International Management

Master Thesis No 2004:22

THE INFLUENCE OF THE E-MBA PROGRAM ON THE SELF-DEVELOPMENT OF A MANAGER

Explaining the Factors Influencing Self-Development

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II

Abstract

The objective of the Thesis was to show how the Executive Master of Business Administration program (E-MBA) has affected the self-development of the former students, the managers. The follow-up with these participants of the E-MBA was conducted through personal interviews. The study was qualitative in nature but included quantitative features. The E-MBA education program at Gothenburg University was used as a case.

The purpose was to find out and describe managers' experiences of the benefits of the education for their self-development. Answers for the following research questions were found: How does the E-MBA education influence the self-development of a manager? How do the selected themes explain the self-development? How does gender influence self-development through these themes? Were the aims and goals of the E-MBA program achieved according to the participants' (managers') experiences?

Theoretical construction consists of the theories of management education, self-development and gender issues.

The results show that there has been progress in self-development of the managers as a result of the E-MBA studies. The selected themes truly described this development. The gender issue had a considerable impact on the depth of the self-development since females reflected more on the education than males.

<u>Key Words</u>: E-MBA, education evaluation, self-development, gender

Declaration of Gratitude

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1. Introduction

1.1 Starting Point of the Research

"The reason for evaluating is to determine the effectiveness of a training program. When the evaluation is done we can hope that the results are positive and gratifying both for those responsible for the program and for the participants of the education". (Kirkpatrick, 1998, p.8.)

All managers are concerned with their own and their department's credibility. They want to be accepted, appreciated and listened to. If all those aspirations are satisfied in a real work life context, many positive issues will arise: you keep your job, you might be promoted, your staff keeps their jobs, the quality of work is improved, senior management listens to you and you are given more control. You sleep better, worry less and enjoy life. In short, it makes you happy. According to Levinson (1981), executives who are rising to higher levels in the organization are required to be more flexible, more sophisticated, more knowledgeable, to have a historical sense of what they are doing, to have some awareness of the impact of what they are doing both on their organizations and on society. They now need a more comprehensive understanding of people. In this Thesis the authors try to examine whether these concerns are satisfied and if these needs are better met after the Executive Master of Business Administration education (hereafter E-MBA). The authors were interested in hearing the managers', once participating in this training program, stories about whether the aims and goals of the education have become true after the training. The authors were fascinated in getting to know

their characters and hearing their individual stories. Through these narratives the possible progress in the managers' self-development was evaluated.

How does one best get ready for career growth, both to fully develop in one's current position and to prepare for advancement? That is a question every manager should ask himself or herself once in a while in the course of a career. The answers will vary but should include two major components: additional education and career experience. (Kiehn et. al., 2004.) Additional education is a priority in this Master Thesis. The managers interviewed for the research already have several years of career experience. Now we, the authors, got interested in their additional education, namely the E-MBA and its affect on a manager's self-development and also on some other aspects, which are clarified in the following chapters.

The basis for the research was the authors' pure interest in leadership and management as a phenomenon; after all, that is what the authors have been studying and are preparing to take the Masters Degree in International Management. During the information collection for the E-MBA program, the authors found out that its content and methods of learning are quite similar to the International Management-program, which the authors have taken. The authors believe that neither the E-MBA nor International Management program that should be considered traditional elements of education, but rather functioning as ways to trigger an individual's thinking-patterns and enhance critical and intellectual thinking. Therefore, it is fascinating to have an opportunity "to gaze to the future" and see how managers, who have several years of managing experience together with different kind of educational backgrounds, have perceived the lessons learned and how they actually use those tools the education has provided for them on a daily basis.

In a rapidly changing world of work, and the constant demand for innovation, self-development is no longer an option but a necessity. Levinson (1981) said: "There is the need for increasing understanding of self, as well as one's interaction with other people." As O'Toole (1994) states, leaders now face changes in versatile forms, such as disorder fuelled by volatile economic conditions, rapid technological obsolescence, turbulent international competition, market dislocations, upstart institutional investors and continually shifting political and social conditions. In order to be able to response to these continuous changes and new demands, individuals and executives need to educate themselves and update their knowledge and skills. This will in addition increase employability, which is also an issue one needs to constantly take care of in contemporary business life. There are no more lifetime positions, quite the opposite; for example short-term employment, downsizing situations and changes in organizational structures are more rules than exceptions. Being prepared to flexibly respond to rapid changes will increase an individual's overall life satisfaction as changing situations will not be a surprise for them.

The management ought to have a holistic conception about the value of an employee to the company in order to recognize the need for self-development. It also means a balance in the utilization of natural and human resources. Despite a company's moral or ethical commitment and interest in the development of its employees, such development must be congruent with the mission and vision of the enterprise. Although the company must provide an enabling environment for personnel development, individuals need to assume self-responsibility to identify and realize their development. This implies a move from a state of dependence to a state of independence and self-realization. In addition, there needs to be an awareness that self-development is a process, not an event. The term 'life-long learning' implies that to cope in a modern enterprise, the individual must be willing to be subjected to a process

of constant psychological and intellectual transformation and growth. Finally, self-development needs to come in parallel with the rapid growth in technology. Just as work is being transformed, the individuals should transform too, to ensure their employability and feeling of self-worth. (Cunningham, 2004.)

The results of this study show the examples of self-development that each of the managers interviewed have achieved as a result of the E-MBA education. This research observes this development through the participant's own experiences described by the authors. The description of how all this effort has been carried out can be found in the following chapters.

1.2 The Structure of the Thesis

For the authors as the researchers and creators of this study, the structure of this Master Thesis is obvious. However, the authors also wish that the reader would get the most of this research. Thereby, the authors try to clarify the content with the following Structure Model of the thesis (Figure 1), which illustrates how different parts of this thesis are connected and finally tied together into a meaningful entity at the end of the report.

The thesis begins with an introductory chapter, which includes a presentation of the topic and its starting point as well as a description of how this particular subject was chosen. Also, the aims and the purpose of this study, as well as the problem statement are presented in this first chapter. The scope and limitations of the thesis follow right after clarifying the borders in which the study takes place. The validity and generality concerns conclude this first chapter.

The second chapter presents the case of this thesis; in other words the core information about the Executive Master of Business Administration program. In the third chapter the authors present all the methodologies used for conducting the thesis. This chapter includes three different areas, as it presents the methodologies used for creating the theoretical construction, for the empirical findings as well as for structuring the data analysis. The fourth chapter, Theoretical Construction, exemplifies the appropriate theoretical frame that supports the empirical findings of this study. After that, the empirical part takes place with the presentation of the stories and experiences of the interviewees, although through imaginary persons. After, all these aforementioned parts are drawn together and analysed as the analysis of the empirical findings takes the turn. Finally, the authors present the main results of the study as well as their final views and beliefs about the topic at hand in the final chapter of conclusions.
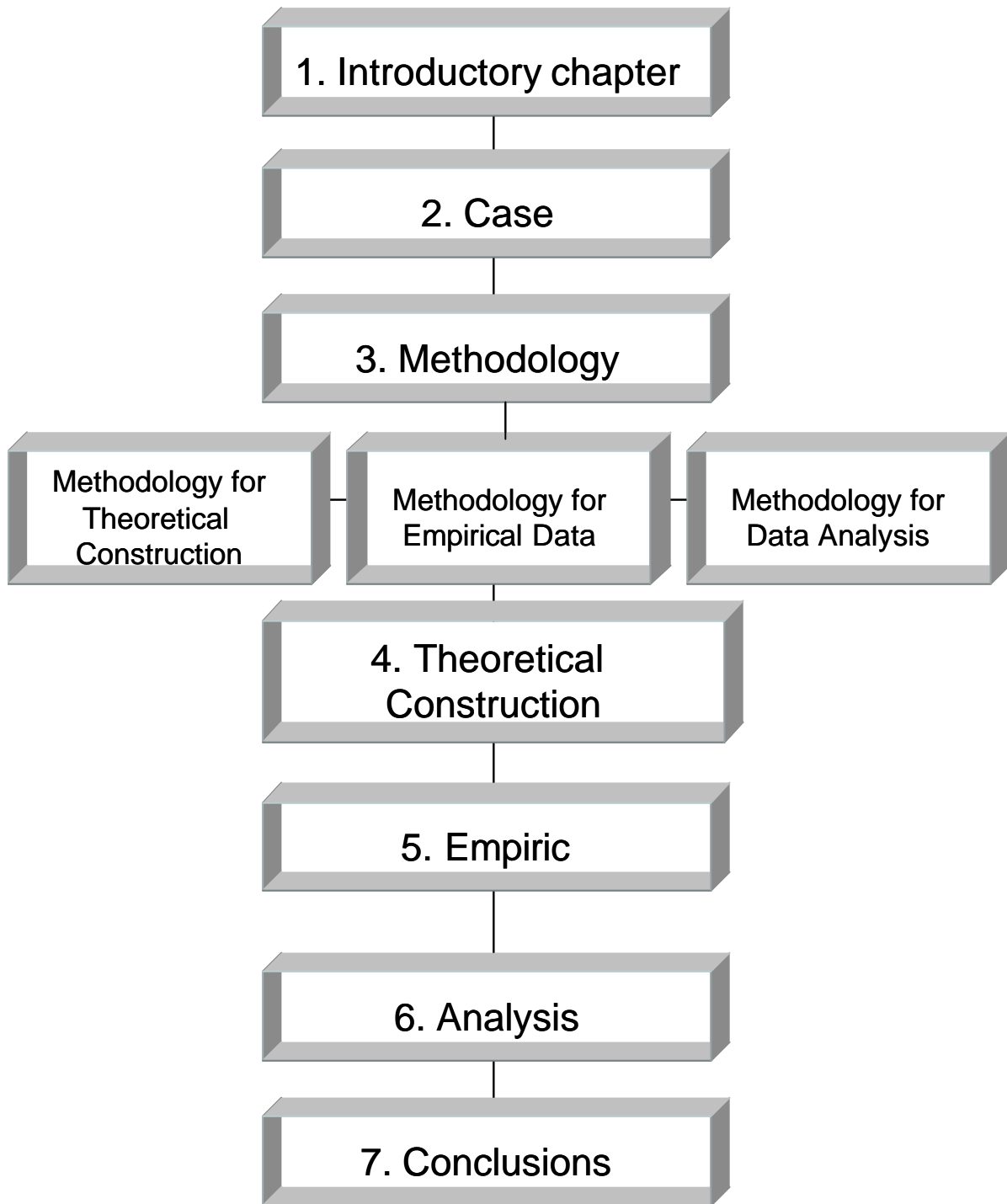
Figure 1. The Structure Model of the Thesis (created by the authors, 2004)

1.3 The Aim and Purpose of the Thesis

The main aim of the study is to explore the influence of the E-MBA program on the self-development of a manager. More precisely, the aim was to personally interview former E-MBA students and find out the participants' experiences about the benefits of the education for their personal development. The authors received an inquiry from the persons responsible for the E-MBA program to conduct a follow-up study among the former students. The common focus for the thesis was set through discussions with the authors and the program representatives. The purpose of this thesis is to show how E-MBA has affected on managers' self-development and their ability to bring and apply knowledge gathered from the education into their professional functions and in other contexts of life. Thus, this research provides information and feedback for the program leaders about the experiences of the E-MBA participants. Moreover, the purpose is that the research can provide useful information for the Executive MBA program as it tests whether the goals and aims of the program are achieved from the former students' points of view. Some feedback for the program was found, but is not presented in the thesis. The feedback and recommendations that derived as by-products of a research were directly delivered to the persons responsible for the E-MBA. However, it is not only the feedback from the former students that will help the program representatives consider the context of the education, but also this thesis as a whole with a greater understanding of the influence of this kind of an education program.

As the work with this thesis proceeded, it became evident that there is a significant difference between the responses of males compared with the responses of the females. This was unexpected. The possible gender factor explaining the differences within the answers and the stories was not the purpose of the authors when first setting up the problem statement and

hypotheses. Thus, this clear difference attracted the authors' interest as it was pure empirical evidence and a result of an empirical study, which emerged without the authors' intention. Therefore the authors believe that it is crucial to shed light upon this result and present the findings with some recognition of gender issues.

When considering the benefit that this thesis provided for the interviewed managers, it can be stated that they got a chance to reflect on their experiences and memories of the E-MBA program and consider the gains and the real outcome of the education in which they once participated. They also had a chance to give feedback on how to improve the program as they naturally have thought about the pros and cons of the program. As interviewers, the authors attempted to trigger the interviewees' thoughts and tried to make them remember things they might have forgotten after they finished the education.

1.4 The Significance for the Authors

As management and leadership are not only about hard, technical issues but are now even more related to softer issues with a more human perspective, it is also important for the authors, as potential future managers, to have a look at the personal development of the interviewees of this thesis. The authors believe that in order to become a good leader one has to develop the ability to manage him/herself. It is crucial to develop as a person, conversely, to recognize ones' own strengths and weaknesses as well as one's own values and goals in life. Furthermore, conducting this research gives a valuable possibility for the authors' to reflect their own learning during the masters' education. Thus, it will increase the authors' competence to actively utilize the education in their personal growth in a future. Additionally, this journey made the authors think

about the importance of continuous learning and considering updating of their knowledge and position in work life after the appropriate phase of time. This makes the writing process of the Masters Thesis an actual part of the author' learning process and completes, in a quite natural way, their managerial education.

Producing this Master Thesis provides important insight about different kind of managers' everyday tasks and responsibilities. It also widens the authors' perspective about manager training programs and their possible importance for a manager when developing his/her own competence in today's business life. As the authors are now about to graduate from the Masters in International Management program, they are finishing their own managerial education and this study gives the authors a chance to have a flash into the future. Moreover, since the Executive Education Program follows the same kind of structure and methods as the master education the authors are taking, the nature of it can be quite easily understood. Therefore, it is fascinating to study people who have undergone the same kind of education (although at a different level) and are now applying the concepts studied in their everyday life. The authors wish to grasp a deeper understanding of how they can consciously focus on applying concepts of the studies in their future careers.

1.5 The Concept of Self-Development

The authors' first ideas about the concept of self-development are related to everyone's personal development as human beings. The concept itself is not anything new as all of us have practised self-development to some degree. Examples of these kinds of "practises" could be reading, observation of other people, meditating, some step-by-step practises from literature, conversations with family, friends, colleagues etc.

However, in this thesis the concept means something more structured and more as an outcome of the education where people are able to estimate themselves as persons, learners, group members, students and even mentors. Training and development programmes will include some self-development element in their overall design and delivery.

Why is self-development attractive? The attraction for organizations is that it can be carried out continuously, as an integral part of day-to-day working activity, and it places greater responsibility on the individual to take the initiative in developing themselves. The attraction for the individuals might lie in the use of self-development: to better meet professional requirements, performance requirements and to support their career development, i.e. as a route to preparing for a change in career direction, promotion to a new position and so forth.[1]

However, it has to be noted that self-development is not only about one isolated program (here, the E-MBA program) or any other events. Self-development should be a process, a continuous process of individual change. Self-development is a lifetime challenge.

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[1] Diane Bailey Associates

1.6 The Problem Statement

The basis for the study was to investigate how individuals who have graduated from the E-MBA program perceive the program and in which ways they think they have benefited from it? Through several conversations and the process of selecting the appropriate theoretical construction the final research problem was modified:

How does the E-MBA education influence the self-development of a manager?

1.6.1 Sub-Problems

During the problem formulating process several questions arose and led to the formulation of the sub-problems for the study:

1. Selected themes explaining the self-development progress:

- Awareness of individual strengths and weaknesses
- Changes in self-confidence
- Changes in behaviour
- Taking more initiatives
- Changes in interaction with co-workers
- Feedback and comments gained
- New career opportunities, and
- New knowledge.

2. The influence of one variable, namely gender, on aforementioned themes.

3. Were the aims and goals of the Executive MBA program achieved according to participants'/managers' experiences? (For further information see Figure 9)

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│    the E-MBA     │     │    the Gender    │
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         │    ┌──────────────┐    │
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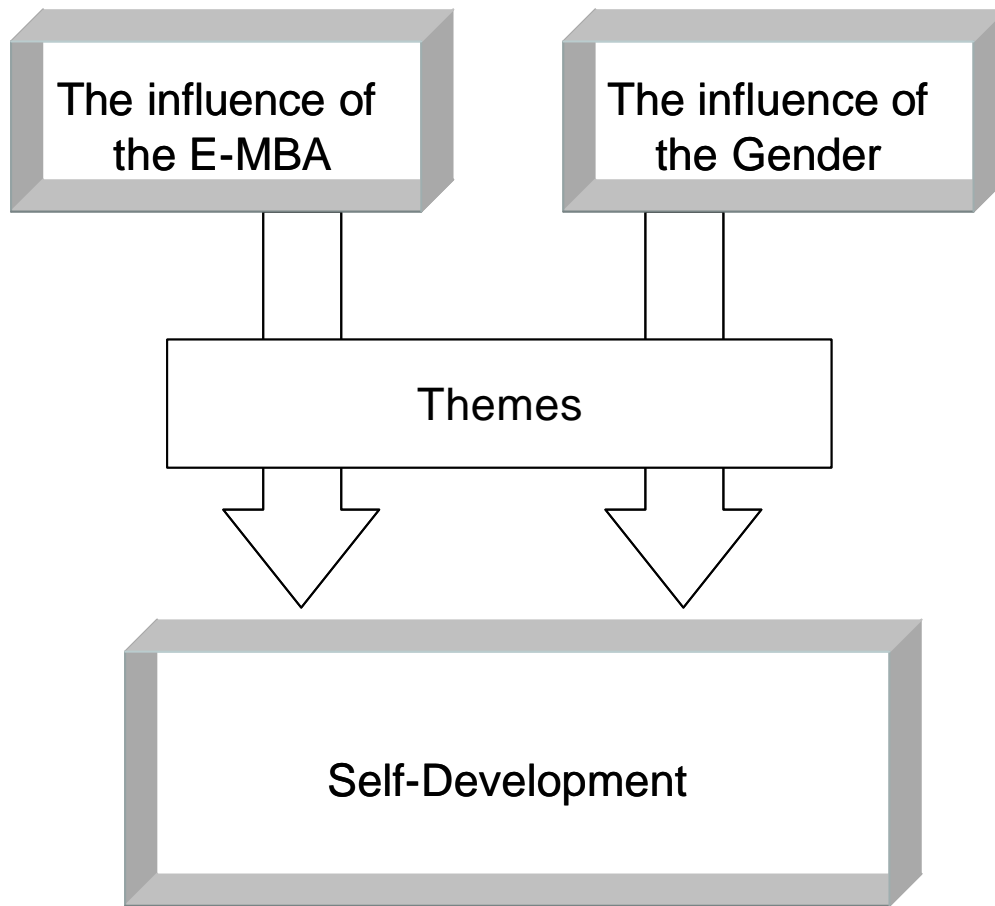
Figure 2. The Illustration of the Problem Statement (created by the authors, 2005)

1.7 The Scope and Limitations

The field of education evaluation is rather vague and offers several interesting areas to study. However, certain limitations needed to be done in order to be able to grasp a deeper understanding and insight into the matter at hand.

This master thesis reports upon some limited steps that have been taken to evaluate management training by changing the focus of evaluation of the programs to evaluation of the participants' development and its effects on a manager's self-development. The spectre of methodological difficulties in analysing this kind of evaluation and data gathered waited the authors behind the corner. The evaluation of management programs and their effects on the participants is very important but loaded with difficulties. One of the difficulties the authors faced was to select only a few of the numerous effects that the program might have on participants, because the area of possibilities is enormous. In addition, the ways to measure the qualitative empirical findings was also a challenge. Furthermore, the impact of management training varies from one situation to another and from a person to another. That makes it difficult to find an analysis and conclusion to pull the research findings together.

Traditionally, studies of education evaluation use and suggest testing the participants in the three different stages of the education; before, during and after participating in the program. Preferably these tests should be done with the comparison of a control group. Due to the time limitations, an assessment in the aforementioned style could not possibly be undertaken for this thesis. Furthermore, the authors' aim and interest was neither to make quantitative measures of the participants' amount of knowledge nor to collect a vast amount

of data in order to investigate the content of the E-MBA program. Rather, the endeavour was to try to get a deeper understanding of former students' perceptions and opinions about the E-MBA program and how different experiences during the program had affected their learning and development processes. Hence, this study focuses on the experiences and feelings of the former E-MBA students and how they perceive the usefulness and benefits from their studies in their self-development and in their everyday (work) life. It is not of the authors' interest to study a large sample of managers in order to get a wide overall feedback. Therefore, this study is conducted among a rather small sample of managers, enabling a closer, deeper and more personal perception.

1.8 Suggestions for Future Research

During the work process of the thesis, several factors arose as issues that could have been included in this thesis, but with the respect of the limitations of time and the purposes of a master thesis, these areas have not been covered or developed. Nevertheless, the authors hope this list of ideas for future research triggers the reader's interest for further actions.

