choice. An example of a use of breakout rooms is described in Figure 11.

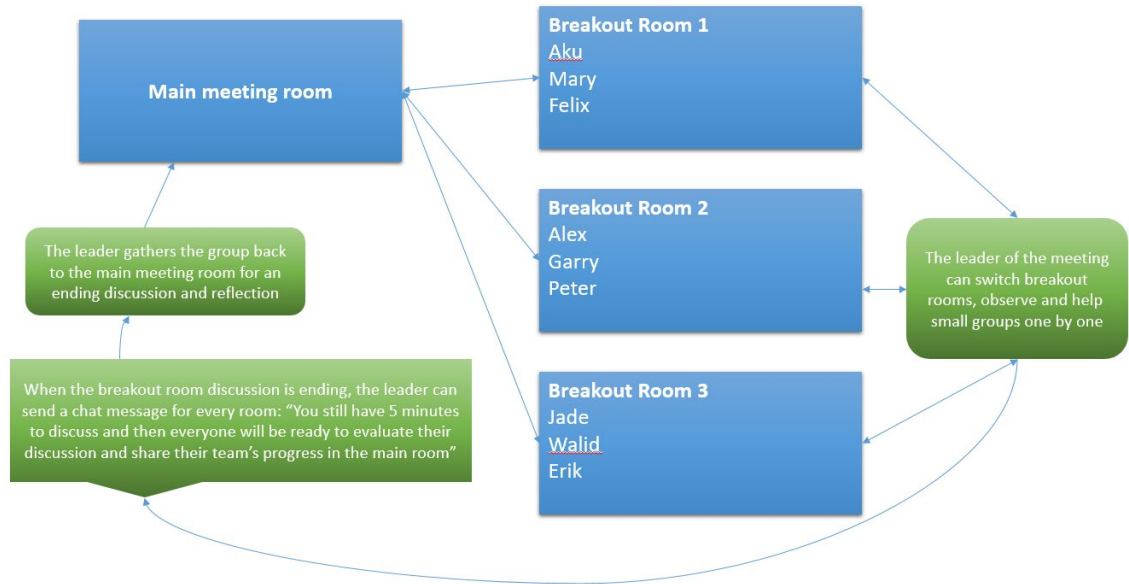


Figure 10. The leader of the meeting observing the breakout rooms

This method might require a couple of exercises before it works well. It is useful to explain to team members that they will be moved into smaller rooms, where they will have the exact same options as in a normal virtual meeting, but they will just stay there with a smaller group. The transfer from the main meeting to a breakout room usually takes a couple of seconds and then the breakout room session can start. The leader of the meeting can go, and observe anytime he or she likes and switch to the next team by just pressing a button. When the leader wants to send a message to the teams, he can send easily messages to everyone, and the team members can also send messages for the leader to ask for help for example. The leader can send a message for example mentioning that: "You still have 5 minutes to discuss and then everyone will be ready to evaluate their discussion and share their team's progress in the main room". When every team is back in the main room, the leader can ask every first person from each team he sees on the chat to answer what the team discussed in the breakout room and reflect on how the meeting went.

Using smaller room discussions can motivate team members to share their feelings either they are extroverts or introverts. When a cooperative leader uses the ground rule that asks for any team member to report on their team's progress

at any point motivates everyone in the team to stay present during the whole meeting since they understand their input relates to the whole teams input.

Group processing

Some of the respondents mentioned how the reflection at the end of meetings could help improve the meeting. Since virtual meetings have come up as a new normal for everyone, this could require more work and could help build even better virtual meetings. A cooperative leader ends all the meetings for a quick reflection to discuss how the meeting went. The research results expressed how some of the participants in meetings might feel uncomfortable for reflecting aloud, using chat for reflecting can be a good way to practice if the time for reflecting is limited. Even though the best way to raise trust between the team is to get everyone speak aloud. The leader of the meeting is responsible for building a safe environment where team members feel their opinions are valuable. When one of the respondents mentioned how the quietness during the meetings can be disturbing, a cooperative leader tackles this problem by participating the team members one by one.

As mentioned earlier, a good ground rule is to make sure that everyone is ready to report on their team's progress. The leader asks at first randomly every team member to answer. When the team knows that the meeting leader is responsible for participating them, they don't need to be afraid of talking over someone else. Each meeting is good to end with a small discussion on what worked on today's meeting and what could be improved the next time. This kind of behavior makes every team member feel that they have been heard and their opinions are respected.

