

Abstract

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Language: Swedish with
summary in English
ISBN 91-7246-208-6
276 pages
Doctoral Thesis, 2003

The virtuous responsibility for personnel About managers assuming of responsibility from ethical perspectives

Managers are nowadays seen to be those who have the responsibility for managing staff as well as personnel work, i.e., recruitment, introductions, and competence development. This is confirmed by theories from Human Resource Management (HRM) and other managerial perspectives. But how the responsibility for personnel works and how managers construct themselves as responsible is so far neglected. One way to examine this is to use ethical perspectives, especially *virtue*- (inspired by Aristotle), *duty*- (deontological) and *utility*-ethics. The study concerns first line managers within two construction departments at the Volvo Car Corporation in Göteborg. It is an interpretative study drawing its inspiration from ethnographical research.

The study shows a great variation between managers. Some actively take responsibility and continuously construct the taking of responsibility and thus create virtues, some only have responsibility and lack the ability to reconsider their constructions. The latter get caught in constructions related to duties or utility-criterions. The most important virtue found in this study is called *combination ability*, i.e., the good managers could combine responsibility for staff with technical responsibility. If the organisation wants to have virtuous and responsible managers, they ought to consider the necessity of new routines, orders, rules, values and utility-criterions that could restrict managers' autonomy and their real *praxis*, i.e., their acting based in their character (virtue). Aristotelian virtue-ethics could help actors within the organisation to be aware of actions related to responsibility for staff, and their importance for both employees and company, while HRM-theories consider this kind of responsibility as a "black box".

Key words: personnel responsibility, ethics, virtue, duty, utility, praxis, HRM, management