➢ Similar research should be conducted with a larger sample of interviewees in order to statistically achieve more reliable results.

➢ The gender issue could be strengthened and taken as a main purpose of evaluating managerial educations. It might be interesting to investigate, for example, the work-life balance between the sexes, since there were noticeable differences between females and males.

- Several different variables, other than gender, affecting the self-development of a manager theme could be considered, such as the influence of age and background education.

- Similar research should be conducted in the three-time dimension; before, during and after participation in the E-MBA (or other kind of MBA programs). That would produce interesting and valuable data about the real changes that have taken place in a person within a longer time period.

- Similar research could be done so that as the students begin the program they fill out a self-evaluating form and do the same after the program. Moreover, the control groups could be studied in order to see the difference between the individuals at the same company or business taking the MBA education and those that did not.

- As the content of the E-MBA program at Gothenburg University has always been the same, research could be conducted in examining the content of the programme, its pros and cons.

- A marketing plan for the E-MBA program at the Gothenburg University could be developed.

- Similar research should be conducted with a larger sample of interviewees in order to make results statistically more reliable.

1.9 Validity and Generality Concerns

The limitations of this study are evident. It was conducted through ten interviews, of which eight was personal interviews. The two additional interviews were made in order to strengthen some issues that appeared in the face-to-face interviews. The authors are aware that due to the small sample, the findings of this research do not hold the authentic statistical accuracy. Therefore, this study should be considered as a guideline presenting general tendencies. Further studies among this field should be undertaken in order to confirm the exactness of the findings this study shows.

Mitchell et al. (2001) distinguish internal and external validity of research and defines them as follows: Internal validity is the degree to which the study demonstrates that the certain observable event caused or influenced a change. External validity indicates that the results of the study can be generalized outside the study to other situations and participants. This study has only focused on one programme and is thereby not comparative to other MBA educations. However, it is comparative with regard to programme participants. Thus, the authors consider evaluating the internal validity of it as being more important. In addition, Åhman (2003) reminds us that the criteria, which are set for case studies, differ from those set to the studies of the natural science. When it comes to qualitative study it is not a necessity that two researchers draw the same conclusions but rather the reader should be provided with enough information to be able to evaluate and possibly accept the conclusions of the researcher. According to Åhman (2003), Gummesson (2000) suggests criteria to determine the trustworthiness of a qualitative case study. As this research falls into the aforementioned category, the authors find it an appropriate way to examine the trustworthiness of this study.

According to Gummesson (2000, quoted in Åhman, 2003), the readers should be able to follow the research process and to make their own conclusion about it. A researcher ought to reveal his or her own paradigms and the pre-understanding of the issue at hand. Whether the researcher has access to collect the data affects the reliability, as well as whether the data is correct. Additionally, all the needed data should be presented. Furthermore, pursuing honesty and that the participants of the research process can recognize the matters presented are considered ways to evaluate reliability. One of Gummesson's criteria is how well the research enhances the awareness of the topic and how well it handles current problems and generates information. It should also be evaluated whether the research process has been dynamic. This means the reflection, dialogue and learning of the researcher. Finally, as Gummesson states, a researcher should have certain personal abilities; he or she should be honest and show commitment to conduct the study.

In this research, the authors have tried to be as precise as possible when presenting the methods and ways of conducting this study. These issues, considering the authors pre-understanding and paradigms are addressed in the "Significance for the Authors" and "The Concept of Self-Development" chapters. As this study is written by two authors, the objectivity increases as the data and the results are not filtered through the perceptions and paradigms of only one person. The empirical data is collected from the interviewees and it presents the truth as they understand and consider it. Thus, the data can be considered correct. The authors have presented the data and the results honestly, yet it is hard to prove. However, taping and typing the interviews can be see as a way to enhance the honesty, as the authors were not solely dependent on their memories about the interview situations. Even if the authors had to assure the anonymity of the interviewees when presenting the data, the

issues that emerged from the interviews are presented as such and should thereby be recognizable for those who participated in this study.

When conducting this research, the authors did not have any difficulties getting access to the appropriate data, as all interviewees were enthusiastic to participate to the study. Furthermore, several researchers from the Gothenburg Research Institute and Gothenburg University helped the authors conduct the study. However, the authors did find the time limitation as a factor that prevented full examination of the issue at hand as the study had to be done with a rather rapid schedule during one autumn semester. The authors have created new information about the topic at hand, as this is the first follow-up study made for the E-MBA program. The research problems are current as this study takes place in the contemporary world of business and management. The authors have reflected upon their experiences during the research process with several people. As mentioned before, the authors felt from the very beginning that conducting this study is an essential part of their individual learning process in their master studies.

2. The Case

In the following chapter the authors describe the case of this study in which the empirical data was collected. The chapter begins with a short introduction to the Gothenburg University, followed by a general illustration of the MBA-degree. Thereafter, a more detailed description of the Executive-MBA programme is given.

2.1 The Executive Master of Business Administration Program (E-MBA)

2.1.1 Introduction to the Company/University

The Gothenburg School of Economics started in 1923 and is now a part of Gothenburg University. It includes a combination of education and research in the areas of business administration, economics, law and information science.[2]

2.1.2 Background of the MBA

MBA stands for Master of Business Administration. MBA is an unprotected title so there is no absolute definition, but one way to describe it is that it is an education that aims to prepare its participants for leading positions in administrative and managerial work. There are MBA programs with a special focus and/or possibilities for students to create their own schedule by selecting

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[2] Handeshögskolan brochure: "Utbildning för ökad konkurrenskraft 2004-2006"

electives of their choice. An MBA program should not focus on one single subject or one field, but rather have the ambition to introduce the student to all the main concepts that will be a part of their future career as managers, such as accounting, marketing and project management. The students are not expected to work with all of this at the same time, but the intention is to have the ability to see the big picture and conduct their jobs as general managers in a more successful way. MBA programs are open to anyone who has an academic degree.[3]

The MBA was first developed in the USA, around 1900. By the 1950's, MBA programs were being criticized for poor academic standards, with second-rate students taught by second-rate professors. Schools responded by putting greater emphasis on academic research and raising admission criteria as well as teaching standards. The classical American MBA programme began to take shape: a first year of required core courses covering the fundamentals of management and a second year of electives allowing specialisation or deeper study. MBA programs in Europe are often patterned to the classic MBA model, but adapted to local, regional or global conditions and needs.[4]

Every year, approximately 100,000 persons receive an MBA degree. In the last couple of years the demand and number of available courses to choose from have increased in the Nordic countries, which might be an outcome of increased globalisation. As companies become multinational or find themselves with foreign owners, the speed of globalisation automatically increases. This new arena gives new reasons for employees, who are interested in growing with their company, to develop their abilities.[5]

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[3] Civilekonomerna: MBA-utbildningar i Norden 2004/2005

[4] Civilekonomerna:MBA-utbildningar i Norden 2004/2005

[5] Civilekonomerna: MBA-utbildningar i Norden 2004/2005

In the Nordic countries, part-time education, as opposed to full-time, has fast become popular since it allows the participant to keep his or her day job while completing an education program. Apart from acquiring technical knowledge, the aim of the MBA program is to use the theory in practise and to focus on the student's knowledge in areas such as negotiation and communication ability, general management and entrepreneurship. Rapid IT development is also changing course contents. That reminds us that there is no such thing as a completed education.[6]

2.1.3 Executive Master of Business Administration, E-MBA

The school of Economics at Gothenburg University has provided an Executive MBA program since 1977, and approximately 700 persons have graduated from the program. It is directly equivalent to an MBA and the special focus is in general management. A program consists of 11 courses as follows:

1. Management (myths, fashion and science)
2. Leadership and Teamwork
3. Development and innovation
4. Organizing the company and network
5. Market strategies in IT-society
6. Management control and effectiveness
7. Ownership relations and financial planning
8. Structural transitions in a historic perspective
9. International business
10. Business development and strategy selection

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[6] Civilekonomerna: MBA-utbildningar i Norden 2004/2005

11. Project work. [7]

In terms of academic degrees the participants have different backgrounds, holding BA degrees in various areas such as engineering, business, medical, IT, law, etc. They represent several different industries and different sizes of companies as well as the public sector. Most corporate functions are represented within the participants from logistics through production, finance and marketing to consultancy, and also the public sector. The criterion for applying for the program is to have an academic degree representing 120 points with at least 60 points in one subject and 10 points for a Thesis. Moreover, participants have to have at least three years work experience and currently hold a managerial position. The education fee is SEK 173 000, paid by a participant's employer. The maximum amount of education places for each class is limited to 24 and the selection is based on career success after a bachelor degree (BA). [8]

Participants meet on Thursday afternoons, Fridays and Saturday mornings, altogether 30 weeks a year. The programme is comprised of cutting-edge theory, cross-disciplinary insight and an in-depth understanding of international relations. Its success rests on three elements: highly qualified professors, a progressive course structure and highly qualified participants. The most important part of learning is the interaction taking place in the sub-groups. Sub-groups prepare reports on several subjects and deliver them according to specific deadlines. [9]

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[7] Handeshögskolan brochure: "Utbildning för ökad konkurrenskraft 2004-2006"

[8] Alarik, Bjorn. Personal interview. 24.9.2004

[9] Alarik, Bjorn. Personal interview. 24.9.2004

The goals of the program are as follows:

- To develop a holistic view of business /company and management.
- To broaden frame of references and to develop new perspectives and influences.
- To learn to utilise theories as a tool to create structure and coherence in one's own experiences.
- To train to actively use the scientific knowledge gained and to advocate critical reasoning.
- To develop and strengthen strategic and business thinking.[10]

[10] Alarik, Bjorn. Personal interview. 24.9.2004

3. Methodology

This chapter includes the descriptions of all the methodologies used when conducting this study. There are three different areas, explained in the following paragraphs. The chapter begins with the methodology for creating the Theoretical construction. After that the methodology for collecting the empirical data is presented, including descriptions of the starting point for the data collection, the methodology for creating questions for the interviews and the methodology for conducting the interviews. Finally, the methodology for structuring the data analysis is presented.

3.1 Methodology for Theoretical Construction

To be able to answer the research questions, the authors explored various forms of literature, such as books, articles, Master Ph.D. Theses and web pages addressing the concepts at hand in order to gather a meaningful framework. Former studies of management education evaluation as well as research findings among the fields of learning, knowledge creation, work satisfaction and motivation, self-leadership and self-awareness were studied.

It was not an easy task to find theories related to education evaluation or to find earlier studies about education evaluation from the same perspective that this thesis has taken. Most of the education evaluation studies are connected to training programs within one's own organization and the evaluation has been made according to business results regardless of whether the training has had an impact on developed business success. In other words, the interest of the

outcome of the education has been tightly linked to business needs, or the emphasis was often on one organization using, for example, outdoor management education (OME) (Brinkerhoff et al. 2003; McEvoy, 1997). Another common perspective among the field of education evaluation aims to improve the education program and its content (Jerkedal, 1967, Hogarth, 1979).

For example, Burke (1998) confirms the authors' opinion about the lack of the research in this area. Burke argues that there is a lack of both empirical evidence and theoretical perspectives to support theories related to the efficacy of the learning process and its transfer to the workplace. Furthermore, there is also lack of earlier evidence in managerial education and its outcomes when it comes to many other areas such as changing attitudes/behavior, increasing knowledge, self-development and so on. There is also lack of theoretically-based models for evaluating the outcomes of the education, especially the influence on a person and his/her development.

As mentioned before, the aim of this study is to find out the influence of an education on a person. This has been conducted through hearing the personal stories of the managers who have participated to the E-MBA program. The interest is in their self-development, not in business development.

3.2 Methodology for Empirical Findings

3.2.1 Starting Point for the Data Collection

First, in this section, the general literature overview is offered in order to show how previous studies among the field of education evaluation were conducted. Thereafter, the reader is provided with the information of how the authors created the interview questions, what data they wanted to collect and why the authors chose to focus on certain particular issues in the interview questions. Finally, the methods and techniques used in this study are described together with the limitations that shaped the form of this research.

Education evaluation methods traditionally suggest conducting tests in three different phases of the education in order to reveal and measure the learning results achieved by students as well as their opinions about the education while taking the course. Pre-tests are done before the students start the course or a programme to determine each participant's starting level in terms of knowledge and previous competence. During-tests are done while studies are still ongoing and post-tests are carried out after the studies have ended. The learning results can then be measured by comparing the post-test results with the pre-test results and by calculating the difference. (Kirkpatrick 1967, Hamblin 1974.) In addition, another classical requirement for measuring the outcomes of an educational effort has been encompassing a control group to mirror and to measure the results towards (Kile, 1969, p.10). In addition, a researcher should decide before taking any actions towards conducting the study whether the aim of the research is to explore the outcomes of education within the perceptions of the students or the syllabus, per se. The interest and focus of this thesis lies in the former one.

Thus, due to the time limitations, an assessment including tests in the aforementioned three stages in comparison to a control group was not possible to undertake for this thesis and the authors had to choose another form of evaluation method. This study is qualitative in nature. According to Lidlof and Punch (1995, 1998, respectively, in Ravenscroft and Rogers 2003), researchers often fail to value the essential challenge of qualitative data; that it is the situated, textual rhetoric of social construction. Therefore, the authors recognised the need for a method that respects this core nature of qualitative data and additionally enables getting a grasp of the factors that the interviewees found important for their learning and developing. The desired goal was to facilitate the interviewees to tell their individual stories about the experience of the education and its possible effects on them.

The authors felt that using a questionnaire would not serve the purpose of the study and searched for a method that would be something different in nature. Instead, the personal interviews seemed to be more suitable because of the fact that when "exploring" a human being, why not using the benefit of interviewees telling themselves about things that concern them (Åhman 2003). Robson (1993, quoted in Åhman 2003) confirms that the benefits of an interview are flexibility, the ability to influence information gathering in that particular situation and the ability to observe body language and ask additional questions. Additionally, the desired sample of interviews can be better achieved like this. Moreover, according to Hirsijärvi& Hurme (2000, quoted in Åhman, 2003), there are no objective tests for every area and there is no need to develop one.

3.2.2 Methodology of Creating the Questions for the Interviews

When the authors created the interview questionnaire (See Appendix 1), Kirkpatrick's (1998) model of the evaluation of education was partly used as a guideline for the interview structure.

The four-level model of Kirkpatrick is a reproduction of the education evaluation. Kirkpatrick developed his model in 1959. The use of this model has constantly increased and it is estimated to be the most used evaluation form. (Åhman, 2003.)

Kirkpatrick (1998) clarifies the intangible term 'evaluation' by explaining that some training professionals believe that evaluation means measuring changes in behaviour that occur as a result of training programs. Others maintain that the only real evaluation lies in determining what final results occurred because of training programs. Still others think only in terms of the comment sheets that participants complete at the end of a program. Some are concerned with the learning that takes place in the classroom, as measured by increased knowledge, improved skills, and changes in attitude. They all are right-and wrong in that they fail to recognize that all four approaches are parts of what the authors mean by evaluating.

That is one reason Kirkpatrick developed the four-level model. He distinguishes four levels of evaluation: 1. Reaction Effects, 2. Learning Effects, 3. Change in Behaviour, and 4. Organizational Effects. According to Kirkpatrick (1998), within any quality system there are two sets of measures that one must respond to when assessing quality: the *internal drivers* that are used to measure your operation and the *external drivers* that your customers use to measure you. Within the framework of the Kirkpatrick model, level 1

and level 2 evaluation results are a training departments' internal drivers. They provide information on student satisfaction with the course and whether they have mastered the course content. Levels 3 and 4 then become the external drivers that provide information to business operations on the application of learned skills and the impact on business. (Kirkpatrick, 1998.)

Kirkpatrick perceived all these level to be important. However, as the authors' aim is slightly different, pursuing to reveal changes and influences occurring on a person's self-development after finishing the degree, the authors felt that certain modifications needed to be made to Kirkpatrick's model in order to serve the purposes of this study. Therefore, in order to focus more on issues regarding self-development and not on the program and its content, the authors decided to stress the second (2) and the third (3) level in the interviews and concentrate less on the first level. Moreover, in this case concerning an academic institution, the goals of education are not an attempt to change behaviour. The end result is an attempt to increase knowledge, improve skills and change attitudes. In addition, the authors changed the fourth (4th) level in whole and named it Management Style, which focuses on changes in the participants' management style after the education. Under that category, the authors were able to ask questions that were considered valid when it comes to the end results of a person's development as a person and manager, and thus gives the desired data for the research problems. Kirkpatrick's fifth (5th) level focuses on the organizational effects, such as development of productivity or quality within an organization, cost reductions and so on, which are hard to measure and are not a focus of this thesis.

Learning (level 2) can be defined as the extent to which the participants change attitudes, improve knowledge, and/or increase skill as a result of attending the program. Those are the three things that a training program can accomplish.

Some trainers say that no learning has taken place unless change in behaviour occurs. In the four levels described in the model, learning has taken place when one or more of the following occurs: Attitudes are changed, knowledge is increased, and skill is improved. One or more of the changes must take place if a change in behaviour is to occur. (Kirkpatrick, 1998.)

Behaviour (level 3) can be defined as the extent to which change in behaviour has occurred because the participant attended the training program. In order for change to occur, four conditions are necessary: The person must have a desire to change, the person must know what to do and how to do it, the person must work in the right climate and the person must be rewarded for changing. (Kirkpatrick, 1998.)

The authors created all the questions under each level used in this study. The ideas have risen from the authors' own intellect, inspired by their education and previous experiences in work life. Literature has also triggered some of the ideas. The exception is the second level, Learning Effects. The questions in that section have been customized according to a model modified by Åhman (2003), which is illustrated in Figure 3. Åhman has created her model based on the wide range of theories of concepts such as thought-, self- and mind-leadership, emotion-intelligence and so forth, and used other researcher's results as well, for example Lombardo's and Eichinger's (2000). She has formed the model in order to use it in her research about "Own Mind-Leadership" in today's work life.

The authors used the idea of the model in order to classify and create questions about the learning effects of education. The authors consider this model as an integrated model for self-development, including several important aspects that

determine the rather vague concept of self-development. Therefore, while creating the questions for the interviews, this model also inspired the authors.

Åhman's (2003) model represents four different categories: "Me Flexibility - comfortable with yourself", "Result Flexibility - the aim is clear", "You Flexibility - I can share it", and "Change Flexibility - I can move further". Åhman argues that when a person has all of these under the control, self-leadership is at the productive state. In this thesis, self-leadership is not the actual research area since this study focuses on self-development, but the authors think that when developing these phenomenon mentioned above a person is prepared to cope with the challenges of the contemporary world and business life: to tolerate the uncertainty, self-development orientation and working as a part of the international network. The authors think that these trends of the model also foster development of a person. As already mentioned, the authors found out that Åhman's model is useful for this study even though it is not perfectly illustrating the exact focus area of this thesis. Therefore, the authors decided to modify this model further to better respond to the requirements of this study and in so doing were able to build the structure of the data analysis to the base of the Åhman's model. Further explanation is provided in the Methodology for Structuring the Data Analysis-chapter.
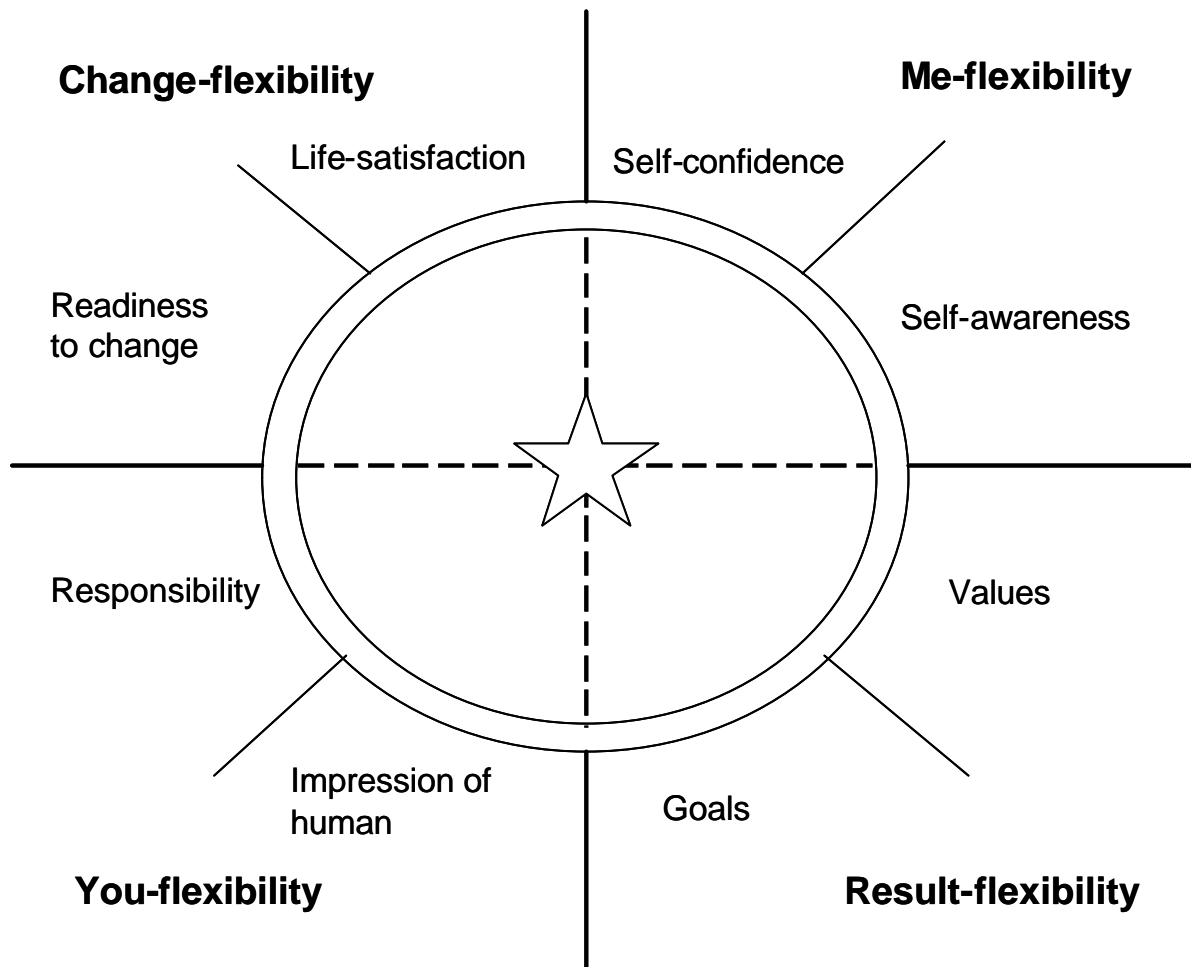
Figure 3. The Essential Categories for Self-Leadership – Model (Åhman, 2003)

3.2.3 Method of Conducting the Interviews

As aforementioned, the authors decided to use personal, half-structured interviews in order to collect the empirical data, as this method was considered to be the most appropriate for this research. In order to fully understand the nature and the possibilities of this kind of method, the authors wanted to examine closely the way to conduct the interviews so that they would be able to benefit the most from the interview situation.