4.2.2 Leader as an example

In the end, as almost all of the respondents for the interview and the inquiry mentioned, the leader is the one who is responsible to start the development of a meeting culture. The leader also has an important role in making any team to work cooperatively. He or she needs to lead tightly by example at first, and make

sure everyone has understood their roles and duties. Some respondents mentioned in the research results how they need to understand why a meeting is held. As the respondents expressed, the leader of the meeting is the one who shares the aims of the meeting in the beginning and makes sure everyone understands, why they are in the meeting. This makes every team member understand their purpose and helps them to participate for the meeting.

The leader is also the one who makes all the plans before the meeting to make sure all the tech related issues work. Almost every respondent remembered some issues that were related to technical problems. A cooperative leader makes sure every technical issue works and participates the team to help with the parts where he or she doesn't have the answer.

When the leader sees that the team is starting to work by helping one another, he can start to participate the team members, give responsibility step-by-step and make his role smaller. During a virtual meeting, when the leader has divided the team into working in breakout rooms in smaller groups, the leader's role is to observe each small group one by one, and intervene only, if a problem occurs. One thing which is crucial to remember especially during the virtual meetings, is to give very clear instructions to every member of the team. If someone is speaking too much, the leader could remind to give more room to others and ask to discuss about the topic in another meeting. Lastly, the leader's role is also important since he or she is the one who teaches the team how to work in the meeting, and how to build the structures. When the meeting is ending, the leader makes sure together with the team what happens in the next meeting. He shares the responsibilities for every team member so that everyone knows how to continue and what is expected from them. The next chapter gives an example of a guideline for any team leader to hold a cooperative meeting.

4.3 A guideline example for a virtual cooperative meeting

The four different themes that were represented earlier were used as an influence to plan a guideline for a virtual cooperative meeting. This guideline part answers for the second research question of the thesis, which was to discover

how cooperative leadership works as a possible pedagogical model for better virtual meetings. The following guideline combines the total theoretical framework of this thesis and the results from the research. All the parts that need developing in virtual meetings according to research results have been notified in the guideline below. The guideline example has also been modified from Asko Leppilampi (2020) which uses a similar guideline that makes sure that the five principles of cooperative leadership will be used. Many examples given during this thesis have been modified from the cooperative leadership theory. The following guideline with its instructions is also modified since it isn't beneficial to transfer an exact method from an organization to another. This guideline can be modified by using it the exact same way from the beginning or just to take parts of the guideline into use in a meeting.

Before the meeting

1. Preparing for the virtual meeting
 - a. Add team members into the meeting software your team is using
 - b. Give a pre-assignment for each team member to introduce themselves in the online channel
 - c. Send the pre-assignment and an agenda for the meeting and add it to the files section of the software you are using, at least two days before the meeting
2. Setting up the virtual meeting environment
 - a. Make sure that all the technical stuff is working and the instructions are clear to be sent for each team member
 - b. Remember to mention in the instructions that each team member should use a webcam during the meeting
 - c. Build a contingency plan if there are problems with the technique or the internet connection
3. Choosing the aim for the meeting
 - a. The aim can be for example to
 - i. Ideate together how virtual meetings could be more effective or more cooperative or to

- ii. Get to know each other

Pre-chat and notification matters

4. Pre-chat (5-10 min)
 - a. You can use some time to discuss non-work-related things
5. Setting up aims (10 min)
 - a. Go through the agenda with the team, which can be found in the files section
6. Ask from the team if there's something to add to the agenda
 - a. Do this by dividing the team into breakout rooms, where team members can discuss in pairs
7. Go through the answers from pairs and write down the thoughts that pairs added for the agenda, which can be shared for everyone to see
8. Choose together a chairman, a secretary and two technicians
 - a. The chairman opens up the meeting, hosts and instructs the use of the web platform, takes care of the schedule, and helps with questions and answers
 - b. The secretary writes down agreed things for the meeting notes, which can be seen and edited by all the team members
 - c. Technician #1 records the meeting, takes care of dividing the groups into breakout rooms, and guides the use of other online platforms if necessary
 - d. Technician #2 takes care of the chat, answers the questions, and helps the chairman
9. Make sure with everyone the length of the meeting (at most 1 h 30 min)
 - a. You can end the meeting even before
10. Show the ground rules on the screen
 - a. The mic should be on only when you are speaking
 - b. Everyone is ready to report on their team's progress at any time
 - c. The permission to speak can be asked in the chat or by raising your hand

