



UNIVERSITY OF GOTHENBURG  
SCHOOL OF BUSINESS, ECONOMICS AND LAW

## **Integration and Onboarding - an International Dimension**

*A study of integration and management adjustments for Swedish  
companies operating on the Japanese market*

### **Bachelor Thesis**

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### **Course**

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## Abstract

- Title:**           **Integration and Onboarding - an International Dimension**  
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- Course:**       FEG316 Management, Bachelor Thesis
- Authors:**     Maria Wlosinska and Ulrika Dillner
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The importance of managing and integrating employees in a globalized world with infinite numbers of multinational companies is certainly increasing. Researchers believe that *people* is nowadays the only resource that truly differentiates markets and cultures from each other. However, the area of managing and integrating employees from different countries is relatively unexplored. This thesis therefore aims to create a better understanding of management and integration processes that are suitable for Swedish companies operating in Japan. The study approaches the topic through the use of seven qualitative interviews with senior executives active in some of the biggest and most successful Swedish companies with subsidiaries in Japan. The empirical findings were analyzed by utilizing the GLOBE study and Bauer's onboarding model. Additionally a questioning and critical perspective was added as a running theme through the study. What we found was that the success of the interviewed companies relies on the underlying similarities in terms of management between the countries studied. We also came to the conclusion that the best way to integrate new hires is through a fixed sequence of activities in the following order; knowledge of culture, role clarity, social integration and self-efficacy.

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## 1. Introduction

Globalization has transformed our world, and will continue to do so. Financial markets are becoming more and more interdependent which leads to dramatic consequences for the volatility of the world economy. On the other hand, the exchange of information, technology and knowledge has facilitated production and establishment of companies all over the world. With money, technology and other tangible assets becoming increasingly accessible, it is no wonder that we have moved into an area where *people* is the only resource that truly differentiates markets and cultures from each other (Evans, Pucik & Björkman, 2011).

The process of managing people in a multinational enterprise is obviously exceedingly complex. Different cultures and contexts make the issue of how management contributes to business performance even more evident. To achieve a healthy and successful business environment and increase profitability it is essential to integrate new hires in a way that makes them feel needed, appreciated and comfortable in the company as well as with their colleagues. Dedicated employees are valuable and important resources that work as the major source of competitive advantage. Therefore it is substantial to start the process of engaging and educating employees correctly from the beginning (Kviselius, 2008).

An effective process that helps senior managers, human resources representatives, hiring managers, and co-workers to welcome and integrate new hires is called *onboarding*. An onboarding programme usually consists of several steps that help newcomers learn about their work and adjust to their workplace. The programme helps companies attract the best candidates, decrease time to productivity, give employees the right tools and knowledge and acculturate employees properly into the organization. Research has shown that the use of a formal onboarding process affects newcomers' job satisfaction, performance and commitment to the company (Korte, 2012). Despite all advantages associated with an onboarding process, not every company are aware of them. Until recently, onboarding has been considered a minor part of human resource management. However, today, academic researchers and

managers responsible for the socialization within their organization have started to realize the huge impact this minor area has on the business as a whole (Bauer 2010). We find it intriguing to provide a closer look at a relevant subject of today, from a different and relatively unexplored perspective, in terms of existing literature; onboarding from an international perspective.

The international dimension that we would like to shed light on is the Japanese market, the third largest economy in the world and the most developed democracy with market economy in Asia. Research has shown that Swedish companies have been successful on the Japanese market (Nilsson, 2010). For example H&M doubled their number of stores in Japan in 2012 (Dagens Industri, 2011) and Volvo considers Japan as their second largest market in terms of sales (Toftevik, Volvo, personal interview, 2013-04-25). This raises the issue of how and to what extent Swedish companies see the huge potential of the Japanese market. But how is it possible for Swedish subsidiaries to succeed when distance and differences in culture are such immense? We believe that it can be of much interest to delve deeper into whether the success depends on how Swedish management is perceived in Japan and whether their onboarding programs have been contributing factors.

## **1.1 Problem Discussion**

To study the management of Swedish companies operating in Japan is interesting for several reasons. The large distance between the countries involved makes it possible to compare them in several aspects that would not be possible when studying Swedish companies operating for example in other Scandinavian countries. The cultural and language differences have affected the entry barriers that have been considerably high. Therefore the dissimilarities and difficulties might be overwhelming when Swedish companies are expanding into Japan. When considering that Japan is the third largest economy and the second largest consumer market, the opportunities for Swedish companies to establish themselves should be of high interest, which also increases the relevance of our study (Swedish Trade, 2013).