After becoming familiar with the Critical Incident Technique (hereafter CIT) the authors noticed that CIT is an open-ended method that enables finding out what are individuals views of the important situations and characters, because in opposition to formal structured interviews, it allows a more open and flexible context for the interviewees to freely and completely express what they wish and how they wish[11] (Punch, 1998 quoted in Ravenscroft and Rogers, 2003). Critical incidents can only be recognized retrospectively when the participant remembers and reflects upon the situations already experienced[12]. When using the CIT, the interview can be considered as a dialogue through which individuals construct their realities, and these stories encode the information by which interviewees decide which events are considered critical in the given context (Lindlof, 1995, quoted in Ravenscroft and Rogers 2003). In so being, it was considered as an appropriate and valid method to be used in this research.

Following the principal rule of CIT, the authors developed a half-structured interview. The questions asked in each interview were following the same form in order to cover all the areas the authors sought after and to provide comparability between the interviewees. However, the authors utilized the possibility of being flexible that the half structured interview style facilitates and also asked a great deal of additional questions related to certain situations and events interviewees told about. This provided the authors with an opportunity to grasp additional information, which in turn offered a more holistic view and understanding of a person and the significant subjects of his/her learning process and the benefits from the E-MBA s/he highlighted.

This was also explained to the interviewee at the beginning of each meeting; the more detailed events they were able to share and describe the better. In

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[11] www.usabilitynet.org 12.11.2004

[12] www.usabilitynet.org 12.11.2004

addition, the interviewees were asked to reflect upon the events they held most significant to their learning and development. This was also crucial for another reason; the authors aimed to build the structure for the analysis of the empirical findings with the help of the Critical Incident Technique. This design was chosen accordingly to Kile (1969), who states that learning takes place within the individual participant and it should therefore be *his* starting point, the experiment process as well as the outcome of the education that should be measured. This growth can then be compared with the growth of other persons, taking into consideration the relation to the environment and personal characteristics of each person. (Kile, 1969.)

The register of former E-MBA students was used as a source of contact information when selecting the interviewees. Interviewees were first contacted via e-mail in order to settle the interview dates and times. All the interviews except one were held at interviewees' offices. Altogether, ten interviews were conducted; first eight by meeting the interviewees face-to-face and last two by phone. The phone interviews were made after the authors had already processed the data gathered from the personal interviews in order to confirm the patterns the authors had found. The authors wanted to have as heterogeneous sample as possible in order to minimize the risk of coincidence explaining the similarities in responses. The authors conducted all interviews. The language used in every interview was English.

The authors chose the interviewees so that they represent different groups according to their gender, age, background education, and the year of E-MBA graduation. Half of the interviewees are women and the other half is men. Their ages vary from 37 to 61 years and they hold various background educations such as Bachelor in Science-degrees and Masters in Science-degrees in engineering, occupational psychology and pedagogic, management accounting

and finance, local government specified in human resources, business administration, and mechanical engineering. One of these persons took the E-MBA degree ten (10) years ago, two of them seven (7) years ago, another two four (4) years ago, one of the interviewees graduated two (2) year ago and two persons had the diploma one (1) year ago. The interviews with the managers who graduated several years ago were done in order to understand possible long-term influences of the program. In this manner the authors were able to see whether the time-dimension generates significant changes in a person's learning and behaviour.

Every effort was made to obtain a good rapport with people interviewed. The respondents were acquainted with the general outline of the project prior to the interview. The authors made every effort to dissociate themselves as the representatives of the "company" (E-MBA program) to assure the interviewees of the confidentiality and to maintain the status of the authors as scientific investigators. Surely the authors cannot be sure of what the interviewees did not tell but all of them seemed to tell as much as they could, including confidential information. Moreover, the observation of the authors indicates that the atmosphere was relaxed and open for truthful discussion. After a brief introduction in which the nature of the Master Thesis was explained, the respondents were informed about the fact that the primary interest of the authors was to hear about actual experiences. As much time was given to interviewee as he/she was capable to offer or interested to give for this project.

3.3 Methodology for Structuring the Data Analysis

As a basis for formulating the structure of the analysis, the authors decided to use Åhman's (2003) model, which was also used for creating some of the

interview questions. The model is presented in the Methodology for Data Collection section. However, as the authors had already modified and combined Åhman's model with Kirkpatrick's 4-level model while creating interview questions, they felt it was not appropriate, as such, for this analysis. Thereby the authors decided to build their own model, which is strongly inspired by Åhman's model, regarding findings from the interviews. With their own model the authors were to be able to analyse topics most relevant to this thesis.

As already described in the Methodology for Conducting the Interviews chapter, the authors used Critical Incident Technique in formulating the interviews. Thereby, using the CIT method for structuring the analysis seemed to be a logical continuation. In the Critical Incident Technique the collected data is analysed by content analysis, which requires, that the researcher reads and re-reads the gathered information in order to reveal common patterns and themes occurring across the answers (Twelker, 2003; Ravenscroft and Rogers 2003). This technique was also used when the empirical data of this study was processed in order to reveal the most important themes that occurred within the interviews. For this purpose all the interviews were tape-recorded which enabled going back to the interviews again to check details. The interviews were also typed according to the tapes, which enabled easier access to the empirical data for the authors. After exploring the most significant areas and discussing different possibilities for themes and opinions the authors had of them, the following eight themes were selected:

1. Awareness of own strengths and weaknesses
2. Changes in self-confidence
3. Changes in behaviour
4. Taking more initiatives

5. Changes in interaction with co-workers

6. Feedback and comments gained

7. New career opportunities, and

8. New knowledge.

The interviewees' statements and experiences are analysed through these Themes. This is done twice, as the first time the data is analysed generally and the second time the gender difference is taken into account. In addition, since CIT offers an opportunity to process and analyse the collected data in both ways, quantitatively and qualitatively[13] the authors decided to use both alternatives. The authors believe that this way they can prevent the analysis of lacking a part of valuable information and instead, are able to create and offer a wider perspective, covering all essential aspects. Thus, in addition to the verbal analysis, the empirical data is presented also in a table form as well as with the help of figures. However, the tables are placed in the Appendices since the figures are illustrating the model that the authors modified to be a basis for the analysis. Thus the figures have to be considered as holding a more central position than tables.

Even though the authors have selected eight themes, the reader can find explanations of the interviewees' answers under the five headlines. This is due to the close relation of some themes. As can be seen in the Appendix 2, Table 1, the second theme, changes in self-confidence, needed to be divided into three sub-themes in order to present the interviewee's experiences quantitatively in a table. Similarly, the third theme, changes in interaction with co-workers, had to be divided into two sub-themes. Otherwise it would have been impossible to illustrate the actual amount and degree of answers, as there was great variety

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[13] www.apa.org

among them. However, further in the analysis section these themes will be discussed as coherent units as issues within them are closely related to each other. In addition, as the reader can notice, the total amount of the answers to fifth theme, new knowledge (see Table 1), is more than eight. This is because the authors did not wanted to limit the amount of factors that the interviewees felt were the most crucial for their learning. Therefore, some of the interviewees mentioned several different issues as being what they most appreciated about the E-MBA education and all these are taken into account in the chart.

As already mentioned in the beginning of this thesis, an unpredictable result emerged which was not purposely sought after by the authors. Namely, there was a noteworthy distinction in the answers of men versus the answers of women. In order to grasp a deeper understanding of to what extent this demographic variable influenced the statements, the authors decided to analyse the data again through the eight aforementioned themes, while simultaneously considering the differences in responses due to the gender of the interviewees.

Moreover, the authors were determined to compare the aims and content of the E-MBA with the experiences of the participants. Yet it is not the authors endeavour to evaluate the program as such; the authors believe that this comparison will create a deeper perspective and understanding about how valuable different aims and methods of the program are for participants' self-development. In addition, it will provide information for those responsible for the program content about which areas the former students appreciated and what areas they found less important.

4. Theoretical Construction

In the following paragraphs the authors describe and discuss some contemporary prescriptions about management and gender. Knowledge about these concepts creates a platform on which the authors have based and built the actual theoretical sector. The theoretical construction enables the authors to answer the research problems and the theories are used later in the thesis, where the empirical findings have been analysed.

4.2 Management Education

Handy (1970) supports the feelings of the authors by saying that a lack of exact definition and assessment of the outcomes appearing within the participants of management education programmes have been a major problem for a long time. Even though it is a largely unsolved problem it deserves an increasing importance, especially as there seems to be a wide variety of different programs holding diverse goals and standards. (Handy, 1970.)

The psychological investigation of executives in the literature is rare. However, the authors find Levinson's work considering managerial education to be appropriate for this thesis. Therefore, the main results that he indicated are presented in the following as they greatly support the empirical findings of this thesis. Levinson (1981) suggests that managers should take an advanced management program five years after graduating with an MBA or equivalent. According to him, when the managers move to upper levels they have to start

to think more broadly, understand more comprehensively and act in a more sophisticated way. He suggests that it is also essential to start to think strategically instead of thinking tactically and move from meeting objectives to conceptualise the nature of the business. Even though Levinson speaks about the MBA as a basic education, the authors consider the E-MBA as corresponding to the advanced management program. That is because Levinson's basic thought is that a manager should achieve working experience for the five years before entering to the advanced program and that is one of the crucial main requirements for the E-MBA education applicants. Levinson argues that by participating in the advanced management program, the participants will get a broader view of management since they are able to bring their own experience to the classroom and apply it to higher-level conceptual problems. Moreover, it enables them to see others struggling with the same issues and to have a selection of points of view about how to deal with them. Seeing others in the same position will temper the participants' tendency towards self-criticism. Levinson thinks that the experience of refreshment as well as a sense of being up-to-date will emerge from such programs. In addition, Levinson explains the results of one specific research that revealed significant results within self-development that emerged among the executives who undertook a management program at the university in America. He states that their interests in self-development seemed to be more conscious to them afterwards than before and that there was evidence that many began to think about their personal growth toward new goals that were not in their thoughts before. Moreover, these executives felt a greater ability to participate in a wider variety of discussions in social and business contacts after taking the management program. (Levinson, 1981.)

Levinson (1981) argues that one of the most important factors the managerial education can and should affect is management and leadership style. He says:

"Rarely are economists, accountants, engineers and others aware of their assumptions about human personality functioning. As a result, many policies and practices in management are mutually contradictory." Therefore, as the managers become more aware of their own assumptions and of how the human personality actually functions due to the education, it eases their efforts in leading their subordinates and interaction with co-workers. (Levinson, 1981.)

4.3 Management Education and Self-Development

Self-development emerged as a major concept in management development in the 1970s (Mumford, 1997). During the 1980s and 1990s, self-development has moved from the periphery of development activity into the mainstream of management and business development. This can be attributed at least in part to advances in information technology, which have made it more possible to deliver training directly to individuals.[14] Working in the contemporary information age presents new challenges and opportunities for employees at globally competitive enterprises. Likewise, management is now tasked with the strategic responsibility of ensuring that employees, as human capital, add greater value to the company. Part of this strategy is to make sure that employees optimise their full self-potential, and that mechanisms are in place to enable the enterprise to promote and harness this contribution. This responsibility has become even more essential in the new world of work in the 21st century because the globalisation of the world's economy has had a dramatic impact on the nature of work, and has contributed to an observable restructuring industrial production and work processes. Self-development is notably related to the general technical and social skills required at any level of

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[14] Diane Bailey Associates

employment and is of much greater importance now than ten or twenty years ago. In many aspects technology is dictating the boundaries of work and the social skills that an individual needs to acquire. "Concomitant with globalisation - cross-national economic interdependence - in industry or business, are number of changes in work, organization and management strategy". (Cunningham, 2004.)

It is towards this brief background of the current nature of work that the concept of self-development is addressed. Regarding the question of self-development, Pedler (1988) defines it in the context of management education as a term for a growing family of approaches, which give the learner control over the processes and tasks of his/her own development. Mumford (1997) states that the main authors who have identified the meaning of and the processes involved in self-development have been Pedler et al. They define self-development as "personal development, with a manager taking primary responsibility for his own learning and for choosing the means to achieve this" (Pedler et al., 1994 quoted in Mumford, 1997, p.239). They define a larger part of the difference having to do with treating managers as agents in their own development processes, rather than patients receiving treatment from experts. They separate learning and development and they are especially concerned with the development of the whole person rather than with discrete job-centred aspects of learning. (Mumford, 1997.)

According to Pedler (1988), self-development methods stress that it is the learner (and not the trainer or any other) who takes primary responsibility for identifying need and choosing the aims for learning and development, for choosing the methods, means, times and places for learning, and for evaluating the results. Pedler's point is that it is about learner power to act as an individual rather than trainer power to direct and advice. That is why it is complex in the

organizations where direction normally comes from the top down. However, the attraction of self-development stems from the fact that the learner cannot be made to learn. (Pedler, 1988.)

Delf (1978) identifies a definition, which serves the widest sense, in all aspects of life. According to him, self-development is a process by which individuals:

- Identify their personal development goals
- Consciously take responsibility for planning and taking appropriate action to reach these goals
- Develop and use methods of monitoring progress and assess outcomes
- Re-assess goals in light of new experiences.

Delf (1978) continues by explaining that self-development differs from traditional approaches of training and development as it is conceived, planned, controlled and assessed by the individual in his/her own terms; not those of the trainer, adviser or of the organisation in which he/she works (Delf, 1978). This definition supports the definition by Pedler (1988), which was described above.

According to Pedler et al. (1994, quoted in Mumford, 1997), self-development is not an activity corresponding to particular techniques like role-play, case studies or lectures. Nor is it simply a collection of relatively untraditional approaches to learning through biography, self-assessment, questionnaires or counselling. Self-development represents a dramatically fundamental and difficult shift of thinking, in that:

- Responsibility for learning is taken on by the learner, and not seen as the responsibility of the provider of learning opportunities

- The focus is on the individual and his/her particular needs rather than on large groups of managers with common needs

- The manager is not simply the receiver of judgements by other people on his/her learning needs and their solutions, but is instead involved in the analysis of the needs and the discussion of solutions

- Because of the process of involvement, responsibility clearly rests with the learner

- The combination of involvement and responsibility generates commitment to personal action, instead of acceptance of the need to follow someone else's instructions

- Because individuals work on defining their own personal needs they have already begun to engage in not only the generation of solutions but work on the solutions.

All of the reasons offered this far can be seen as practical statements of how to secure more effective individual management development. This closely relates to the associated point of whether one is developing or seeking to develop the whole person, or are operating at more immediate managerial levels of particular skills. (Pedler et al. quoted in Mumford, 1997.)

According to Delf (1978), a new emphasis on self-development as an approach to improve the effectiveness of managers has been growing over the years. It is being increasingly noticed that one of the most significant factors affecting success in management development activities is the extent to which individuals see development opportunities around them and take advantage of them. Self-development represents a clear opportunity to increase the chance of success in development at work and seems to be in tune with changes in the outlook of those people who represent tomorrow's managers. Managers can be helped to acquire or to develop the skills and behaviour in order to become a self-organized learner. When much time and effort has been continuously put in this development, the person will gain better methods and personal commitment into producing improved job performance and development at

work. Therefore, Delf emphasises the importance of promoting self-development in the organizations. His opinion represents a clear opportunity to increase the chances of success at work. (Delf, 1978.)

The 1960s was, according to Pedler (1988), the age of systematic training, stimulated by skills shortages in a full employment economy and encouraged by the industrial training act. Training was externally directed and training needs stemmed from organisational goals; skilled training officers diagnosed individual needs, set measurable objectives, developed programmes, and so on. Individuals were trained in groups, where the training needs were all the same. Systematic training was effective and still is but when the approach was applied to management development, a critical problem known as the "transfer of training" emerged. Programs were, according to post-course evaluation instruments, excellent and trainees learned a lot but their actions and possible changes in their behaviour back at work did not change. (Pedler, 1988.)

This problem could naturally lead to a focus of learning and transfer of learning into on-the-job behaviour. However, the aim of this thesis is not in learning and whether it has led to change of action or behaviour of a manager. Instead this study focuses on what the education does for the self-development of a person. This must be done with respect to the limitations of a Master Thesis. This is the reason the authors continue presenting the thoughts of self-development further.

Cunningham (2004) considers self-development as a process, which implies the following:

- Self-awareness and introspection
- Realization of capacity and shortcomings
- Self-initiated willingness to change
- Long-term commitment to change
- Embarking on a process of change
- Accepting of possible failure
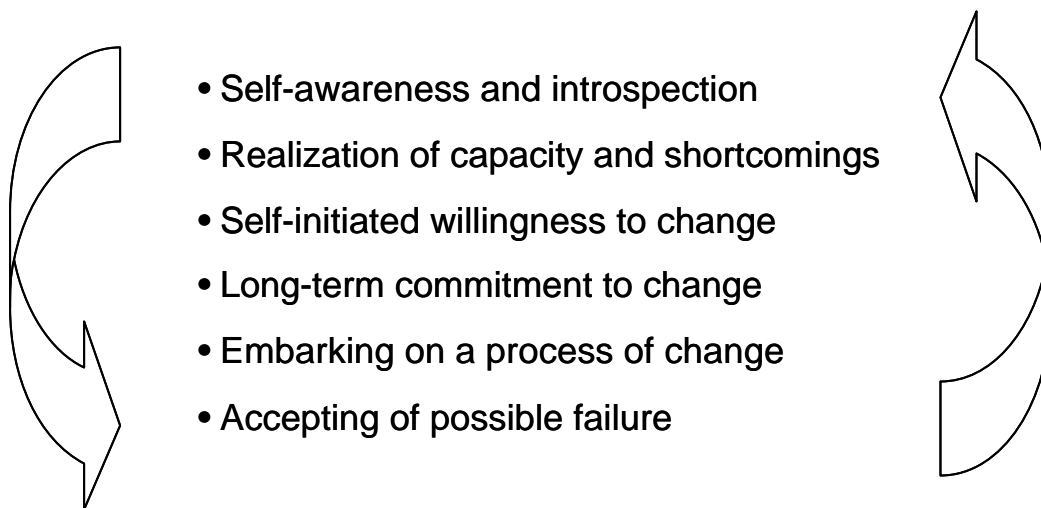
Figure 4. The Components of Self-Development (Cunningham, 2004)

Targama (1992) goes further by arguing that a stronger manager-identity often follows with stronger self-confidence in work. In a leader or a manager education program one can establish new views and learn new methods. But taking such a program can also lead to a situation where one becomes confident to utilize those skills and competencies one already has. (Targama, 1992.)