- d. Make sure that everyone gets to speak in breakout rooms and everyone will have their voice heard
- e. Make sure that everyone is constructively critical and everyone stays on the topic during the conversation
- f. Make sure that each speaker can only speak 5 minutes at a time
- g. Tell that at the end of the meeting you all will reflect on how the meeting went and decide the next meeting's themes, roles, and responsibilities

Matters to be decided and discussion about the matters

1. Go through the decision list and give time for groups or pairs to discuss in breakout rooms so that everyone's opinions will be heard
 - a. Pairs or groups write down their thoughts on a platform, which has been chosen together for everyone to see
2. When the breakout room discussion is done the chairman draws the person who will report their team's discussions for everyone
 - a. The chairman can for example decide every second from the name list to answer
 - b. In the next round, every first in the name list of the team can answer
 - i. The main idea is to get everyone to answer and participate
3. When everyone has had their say, the team can have a general discussion, where people can constructively take side on each group's opinions.
4. A mutual decision will be made after everyone has been heard. The decision will be written down on the notes board.
5. Remember to say that the decided matters will be possible to read right after the meeting on the platform channel

Group processing part – 5 minutes:

1. Discussion on how the virtual working felt like? What did you notice about yourself and others?
2. Discussion in groups, how effective the meeting was? Why?

3. Discussion, did everyone participate? Why not? What could be done differently the next time
4. Evaluating how the ground rules were followed.
5. Discussion on the ground rules for the next meeting. Also agreement on what material to get familiar with before the next meeting.

Planning the next meeting

(5 minutes)

The following things have been decided:

The time for the next meeting:

The chairman for the next meeting:

The secretary for the next meeting:

In the next meeting following matters will be discussed:

1.

Responsible for its preparation:

2.

Responsible for its preparation:

4.4 My own liability reflections

The research process felt occasionally difficult, since it was hard to reach people and get time for the interview. I first needed to contact the project manager of the country, explain the master's thesis idea, and then get permission for the interview. This process took lots of time since some of the project managers were busier than others. Luckily, I got to interview 4 people from the Deus stakeholder group. I had talked to two of them, and the other two were unfamiliar to me that made it possible to have an impartial interview. One way to support the reliability of the thesis was to find new theories and research studies as possible. This became difficult since cooperative leadership hasn't been researched as much in the past years. That was one reason why I chose to use many classic studies about cooperative learning and the experiences from Asko Leppilampi Company.

At the beginning of the interview, I mentioned to each interviewee that I work in the Deus project and the answers from this interview would be used within the project, but I would also focus on developing virtual meetings in general keeping in mind that anyone in the working life could benefit from the results of this research process. I also told each interviewee that their names or nationalities won't be used in the results section of the master's thesis so their identity can't be solved from the text. When the interview started, I started asking open questions like: "How do you feel about the virtual meetings?" and "How effective do you see virtual meetings?" The reason why I chose open questions is that it gives permission for the interviewees to give as wide answers as possible. They don't need to agree or disagree the beginning but let their own experiences tell the truth. Each question I used was as open as possible and I didn't interrupt the interviewees at any point to let them have their say.

One interviewee reminded me that I didn't give clear enough aims from the interview. This happened at the same time as the interviewee was remembering his own experiences of meetings where he didn't understand the aim of the meeting. This was a good reminder for me. I realize that even though this meeting was an interview with only two people, the same rules apply here as in cooperative meetings. If the participant understands the purpose of the meeting, he can bring much more value for the outcome.

My original hope was to get two interviewees from each country involved in the project, but unfortunately, that didn't happen. One problem for reaching interviewees might have been the amount of time that the interview takes and the other might be that the people working in the creative industries field are busy during the Covid-19 pandemic times. I was too optimistic with the length of the interview's when each of them lasted one hour. This made me also realize that online inquiries might have been an easier solution to gather results sooner. One other reason for the low amount of interviews might have been that people didn't see the topic relevant to them or didn't want their opinions to be documented. Since I didn't get enough respondents, I talked with the project managers from some of the countries involved. After talking, I decided to contact more people by

sending them an online inquiry, which consisted of the same questions that I asked in the interviews. I got seven people to answer the inquiries online, which also wasn't as many as I hoped but it gave more important research data. The difficult part was that I didn't have the email list for all the stakeholders, which made me contact each project manager separately at first to ask them to share the inquiry.