When investigating existing literature of cross-culture management concerning the countries involved, we discovered a clear lack of information on whether Swedish

management strategies and onboarding processes must be locally adapted in Japan. Since Swedish establishment in Japan is expecting to increase further it is essential to evaluate which strategies and onboarding processes are preferable when expanding into Japan. Studies have shown that “the greater the distance between two countries, the greater the differences in organizational attributes and practices” (Mansour & House, p.1, 2002). These findings imply a huge difference in Swedish and Japanese management culture.

Today there are 130 Swedish subsidiaries established in Japan and additionally 350 companies are represented in other forms (Business Sweden, 2013). According to a study conducted by Business Sweden in 2011, 90 percent out of 20 companies interviewed expect a high growth in the next five years. To maintain this high level of growth, it is important to have a developed awareness of the differences in culture and management norms. If it is a fact that “the greater the distance between two countries, the greater the differences in organizational attributes and practices”, then how could Swedish and Japanese management possibly have any similarities? Or, are the differences really that remarkable? To find out, we will start by providing a brief background of the management characteristics of each country involved in our study.

Research shows that one key attribute of Swedish management is strong *collectivist* culture, which implies a strong belief and importance of working within a team or group (Birkinshaw, 2002). Individualistic performance is therefore not practiced to the same extent as in Japan. Another key attribute is the lack of hierarchy. The level of informality and openness is high and there is no problem for an employee to talk directly to the CEO. This has led to a “feminine” society where values such as nurturing, caring and supporting are considered to be important. Furthermore, the high level of tolerance of uncertainty makes Swedes more resistant to change, able to accommodate new ways of thinking and more tolerant with foreigners. Swedish management can be described as empowering and coaching (Lewis, 2000). Empowering stands for a delegating responsibility to the people who work for you, shared decision making processes and appreciating initiatives from your employees. A coaching management style has the intention to make everyone feel a part of the team, encouraging employees to cooperate but also appreciating and listening to individual’s own initiative (Birkinshaw, 2002).



The Japanese culture certainly consists of several different managerial aspects from the Swedish culture. One of the differences lies in the ambiguous Japanese language that from time to time lack direct contractual commitments. The reason behind this might be the fact that the Japanese have repugnance to conflicts, particularly when they have to confront someone. This can cause communication problems when interacting with foreigners (Vargö, 1997). In Japan politeness is a cultural norm and the Japanese are famous for taking politeness to extremes. They have ritual gestures of deference and humility, frequently insert apologetic expressions in their normal speech and use different verb endings depending on the formality of different occasions. Another famous extreme of the Japanese politeness is the unwillingness to say no with clarity and determination (Lincon, Kerbo & Wittenhagen, 1995).

Moreover, in Japan the value of deep and long lasting relationship in business and politics is significant. However, they tend to keep distance to people whom they don't know. Japanese managers hold the responsibility for different failures within the business even though they were not implicated in the situation causing the error (Vargö, 1997). The most distinctive formal structure in Japanese firms is the vertical status hierarchy that precisely situates employees on different levels. In contrast to Sweden, a typical Japanese employee would not speak directly to his boss. Their status remains outside work situations since they have a fondness for titles (Lincon, Kerbo & Wittenhagen, 1995).

As presented above, there are several distinctive differences in culture and management between Sweden and Japan that reflects the general perception of the two countries. Many researches have studied cross-culture management to understand the impact that culture traditions, values, ideologies and norms have on people's behaviour. Some have argued that there is a strong link between culture and management, which implies a specific management for each country or region. The characteristics of Swedish and Japanese management described above ensure the correctness of the researches. However, other researchers believe that globalization, common technological imperatives and common industrial logic practices have contributed to a management style that is universally accepted (Housea, Javidanb, Hangesc & Dorfman, 2002).

With the globalization, more and more companies are expanding on a global scale, which increase the importance of knowing how to effectively use onboarding as an initiative to establish the right workforce when recruiting and integrating employees from different cultures (Bauer, 2010). Swedish managers face a highly complex situation that when acting on the Japanese market. We therefore find it interesting to research how and if their management has played an important role when doing business in Japan. Could the outcome possibly be connected to the original perception of Sweden and their management or is it all based on universal accepted strategies and methods?

We believe that when studying human resource management, especially from an international perspective, it is necessary to take into account that every individual has their own subjective perception about what strategies they consider the best. Even though a Swedish manager believes that he is empowering and coaching, his employees might have the opposite view. The relevance of human resource strategies can therefore be questioned. Even though every person has his or her own opinion there are several socially accepted norms, which often are referred to as an *institutional* way of thinking (Jackson & Carter, 2002) When taking this into consideration, is the underlying reason to why Swedish managers are appreciated in Japan that there is an institutionalized acceptance and positive image about Sweden?