Pedler et al. (1988) talk about traditional management courses. They think that such training where there is a professional tutor teaching a group of individuals is the traditional method of teaching management techniques. While the professor-student relationship is likely to be greater than with the workplace training, this method has the benefits of a professional tutor, with a greater depth of knowledge of different subjects, theories and techniques and hopefully the skills to pass it on. These kinds of training are more costly than workplace training because greater resources are required and the person is taken away from the workplace, but this does have the advantage of removing workplace distractions. Much, if not most, of the management self-development takes place during the course of everyday work and life experience. (Pedler et al. 1988.)

From here on, the theoretical discussion would naturally take place in exploring the advantages and disadvantages of the management courses. However, the purpose of this thesis is not to evaluate the content of the E-MBA program, itself. Furthermore, the type of the education program that the E-MBA represents is not seen as very traditional in nature as it uses "learning how to learn" – methods and sub-groups work as the central parts of the education. Pedler et al. (1988) mention that emphasis within management courses should be placed on the development of the group, but apart from that, the areas of work covered will depend on membership. Groups usually aim to develop the individual members by learning from the skills and experiences of other members and how much is learned will depend on what is available in the group. Managers operate in groups, and it is therefore logical that their training will be the most effective in the same environment. (Pedler et a., 1988.)

The theoretical patterns and arguments discussed in this section were used to help analyse the empirical findings of this research in the analysis chapter. The authors have tried to apply this knowledge in order to find out in what ways the participants expressed self-development that can be related to their E-MBA training. The authors also try to explain the need of self-development for certain aspects, such as person's (manager's) career success and life satisfaction.

4.4 Management Education, Self-Development and Gender

Gender is one of several issues that create differences at work. Pedler et al. (1988) consider these issues, sharing the potential for creating discrimination against minorities at work and for forming a sense of collective and individual identity, which provides a powerful motivation for self-development.

Fritchie et al. (1988, quoted in Pedler et al. 1988) continue by declaring that if the feminine concept of 'self' tends to be inclusive and relational and the masculine concept centred and separate, then 'self-development' directly has a different meaning for many women than for many men. At present, many programs are often limited to a sub-set of a particular workforce. The majority of these pre-identified people are almost certainly male, for whom opportunities and resources for self-development with the organisation's approval are open and available. Obviously, these models of self-development cut out of the calculation most women, who are usually concentrated in the lower levels of employment. (Fritche, 1988, quoted in Pedler et al. 1988.)

According to Klein et al. (1996), only few studies have investigated the training experiences of executives and managers. There has also been limited investigation of gender differences despite the dramatic rise of women in managerial and executive roles. It is true that women are disproportionately represented in lower-level corporate jobs and may feel less comfortable in work and training settings because of their token status. Nevertheless a growing number of women attain middle- and upper-level positions, making it essential to understand the influence of gender on learning during leadership education. The lack of research on gender and level in management education is due to a number of factors. Historically, upper management has been a male domain, so gender has rarely been investigated. In addition, data on leadership education has not widely been available possibly due to concerns that confidentiality cannot be maintained. Except for work by Levinson, the psychological investigation of executives is rare; there may be a reluctance to evaluate their performance. Also, academics tend to study students or lower status employees, not experienced managers in work settings. One exception found that after

leadership-training, men report more positive affective reactions than women managers. (Klein et al. 1996.)

Hatcher (2003) also states that even though management has long been recognized as a masculine space, an important part of these changing expectations also involves a redrawing of the traditional masculine/feminine hierarchy of logic/emotion. He continues by arguing that the establishment of a number of truths about the meaning of gender has contributed to our understanding of what it means to be a successful manager: one who must be not just rational, but passionate about a range of managerial practices. The place of emotions in good managerial behaviour now has a new salience and is valued alongside, and sometimes in preference to, the logical and rational behaviour of managers. Also according to Hancock (1998), the phenomenon of women in the workplace arose in the past two or three decades; the cultural stereotype defining men as leaders and women as supporters has lasted for centuries. That image is rapidly changing. His opinion is that the expansion of world markets and diversity among employees is redefining the paradigm of the business manager from analytical to empathetic, from competitive to cooperative. Today, business is less about building mathematical models than about building relationships, reflected in the new priority among MBA hires for communication, interpersonal, and team-building skills. (Hancock, 1999.)

Theories about the differences between men and women are endless and varied. Therefore, it is reasonable to conclude that efforts to directly transfer findings based on the study of men to the life course of women may lead to oversimplified or erroneous conclusions. Most importantly, at present the role of women is changing all the time, as equality has become a major focus. Furthermore, according to Crites and Cytrynbaum (1989), in studying the adult development of women, parameters such as stage of development, investment

in family role and the life cycle stage of the family among other parameters must be taken into account.

With the help of the gender theory in self-development, the authors wished to be able to explain in the analysis that women and men gained different things from the E-MBA program together with many other things, which occurred to be different between the sexes.

To conclude the theory section, the authors created a figure to pull all the aspects of the theoretical hypothesis together. Thus, Figure 5 illustrates the theoretical focus of this thesis and how every aspect of it is interconnecting with each other.
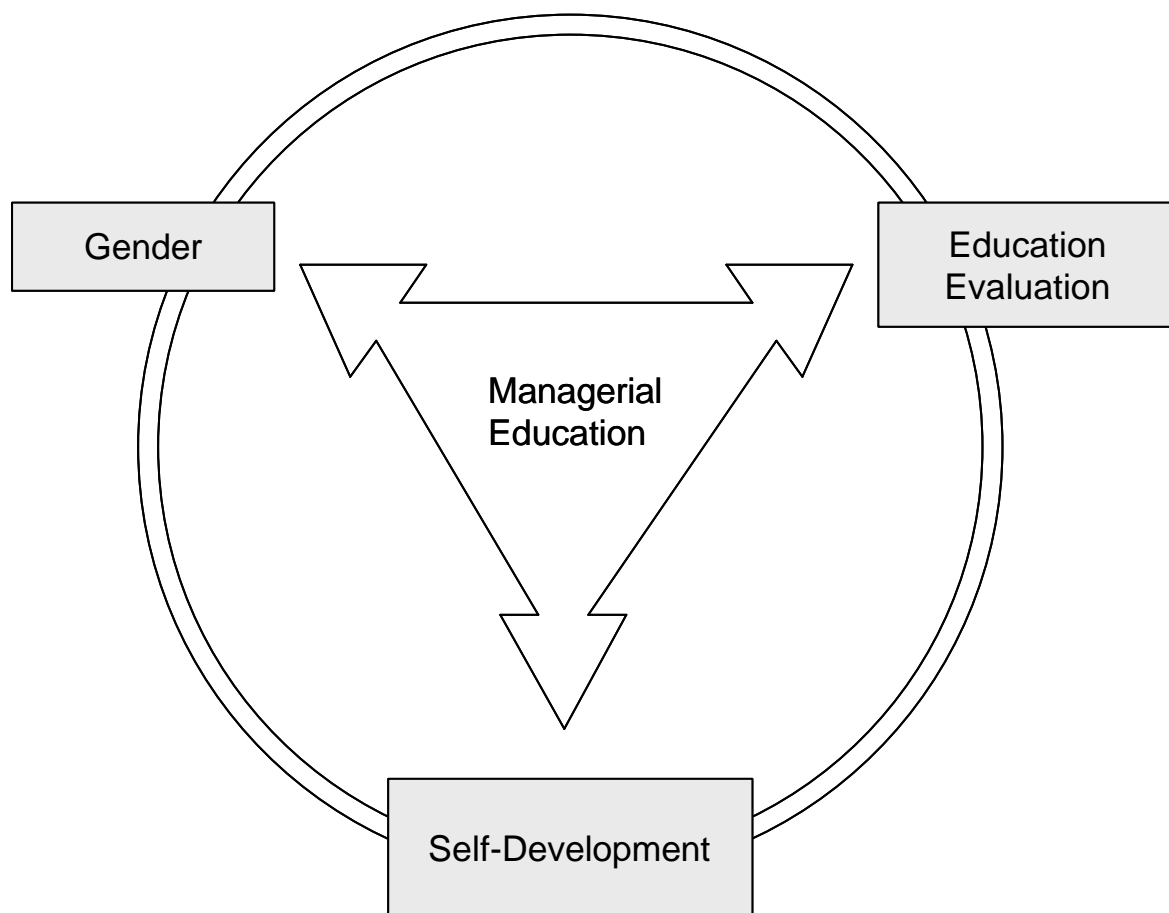
Figure 5. Illustration of the Theoretical Construction (created by the authors, 2004)

5. Empiric

In the following chapter each of the eight interviewees are described, using their experiences and stories as empirical findings of the research conducted. The reader should note that in order to protect their identity and to fully embrace confidentiality, none of the interviewees are presented with their actual names. The factors revealed from the interviews and described in this chapter will be used later in the analysis to measure the effects of the E-MBA program on each and everyone's self-development.

5.1 Paul

Paul is a 44-year-old manager in the banking industry. His previous education, BBA, is in Business Administration. He completed the E-MBA diploma a couple of years ago. During the E-MBA, he worked for a different employer than he is working for now. Paul has five subordinates. He likes the company culture and has the freedom and the power to choose himself how to make good business and who to do that with.

It was his idea to participate in the E-MBA education. He considered it to be a good way to spend the extra leisure time he had at that time. He believed studying was fun, useful in the future and offered new possibilities for his career. He says that it was two good years and he learned a lot and got a great deal of business contacts within different branches. He explained that if something comes up that he doesn't know anything about he can call these people and ask for their professional opinion. His class is still having meetings

twice a year. The meetings are a mixture of business and pleasure: dinner, lecturer, etc.

When it comes to the strengths and weaknesses and their recognition as a result of the education program, Paul thinks he now knows more about his strong sides. In his opinion, he noticed during the education that he was able to manage many things at the same time; he was able to cope with the education, his work, colleagues, and so on. He says that one noticed he was doing quite a good job and from that point of view one becomes proud of himself knowing that he can handle, manage and cope with those kinds of requirements. Paul says that the education had a positive influence on his self-image, as an MBA is part of personal development.

He thinks that the program offers a good starting point for a successful career, but he does not think he has used the diploma as much as he could have done. However, he thinks that he would have got the same position from his company as what he holds now even if he would not have completed the degree. He says his position would be good anyway. He thinks that the E-MBA education has not really influenced his career. He states again that it probably comes down to the fact that he has not used it, but he still sees that as a good trigger for finding a new job or new opportunities in general.

Paul feels that he knows his subordinates quite well, but points out that it is quite hard to learn to know the subordinates and other colleagues and that, according to him, is normal. Whether his subordinates know him well has not been considered and he thinks they do not know him very well and that he should be more open minded towards them in the future.

Paul did not mention much about any particular new knowledge he might have learned in the program but states that one gains tools for discussions. From time to time he is able to relate certain discussions with something that he learned with the education. The same goes to what he has read and studied; he can use those facts in the arguments. His opinion is that the more you know, the more you can use it in different situations. Paul explains that he has always worked quite close to the presidents of companies and has always been quite close to the major decisions, within different organizations. So some of the lectures (in E-MBA) were like a confirmation; "Yeah, this is exactly how we discussed about it at work in that certain situation." It was more like repeating what he had learned in real life situations. He thinks that was really good.

His opinion is that one should update his/her knowledge frequently in order to develop them self and to be able to move further. Paul concludes that he is satisfied and happy at his work at the moment and the possibilities to move for different tasks in the company are quite good.

5.2 Petrus

Petrus is a 52-year-old manager within the telecommunication industry and he has a background as an engineer. He works for the same company as he did during the E-MBA program, which he took several years ago. He has seven subordinates. Petrus was recommended by the company's CEO to take part in the program. He has been a manager for many years so he thought it would give him a better understanding of how other companies are working and what was new within the different subject areas of what the E-MBA offers, such as production, quality, leadership etc. Furthermore, he states that half of the interest was to meet other people and learn how they and their companies work.

Petrus did not feel that he created any long-term contacts and he has not kept in touch with fellow students after the programme ended. He says the reason may be that they came from so many different business areas that there was not that much in common.

Petrus' opinion is that the E-MBA can offer a good starting point for a successful career, especially if one is interested in a general management position. That is when it is good to have different types of skills, not only one specific speciality area, but one has to know a little bit of everything. For that purpose, according to him, the program is perfectly suited. He thinks that there was some kind of a focus on the economical side, which is always very useful if one is working in the management team; one really understands what figures mean, learns to analyse them and to understand how they effect different business situations. For Petrus it is hard to say whether the diploma affected his career in anyway. He says he was in contact with a number of companies and discussed president positions with these organizations. Nevertheless, he is happy he turned the opportunities down, as these companies no longer exist. In any case, Petrus says he did not see any direct consequences of the education for his career. He explains that his company was in a constant state of change, so it is difficult to estimate what the diploma's effect was in that. He says that one is never able to give a good answer, as it is hard to see the situation without the diploma. He says that he also cannot say that the diploma has hindered him in anyway. It has probably been an advantage, he states at the end.

He does not pinpoint any specific new knowledge that he learned in the E-MBA education, but he says that he now feels capable of having more discussions outside his specific speciality area. For example, he has been more involved in discussions about financial situations and economics because now he has a better understanding of what these things mean and he can have a

discussion with their financial department. He mentions that gaining more confidence in discussing other areas is new for him. Later on Petrus mentions that there were some parts in the programme dealing with change management and that he thinks they were quite good. At his company there are big changes going on at the moment as well, so he thinks that they need all the skills they can find to cope with the changing situations.

When discussing with him his strengths and weaknesses, Petrus said that he does not think he discovered anything that he did not know earlier. His opinion is that he did not learn so much about himself, but that it was always interesting to see how people act and react in the groups. When asked why he feels there was no need to take a deeper look at himself, he says he is stubborn.

However, Petrus thinks the education had an influence on his self-confidence. He points out that the title itself is worth something. It gives some kind of self-confidence to work with people from other companies and to see how he works with them.

Petrus doubts if anything changed in his relationship to other people (for example colleagues) after the education. He does not think it was the case, at least he has not noticed, he says. He continues by explaining that the E-MBA did not have that focus, the actual leadership part was not that large. He thinks they have had more comprehensive and detailed leadership programs at his company and that has probably influenced him more than the program because E- MBA was at a very high level, he says. Petrus explains that the meaning of it is to give an overview of number of different topics. It would be very strange if one had changed a lot after returning from that kind of a program, he argues. He believes that he knows his subordinates quite well. They have had some tough times but right now the management team of his department is working

well. For them, he says, he opens up a little bit but not very much. He says that one has some kind of the dignity as a manager and thus does not share everything.

Petrus says he is happy at his work at the moment as there are many changes going on and he knows he will have new challenges, which according to him is very important after every five-year period.

5.3 Pelle

Pelle is a 40-year-old manager in the retail business. He also holds a Masters Degree in mechanical engineering. He works for the same company and has the same position as during the E-MBA education, which was not so many years ago. He has four subordinates. It was his idea to take part in the program, as he heard about it from his friends who had participated in the program and who recommended it to him. He found the E-MBA meetings refreshing, offering a change in daily routines. He also mentions the convenience to have a network of classmates to ask for advice. The reason he decided to apply for the programme was that he considered his background education too technical; so he took the E-MBA in order to widen his perspective and collect a broader knowledge base. He realised he was lacking overall insight of a business and management. This, in turn, would increase his competence and give him a better starting point for reaching new job opportunities, either within his current employer company or elsewhere.

Pelle says that he actually felt the satisfaction of learning new things. He found the critical and intellectual part of the education fascinating; he realised that he actually can search for information and knowledge within any subject and

analyse it in order to see how he can apply it in practice, in his work situations. However, these days he is too busy to do that, and usually in companies one does not analyse the results of using certain theories or models. In the future he believes that if his next tasks have something to do with strategic business development he will be able to use that tool as well. Having a technical background the program provided him with many new things. He learned to see how everything connects together.

He sometimes feels frustrated as people who have not undergone the same kind of education cannot see things from the same perspective as he, but have a narrower point of view. Moreover, he has been so occupied with his project at hand that he has not had time to sell his new ideas to other people. In the future he might move to work on things concerning the company strategies and he thinks he can have an affect on the business development and that it will be done in the way they did the reports in the E-MBA programme. Then they could do a proper analysis of the present situation and other information needed in order to see what to do, how to act, and so on. He knows, that he first has to sell these ideas in order to establish the changes in the strategies that he is thinking about. In addition, he definitely has a broader view on management and business issues after the education. He can see opportunities and threats, as well as weaknesses in top management behaviour now. As an example, he explains that the reflection around management things has definitely changed his views. He has understood that the process of doing business is not static, but very dynamic.

So far the E-MBA education has not influenced his career, but that is partly his own choice. He worked as a project leader when he started the programme and after he graduated he wanted to keep his old position until the end of the project. However, he has had several conversations with his manager, who

thought he definitely deserves a higher position after the ongoing project ends. Pelle is willing to move to another position; he is especially interested in tasks that consider more strategic issues of business life, such as business development.

The E-MBA increased his self-confidence. He now feels that he has a stronger knowledge base in strategic and financial issues than he had before. Therefore, he thinks he can better participate in conversations considering these matters and can have a stronger argument as well. Furthermore, he believes he has a holistic understanding of the company's situation, as he now understands the meaning of the strategies, goals and how business can be developed. This, in turn, has given him even more self-confidence, as he is now more competent than before the education. He says "no" more often at work, but that might also be something that comes with age and confidence. He also thinks that having work experience before entering the E-MBA education is important; it gives a better understanding of the issues handled in programme. On the other hand, he felt frustration during the E-MBA programme due to the lack of the time at the same time they should have been writing a report and focusing on a group dynamics as well. Maybe the group spirit part did not get as much attention as it should have.

He considers the E-MBA as "hardware", which provides knowledge and understanding about certain general business issues. This education does not focus much on leadership issues and other "software", but might indirectly influence these sides of a person as well. He says he mainly gained the satisfaction of learning new things. Additionally, the education was a very good step for understanding and learning how to run a business and what is needed in doing good business. He thinks it increased his own value; it was an

investment in himself. He sees many areas where he can contribute with a new way of working, which he learned during the program.

5.4 Patrick

Patrick, a 61-year-old insurance manager has both a technical and business administration background. He works for the same company, in the same position, as he did at the time of the E-MBA education, which was several years ago. Patrick does not have subordinates and he prefers working that way, concentrating fully on his special business area. He had seen the brochures that were sent to his company almost every year but he never got interested until a colleague of his, who participated in the E-MBA earlier, recommended the program to Patrick. She told him what they were doing during the education and that is when he thought it might be attractive for him, too.

It was not for his career that he took part in the program. He was happy in his position already. He mostly wanted to update his knowledge and make sure he did his things at work in a right way. He actually did not want to become a manager into too high a position in the company. He thinks it is not worth it. That would mean spending a lot of time with the things that he thinks are not worth spending time with. There is awfully lot of other things like the press and external things, which some people like, but he says he is not one of them. He explains that when studying at the university one constantly receives a lot of information. Afterwards it is time to work in the real world, which is more practical, less fancy and there is less time to do things and to think about the theories, etc. After a while one starts to think whether one lost the goals or if one is still updated with his knowledge and that is something this program can do, he says. He got a real "kick" from the studies. "If I would have known

earlier what it could do I probably would have done the same as one of my classmates said he is doing: undertaking something like this every ten years, to recharge your batteries and get going"! He points out the importance of meeting really knowledgeable people in the program and being able to receive and offer consultancy.

The program helped Patrick become more aware of his own strengths and weaknesses. This happened mostly through the sub-group work where everybody took different roles. He found some new sides to himself and supported the idea of what he already knew about himself. He says he had two different roles: an analytical role and making sure things get done. It came quite clear for him as they made so many reports, which they had to deliver by certain dates. He said that tests for analysing what kind of persons they are were also taken. Although he recognised some weaknesses too, he was not interested in changing some characteristics in himself. That comes down to the factor of age. According to Patrick, as he was at that age already he did not see the reason for changing the whole structure of his life at that point. He wanted to be a person he already was.

Moreover, he did not see anything changing between him and his colleagues as a result of the education. Patrick sees that the program had a definitive influence on his self-confidence. He has used the increased confidence in his work, in what he does. He is sure that he works better as he is on the top of his knowledge. He mentions that he takes more initiatives than he used to but points out that it might be a result of many things not only the education.

5.5 Helena

Helena is a 42-year-old woman working as a manager in the public sector in the field of Human Resources. She holds her BBA a Bachelor of Science in Local Government, with an emphasis in Human Resources. After the E-MBA education several years ago, she returned to her company as she received a new project. After that she did not want to go back to her old tasks, so she changed companies. Thereafter she changed employers several times on her own will. She has one subordinate at the moment. Several people and friends talked about the program and recommended it to her and that is why she became interested in it.