One disappointment was also that, most of the answers were surprisingly predictable, which was a slight disappointment for me. I guessed that some of the answers might involve building trust in a meeting, the role of the leader, and the presence of the people in the meeting. Still, the answer I got, offered smaller themes that relate to building trust in a team and gave new themes where to focus on this thesis. Even though the main aim of this master's thesis was to study the effectiveness and cooperation building in a meeting so the main value comes from the points of how co-operational learning can support the themes that don't work in a virtual meeting according to interviewees. The replies I got from the interviewees and inquiries will be used when implementing new learning pedagogies in the Deus project. According to the projects management, they can also be used in the virtual meetings of the Deus project.

Discovering validity and reliability is used to study the research credibility. Validity expresses research results and reflects the real state of the chosen matter. This was made sure in the thesis by choosing the right kind of professionals for the research, who have a real interest in developing virtual meeting culture. Reliability instead, discovers the permanence of the thesis results. The permanence part is difficult to reflect with this research since one main aim of this thesis is to study how to develop a meeting culture and developing means that something is changing instead of staying permanent. (Heikkinen & Syrjälä 2008, 148.)

The researcher needs to be critical of his own work. Being critical requires skills to divide complex occasions into smaller parts, and analyze them. Based on the analysis the idea is to form new kinds of concepts which form new synthesizes.

Then a critical researcher recognizes similarities and contradictions between the syntheses that has been built. A critical researcher also does empirical perceptions and claims, and builds new claims that construct new kinds of knowledge to be used in the next research process. I hope that this thesis excites people interested in developing and testing virtual meetings to even larger research processes. According to Puolimatka (1995), these acquirements make it possible to control the environment and people with careful planning and rationally estimating the process. They also make it possible to develop existing culture (Erkkilä 2013, 161.)

My own reflections from the methods which to use in meetings come from my experience as a student while studying for a bachelor's degree and master's degree. My working experience is still quite limited since I have worked for five years, but I consider because of my limited experience, I get to see the meetings differently than older generations. Each generation has learned their own ways of working and spending time in meetings and I belong to a generation, which has worked with computers, played games online, and talked with peers online. I consider that these experiences have brought my generation and me to experience working life and virtual meetings differently. I have learned during my studies and working with my student peers how many different time consumers we have when we are online, so it's very easy to get distracted during virtual meetings. When I have developed during my working time, and started using cooperative learning more in my work, I have noticed its pedagogical benefits to get everyone's attention to being present. What has surprised me is how well it has worked in virtual meetings and workshops. Especially the use of breakout rooms in applications like Adobe Connect and Zoom helps to use smaller group meetings that helps to motivate the team members to work side by side, and let everyone's opinions be heard.

In the beginning of the research process, before during the interviews I thought that the focus of this thesis is more in the effectiveness of the meeting, but based on the answers given, it turned out that the cooperation and the unity are the basis of everything. Some of the participants agreed that effectivity is seen after

the team starts working cooperatively. I have used cooperative learning as the theoretical framework since the beginning, but after reading results from the interviews and questionnaires, I noticed that there really is a need for cooperative leadership, and a cooperative meeting model. When the five principles of cooperative leadership are used in a virtual meeting, it supports the cohesion inside a team and builds a base for the future success of the team.

5 CONCLUSIONS

The main aim of this thesis was to study how to develop virtual meetings to be more cooperative and effective. In this chapter, I will reflect on how this aim was achieved. This chapter will also reveal answers to the research questions mentioned at the beginning of the thesis. The research questions were:

*“What are the parts that need to be developed in a virtual meeting?” and
“How does cooperative leadership work as a possible pedagogical model for better virtual meetings?”*

At the end of this chapter, I will go through how and where to implement the results of this thesis. I will also give five examples on what kind of research could be made based on the results of this thesis.

The research process managed to find out many similarities between the respondents opinions about the cooperation and effectiveness in virtual meetings. As was mentioned in the end of the previous chapter, the respondents talked more about the impact of cooperation than the effectiveness. To summarize these two topics, the effectivity can grow when the experiences and skills of each team member can be taken into use. When this has happened, it guarantees that the team gets motivated and is committed to develop when they realize the benefits of their work. After realizing the benefits of their work, the team members feels they are heard and begin to influence in their work more. This opens up possibilities for continuous developing and meetings come better each day. In the end, the meeting becomes effective, when each five principles of cooperative leadership are used during the meeting.