It is also interesting to further discuss whether it is true that culture and management are positively linked to each other, as some of the researchers mentioned above believe, or whether there is a universally accepted management style. If there is a universally accepted management style, does this also imply that there is a universally accepted onboarding programme? Or is it always necessary to make some local adjustments? To sum up, we have the intention to cover these questions and challenges that should be of interest for Swedish companies expanding into the Japanese market.

## **1.2 Research Questions**

1. Are there any underlying similarities in terms of management culture between Sweden and Japan despite the huge geographical and cultural distance?
2. How should Swedish managers adjust their management and onboarding processes towards the Japanese culture and norms?

## **1.3 Purpose**

The purpose of our thesis is to investigate whether there are any underlying similarities in terms of management culture between Sweden and Japan despite the huge geographical and cultural distance. We also aim to provide a deeper understanding of how Swedish management methods and strategies have been received in Japan and whether they can be improved to maximize the profitability of future companies entering the Japanese market. Our study will hopefully provide a general description that can be used for further findings but also for managers operating in Swedish companies in Japan and thereby help them to choose the most successful management strategies and onboarding processes in Japan.

## **1.4 Limitations**

In order to study this research area and get adequate results it was important to consider limitations when choosing information sources in terms companies. We have chosen to interview and further study seven of Sweden's largest and most successful multinational companies with subsidiaries in Japan. Our focus lies on Swedish managers perception of differences in culture and onboarding processes. We are aware of that the result given from this study only covers one perspective to answer the research questions and might therefore be bias. However, we believe that the knowledge and experiences from the managers interviewed, together with existing literature, are sufficient to get an accurate insight of the area and answer our questions. What would have enhanced our research are qualitative interviews with Japanese managers as well employees. Due to limitations in time and resources the possibility to conduct a research in Japan was unfortunately not possible.

It would also have been interesting to interview respondents from Swedish companies that faced more challenges on the Japanese market than the ones we interviewed. This would have added a perspective that would explain and clarify which management practices and onboarding processes that either contributed to the success of the companies or were not suitable on the Japanese market. Our study is also limited when it comes to general conclusions since we were able to interview only seven Swedish companies operating in Japan. The fact that we only interviewed one respondent from each company studied means that we only get the managers perspective as a general perception from the whole company, whos opinion probably is subjective.

Additionally, a final limitation to our study is that the companies interviewed have not been active on the Japanese market for the same period of time. They therefore have different experience and their answers might differ because of that.

## **1.5 Disposition of the Thesis**

The introductory chapter of the thesis provides the problem discussion as well as the purpose of the thesis and an outline of the research questions. In the second chapter we present the theoretical framework, which cover models and theories that will support our empirical findings and work as a foundation for our analysis. Chapter three includes the methods utilized to implement our study and a motivation of our choice of methods and approaches. In chapter four the interviews will be presented as empirical findings. Chapter five will include a comparison and analysis of the empirical findings by using the theoretical frameworks. Chapter six will address our findings, reconnect to the purpose of our study and answer our research questions. At last suggestions for further research will be addressed.

## 2. Theoretical Framework

The aim of this section is to present the theories chosen that will work as a foundation for the analysis. We have chosen different theories in regards to *cultural dimensions*, but also *onboarding processes*, which are the two main subjects for this thesis. To be able to question and gain a deeper understanding of the area we have also chosen to add a critical perspective, *looking awry*. We will begin by presenting previous research in the area and conclude by motivating the choice of theories utilized for our study.

### 2.1 Cultural Dimensions

*This section will cover previous research in the area of cross-culture management that has been important for our study.*

When studying culture it is of great importance to take into account that there is no universally accepted definition of culture. Culture can be defined in several ways and have many different understandings and definitions for all individuals. It seems to be distinguished from one group to another depending on shared values, beliefs, behaviours and attitudes. To facilitate worldwide communication, a number of scholars and researchers have tried to define an all-inclusive and universal definition of culture. For example, Hofstede (2001) argued “culture is the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes members of one group or category of people from another”. Another definition was created by House et al. (2004); “culture is a set of parameters of collectives that differentiate the collectives from each other in meaningful ways. Culture is variously defined in terms of several commonly shared processes: shared ways of thinking, feeling, and reacting; shared meanings of identities; shared socially constructed environments; common ways in which technologies are used; and commonly experienced events including the history, language and religion of their members ”. Although these researchers, together with others, have tried to create a universally accepted meaning, each individual will always have its own perception.