According to what she had heard about the program, she was interested in working in small groups and the idea of getting a more holistic, overall perspective on business issues. She thinks that most of the participants took the diploma in order to improve their career opportunities, but she personally is not so interested in career. It is more important for her to work where she thinks she can do the best work, for her as well as for the company. Helena says she wanted to learn more since she started to work right after graduating from the previous school. For her it was really interesting to have all the knowledge gained from the long work life and put it in the E-MBA education and to put that knowledge into the new cases they worked with. Nevertheless, the diploma has influenced her career. She says that she received feedback from the other employees of the company that she has gained a holistic view on things. She was doing things differently than was expected of her but her decisions turned out to be good and the right ones. She thinks the diploma definitely unlocked doors for her.

Helena thinks the program opened her eyes in many ways. Moreover she became more familiar with her strengths and weaknesses. They worked a lot in the groups and as the group was rather tight they were also mentally very close. She explains that they knew each other's strengths and weaknesses and they used it to their advantage. She thinks it was good that they actively used each other's strengths because it was obvious for her that not everyone had thought about their strengths and weaknesses earlier. She mentions one of her strengths to be braveness, she is not afraid of anything these days. Helena says that women are rather aware of their strong points and weaknesses while men do not want to think about that side of them so often. She continues explaining that she also learned that not all the issues she thought were her strong points were that strong after all. She is rather honest with her boss, too; he knows her strengths and weaknesses. She has been actively working on her weak or not so strong points, she states.

When talking about self-confidence, she says the program definitely had an influence. She thinks one grows and one can see that she is important in many ways, including professionally. Helena divorced quite soon after the program. Her opinion is that she was stronger and she was braver to tell what she likes and what she did not like. She thinks she changed somehow and today she is a much happier person. She has also received positive feedback on that from people near to her. She says she was not without self-confidence before, but now she does not care so much about what other people think of her and what she is doing. That used to be much more important earlier. If she feels that "this is what we need to do," she works for it and does not listen too much to other people. She points out that as she now has more confidence in herself, so do other people. She thinks they find it easier to trust her now.

In the program, Helena had expected to learn more about financial issues, "hard" business issues like economics, but because one of her group members was a financial manager, he checked everything and took care of the financial side of the group works. That was a little bit disappointing for her because he could directly see what the financial situation was and the others did not understood that much of it, she explains. She did not learn as much about economics as she had expected. What she learned was "to go out and find the knowledge and experiences you need." She also used the new knowledge she gained about management in her work when dealing with other managers. She learned how to convince them about new ideas. In other words, she learned new things about how to deal with people and she has also used that when meeting people. Furthermore, she learned to say 'no' when necessary, to be more organized and to work in projects towards certain goals. Moreover, she learned something else about herself which that extremely important for her.

She has good relationships with her subordinates. They know each other quite well, but she does not consider them as friends and that is something that is hard when being a manager. She says it is always a bit sad when you are a manager because you are left so much more alone and you cannot be very good friend with your subordinates. Of course you are polite and you discuss things, she continues, but it is not the same than what she remembers from the time before the program. It was much easier to work then, she concludes.

Helena thinks that the E-MBA was a turning point in her life. Before taking the programme she felt she wanted something more from life. She now feels that her life is in balance. For her it is more important to work where she thinks she can do the best work and feel happy. At he moment she is satisfied with her work, she also takes more time for her family than before. She plans to continue working where she is now until there is nothing new to learn anymore.

5.6 Hanna

Hanna is a 38-year-old manager working in the automotive industry in Human Resources. She has been working for the same company for eighteen years and has three subordinates. Her background education, BBA, is in occupational psychology studies. She was really interested in business contexts and how to run a business and felt it was important for an HR manager to have a lot of management knowledge, tools, and techniques to know how to work with different business areas. She says that she also took the program for her own self-development. She thinks that it is not so common that someone with the same background as her receives a chance to attend this kind of program, but she was strongly supported by her manager to participate in the program. One of her best friends attended the program before and recommended it to Hanna, who completed the education not so many years ago. She says that in the program, she met many people, made good friends and a good network, and they still keep the contact. She continues by explaining that men dominated her class and it was not that good mixture. There were three women in the class and that was a shame, she thinks. She was hoping for more challenge through a better mix of the genders.

Hanna thinks this program could provide a good starting point for a successful career, especially because it gives a good overall understanding of many business topics and how to run a business. The program had added value for her, she declares. She said that for her career is not the main focus, more important are the assignments that seem interesting and where she can bring something valuable. She thinks that she is able to move forward in her company with or without the MBA diploma. She continues that after the program she and her manager felt that Hanna should try to find a job somewhere else within the company. She was truly willing to learn what kind

of opportunities there were and then to find out if that could be something for her. She was asked to take a new job as a project leader. She was delighted, as she never thought about receiving an opportunity like that. She happily accepted it. She says that the E-MBA helped her to succeed with this new work. She felt updated when it came to the different business philosophies and in which ways to do business. She was able to understand many different business topics. She started to ask new questions about the company and about how the things were done there, as she now had a better understanding of certain areas. Recently she got a new job offer, from abroad. She thinks that it is not only because of her E-MBA diploma, but that it definitely was a way to show her capability and she thinks it helped her to receive new possibilities. She feels that the years after the program have been busy and full of new things happening to her. She has been involved in the new projects and has had new responsibilities, so it has been lot of learning and taking initiative. She now feels much more confidant.

She adds that she learned a lot in the sub-group. All the members of her small group had several years of work experience. She thinks it was a learning process for each and everyone in the group. Working like that was sometimes really hard. A few times during those two years, people might get divorced, get married, move abroad, etc. but one has to manage that as a team. She also learned a lot about herself. She learned where her limit is and learned about her personality; it became more obvious, she says. She thinks she developed to facilitate the working process of the sub-group reports, to see how each of them was able to contribute to the project. In the beginning of the program she felt a bit insecure, since she did not have a similar background as the others had, such as finance directors, engineers or entrepreneurs. At first she was wondering what could she possible add to this, but she learned that her input was as good as the others'.

Hanna thinks that the program definitely had a positive influence on her self-confidence. She is proud that she managed to go through it because she was not sure at the beginning what the program was really about. It has been a really good thing for her and she is really satisfied that she did it.

5.7 Heidi

Heidi, a 40-year-old woman, works in the medical business industry. She has a BBA in Management Accounting and Finance. She has three subordinates in the company, where she also worked during the E-MBA. Her position has changed as the company has grown. She heard a lot about the program because a couple of her friends completed the education. She was home with her child when she made the decision to participate. She explains that when one is working she does not think about so much of having more education, but when one has to stay at home one starts to think if she has lost something or how updated her knowledge actually is. She says it was her own interest a couple of years ago that led her to participate and to do it for her own good. She still meets her student buddies annually. She feels she needed to promote the program a little bit for her manager in order to get support to participate.

Heidi started to describe how she took the program for not only to increase her knowledge but also to increase her self-confidence. She thinks that her better self-confidence has influenced her work relationship with her manager. She thinks her manager listens to her much more than he used to do. During the program she realised that she is actually on a right track, that she has not lost her knowledge, etc. She says she is more on the same level with her manager now than what they used to be. They work more closely and they are more

equal than before. As a result, the rest of the staff treats her with more respect. Heidi says the program had a positive impact on her career. She thinks she grew a lot as a person and got more self-confidence and was more secure in her role in the organization than she used to be. Moreover, she is more respected in other people's eyes in the organization. The program has broadened her possibilities in her organization and it has opened not only her eyes but others' as well. There are some people who have taken the program after her. So it is obviously appreciated, she concludes.

When it comes to learning, Heidi thinks that she learned a lot from the group. She says her group was a dynamic group because they were not all from the same business field. That was also a reason for several conflicts. She thinks all that helped her to grow and it also helped her at work since now she has a lot of experience she did not have before. What she also learned was to negotiate and to manage people in a away to get her will through. She says that one learns to listen, to make better decisions and one becomes very observant about how people react. One gets more open minded for different viewpoints, evaluates them and maybe changes one's own mind to some extent. Sometimes it is better to be more of a listener, she concludes. She mentions she learned about her strengths and weaknesses, she listed both. She says that it is not until afterwards that she realised what had changed when she reflected on what happened. During the program one is so into it that there is not time to reflect. She says she still realises every now and then some details of what has changed with her and her way of thinking. She also says that she can use the skill of giving feedback in a constructive way in her work too, as they practised that within the sub-groups. As a manager one needs to bring these things up and to be clear as well as constructive in criticism. That is something she learned during the education and that has been very valuable for her.

Heidi has very open communication with her subordinates. She lets them work quite freely just doing some checks every now and then to see that they are on the right track. During her time with the E-MBA, she was confronted by envy from the people in her organization. She thinks the reason for that was that people started to think about what it means, does it have something to do with her future position at work, she gets a better position, etc. She thinks that is maybe because she is a woman.

She wants to stay at her current organisation. She says it is a very good company to be at. The atmosphere is open, there are fun people to work with and the company is doing well.

5.8 Henrietta

Henrietta is 37. Her background education is a Bachelor of Business Administration. While studying in the program a couple of years ago, she worked as a business manager in the automotive industry. After the education was complete she resigned from the company as she felt that neither recognition nor interest was given from the management for her new diploma and her willingness to move up in the company. She is unemployed at the moment and is looking for a satisfying job where she can feel happy. She heard about the E-MBA program from her friends, thus she had always planned to get an MBA qualification. Her opinion is that she needed to convince her boss to accept her willingness to take part in the program and study. She says she likes to study and she finds it fun. She thought that an E-MBA diploma could give her more opportunities either at the company she was working at or at some other organisation. She finds it really interesting to study. There is always something new coming up in the theories, etc. It was not that she felt that she

could not get a good enough job without this education but she thought it could give her more opportunities. She says that in Swedish companies they do not pay too much attention to MBA certificates, but she thinks and hopes that will change in the future.

What she learned in the education was to better know herself. She reflected on the other students in her group, how they are, how they act and compared herself to them. She learned a lot of how she interacts in a team. Furthermore, she learned a great deal about her strengths and weaknesses. She took a role in her sub-group that she had not used before and believes that she succeeded. She learned to put deadlines and targets and to keep them. That came naturally because she had more to do and less time to do it as she was working and studying at the same time. Moreover, she gained more self-confidence during the program. She says that as she looks back to that time now she thinks: "How did I mange all that"? She worked a lot, travelled and studied at the same time. Knowledge about the subjects was not the main gain for her, but mostly updating what she already knew from her BBA.

Henrietta still worked for her company for one year after receiving the new diploma of the E-MBA. The reason why she decided to leave her work was that she was very disappointed. Nobody ever asked her about the program and no comments during or after the education were given from other people or from the manager at the company. She naturally wanted to move upwards in her career, but did not see any chance for that. She found the atmosphere of the company too difficult for her, also as a woman, and decided to leave.

6. Analysis of the Empirical Findings

In this chapter the authors present the analysis of empirical findings combined with the theories, which were presented earlier in the thesis. First, the reader is provided with the authors' general observations about the interviewees as well as the interview circumstances. The explanation of the interviewees' reasons to take part to the E-MBA program and other additional background information follows directly after. In the end, the results are analysed and presented according to the structure illustrated in Figure 6.

Statements from all the interviewees of the selected themes → The influence of gender on the selected themes → The connection between the goals of the E-MBA program and the experiences of the participants
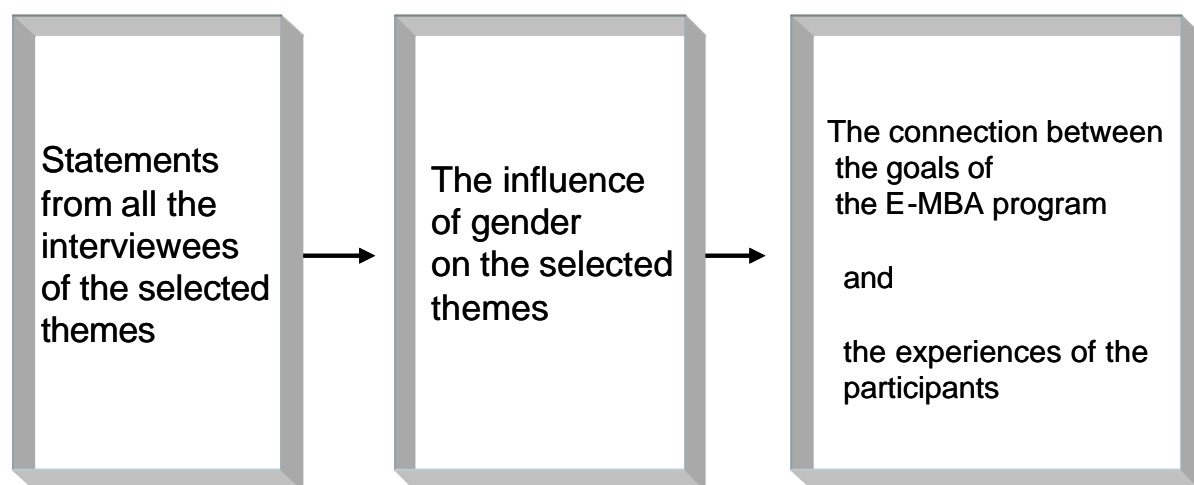
Figure 6. The Structure of the Analysis (created by the authors, 2004)

6.1 General Observations

To start with, the authors want to point out that each interviewee was incredibly enthusiastic to provide an interview and tried their best to answer to the

questions, which was sometimes hard to do. A lot of effort was made by the interviewees in trying to remember their time at the E-MBA program and to separate their experiences from other events that might have gotten mixed up with the achievements and learning from the E-MBA education. Persons who took the E-MBA degree several years ago amazed the authors by remembering many things, including small details, from the program. In addition, sometimes the interviewees got "carried away" with their narratives, expressing all the memories and feelings connected to the stories. This helped the authors to really understand their personalities and their experiences.

However, the authors observed different kinds of action and attitude. Some of the interviewees seemed to hold on tight to their role, given by their status at work. The authors felt that these interviewees purposely wanted to keep a certain distance and not necessarily give truthful answers. They probably gave the answers that were correct and suitable in their position. Somewhat reserved behaviour was also observed from time-to-time. It has to be taken into account that there is always a possibility of mistakes in the answers given by an interviewee. Some of the mistakes are unconscious. A person might answer only to say something even though he/she is not interested in the matter. They might answer to please the interviewer.

6.2 Reasons for Taking the E-MBA Program

The authors assume that the reader is interested in knowing why the interviewees took part in the E-MBA education, how they actually got to know about the program and what they believed they could achieve with the degree.

Interviewees had heard about the E-MBA program from their friends, and after getting this information they started to look for more specific information about it from other sources. Therefore, the result shows that it was their idea and interest to participate in the education. They took responsibility for their own competence at their occupation. According to the theory, this reveals a positive starting point for a self-development process as Pedler et al. (1988) defined self-development as "personal development, with a manager taking primary responsibility for his own learning and for choosing the means to achieve this." According to Pedler et al. (1988), self-development methods stress that it is the learner who takes primary responsibility for identifying need and choosing the aims for development, for choosing the methods, means, times and places for learning and for evaluating the results. Even though Pedler et al. (1988) here mean something more and something deeper than just choosing an education program, it can also be seen in this E-MBA context that the participants have, themselves, evaluated their willingness to participate in this program for many reasons that will later benefit their lives.

The interviewees indicated several reasons to take part to the E-MBA program. Half of the interviewees mentioned that they thought an E-MBA degree would give them a chance to achieve better and different job-opportunities; whether in their current company or elsewhere. Altogether, increasing one's competence in terms of knowledge, experience and contacts were the main reasons to participate in the E-MBA program. As the E-MBA students have been working for a while before entering this program, the general interest towards revealing ones' knowledge level and updating it seemed to be the most important reason for the participants. As one of the interviewees stated, it is interesting and fun to study new things and there is always something new going on in academic world. The critical and intellectual approach the academic studies offer was also appreciated. Levinson's (1981) views support these empirical findings as

he suggests that managers should take an advanced management program after five years of graduation with an MBA or equivalent. Levinson's ideas support the reasoning of the participants. He says that by participating in an advanced management program the participants will get a broader view of management since they are able to bring their own experience to the classroom and apply it to the higher level conceptual problems. Moreover, it enables them to see others struggling with the same issues and to have a selection of points of view about how to deal with them. Seeing others in the same position will temper the participants' tendency toward harsh self-criticism. According to Levinson, the experience of refreshment as well as a sense of being up-to-date will emerge from such programs. (Levinson, 1981.)

According to Ibarra (2004), self-conceptions affect not only what specific social interactions people seek out but just as important, how they define the boundaries within which they construct their networks and careers. The empirical findings of this study support Ibarra's suggestion. According to each and every one of the interviewees, working in rather small sub-groups gives an opportunity to get to know all the group members fairly well and that enhances the ability to create a network and make contacts across different industries. Hence, it also offers an opportunity to see how other people manage certain issues and how they do their work as well as how things are handled in other companies. The interviewees seemed to be interested in reflecting their own ways of working towards others' methods.

6.3 Statements From All the Interviewees about the Themes
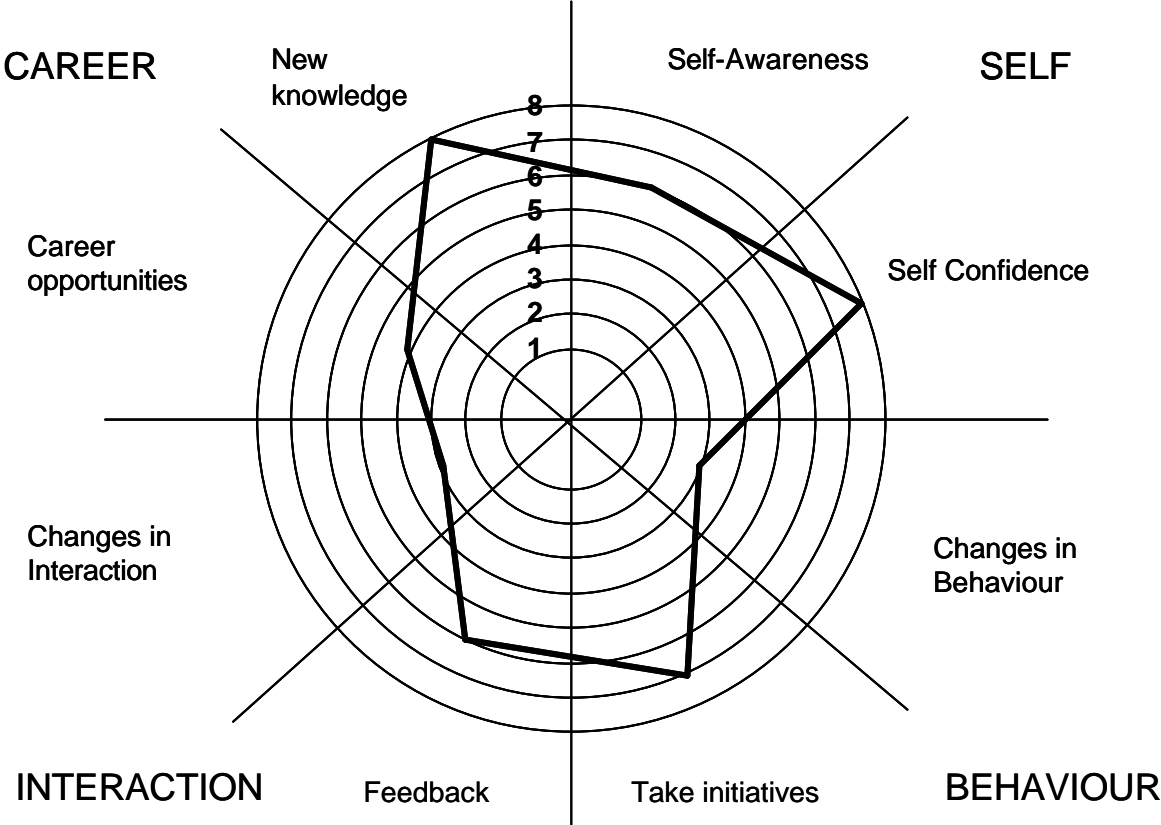
Figure 7. The Interviewees' Statements About the Themes (modified by the authors, 2004, by an idea from Åhman, 2003)

Figure 7 above presents the findings of empirical data collection. Before presenting the analysis of the results illustrated in the figure, the authors prefer to take an opportunity to explain the content and the meaning of the model for the reader. As already mentioned, the authors built this model, though it is strongly influenced by the model presented by Åhman (2003). However, as Åhman was not studying exactly the same area that is in the focus for this thesis, the model needed to be modified.