As written in the results chapter of this thesis, four different themes rose as examples to be developed according to respondents. The four themes that were introduced answered for the first research question that was to discover what parts need to be developed in a virtual meeting. The themes that were found can be seen in both virtual meetings, and normal face-to-face meetings that makes the results with the development ideas easy to implement for both meeting models. Even the participants of the research compared their experiences from normal meetings to virtual meetings. The second research question was answered in Chapter 4.3, which represented a virtual meeting guideline for a cooperative leader. That was the outcome of this thesis, which could be a case study for new research. The guideline is a concrete example that brings value for the Deus project immediately since the instructions of the guideline are clear and any meeting leader can use the whole guideline or just parts from it. One idea could also be to reflect the whole research process with the questions and results with a group of educators who understand the cooperative leadership theory. The educators could reflect cooperatively how the research process could be developed further so that more people would participate the research, and the results would be used in a more diverse way. I will describe five more concrete ideas next that could be more easy to produce.

5.1 Five ideas for a next research

The first idea for the next research could be to research the differences between generations. I could notice from analyzing the results that some of the respondents were younger based on the text they wrote. The respondents gave different kinds of feedback based on their feelings about the virtual meetings. They felt the virtual meeting wasn't as effective as others thought. The more experienced participants gave better grades in online inquiries and didn't give as many development ideas. It could be interesting to study this topic more and find out how to develop virtual meetings.

The second idea which could be studied would be the difference in the answers between extroverts and introverts, and how they felt about the virtual meetings. It

would be interesting to study what kind of effect cooperative leadership has on hearing the ideas from people who are usually quieter during meetings. Some people believe that quiet people are permitted to be quiet, but cooperative leadership gives so many responsibilities for each team member in a team that it forces everyone to talk. It would be interesting to see what kinds of new ideas would come if more introverted people could have their say equally with everyone else.

The third idea that could be studied would study deeper into the cultural differences within teams. In this research, some of the countries had fewer respondents and the results didn't show any notable differences within the results comparing all the countries. Even though, it could be beneficial to find out if there are cultural differences in virtual meeting behavior.

The fourth idea for the next research would be to follow how the Deus project or any other project, business company, organization, or school would use the virtual meeting example, which was made as an example to tackle the themes which need developing according to the answers given in this research. The next research could study exactly how cooperative leadership such as the one that was described at the end of this thesis could work as a pedagogical model in a virtual meeting model.

The fifth idea is the one that is the easiest to implement. After discussing with the project management of the DEUS project, I heard that the results from this research could be used in building the pedagogical structure for the vocational training and in the administrative work of the Deus project. I will explain the results together for the whole project team and we will analyze the results together. After analyzing, we can see if there is something to change in the pedagogical methods of the Deus project and possibly use cooperative leadership to support the project to build a new learning approach for creative industry entrepreneurs in Europe.

5.2 The effects of this research on my own professional growth

This research process started in September 2020, but brainstorming for the thesis already started at the beginning of the year. When thinking about the past year and the whole research process I feel like I have grown as a researcher and learned more about cooperative leadership. Due to writing and analyzing cooperative leadership, I have had to reflect a lot on what I already know in theory and how I act while facilitating my own meetings. At this moment, I can say, I have learned a lot, but there is still a lot of work to do. Cooperative leadership is the best pedagogical model to lead any team or a meeting, and while being the best it is one of the hardest models to learn. I am still motivated to learn, to study more, and to try out different cooperative meeting methods to make me a better leader. This process has taught me that if a leader has not internalized the five principles of cooperative leadership, the leader might struggle with using the principles in practice. A leader is a student who builds a culture for the team where everyone acts as a student. This can be seen during a meeting where people learn and teach each other. It is essential for the leader to absorb the principles of cooperative leadership and then learn to use them in practice. This process will take years.

The next step for me is to practice the cooperative meeting model that was built as a guideline for a virtual meeting in this thesis in my own project at my work. One of my projects aims has been to build a network of esports professionals in the Kymenlaakso region in Finland. The network has been built using the same pedagogic models as in this thesis. It has included the use of experiential learning by participating people in the network asking them what we could do to help them. This way people get to bring their hopes and skills visible all the time, which is an essential part of cooperative leadership. Our hope for the future is to build a platform that connects people around the world. We have a group of international people who can translate all the work we do in their native language and connect people speaking Arabic, English or German to our network. Next year for me will start with leading a new team. The team consists of ten team members which gives me a great platform to practice cooperative methods used in this thesis and become a better cooperative leader.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the commissioner of this thesis, South-Eastern Finland University of Applied Sciences (Xamk), and the Deus project will be the first ones to benefit from the research results of this thesis. Luckily, the Deus project consists of many European countries that might get interested in the use of cooperative virtual meetings. If the cooperative leadership methods would become a part of a new learning approach for creative entrepreneurs through the Deus project, it would give me a possibility to help our European colleagues to implement cooperative leadership models to their virtual meeting culture. That could make it possible to build safe working environments for virtual meetings around Europe, where every participant feels heard during meetings. A cooperative leadership model works in every culture, but the process needs to start with acknowledging the current action culture in each country. The work starts by understanding the current state and the experiences of the working culture. After that phase, the developing can start and each culture can adapt the parts from cooperative leadership that works the best for them. Lastly, since the Deus project aims to support creative industry entrepreneurs, they will be the end customers from the project point of view. When a base for a safe virtual meeting culture has been constructed and everyone is heard, the possibility for innovations and European wide cooperation grows. In the end, it could make it possible for us to learn more from each other during the Covid-19 pandemic and be more ready for the upcoming challenges.