In the area of cross-culture management, Hofstede (2001) is one of the most cited researchers. He conducted a comparative study where over 50 countries were compared and mapped on five cultural dimensions. The study was published in 1980 and has for many years been the most comprehensive study in the area of cross-culture management. The five cultural dimensions of Hofstede are; *Power Distance* which refers to “the extent to which the less powerful members of organizations and institutions accept and expect that power is distributed unequally”. *Uncertainty Avoidance*, which is defined as “the extent to which a culture programs its members to feel either uncomfortable or comfortable in unstructured situations”. *Individualism* can be defined as “a preference for a loosely-knit social framework in which individuals are expected to take care of themselves and their immediate family only”. The opposite of individualism is called collectivism. *Masculinity* versus its opposite, femininity refers to the distribution of emotional roles between the genders; it opposes “competitive” masculine to “cooperation” feminine societies. *Long-term (versus short-term) orientation* refers to “the extent to which a culture programs its members to accept delayed gratification of their material, social, and emotional needs.” Hofstede’s study has worked as a foundation for several studies and contributed with understanding of cultural diversity.

## 2.2 The GLOBE Study

*One of the studies that were partly based upon Hofstede’s cultural dimensions is called the GLOBE study. This section will provide a wide description of the findings from the study.*

When investigating managerial differences and similarities between two different countries we considered a comparison of culture highly relevant. A study that has identified how human communities are different or similar in aspects of cultural clusters is called GLOBE, Global Leadership and Organizational Behaviour Effectiveness (Javidan & House, 2002). The study examined the interrelationships between societal culture, organizational culture and organizational leadership. 150 social scientists and management scholars from 61 cultures representing all major regions of the world were engaged in the long-term project. The GLOBE study is today the most extensive study that *empirically* studied the relationship between

culture and leadership styles and behaviour in as many countries, with help from both quantitative and qualitative measures and analyses (Bik, 2010).

The results from the empirical findings provided ten different clusters; South Asia, Anglo, Arab, Germanic Europe, Latin Europe, Eastern Europe, Confusion Asia, Latin America, Sub-Sahara Africa and Nordic Europe (House, Javidan, Hanges & Dorfman, 2002). These ten different clusters consisted of several areas in which the empirical findings demonstrated clear similarities in cultural and leader behaviour. The most distinctive differences from Hofstede’s model are that the GLOBE study is broader, based on empirical findings, connects the findings to greater areas than to specific countries and also covers leader behaviour (Bik, 2010). The following table demonstrates the cultural dimensions evaluated from the GLOBE study.

<b>Culture construct</b>	<b>Definition</b>
<b>Power Distance</b>	The degree to which members of an organization or a society expect and agree that power should be stratified and concentrated at higher levels of an organization or government.
<b>Uncertainty Avoidance</b>	The extent to which members of an organization or a society strive to avoid uncertainty of future events by relying on established social norms, rituals, and bureaucratic practices.
<b>Assertiveness</b>	The degree to which individuals in organizations or societies are assertive, confrontational, and aggressive in social relationships.
<b>Institutional Collectivism (Collectivism I)</b>	The degree to which organizational and societal institutional practices encourage and reward collective distribution of resources and collective action.
<b>In-Group Collectivism (Collectivism II)</b>	The degree to which individuals express pride, loyalty, and cohesiveness in their organizations or families.
<b>Future Orientation</b>	The degree to which individuals in organizations or societies engage in future-oriented behaviors such as planning, investing in the future, and delaying individual or collective gratification.
<b>Performance Orientation</b>	The degree to which an organization or a society encourages and rewards group members for performance improvement, innovation, high standards, and excellence.
<b>Humane Orientation</b>	The degree to which individuals in organizations or societies are encouraged and rewarded for being fair, altruistic, friendly, generous, caring, and kind to others.
<b>Gender Egalitarianism</b>	The degree to which an organization or a society minimizes gender role differences while promoting gender equality.

*Figure 1 – House et al. culture construct definitions (2004) p.92*

Except for the general cultural differences, The GLOBE study also specifically covers differences in leadership for each cluster. By measuring to what extent a leader of a certain cluster is Team-oriented, Human, Self-protective, Autonomous, Charismatic and Participative the GLOBE study makes it possible to compare and analyze different leader styles related to cluster (Chhokar, Brodbeck & House, 2008).