6.3 Statements From All the Interviewees about the Themes

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As show in Figure 7, the eight selected themes were placed into it and they fall into four larger categories. These are Self (including self-awareness and self-confidence), Behaviour (including changes in behaviour, taking initiatives), Interaction (including feedback and changes in interaction) and Career (including career opportunities, new knowledge). The eight circles illustrate the eight interviewees and are also numbered in order to alleviate the "reading" of the figure. The statements of the interviewees were counted together (see Appendix 2) and marked into the circles. For example, all eight interviewees stated that their self-confidence increased due to the E-MBA program. Therefore a mark was placed in the eighth circle. On the other hand, only two interviewees stated changes in their behaviour and therefore the second circle was marked. A line was drawn between the marks, so that it will be easier to realise which circles are marked in which sections.

The answers from the interviewees about these different areas vary and it can be seen that, for example, self-confidence and new knowledge have increased the most among the participants. The results of the different statements are presented further in the following.

1. Awareness of own strengths and weaknesses

Six interviewees out of eight stated that they became more conscious and aware of their own strengths and weaknesses. Many of the interviewees mentioned their different roles in the group. Not surprisingly, learning to work in small groups was identified as one of the most important issues within the E-MBA. This is quite evident, as a sub-group work is a very essential part of the E-MBA method of working. The interviewees explained to the authors that different roles, which the different group members hold enabled them to use their

diverse strengths to their full potential. Some of the interviewees mentioned that they had an ability to change roles even though the group combination remained the same during the entire program. The others, however, felt that each group member maintained the same role during the whole program and felt a frustrated. Instead, they would have liked to change their group at least once and try to work in a different group combination. Individual strengths were revealed when reflected and compared with roles that the other group members took. This empirical finding can be supported by Pedler et al. (1988) who argue that groups usually aim to develop the individual members by learning from the skills and experiences of other members and how much is learned will depend on what is available in the group. Thereby, it is important to have as diversified groups as possible, to enlarge and enhance the possibility to achieve greater learning and awareness. This was also stated by the interviewees.

The participants said that realising afterwards the significant workload they were actually able to manage during these two years was also seen as a major strength; participants felt that if they were able to manage and survive this, they could do much more in the future than they would have imagined before. In other words, they realised they are much more competent than they had ever believed.

Åhman (2003) supports these results as she states that people are usually more competent than they are aware of; one needs to leave hindering paradigms in order to put competence into use. This can be done, for example, by going through or completing something an individual does not recognize as having resources for when starting a task. One of the female interviewees told the authors that she was a little afraid in the beginning of the program, as she was not sure how much she could contribute since she had a different professional

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background from the other participants. In addition, Levinson stated similar results among the executives of one company who participated in a management program at the University of Pennsylvania (Levinson 1981). He states that their interests in self-development seemed, afterward, to be more conscious to them than before and that there was evidence that many began to think about their personal growth toward new goals that were not in their thoughts before.

Participants learned to know their weak points as well. They mentioned that they were lacking, for example, in their ability to limit the workload, prioritising tasks, setting and keeping deadlines and making decisions rapidly. As one of the women said:

 "*Yes, but it is not until afterwards that you realise it, when you reflect upon what happened because during the time of the program you are so in to it and yourself and the process that you do not have time to do it. And still I get flashbacks of what actually changed in my head and the way I think. That gave me lot.*"

However, two of the interviewees said that the program did not have a particular influence on their awareness of their strong and weak sides. They felt they were already aware of these matters because of previous training provided by an employer. When talking about the awareness of the weaknesses, one of the male interviewees said:

"*I was 50 years old at that time, so I am not going to change the whole structure of my life at that point. I can't see why.*"

2. Changes in self-confidence, behaviour and in taking initiatives

"Yes, somehow you grow and you can see that you are important in many ways, professionally too. I divorced a year after, so perhaps I was a bit stronger and said that I like this and don't like that, somehow I think I changed and today I am much more happier person. Even my friends have told me that. And I feel it opened up a door, why, I don't know, maybe because I just let it happen."

Not surprisingly, all interviewees pinpointed the importance of a great increase in their self-confidence and its affect on their life and work. It seemed to the authors that this was the one issue, above all, as the interviewees felt they benefited from it in all areas of life. This is quite obvious; after all, they all handled their normal routines such as daily work and family-life plus this fast tempo, demanding program for two years. This supports Targama's (1992) statement about the fact that a stronger manager-identity often follows with stronger self-confidence in work.

According to the interviewees, there were several factors during the program that facilitated the improvement of self-confidence. For instance, realising that they were on "the right track" and had not lost their previous knowledge were the statements of the factors that made them more confident. Levinsons' (1981) findings support this empirical result, as he states that experience of refreshment as well as a sense of being up-to-date will emerge from managerial education programs.

Additionally, observing group members coming from different companies and their way of working made the interviewees notice the validity of their own

working habits. As all interviewees had been working for quite a while before entering the E-MBA program they had previous working experience. That was noted as a benefit since it enabled them to apply more experience-based knowledge to the theoretical university studies. Levinson (1981) found the same result for managers with working experience who were thereby able to bring their own experience to the classroom and apply it to the higher level conceptual problems.

The higher level in self-confidence is manifested through various ways. For example, an increased knowledge base among a wider base of business issues offered them the confidence to participate in the conversations regarding issues apart from their own special skill area. Many of the interviewees mentioned that after the E-MBA program they were much more confident in discussing financial and economical issues, as they had strengthened their knowledge about that particular area. Levinson (1981) presents similar results that were found within the executives who took a one year long managerial program. They felt a greater ability to participate in a wider variety of discussions in social and business contacts.

"I think the reflection around management things has definitely changed my views. I have understood that the process of doing business is not static but very dynamic and you need to be a proactive in order to have a leading product category. I was interested in all these strategic issues earlier but now I have a deeper knowledge and understanding of them. I definitely have a broader view on management and business issues after this program."

In addition, due to the improved self-confidence, the interviewees started to rely and trust more on their own opinions and decision-making skills. They no longer felt a need to rely too much on other people's estimations. Also,

according to the interviewees, they learned to say "No" more often. This was partly because of tight schedules that the studies with daily work and family-life brought about. Thereby, the interviewees learned to prioritise the tasks.

Ibarra (2004) argues that people's conceptions of themselves, in other words their identities, have an important influence on their behaviour and interactions with others. Since, according to Ibarra, identities are social as well as individual, they are negotiable and also negotiated. In addition, Leonard (2003) argues that the identification of behavioural leadership competencies has proven to be an important advance in both the forecast and development of leadership. It is easier to identify and evaluate a leader's behaviour than personality traits. By developing behavioural anchors, co-workers and the individuals themselves can evaluate the degree of competence displayed. This was also shown in the statements of the interviewees as they stated that better self-confidence influenced the inter-personal relationships with their work colleagues. For example, it was stated by one of our interviewees, '*When I have more confidence in myself, other people find it easier to have more confidence in me too.*" The results can be shown with Helena and Heidi, as they indicated that they changed their behaviour after taking the E-MBA and it has been a great joy for them to see the consequences of these changes. Their managers appreciate them and their decision-making skills to a greater extent now than earlier and their subordinates and colleagues also show higher respect towards them. Paul noticed that a manager needs be an example for the subordinates and it is very important to consider what kind of a message a manager is giving to the co-workers with his/her own behaviour.

However, leaning to the theoretical suggestions mentioned above, the authors think that the interviewees could and should have developed their behaviour to an even greater extent. Now, only three out of the eight interviewees stated

changes in their behaviour, yet the authors believe these changes made have been a great advantage to these persons.

Due to increased knowledge level and self-confidence, as many as seven interviewees indicated that they now take more initiative than before the E-MBA degree. For example, one of the interviewee started regular meetings with the board and HR-department, the other one makes more decisions without relying on her manager and the third had to use her creativity and decide how to do things in a new project in which there were not that many involved with experience of project work.

3. Interaction with co-workers and feedback received

Only three interviewees indicated changes in their interaction with their co-workers. All these changes can be related to their management styles. This is considered an important result by the authors as, for example, Levinson (1981) argues that one of the most important factors the managerial education can and should affect on is the management and leadership style. He says: "Rarely are economists, accountants, engineers and others aware of their assumptions about human personality functioning. As a result, many policies and practices in management are mutually contradictory." Thus, as the managers become more aware of their own assumptions and of how the human personality actually functions due to the education, it eases their efforts in leading their subordinates and the interaction with co-workers. One interviewee suggested that as a manager one has to think first how to behave since a manager is making standard for the group s/he is leading, about how to behave and how to do things. Another one said that she is not always telling her subordinates about what and how to do things, but merely guiding their thoughts so that they will

find the same solutions as she has, by themselves. A third one observed she was more observant and listening to and considering her subordinate's opinions. She thought that becoming more open minded and evaluating different viewpoints offers a better standpoint for decision making:

"*I am quite eager to get my will through. What I learned was to negotiate and manage people, but you still get your will through! You listen a lot, you become very observant about how people react and make better decisions. You are more open minded to different viewpoints, evaluate them and maybe change your mind somewhat, since of course you have a quite clear picture what you want to do, but sometimes it is better to be a more of a listener.*"

When it comes to feedback, the interviewees did not mention remarkable feedback received. Only their family members commented that the program was time-consuming. However, the interviewees stated that regardless of the stress due to the lack of time for their closest ones, they felt their families were proud of them for completing the degree.

A couple of the interviewees indicated that they confronted some envy from their organization. That was explained by the uncertainty of the work colleagues towards the situation and its outcome and meaning. People, who were not aware of the consequences of the work colleague's studies were concerned about if there were any affects on their position in an organization later. Also, one of the interviewees assumed that her newly gained E-MBA degree was totally ignored among the management of her employer partly because of jealousy. After taking the E-MBA she had a higher educational degree than her closest manager.

An overall statement among the interviewees was that their closest managers and organizations understood the pressure the studies created and accepted that it took time from their normal tasks. This was because a company makes a commitment with the employee and the program and is thereby aware of the situation and consequences it might create along the way.

4. New career opportunities

Three of the interviewees stated that they received new career opportunities after taking the E-MBA degree. They felt that having an E-MBA programme helped them to achieve these career movements. Two of them got new projects to run right after the graduation. Their managers had indicated that they should have a new position in order to put the newly gained knowledge into use. Defler's (1978) statements seem to fit with these interviewees' experiences, as he argues that self-development represents a clear opportunity to increase the chance of success in development at work, and along with opportunities for self-development a person will gain better methods and personal commitment for producing improved job performance and development at work. It seems that these abovementioned interviewees created a stronger commitment to their work and they have put effort in improving their job performance because of the new responsibilities achieved. As the employer has rewarded them for improved self-development, they have rewarded the employer with better performance. Leonard (2003) supports this behaviour as he emphasizes the shaping of the work environment, where the participants of a leadership education return. According to him, the participants should have an opportunity to practice their new skills on real-world tasks and problems and get useful feedback. Also, the organization should support and reward them for both, taking the course as well as using the new capabilities on the job.

Another five respondents did not mention any significant changes in their careers or positions that could be related to the E-MBA degree. If there were any changes they were mainly because of mergers that caused changes in organizational structure. Three of them were satisfied with the company they were working for and their positions and did not wanted to use the degree as a way to change their career. However, in one of the cases the employer did not recognize the employee's E-MBA studies to any degree. It seemed to this interviewee that the employer was totally indifferent towards her new diploma and did not show any kind of possibilities to enhance her career development. Since this interviewee felt the employer was not respecting her efforts as deserved, she resigned. House (1968, cited in Handy, 1970) recognizes similar behaviour to occur in this kind of situation. He argues that if the organization wherein the student is returning does not reinforce the objectives of the program by offering either a promotion or more challenging assignments, a student might leave the company or becomes an irritant within the organization.

5. New knowledge

From the interviews, four main areas of knowledge could be distinguished (see Table 1 in Appendix 2). The interviewees indicated these subjects as most valuable and of which they learned the most. These areas are as follows: understanding of economical and financial matters, a broader understanding of management and leadership concepts, better understanding of team work and other participants through working in small groups and developing an overall holistic view on business and management. All the interviewees mentioned more than one of these areas.

According to one of the interviewees, there was some kind of focus on the economical side during his E-MBA time. He thought that it is very useful to have a good understanding of financial issues, especially when working in the management team. Thus, one is able to really understand what the figures mean, to analyse them and to understand how they effect different situations. Another interviewee, who saw financial issues as one of the main benefits of the program, said that he is now more involved in discussions about financial situations and economics with company's financial department. He said that he now has a better understanding of the economics and because of that his interaction with the employees working at the financial department, has developed and improved. These statements support the opinions of Targama (1992) as he says that in a leader or a manager education program one can establish new views and learn new methods. But such a program can also lead to a situation where one becomes confident to utilize those skills and competencies one already has. (Targama, 1992.)

Each and every interviewee stated that their understanding towards management and leadership increased dramatically during their E-MBA studies. They said, for example, that they got new point of views to think about, and are now able to recognize and evaluate different management styles. Hence, they have developed a broader view on management and leadership issues and what these concepts actually mean. They also have actively used this new ability. A few of them said that they now notice the poor as well as excellent behaviour and managements styles among the upper management of their employer companies. In addition, they learned to realize a lot more about where the top management is heading and what the reasons behind the decisions are. Moreover, the difference between leadership and management was mentioned in the interviews. One of them said:

"You can be a very good leader and have a positive impact around you, but if you don't have other understanding and methods how to improve or change or handle business aspects, it takes a longer time and you have better confidence if you have this knowledge."

Almost all the interviewees stated that after the E-MBA program they have a much more holistic view on business, how to run it and how to manage it. For instance, one of the interviewees stated that the E-MBA taught him issues that can be considered at company level, but not that much in connection with his daily activities. The other one said that he learned to look at things from an upper perspective, therefore getting a broader view. Furthermore, the interviewees said that as they got more insight into different areas of business, they were able to understand how every area connects together and how the whole entity of the organization works better together. This, in turn, has provided them with a better base to manage their responsibility areas within their companies. These answers and results can be identified with the suggestions of Levinson (1981) as he says that when the managers move to an upper level they have to start to think broadly, understand more comprehensively and act in a more sophisticated way. He suggests that it is also essential to start to think strategically instead of thinking tactically and move from meeting objectives to conceptualise the nature of the business. Taking Levinson's arguments as guidelines of which aims to achieve with managerial education, it is evident according to the interviewee's statements that these aims are met quite well among E-MBA participants. An overall statement of the learning process the E-MBA offers was entirely crystallised in this next statement from one interviewee:

"But they (at the E-MBA program) encouraged us to use our own experiences from business life and compile that with theories and make conclusions of that. That was fascinating. We knew a lot of things but when you get more information and learn some theories you can get more from the things you already know, because you can put those things into another perspective."

The authors found one interesting and important factor within this area where the new knowledge was tested. The authors discovered that the background education has influence on this theme. The interviewee's educational backgrounds were divided into three different categories; Technical (engineering) Business/Financial, and Other, including fields such as occupational pedagogic and local government.

Those with a technical background (Petrus, Pelle and Patrick) gave the impression that they had learned a great deal about financial matters in the program. The reason why Pelle decided to take part in the E-MBA program was that he considered his background education as too technical. He wanted to widen his perceptions of business and he succeeded in this aim. In addition, Petrus mentioned that the economical side of the education was really important, especially because he works in the management team and has to understand what figures mean. He said: *"I really learned to analyse them (figures) and to understand how they affect different business situations."* He also told the authors that he now feels capable of having more discussions outside his specific (technical) speciality area. He has been more involved in discussions about the financial situations of the business as he now feels he has a better understanding of what these things mean. Furthermore, Petrus mentioned that there were some parts in the program dealing with change management and that he thinks they were quite good. At his company there are

big changes going on at the moment, so they need all the skill they can find to cope with the changing situations.

The other category of the background education is the 'business/finance' category including Paul, Heidi and Henrietta. It became obvious that for them the education was more like updating the business knowledge they already had from their previous education. They learned more about interaction with other people than actual new knowledge. They considered the participation in the E-MBA to be more for their own self-development and even for fun, as Paul states: "It *was a good way to spend the extra leisure time I had at that time.*" He believed studying to be fun and useful for the future. He also mentioned learning new tools for discussion. What he has studied and read about he has now been able to use as arguments in different conversations. Heidi, having a finance background, mentioned learning better negotiation skills. She said she learned to manage people in a way to get her ideas through. She said: "O*ne learns to listen, to make better decisions and one gets very observant about how people react. One gets more open minded for different viewpoints, evaluates them and maybe changes one's own mind to some extent. Sometimes it is better to be more of a listener*". Her reason for attending the program was because she thought she might have lost some of her knowledge and wanted to update her knowledge. Henrietta's drive for taking the program was that she likes to study and she finds it fun. One of the reasons was also to learn more about new theories, which always occur over time.

The interviewees with the 'Other' backgrounds (Helena and Hanna) such as occupational pedagogic and local government have gained similar areas of knowledge as the persons with technical and business backgrounds. These persons have gained a mixture of what the technical and business/finance people did separately. Helena became interested in working in small groups

and the idea of getting a more holistic and overall perspective on business issues. As mentioned in the 'Empiric'section, Helena had expected to learn more about financial issues, but because of the structure of her small group she did not gain as much of that as she wished for. What she learned was "*to go out and find the knowledge and experiences you need.*" She also learned to understand the concept of Management better and has used that when dealing with other managers and senior management in her company. She learned to interact with people and also gained better negotiation skills. Hanna was really interested in how to run a business and felt it important for an HR manager to have a lot of management knowledge, tools, and techniques to know how to work with different business areas. After the program she felt updated when it comes to the different business philosophies and different ways to do business.

"Of course people think that it is a good thing that I, as a project manager, can now take part in discussions and contribute in a cost productive way. But I don't think that changes me as a person or my leadership skills has that much to do with the E-MBA. It is more about the opportunities that I have now and a better understanding of business. As a project manager you should have a great understanding of business, and business people appreciate when they can discuss with the project manager and she or he understands their concern and their situations."

6.4 Influence of Gender on Themes
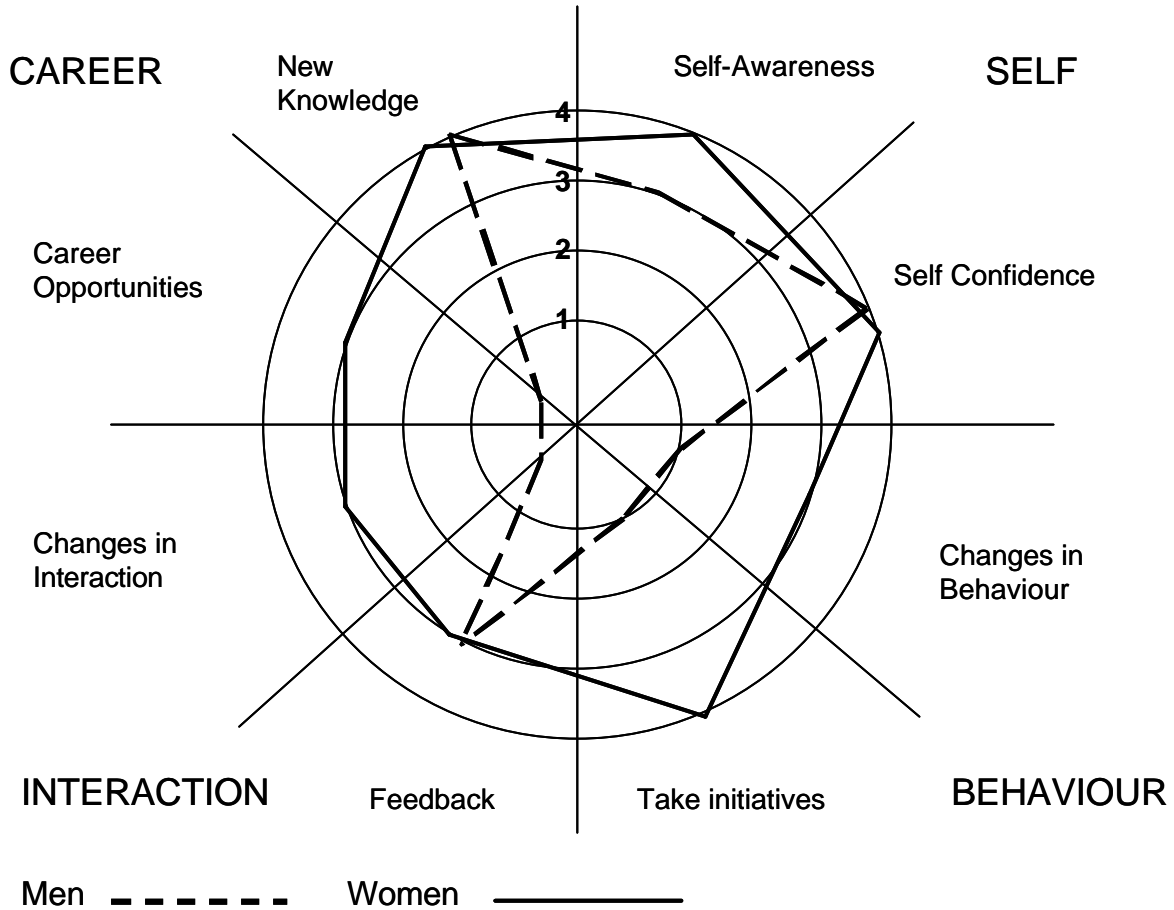
Figure 8. The Influence of Gender on Themes (modified by the authors, 2004, by an idea from Åhman, 2003)

In the following section of the analysis the differences that occurred between the answers from men and women are discussed. Hancock (1999) argues that the cultural stereotype defining men as leaders and women as supporters, which has lasted for centuries, is rapidly changing. He identifies the expansion of world markets and diversity among workers being the factors that redefine the paradigm of business manager from analytical to empathetic, from competitive to cooperative. According to him, today business is less about building

mathematical models than about building relationships, reflected in the new priority among MBA hires for communication, interpersonal, and team-building skills. The old masculine stereotype is obsolete (Hancock, 1999). However, Klein et al. (1996) argue that "After leadership-training men report more positive affective reactions than women managers." This is quite opposite to the results of this study, as can be seen from Figure 8 above. There are several areas where the degree of benefit differs significantly between sexes and women's achievements exceed the men's.