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Screenshot describing the online inquiry

DEUS: Virtual meeting inquiry

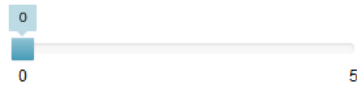
This virtual meeting inquiry is made by Antti Leppilampi. He works as a project worker for the Deus project and studies International Business Management in Finland. The inquiry is a part of his Master's Thesis. By answering this inquiry you will participate and help his research, which focus is to study how to make virtual meetings more effective. This inquiry will be sent to Italy, Lithuania, Malta, Slovakia, and Wales. If you need help with some of the questions, don't hesitate to send a message at antti.leppilampi@xamk.fi

1. How does a normal meeting from your view differ from a virtual meeting?

2. Have virtual meetings been effective from your view? Why? Why not?

Questions about virtual meetings. (0 = I don't agree, 5 = I agree)

3. During a virtual meeting, do you get to learn to know others?



4. Optional comment & If not, what could be done differently?

Questions for the research interview and the online inquiry

Questions related to the principle - Positive interdependence

- During a virtual meeting, do you get to learn to know others?
 - o Grade from 1 to 5, with 1 being you don't agree and 5 meaning that you agree.
 - What could have been done differently?
- During a virtual meeting, the discussion feels safe and open for ideas?
 - o Grade from 1 to 5, with 1 being you don't agree and 5 meaning that you agree.
 - What could have been done differently?
- During a virtual meeting, the discussion had an aim?
 - o Grade from 1 to 5, with 1 being you don't agree and 5 meaning that you agree.
 - What could have been done differently?
- During a virtual meeting, everyone's opinions are heard
 - o Grade from 1 to 5, with 1 being you don't agree and 5 meaning that you agree.
 - What could have been done differently?

Questions related to the principle – Face-to-face interaction

- During a virtual meeting, the meeting is led well led?
 - o Grade from 1 to 5, with 1 being you don't agree and 5 meaning that you agree.
 - What could have been done differently?
- During a virtual meeting, the participants support each others points and views?
 - o Grade from 1 to 5, with 1 being you don't agree and 5 meaning that you agree.
 - What could have been done differently?
- During a virtual meeting, the participants are encouraged to share their views?
 - o Grade from 1 to 5, with 1 being you don't agree and 5 meaning that you agree.
 - What could have been done differently?

Questions related to the principle - Individual accountability

- During a virtual meeting, you have a possibility to impact on the progress of the meeting?
 - o Grade from 1 to 5, with 1 being you don't agree and 5 meaning that you agree.
 - What could have been done differently?
- The participants supported each others points and talks during the meeting?

- Grade from 1 to 5, with 1 being you don't agree and 5 meaning that you agree.
 - What could have been done differently?
- During a virtual meeting, very participant is 100 % present during the meeting
 - Grade from 1 to 5, with 1 being you don't agree and 5 meaning that you agree.
 - What could have been done differently?

Questions related to the principle - Social skills

- During a virtual meeting, the participants openly debate about a topic at hand?
 - Grade from 1 to 5, with 1 being you don't agree and 5 meaning that you agree.
 - What could have been done differently
- During a virtual meeting, possible conflicts are treated respectively?
 - Grade from 1 to 5, with 1 being you don't agree and 5 meaning that you agree.
 - What could have been done differently

Questions related to the principle - Group processing

- During a virtual meeting, the participants have a chance to give feedback?
 - Grade from 1 to 5, with 1 being you don't agree and 5 meaning that you agree.
 - What could have been done differently?
- At the end of a virtual meeting, the next terms are agreed together so everyone knows what comes after the meeting?
 - Grade from 1 to 5, with 1 being you don't agree and 5 meaning that you agree.
 - What could have been done differently?