*Team-oriented* leaders use a collaborative approach to work by utilizing team-structures. They need to get the job done but must also be considerate of the welfare of team-members. A *human* leader is characterized by being caring and considerate of others. *Charismatic* leaders usually shows attributes to use a visionary, inspirational, integrity, decisiveness and performance oriented approach. *Autonomous* leaders tend to be individualistic, independent and unique. Thus, it does not imply that they work to promote their self-interests or act independently (Guptaa, Hangesb & Peter, 2002). Both *self-protective* and autonomous leadership styles are considered to influence effective leadership in a slightly negatively way. Self-protective leadership is known as being self-centred, status conscious, conflict inducer, face-saver and procedural. The *participative* leader encourages input from the employees in decision-making and implementation. Participative leaders also emphasize equality and delegation. (Guptaa, Hangesb & Peter, 2002)

Among the ten different clusters defined from the GLOBE study, Sweden is classified within the Nordic European cluster, which consist of Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden. According to the study the Nordic European cluster tend to show relatively strong practices of future orientation, uncertainty avoidance, institutional collectivism and gender egalitarianism in terms of cultural dimensions (Bakasci, 2002). When it comes to human orientation and performance orientation the Nordic cluster falls in the middle range of scores. It scores low on assertiveness, in-Group collectivism and power distance. There is a weak practice of assertiveness and power distance (Chhokar, Brodbeck & House, 2008). Regarding the leadership dimensions developed from the GLOBE study, the Nordic European cluster is characterized by scoring high in charismatic/value based - and high team oriented leadership. Participative leadership is also considered to be distinctive for the cluster. Nevertheless, self-protective leadership is considered very undesirable within this



cluster. Concerning the last dimension in the model, autonomous leadership is tolerated but not often practiced (Jesuino, 2002).

Japan is placed in the Confucian cluster, together with China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, South Korea and Singapore. The Confucian cluster scored especially high in institutional collectivism and performance orientation and scored with the average on Assertiveness, Future orientation, Human Orientation, Gender Egalitarianism, Power Distance and Uncertainty Avoidance. Surprisingly, there was no cultural dimension that the Confucian cluster scored low on. The most distinctive leader properties for the Confucian cluster are Team-Oriented, Human Oriented, Participative and Charismatic. The Self-Protective leadership dimension score was higher for the Confucian cluster than any other, but is still classified as neutral. Special features of this cluster are learning through a hierarchical and family modelled institution and teaching principals such as diligence and self-sacrifice. These are all running themes in the social norms and practices (Chhokar, Brodbeck & House, 2008).

### 2.3 Onboarding

*After a thorough presentation of studies concerning cultural dimensions we will continue by providing a strategy of how to integrate employees. These two areas are closely connected in our study and will help us answer our research questions.*

One of the most important ways for an organization to improve effectiveness and profitability is by investing in the most important resource of today, *people*, through strategic use of an onboarding programme. Onboarding is defined as “a way to help new hires adjust to social and performance aspects of their new jobs quickly and smoothly” (Bauer, 2010). Research shows that when onboarding is done correctly, the outcome is higher job satisfaction, organizational commitment, lower employee turnover, higher performance levels, career effectiveness and lowered stress. The fact that 25 percent of the working population in the United States change their job each year is only one example of why onboarding should be implemented in all companies of today (Harmon, 2011). According to Aberdeen Group (2006) there are not only short terms gains when a company decides to introduce an onboarding program. In

fact, an onboarding program can rise time to full productivity by 60 percent and increase the overall customer satisfaction by 53 percent (Bauer, 2010).

Today every organization has its own configured version of an onboarding process which teach new hires to learn the organizations culture, attitudes, knowledge, skills and behaviours. Previous academic researchers often used the term organizational socialization when they refer to onboarding. The structure of the onboarding process differ from company to company but the bottom line remains the same; “the faster new hires feel welcome and prepared to their jobs, the faster they will be able to successfully contribute to the firms missions” (Harmon, 2011).

Onboarding processes are usually divided into *formal* and *informal*. An informal onboarding process refers to when employees learns their new jobs without an explicit organization plan, while a formal onboarding process refers to a written set of coordinated policies and procedures that assist an employee in adjusting to his or her new job in terms of both tasks and socialization. Even though a company does not have an outspoken formal onboarding process there is naturally always an informal process. Research shows that the use of a formal onboarding process with a step-by-step programme is the most efficient way to increase job satisfaction and performance within the company (Bauer, 2010)

There are several different models of how onboarding is possessed to recruit and educate new hires. Finnegan (2009) argues that companies should completely design and structure the first 90 days to ensure a successful integration. He believes that in order to increase job satisfaction the working environment plays an important role and the first impressions are critical.