Briefly, in terms of self-awareness, all the women indicated change or recognition and as many as three out of four men made the same statement. Self-confidence increased among both genders but when it comes to changes in behaviour, women seemed to change more since only one man identified change in this field. All the women take more initiative after the E-MBA education whereas only one man noticed any difference in his actions. Both genders got an equal amount of feedback from their environment, but women seem to take other people more into account, as men did not, according to them, change their way to interact at all. Three out of four women got new career opportunities, whereas men have remained in their old positions. In terms of new knowledge both genders learned new issues, though only men indicated gaining within the financial matters. Women, on the other hand, seemed to get more out of the group-work and overall business understanding than men.

According to Klein et al. (1996), it is imperative to understand the influence of gender on learning during leadership education, as a growing number of women attain middle- and upper-level positions in the organizations. As the empirical findings of this study tend to show evidence of such a large

dissimilarity, the authors believe it is worth examining this phenomenon a bit closer.

"I did not actually pay any attention to it; I just noted that there were approximately one third of women. It is so common having fewer women than men in these kinds of things."

That was a comment made by one of the female respondents. The statement shows the general belief and common stereotypes of the role of women in these contexts.

1. Awareness of individual strengths and weaknesses

During the E-MBA, women became considerably more aware of their strengths and weaknesses than men. It was quite clear to the authors that women had consciously evaluated these areas and used them actively in their everyday life. Also, they stated that their intention was to develop their weak points. However, the authors observed that women were not too cruel to themselves; there seemed to be a tendency that as long one is aware of one's weaknesses there is a good chance to cope with them. Clearly, the female respondents consider it as a continuous process, which is also Cunningham's (2004) notion of self-development. He defines this process to include self-awareness and realization of capacity and shortcomings, which the females interviewed evidently stated. Furthermore, according to Cunningham, willingness and long-term commitment to change are essential parts of the self-development process as well as embarking on a process of change and accepting possible failure. It seemed to the authors that the female interviewees had passed through all the

aforementioned parts of the self-development process, as will be shown in the following paragraphs.

Women were able to declare several different characters that they felt were their strengths or weaknesses. For instance, they consider themselves as being good listeners, giving everyone space to be listened to. One of the interviewees said she was told that she was good at explaining things, especially complicated financial issues, in a way that was easy to understand for those who were not familiar with certain matters. Another one said she learned during her E-MBA studies where her limit stands and those personal characters that were strong became more obvious to her. One of the female interviewees stated that she was not aware of her ability to be an objective negotiator in a conflict situation, before she confronted one in her sub-group and was trying to solve that situation.

Of the weak points women recognized slow decision-making. This was a result of careful consideration of everyone's opinion that had something to do with the decision. Also, collecting too heavy a workload was a weak point that woman tried to improve. Obviously, it is not easy to learn to say "No" to tasks and duties. However, at least one of the interviewees had noticed that when a manager appraises her performance, it is not about how many things she had managed to do herself, but instead that she is doing the right things and on time. Therefore, it was easier for her to learn to take just the workload she felt was manageable and including the most appropriate tasks in order to do good work and keep the deadlines. One of the women interviewees thought that there is an essential difference between men and women when it comes to self-awareness:

"As a woman I think we are rather aware of our strong points and weaknesses, but men don't want to think about that side of them so often."

Men, on the other hand, were not that specific in detailing their strong and weak characteristics. They mentioned that it is good to get know in what areas one is capable and in which areas one needs to improve. Group work was considered an appropriate way to reveal these areas. As an individual takes a certain role in a group, s/he can learn about her/his capabilities through that and also through observing others. One of the males indicated that as the sub-group produces several assignments during the E-MBA studies, there are many opportunities to try different roles within a group and thereby develop different areas. However, one of the male interviewees stated that there is a tendency to take the same role in a study group than at work, which in turn leads to a situation where there are limited chances to improve or change one's characteristics.

In addition, men indicated that going through this kind of tough education and realising afterwards that one was able to manage everything, shows that a person holds certain strong areas. According to the interviewees, the ability to manage work, education and family-life and all the requirements each section has is good for self-image. But still men were not quite sure if they became any more open minded or more aware of themselves, as they stated:

"I don't think that I actually learned so much about myself."
"I don't know if it opened up my mind...?"

It seemed to the authors that male respondents did not consider the process of self-development in line with Cunningham's (2004) definition.

2. Changes in self-confidence, in behaviour and in taking more initiative

Women discovered that because of the E-MBA program they noticed that they had not lost their knowledge level but were even able to increase it and that was one of the reasons leading to better self-confidence. Also, as aforementioned, when they reflected upon this whole experience they felt proud of themselves because they were able to manage to do everything. As one of the women said:

"...now when I look at my boyfriend going through an MBA and being stressed --- I really feel that hey, I managed all that!"

Men, on the other hand, emphasised more work-related issues as being the basis for the raise in their self-confidence. For instance, they felt that after the E-MBA program they were more knowledgeable of the financial and management issues. As one of the males put it:

"The (E-MBA) education was more about improving the knowledge and competence and not the softer issues, (such as) how I am acting, problem solving and so on."

Men felt they can create a more holistic understanding of a company's situation as they now understand the meaning of strategies and goals and how business can and needs to be developed. Hence, men felt that they were able to take part in the discussions handling issues they are now, after taking the program, more knowledgeable and confident of. Earlier they were not keen or even able to discuss financial or overall business and management issues as they were lacking the appropriate information. This, in turn, increases their

self-confidence, as they consider themselves more valuable for the employer and more competent than before taking the E-MBA degree.

Three of the female interviewees stated changes in their behaviour. They said, for instance, that they started to dare to say "No" more often to additional tasks and duties. They learned to be more organized and to work in projects and sub-groups toward certain common goals. They have also been able to bring these issues to their everyday work. One of the female interviewees said that she values her ability to give constructive feedback and that was something she learned during her E-MBA studies. In addition, another one said that her management style has changed; now she does not tell others to do something but instead enhances their abilities to make their own deductions and solutions about different things. Hatcher (2003) also pointed out the same tendency in women manager's behaviour, as he recognizes a range of "softening devices" the women use in their verbal instructions instead of controlling others. One of the female interviewees has made a very clear change as she has "lifted" herself to the same level with her closest manager, who used to be more distant to her before she took the E-MBA degree. In addition, women learned to keep tight deadlines for the group assignments and thus they also learned to see the "big picture" and not control every tiny detail of their work.

Men were using almost the same sentences even when stating to the authors that there were no changes in their behaviour. One man noticed some change in his work behaviour, due to the increased knowledge base, but even he said: "*but (behaviour did) not (change) dramatically.*"

Women indicated that they now take more initiatives at their work and they accomplish things they see as being important for a company at the particular situation. They have learned not to listen too much to other people but have the

courage to make decisions on their own. The relationship between women and their nearest manager has developed as well. According to the interviewees, their managers respect them more and the co-operation between them is on a more advanced level than before. In addition, their managers trust them more and the decisions they take. This reaction has had an even wider effect in the organization; when the manager takes women's opinions more into account and shows them respect, the other organizational members do the same. It might also be that the women communicate their increasing self-confidence unconsciously and that leads to enhancement of the respect from peers. Quoting one of the women-interviewees:

"...if you have a experience of having better self-confidence you communicate it to the others in some way, maybe not in words but with body language for example."

One of the female interviewees got a brand new project to run right after her graduation so she had to consider and decide how to handle different things, how to lead her subordinates and team members towards the same goal and how to communicate her decisions to them. She told the authors that:

"It was a personal challenge, which has given me a lot of self-confidence. In two years there have been so many things happening and I have been involved in all that and had responsibility, so it has been lot of learning and taking a lot of initiative."

Only one of the male interviewees said that he is now taking more initiative, however, he felt that this might be because of other reasons as well, such as reorganization within the company. The other males did not notice any significant changes within this area. A couple of them mentioned again the

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increased capability to take part in discussions within a wider area of issues nowadays, but that aspect is discussed in a different part of the analysis.

3. Changes in interaction with co-workers and feedback received

When it comes to changes in interaction with work colleagues, there was a relatively large difference between the sexes. None of the men identified any changes in their interaction with their peers. In fact, when asked to reflect upon and to describe their relationship with their subordinates, the male interviewees seemed to have no immediate answers. One of them actually mentioned that he had never even thought of that and has not evaluated how well his subordinates know him. Hence, the reality seems to be in contradiction with the theoretical base, since Hatcher (2003) suggests that managers in the contemporary world are required to manage their emotions in new ways and to shape the images of themselves that are traditionally not revealed to their colleagues so that they can connect with fellow employees. According to Hatcher (2003), all managers, whether male or female, are required to submit to the self-regulating task of producing emotional performances for the purposes of their corporations and in so doing, gender work becomes a critical force in modern management. (Hatcher 2003.)

Among the women, however, three out of four noticed changes in interaction. As an example, women said that this change is manifested by taking colleagues opinions more into consideration and giving them constructive feedback. In addition, they now feel that it is necessary to discuss more with their colleagues in order to share and explain the reasons behind their decisions as well as creating a more holistic understanding of certain situations before making a decision. This is perfectly in line with the statement of Hatcher (2003), who

argues that women managers have a tendency to use certain styles of communication, such as paying attention to daily practices of speaking and listening to the others.

In terms of comments and feedback received from friends, family and the co-workers of the interviewees, there were no significant differences between the answers of men and women. All the interviewees who indicated that they received comments about their studies confronted similar feedback, regardless of their gender. However, there was one exception. Those interviewees who said they had faced jealousy within their organizations, were women. Men did not mention receiving any envy comments at all.

4. New career opportunities

It was quite evident for the authors that women benefited more from the E-MBA degree in terms of new career opportunities than men. Three out of four female interviewees stated changes in their careers and positions after taking this degree, whereas none of the men had changed their position due to the E-MBA.

Two of the female interviewees got new projects to run right after graduation. Their managers had indicated that they should have a new position in order to put their newly gained knowledge into use. The other of these interviewees moved to work for another company after the project ended, as the employer could not offer a different position for longer time and she would have had to go back to her old position. The E-MBA "opened a door" for her and provided her with confidence of her abilities, which encouraged her to enter that door and seek new opportunities. The other one is still working for the same

employer but was promoted after that first project, which started after the graduation, was complete. The third interviewee has also moved up the organizational hierarchy and is currently holding a position with more responsibilities than during the time of the E-MBA studies. In addition, her closest manager considers and treats her as having more competence and power to make independent decisions. He is more co-operative now, according to this interviewee. Most of the women had better job opportunities and they felt they were more capable and competent than they had ever thought.

What could be a reason for this remarkable increase in terms of career opportunities for females? Perhaps the employers promote females over males, as they have found the place of emotions in good managerial behaviour as Hatcher (2003) suggests. Or maybe they have started to consider that there should be a shift in business managers from analytical to empathetic, from competitive to cooperative, which usually occurs among women, as Hancock (1999) proposes. After all, according to Hatcher (2003), contemporary business is less about building mathematical models than about building relationships, as well as communication, interpersonal, and team-building skills.

Another reason to explain this result might be females' increased awareness of their competence and thereby improved self-confidence. Females might be more courageous to show their willingness to go for a better position and might more actively seek opportunities to climb up the career ladder.

However, even though there seems to be a tendency that women participants benefited more, this issue is not quite black and white. This result can be partly explained by the fact that males already had positions that they were satisfied with. One of the male interviewees said that as soon as his current project he is

leading at the moment ends, it will be very likely that his position is changed to handle more about strategic and developmental matters. It was due to his own choice to run this project to completion and he has had several conversations regarding to his future plans and positions with his closest manager.

In addition, the other woman resigned from her workplace and one of the reasons for doing so was because the employer did not notice her new degree. It became clear to her quite soon after the graduation that the employer was not planning to promote her or take any other actions in order to recognize and support her efforts. Moreover, she said that at the time they were starting to write their thesis, she offered to write it for her current company and that she actually had a good idea which would have been an advantage to research for the company. However, this company did not want to co-operate with her in terms of thesis work. She found it very strange as it would be hours of free consultancy work for the company. In addition, it became evident to the authors that this company was not only ignoring this woman's studying efforts. As mentioned earlier, two additional phone interviews were conducted among this study and one of those interviewees happened to have this same company as an ex-employer. This woman also declared that she resigned partly because her employer was somewhat indifferent towards her studies. These situations confirm Schein's (1967) arguments to be reliable, as he argues that the organization that the student returns to needs not only to recognize and appreciate its employee's studies but also offer an opportunity for an employee to put his/her newly gained knowledge into use. In addition, Nordström et al. (1999) claim that if an employer educates people but treats them afterwards as "morons" or just a human resource, the best ones will leave.

5. New knowledge

There are also differences between genders when it comes to the new knowledge that interviewees received from the E-MBA program. Only men stated that their understanding and knowledge of financial and economical issues increased significantly. Women seemed to learn more about group work and how to interact within a group. In addition, it seemed to the authors that the sub-group as a way of working enhanced and developed women's leadership and management skills, as a couple of them said that after the E-MBA studies their own management style is not "telling" other people what and how to do things but it is shifted more towards managing the understanding of their subordinates and colleagues.

Females also seemed to develop slightly more their knowledge base in terms of understanding the overall business relations, as all of the women interviewees mentioned this aspect. It seemed to be a real benefit for them, as they now have a more holistic view on business and how different departments and their actions and outcomes create a functioning entity. Thus, it helps them to evaluate the situation and the possible consequences before taking actions and making decisions. Females feel that they are now more confident in work as they can consider themselves knowledgeable enough for their positions.

All the interviewees representing both genders agreed that the E-MBA increased their understanding of management and leadership. Their statements about this issue were quite similar despite gender; both men and women had new perspectives to realise management and leadership from. They both stated that it is now much easier to understand the intents of their employer's top-management as well as the means they use to achieve certain goals.

6.5 The Goals of the Program vs. Participant's Experiences

In order to sum up the results presented above, the authors' interpretations of how the goals of the E-MBA program are met according to the experiences of the participants are presented in this last section of the analysis. The authors aspire to explore whether the aims set for the program are met according to the interviewees. The participants were not directly asked about whether these goals have been met. The answers were gathered through the stories of their expectations, experiences and benefit from the education. The answers, so to say, "accidentally" gave clear answers to this research problem. Furthermore, it will be shown if the interviewees perceive the methods used to achieve these goals as being appropriate. Figure 9 clarifies this comparison.
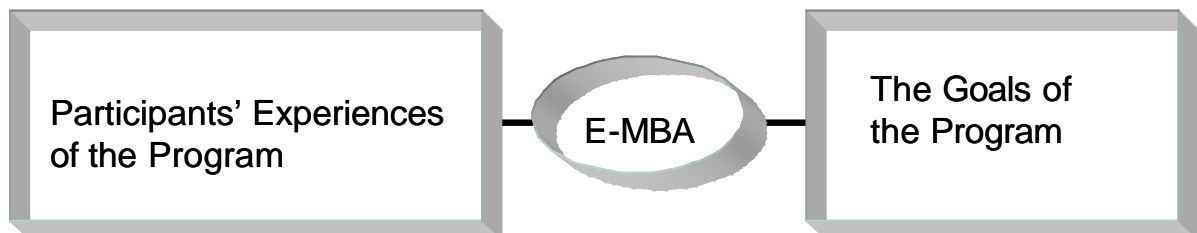
Figure 9. Experiences of the Participants vs. the Goals of the E-MBA Program (modified by the authors, 2004, by an idea from Rovio-Johansson, 2004)

The Goals of the Program

As aforementioned in the case presentation, the aim of the MBA program is to use the theory in practise and to focus on the student's knowledge in areas such as negotiation and communication ability, general management and entrepreneurship. Hence, the main focus is not in acquiring technical knowledge. The E-MBA follows this guideline since its special focus is in general management. The goals of the E-MBA program are as follows:

1. To develop a holistic view on the business/company and management.
2. To broaden the frame of references and develop new perspectives and influences.
3. To learn to utilise theories as a tool to create structure and coherence in one's own experiences.
4. To train to actively use the scientific knowledge gained and to advocate critical reasoning.
5. To develop and strengthen strategic and business thinking.

The programme comprises cutting-edge theory, cross-disciplinary insight and an in-depth understanding of international relations. The most important part of the learning is the interaction taking place in the sub-groups. Sub-groups prepare reports on several subjects and deliver them according to specific deadlines.

Participants' Experiences

1. To develop a holistic view on the business/company and management.

All of the interviewees, every single person, indicated an increase in their knowledge about management and leadership concepts and seven of them stated that they developed a broader understanding of business. They mentioned the capability to now see the things from an "upper" perspective. According to some of the interviewees, these issues were considered one of the main expectations from the program as well.

For example, except for having new viewpoints, the interviewees can also recognize different management styles among managers around them and evaluate the poor as well as the excellent managerial behaviour in them. In addition, the interviewees stated that they have also learned to realise where the top management of their companies are heading and to extrapolate what the reasons are behind the actions and decisions they take. Also, it seems that the interviewees have developed their ability to distinguish the difference between management and leadership concepts. As one of the female interviewees stated:

"I do look more at management now than I used to, I look more on how they manage their subordinates and so on. Some people lack respect in my eyes and some people who I used to respect do not earn that respect anymore, since I can point out their weaknesses in their leadership. So it has opened my mind a lot."

2. To broaden the frame of references and develop new perspectives and influences.

It seems to the authors that, according to the interviews, this goal is met among seven out of the eight interviewees. For instance, one of them stated that in the E-MBA program the students were encouraged to use their own experiences from business life and compile that with the theories in order to make conclusions about it and learn something new. That was fascinating, as it showed to the participants how issues that they already dealt with can be put into another perspective. The program triggers the participants' thoughts in a way that encourages them to start to utilize their knowledge and experiences to their full extent.

Taking more initiative as well as taking part in the discussions in a wider area than before the E-MBA studies can be considered a way to put new perspectives and influences into practice on a daily base. That can be seen as a way to develop new perspectives as well as actively trying to achieve new influences, as the participants actively utilize the knowledge they have achieved, in order to contribute within a larger business area.

3. To learn to utilise theories as a tool to create structure and coherence in one's own experiences.

It was evident for the authors that three out of the eight interviewees have attained certain theoretical models they utilise in practice within their work life. For example, one interviewee finds the issues among the field of change management very useful in his work, as the company he is working for has undergone several enormous changes lately. The knowledge of change

management helps him to manage, for instance, the resistance from his subordinates. Another interviewee likes to determine the situation fully before making decisions or taking actions. She finds, for example, SWOT-analysis that she learned at the program as a useful basic tool for that matter.

Furthermore, this goal can be considered as achieved, as the interviewees stated that during the E-MBA program they learned to link their own experiences within the information delivered from the education. As an example, one of the male interviewees said that many situations and matters handled at the program confirmed what he had experienced earlier in his work context. Therefore he was able to understand a wider connection between theoretical perspectives and the practical situations. In addition, another interviewee said that since she was so up-to-date with management and business procedures, philosophies and practices, she succeeded very well in managing the project that she got right after graduating from the E-MBA.

4. To train to actively use the scientific knowledge gained and to advocate critical reasoning.

The interviewees showed a tendency of being aware of the scientific knowledge and that they could benefit from applying that kind of knowledge in their work. The critical and intellectual part of the education was described as fascinating. In addition, the interviewees seemed to be aware how to search for the knowledge needed and it was considered as one of the important aspects within the learning process.

However, at least one of the interviewees told the authors that as working life is relatively busy environment, decisions needs to be taken quickly and unfortunately there is not always enough time to collect scientific knowledge

about issues at hand in order to evaluate different perspectives. Thereby, the contact network of fellow students that the participants had created during their E-MBA studies was seen as an additional and easier source of getting information. Since many group members represented different business industries, it is easier to contact them, or the professors at the University, when one needs information external to his/her own special knowledge area.

As the authors do not really see the difference between this goal, compared to the second and the third goal, in practice and in real life context, it is relatively difficult to analyse this section separately from those. Perhaps the program leaders should reconsider and reframe this goal.

5. To develop and strengthen strategic and business thinking.

The last goal was considered as one of the most important areas the E-MBA program provides, according to seven of the interviewees. The aim to develop a stronger understanding of strategic and business thinking was considered important, especially among those interviewees holding 'Technical' or 'Other' background educations. For example, according to one interviewee, it is essential for HR people working in close relation with other management teams to have knowledge about management tools, techniques and how different business areas could and should work together. When asked to sum up the main benefit of the E-MBA program, one of the interviewees stated:

"The insight and better understanding of the total scope, about how to run the business and a company."

The education was considered a very good step for understanding and learning how to run a business and what is needed in conducting good business. In

addition, the participants have acquired a more holistic understanding of the meaning of strategies and goals and how business can and needs to be developed.

Furthermore, two of the interviewees seemed to be able to understand how every area in business connects and works together.

To sum up the main achievements from the E-MBA according to the interviewees, four main areas of learning could be distinguished. The interviewees indicated these subjects as most valuable and from which they learned the most. These areas are: developing a broader understanding of management and leadership concepts; updating the theoretical frame already known and learning to search for the new, applicable theories; learning to utilize a theoretical frame in a work context; understanding of economical and financial matters; and developing an overall holistic view of business. Furthermore, the interviewees developed a better understanding of themselves by reflecting upon other group members. Working in the sub-groups developed their overall understanding of teamwork. Sub-group work seemed to offer the possibility of changing attitudes and development of an individual as himself or herself. It was up to the person, then, whether to fully take advantage of these situations offered to them.

7. Conclusions

7.1 Conclude the Findings and the Analysis

In this final chapter of the thesis the main results of the study are summarised. As shown in the problem statement, the authors intend to answer the question about the E-MBA education's influence on the self-development of a manager. Furthermore, the authors continued to investigate how the self-development could be explained and measured through the eight selected themes. Moreover, the study examines if gender has any affect on the self-development process. Additionally, the goals of the E-MBA program were compared with the experiences of the participants in order to reveal whether these two aspects meet.

As with any study, care should be taken in extrapolating the results of this Master Thesis. The authors are aware that the interviewees graduated from the E-MBA program at different times; some of them took the program recently while others went several years ago. Thus, it needs to be remembered that the interviewees are expressing their experiences about the program through "filters", which working experience as well as time generates. This might affect the statements of the participants and it has to be relatively hard to consider how things would be without the E-MBA program. In addition, seven out of the eight interviewees took the program on their own free will, not sent by the company. Thus, there might be a tendency among the interviewees to be more interested in taking responsibility for their own personal and career

development than the average E-MBA student. This might, in turn, lead to more positive statements in the interviews.

Moreover, as already stated earlier in this thesis, the sample of interviewees was relatively small and thus cannot generate statistically reliable results. Nevertheless, as the program content has not changed dramatically during these years, the participants can be compared equally. Moreover, as there were not significant differences in the statements despite the amount of time passed after graduation, the authors believe that the results of this thesis can be considered as illustrating tendencies. Further studies with larger samples could be undertaken in order to examine the issue further.

The results of this thesis show that the changes in the E-MBA participants' self-development takes place through certain issues, where eight themes can be distinguished. According to the interviews, self-development proceeds through an increased awareness of individual strengths and weaknesses as well as increased competence due new knowledge and utilising already existing knowledge. Thus, changes in self-confidence, behaviour and interaction with co-workers emerge. This leads, in several cases and especially among females, for new and better career opportunities.

Briefly, in terms of self-awareness, all the females indicated change or recognition and as many as three out of four men made the same statement. Self-confidence increased among both genders but when it comes to changes in behaviour, women seemed to change more since only one man identified change in this field. All the women take more initiative after the E-MBA education whereas only one man noticed any difference in his actions. Both genders received equal amounts of feedback from their environment, but women seem to take other people more into account, as men did not, according

to themselves, changed their way to interact at all. Three out of four women got new career opportunities, whereas men remained in their old positions. In terms of new knowledge, both genders learned new issues, though only men indicated gaining within the financial matters. Women, on the other hand, seemed to get more out of group work and an overall business understanding than men.

Hence, the authors can make a conclusion that taking the E-MBA program affects the self-development of managers positively. Results show that every participant interviewed has improved in many areas and thereby the authors draw the conclusion that they have experienced significant self-development. The authors believe that by asking the persons to think, analyse and separate the experiences of the program, they triggered them to reflect upon their own development in order to become more aware of it. It can be also concluded that gender does affect the degree of self-development, as the female interviewees showed development to a remarkably larger extent than males.

As shown in Figure 10, the goals of the program and the experiences of the participants were drawn together to see if they connect with each other. As explained in the analysis chapter, all of the goals were achieved according to the interviewees. It was only the fourth goal that the authors were not able to determine if this goal was actually met. Moreover, learning from the sub-group work was not one separate goal achieved, but more like an overall learning method. That is why, as illustrated in Figure 10, sub-group work was the method by which all these experiences were produced. Thus, it is shown to affect all the experiences of the participants.
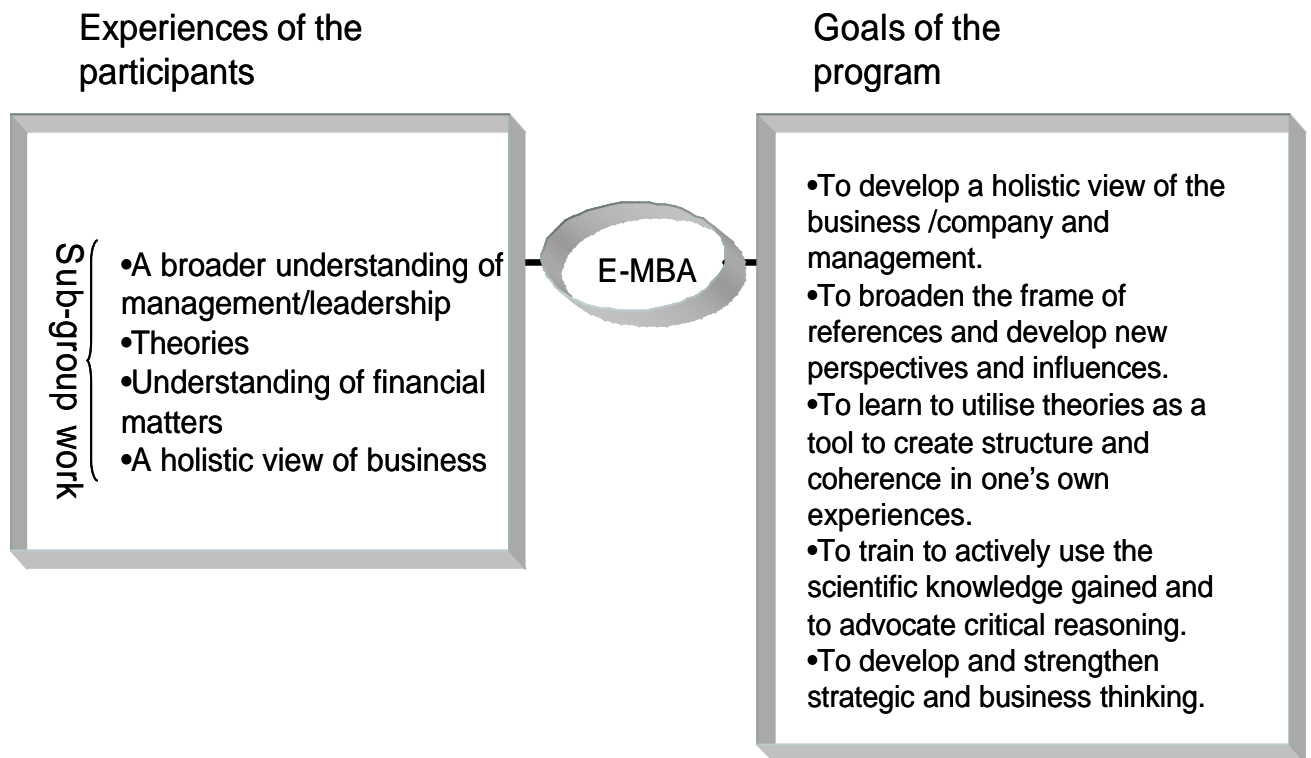
Figure 10. Conclusion of the Program Goals and Participants' Experiences (modified by the authors, 2004, by an idea from Rovio-Johansson, 2004)

7.2 Implications of the Study

According to Fritche (1988, quoted in Pedler et al., 1988), many programs are often limited to a sub-set of a particular workforce. The majority of these pre-identified people are almost certainly male, for whom opportunities and resources for self-development with the organisation's approval are open and available. As the analysed results show, females gained more out of the education than males throughout all the themes (see Figure 8). As Fritche mentions, it is self evident for a male to be able to take part managerial education and gain approval for it from the organization, whereas for females this might not be so easy, natural or accepted. Two of the female interviewees told about the difficulties of getting confirmation and acceptance to take part in

the E-MBA from their employers. They felt a need to convince their managers about the benefits and need of participating in the E-MBA program. This was also shown in the gender diversity in classes, as there were always remarkably more men than women. Moreover, only women experienced jealousy and envy from their co-workers, whereas men did not state that kind of behaviour shown towards them.

However, the authors believe that more females should undertake the E-MBA program; thus, their organizations should encourage them to apply for the education and the program should take more female participants. The authors' statement is based on the results of this thesis, which show that females have achieved better results in their self-development than their male counterparts during the E-MBA studies. Furthermore, the authors believe that it would not only be the females participating to the program that would benefit from them being there, but it would be an advantage for their sub-group members, too, as will be discussed further in the following paragraphs.

Five of the eight interviewees stated that the more diverse the sub-group is in terms of gender, background education and working experience, the better. It was stated by the interviewees that it was fascinating to learn about the group members' experiences and to see how things were done in the different companies that the group members represented. As there seems to be a tendency among women to hold more diverse educational backgrounds than men, the authors believe that in order to increase the diversity, and thereby the value of a group to its members as a learning environment, it would be beneficial to choose more women, especially holding varying bachelors degrees, to the program. It is a favourable factor for a woman to see that her contribution and ideas from different perspectives are appreciated among the group members.

Klein et al. (1996) suggest that if fostering diversity, particularly at high levels, education programme designers need to create supportive learning environments, that do not simply mirror the tokenism women currently encounter. According to them, leadership education can include topics relevant to female managers, such as managing career and family conflict and exhibiting professional competence and leadership in a work environment, which had previously been a largely male fortress.

Furthermore, as the program is not free of charge anymore, there might be a risk that organizations from the public sector are not eager to send attendances to the E-MBA program. The interviewees were a bit worried about this too, as they saw it as a decrease of diversity within the group combinations. Hence, the interviewees suggested that the E-MBA should be advertised more, so that it would be easier for employees to apply to the program, as those responsible for education and HR issues in a company would already know what this program actually is and what it includes.

To sum up the results in terms of pros and cons of the program, according to the interviewees they perceived learning in sub-groups as effective and preferred more diverse subgroups. Furthermore, as they were satisfied with all that they received from the program and they suggested that the program should be promoted and marketed more so that more people could have an opportunity to apply. However, the interviewees hoped that the persons responsible for the program would use their feedback, which was collected from the participants at the end of the program, to develop the program. In addition, they suggested that the sub-group combinations should be changed during the program.

The first impression the authors got in the beginning of the interviews was that the participants did not give much credit to themselves when it came to the affects of the program on their self-development. But during the discussions it appeared that, for instance, the interviewees had reflected upon how interesting it was to see people taking different roles in sub-groups or how their self-confidence had considerably increased. Therefore, the authors think that it would be valuable for the E-MBA students to achieve support and some "trigger" from the program representatives, in order to be able to better reflect upon their self-development during and after the program.

According to our observation, the E-MBA is the door to management opportunities for its participants as well as a way to enhance their self-development.

7.3 Concluding Remarks

It seemed to the authors that male interviewees were already satisfied with their positions at work. The authors believe that males did not feel the need to process their self-development to same extent as females in order to progress in their careers. It might be that men did not reflect upon their self-development that much after the program because of that. Females, on the other hand, might feel a need to improve their skills in various areas in order to achieve better positions at work. Therefore they seemed to reflect more upon their self-development, as it can be considered as an essentially important matter for their career development.

It seems to the authors that family had a big impact on the career development of females. The authors found out that females indicated returning back to work after the child rearing years at home as a significant event for them. Female managers seemed to integrate family issues more with their work life than males. Males did not mention their families to the authors during the interviews at all. The interviewees were reflecting traditional patterns in the sense that the females were reflecting more on how to combine family and work life whereas males did not mention the family's role in their career development at all. Males seemed to discuss work apart from the family-life. Females, on the other hand, tried to find the balance between the time divided for family and career. Having a family implies that one has to be more proactive and capable in planning daily schedules as well as life in general. As women are now have more possibilities for career development, the tensions for balancing work and family life will be more acute in the future.

7.4 Recommendations

The following recommendations are based on the authors' interpretations about the interviews, their observations and feelings. The authors distinguished three different parties as receivers for these recommendations.

For those who undertake or are interested in undertaking the E-MBA or similar kind of program the authors would stress the importance of the sub-group work and all the possibilities it offers for a participant. One should utilize the diverse knowledge and professionalism that is available within the group-members. In terms of the learning process it is important to change the responsibility area of each group-member when producing the assignments. One should consider the

possible conflict situations as chances to learn about oneself and the roles that the others take. It should also be noticed that the E-MBA is not only about improving the skills but getting a more holistic understanding about business. The program should be considered as an overall self-development process, which has a tendency to enhance knowledge base, self-confidence and self-awareness. The more management experiences in terms of working years, the broader the scope of its application.

For the employers that have employees undertaking the E-MBA or similar kind of program the authors would like to suggest ensuring that employers in all professional areas have equal opportunities to apply for the program. Furthermore, it is essential to respect the employee for taken the diploma. This could be done by having a conversation about the possibilities to use the knowledge and the new capabilities of an employee so that the company and the individual will benefit the most. It would be beneficial to analyze together the prospects and possibilities for the individual's career development. If the employee's educational efforts are not recognized and respected from the company there is a risk to loose the employee and the intellectual capital she or he holds for another company.

For those who are in charge of the E-MBA program the authors have sum up some recommendations. The participants would benefit the most when the combination of the sub-groups would be changed at least once during the program. In addition, the gender diversity in the class needs to be more balanced. Females need to be attracted to apply and take the program. This could be done for instance by marketing the program more effectively for the companies. The program seemed not to be well known within organizations as all the interviewees had heard about it from their friends. The program should make itself much more visible and inform its target group about the content and

the methods that it is using. As the knowledge of the E-MBA program spreads wider more people become interested in it, which will enhance the variety in the applicants.

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9. Appendices

Appendix 1: Interview questions

(In addition, several different kind of additional questions were made according to the person and to the particular situation)

Age___ Education____ Same organization____ Same position_____

1. **The first level: Reaction effects**
   (Person's direct reaction towards the education)

   - Where did you get the idea to take part in the E-MBA?
   - Why did you find it important to get an E-MBA diploma?
   - Do you think that the E-MBA provides a good starting point for a successful career?

2. **The second level: Learning effects**
   (Knowledge, skills, attitudes)

   2.1. <u>Me-flexibility</u> "Comfortableness with yourself"

   A person is familiar with his/her strengths and weaknesses, what they mean and how they affect him/her and his/her environment.

   - Did the E-MBA program help you to become more aware of your own strengths and weaknesses? Can you give examples?

   - Have you consciously tried to work on these issues, for example tried to improve your weak points? If yes, have you succeeded in changing them?

- Did the program have any affect on your self-confidence? Can you give examples?

- Have you made rules for yourself? (Decided to say "No" more often, never bring work home…)

2.2. Result-flexibility "The aim is clear"

A person recognizes his/her own values and considers them important. A person consciously selects his/her own goals and is able to work in alignment with them.

- Did the program have any affect on your future career? Can you give examples?

- Do you feel your values are aligned with your company's values? If not, how do you cope with it?

- Do you, now after the education, take more initiative according to how you feel things should be done? Can you give examples?

- What kind of plans do you have for the future? How do you plan to achieve them? (Are you consciously working towards your goals? Both, personal and work-life related issues)

2.3. You-flexibility "I can share it"

A person recognizes his/her comprehension of a human being and its significance for the interaction with others and stances rationally towards other people. A person takes responsibility for himself/herself, others and the environment.

- Did anything change regarding interactions with your colleagues/environment? Can you give examples?

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- Has your relationship with your subordinates changed in any way after the education? (Do you listen to them/consider them more often than earlier?) Can you give examples?

- Did you learn anything new about conflict situations? Can you give examples?

2.4. Change-flexibility "I can move further"

A person is able to adjust to changes and direct his/her thinking, actions and interpretation models and feeling when it is suitable. A person is satisfied with his/her life and recognizes the influence of his/her own thinking, action and interpretation models in life satisfaction.

- Did you get tools/resources for coping with changes in work/life? Can you give examples?

- Give some examples how you have managed the changes in the work? (Downsizing, changes in structures, etc.?)

- Do you realize the influence of your own thinking, actions towards your environment/own work satisfaction? Can you give examples?

- Are you satisfied with your life at the moment (What would you like to change)?

3. The third level: Change in behaviour

- Have you received comments from your environment (work or home) about the effects of the education, and if yes, what and from whom?

- Have you been able to make changes in your behaviour or was there resistance towards you?

- What particularly in the EMBA training lead to each of the changes that you just described? Examples, stories…?

4. The fourth level: Management style

- Did your understanding towards "Management"/"Leadership" change during the E-MBA program? In what way? Can you give us some specific examples?

- How do you define a good leader?

- Is your own role and status within the company more clear to you now?

Appendix 2: Tables

Table 1. The perceptions of all interviewees by themes.

THEME	
1. AWARENESS OF INDIVIDUAL STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES	
Yes	**6**
No	**2**
Total	**8**
2.a)CHANGES IN SELF-CONFIDENCE	
Yes, positive	**8**
Yes, negative	**0**
No	**0**
Total	**8**
b) CHANGES IN BEHAVIOUR	
Yes	**3**
No	**5**
Total	**8**
c)TAKE MORE INITIATIVE	
Yes	**7**
No	**1**
Total	**8**
3. a) CHANGES IN INTERACTION WITH CO-WORKERS	
Yes	**3**
No	**5**
Total	**8**
b) COMMENTS AND FEEDBACK	
Yes, positive	**3**
Yes, negative	**3**
No feedback	**2**
Total	**8**
4. CAREER OPPORTUNITIES	
Yes, new task/job	**4**
No change due to the E-MBA	**4**
Total	**8**
5. NEW KNOWLEDGE	
Financial	**2**
Management/leadership as concepts	**8**
Groupwork	**3**
Business	**7**
No	**0**
Total	**20**

Table 2. The perceptions of themes by gender

THEME	MEN	WOMEN
1. AWARENESS OF INDIVIDUAL STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES		
Yes	3	4
No	1	
Total	**4**	**4**
2.a)CHANGES IN SELF-CONFIDENCE		
Yes, positive	4	4
Yes, negative		
No		
Total	**4**	**4**
b) CHANGES IN BEHAVIOUR		
Yes	1	3
No	3	1
Total	**4**	**4**
c)TAKE MORE INITIATIVE		
Yes	1	4
No	1	
Cannot say	2	
Total	**4**	**4**
3.a)CHANGES IN INTERACTION WITH CO-WORKERS		
Yes		3
No	3	1
Cannot say	1	
Total	**4**	**4**
3.b) COMMENTS AND FEEDBACK		
Yes, positive	1	2
Yes, negative	2	1
No feedback	1	1
Total	**4**	**4**
4. CAREER OPPORTUNITIES		
Yes, new task/job		3
No change due to the E-MBA	4	1
Total	**4**	**4**
5. NEW KNOWLEDGE		
Financial	2	
Management/leadership as concepts	4	4
Groupwork	1	2
Business	3	4
Total	**10**	**10**

Table 3. New knowledge acquired per educational background

NEW KNOWLEDGE	EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND		
	BUSINESS/ FINANCE	TECHNICAL (i.e.engineer)	OTHER (i.e. Psychology, local government
Financial		2	
Management/leadership as concepts	3	3	2
Groupwork	1	1	1
Business	3	2	2
Total	**7**	**8**	**5**