### **2.3.1 Bauers' Onboarding Model**

We have chosen to use a model developed by Bauer (2010) since we believe that it describes how onboarding actually is contributing to the success of an organization in the best way. According to Bauer onboarding has four distinct levels, which often are referred to as “The four C’s”; Compliance, Clarification, Culture, Connection. The

first level is *compliance*, which refers to teaching new employees basic legal and policy rules and regulation of the company. When this level is fulfilled the function of *clarification* dominates. This refers to the fact that managers have to ensure that new employees will understand their tasks and expected performance. The third level in the onboarding process includes providing employees with a knowledge about formal - and informal organizational norms, which constitutes the foundation of the organizational *culture*. The fourth and last level explains the importance of *connection* within an onboarding process. The vital interpersonal relationships and information networks must function properly for this level to be fulfilled. The degree to which the different levels are fulfilled in a company determines how well they utilize onboarding as a contributing factor for the success (Bauer, 2010).

Moreover, Bauer has also designed a model of four major components that are related to both work roles and social environment that organizations can use in order to maximize the success of the onboarding process. The first part consists of *self-efficacy*, which means self-confidence in their own work to feel motivated to perform on top. Self-efficacy is proved to have a great impact on organizational commitment, work satisfaction and turnover. The second part of a well-executed onboarding process is *role clarity*, which means to have a predetermined template of what needs to be done within the specific role of an employee. Without a clear role definition the quality of the work might fail. Additionally it contributes to prevent employees from misunderstanding their tasks and spending time on irrelevant things. Actually, studies shows that businesses lose an estimated \$ 37 billion annually in the United States and United Kingdom due to the fact that employees have not understood their role (Cognisco 2010). Overall the measurement of role clarity must be consistent in order to contribute to work satisfaction and organizational commitment during the onboarding process (Bauer, 2010).

The third part of the onboarding process is *social integration*. This part of the process implies meeting and getting to know professionals from other departments to get an overall picture of the organization as well as learning from more experienced employees within the organization. This helps the new employees to feel socially comfortable and accepted by their superiors. A good relationship with their department heads and the staff is positively related to a successful onboarding

process. Thus, to facilitate the onboarding process, new hires should actively participate in social integration themselves and not only rely on the human resource staff (Bauer, 2010).

The fourth and last part of the onboarding process is *knowledge of culture*. Since every business is unique and operates differently from others, employees have to understand the culture of the company to feel satisfied. It is therefore of great importance for an employee to learn the company's policies, values and goals to ensure higher job satisfaction and turnover (Bauer, 2010).

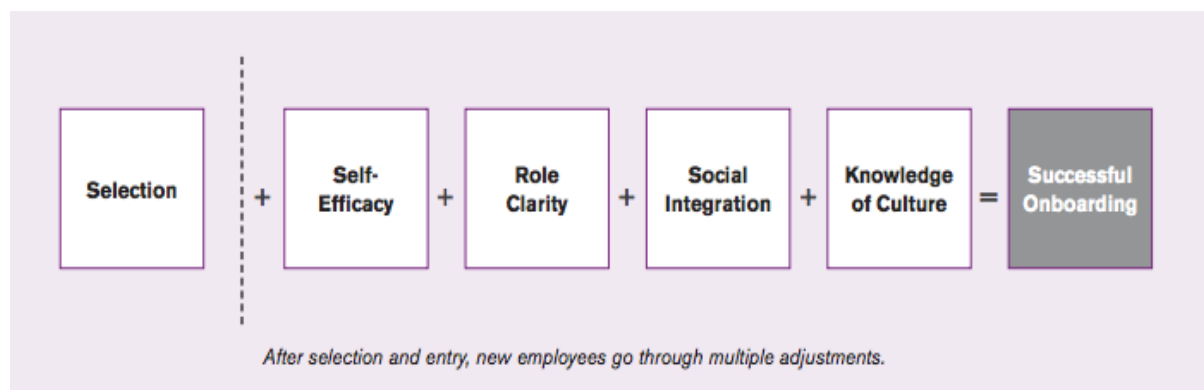


Figure 2. Bauer's four levels to successfully complete the onboarding process (Bauer, 2010).

The four levels discussed above do all refer to short-term outcomes of an onboarding process. Without achieving the short-term outcomes, a company will also forfeit their long terms goals. If the process is done correctly from the beginning it will work as a foundation that can increase commitment and performance in the long run. Researchers found that it took two months less to reach full productivity if using an onboarding programme (Allen, 2006). Without an onboarding process, there is a risk to loose the best talents since they get confused, feel alienated or lack confidence or knowledge. In conclusion, an onboarding process is one of the most necessary actions to ensure a successful integration of new hires (Bauer, 2010).

## 2.4 Looking Awry

*When discussing management theories it is of great importance to not only look from an objective perspective but rather understanding the subjectivity in each individual's*

*perception of leadership and successful onboarding processes. We will take this into consideration and through the whole study and analyze with help from this perspective. “Looking awry” is therefore a running theme through our thesis.*

Žižek (1992) believes that to achieve a greater knowledge and understanding it is essential to look awry at existing management models. When doing so, you are able to step outside the normative view and see beyond the objective neutral model. He also argues that individuals from the same culture are familiar with the normative discourse surrounding them, which makes them “blinded” by their own opinions and perceptions. In terms of leadership, looking awry enables managers to see their role and thereby act or intervene in a more successful way. It adds depth to what is seemingly straightforward and reveals what previously was not discovered.

Western (2008) believes that leadership is a social construction rather than a fixed identity, which implies that leaders are socially constructed by the ones following them. In essence, we are all part of the history, culture and norms that surrounds us which builds frames and discourses that eventually constructs ourselves. Lyotard (1994) argued that there are no universally shared norms and assumptions since it only can be legitimate locally. This provides a limitation to apply a universally accepted framework.

Jackson and Carter (2002) shares Lyotard’s view when claiming that most words are also symbols that signifies something different for each individual. For example, leadership is signified by a lot of different signifiers. With this, Jackson and Carter mean that all symbols can have different meanings in different contexts, but also different meanings to different people. Thus, this means that a specific signified have more than one signifier, which also implies that management theories and onboarding processes are perceived differently depending on what critical lenses you are using. Since most words are symbols, leadership and onboarding processes are also symbols constructed in the eyes of the beholder. The meaning of a strong leadership are therefore different depending on clusters, countries, regions and individuals, which is why we found this theory practice of high relevance for our study (Jackson & Carter, 2002)

Since there are infinite numbers of different readings and perceptions of a specific symbol it might seem impossible for shared norms and understandings to exist. However, this is after all not the case in our society. Even though we all understand meanings in our own unique way, it is acquired that we implicitly assume some general agreement about the meaning of words and expressions to be able to communicate and facilitate the society. The phenomenon is called *intersubjectivity*. Intersubjectivity is dependent on shared experience, culture and perceptions, which is why there usually is a common implicit norm, connected to a certain culture (Jackson & Carter, 2002). This might be the reason behind expressions such as “typical Swedish” or “typical Japanese”.

## 2.5 Motivation of Theories

To sum up the theoretical framework we would like to emphasize the reason why we have chosen the theories utilized for our study. The GLOBE study gave us depth knowledge about how culture clusters and societies differ in terms of leadership and management. Additionally it will provide us a foundation to answer our first research question where our aim is to find out the underlying similarities between Sweden and Japan in terms of management culture. What also strengthens our choice of theory is that the GLOBE study is comprehensive, based on empirical findings, connects the findings to great areas instead of to specific countries and also covers leader behaviour (Chhokart, Rodbeck & House, 2008).

Further on when discussing management and leadership, one of the most important tasks for a leader knows how to integrate new hires in the best way possible, which leads us to onboarding. The onboarding model constructed by Bauer (2010) is of high relevance since it is one of the most renowned integration models in the area. The four distinct levels of the model are all necessary for a successful integration and personal development for the employees. We will use the model as a reference when answering our second research question whether Swedish companies should adjust their onboarding processes when entering the Japanese market.

To add a different, questioning perspective to our thesis we chose to include “looking awry” as a running theme through our study. As mentioned earlier, when discussing

management theories it is important to not only look from an objective perspective but rather understanding the subjectivity in each individual's perception of successful leadership and onboarding processes. This perspective leaves room for us to be more critical and questioning to our theories chosen and empirical findings.

### **3. Methodology**

The aim of this section is to provide a better understanding of how the study was conducted. Focus lies on how the study was performed and to justify our choice of methods. We will also cover reliability and validity of the study and its components. Additionally this chapter includes source criticism and limitations.

#### **3.1 Research Approach**

In our introductory chapter it is obvious that our research questions has to be answered through qualitative interviews to be able to conduct subjective perceptions based on past experience and personal involvement within the expansion of a Swedish company operating in Japan. In this thesis we have therefore chosen to make a qualitative research to understand whether there are some underlying similarities between Swedish and Japan that can be the reason to why Swedish companies are seen to increase their market shares in Japan but also to find out if and how Swedish management and onboarding processes must be adjusted.

In line with the decision to collect qualitative interviews, we have conducted a small amount of longer interviews with seven selected companies and professionals who possess the right knowledge in the field that is investigated. The respondents are all working in a Swedish company that have business units located in Japan. We have chosen to make open questions to be able to ensure expressive and open answers from the respondents. The purpose is to attain a greater knowledge of how they all operated to precede a successful onboarding process but also investigate possible mistakes made to prevent them from happening in the future.

A study based on empirical research has the purpose to combine earlier literature and existing theories with collected empirical knowledge. To connect our empirical and theoretical knowledge we have used a deductive research approach. The meaning behind a deductive research approach is to narrow down a general approach to a more specific one (Trochim & Donnelly, 2006). To thorough investigate existing literature in the research area implies the possibility to identify specific parts that are yet unexplored. On this basis, a hypothesis in line with a research question can be



constructed. The result of the investigation is in the end possible to determine as either confirmed or contradicted to the hypothesis (Gill & Johnson, 2010).

Our research process began with a thorough overlook of existing literature of management in an international perspective. Through observation we found a great interest concerning studies of cultural differences in both countries studied in our thesis. However, we discovered a clear lack of information about how Swedish companies should adapt and transform their management towards Japanese culture and norms. Specifically we found an interest to further study and gain deep knowledge about how Swedish managers actually should behave and act to succeed with their formal onboarding process when making business in Japan. Theories that we believed matched the subject were chosen and our core questions were derived there from. To be able to respond and explain our research questions we collected data from qualitative interviews. The main reason to our choice of qualitative interviews in our method is that it allows questioning to be guided as desired and it clarifies points more easily than through other methods as for example mailed questionnaires (Frey & Oishi, 1995). The technique does however rely on the respondent being willing to give accurate and complete answers (Breakwell, Hammond & Fife-Schaw, 1995). After conducting the interviews we were able to analyze the results and form a final conclusion. In other words, we followed the deductive research approach.

### **3.2 Investigation Method**

The primary data collected in the thesis consists of information gathered from seven qualitative interviews. Five of them were conducted via Skype since the possibility to meet them in person was limited. One respondent answered our questionnaire by email and the remaining one was collected face-to-face when we visited the headquarters of Volvo. Since almost all of them were conducted personally, it gave us deep knowledge about the subject studied since we could interact and have an open dialogue with the respondents. All of the interviews conducted via Skype or personal meeting were recorded and transcribed afterwards to ensure that all relevant information was captured. The length of the interviews varied depending on how

much time the respondents had to share information with us, although all of them lasted between 30 to 50 minutes.

We based our interviews on our questionnaire that we constructed and sent to the respondents in advance. However, we did not follow the questionnaire completely during our interviews, which allowed us to use a semi-structured approach (Björklund & Paulsson, 2003). A semi-structured approach gives opportunities to more spontaneous and deep conversations and leaves room for important discussions and knowledge that would have been omitted if we did not use this approach. The approach also allowed the respondents to describe the topics and questions with their own words (Svensson & Starrin, 1996). The respondent that answered us via email gave us deep and comprehensive answers and knowledge although it did not allow us to use a semi-structured approach. However, the amount of information shared from the companies differed in terms of given information. We have been selective when presenting our empirical findings and therefore we chose to include only the relevant information for our analysis.

### **3.3 Course of Action**

The thesis aims to find out whether there are any underlying similarities in management between Sweden and Japan that might also have contributed to how Swedish management strategies and onboarding processes should be implemented to integrate new hires in the best possible way. “New hires” refer in our case especially to Japanese employees active in Swedish companies operating in Japan. We asked questions during the interviews regarding the companies’ perception of the differences in Swedish and Japanese management, what onboarding processes they use and how they work with the four levels of Bauer’s onboarding model (Bauer, 2010). We also asked them what leadership style Swedish managers have to adapt in order to succeed on the Japanese market. Through interviews we had the possibility to answer our thesis questions but also contribute with knowledge of how onboarding and Swedish managers should perform to succeed with their onboarding process on the Japanese market.

We chose our theories based on their relevance to our research questions. Through an extended search of databases and literature we examined previous authors that have covered our research area. We used keywords such as “onboarding”, “cross-culture management” and “human resource management” to conduct all information through databases found at the Economic Library in Gothenburg. Thereafter we could derive our research questions and create the questionnaire that was used during the interviews with the companies.

### **3.4 Interview Construction**

As mentioned in the investigation method, we used qualitative interviews as a tool to collect data to our study. Open questions were used since it is the most appreciated approach when a relatively few number of respondents are interviewed (Jacobsen, 2002). When constructing our questionnaire we derived our questions from the literature and chosen theories. From each theory we chose the most interesting areas concerning our study and created different themes that we wanted to investigate with help from our questionnaire. In each thematic section we asked three to five questions that could give us a clear sight of the area. The first section contained questions that covered Swedish management in Japan, for example what differences and similarities the managers had discovered when operating on the Japanese market and how one should adjust the management to the Japanese culture and norms. The second section covered cultural aspects and leadership. Our questions in this section were inspired by the leadership properties evaluated in the GLOBE study (Chhokart, Rodbeck & House, 2008). The final section of our questionnaire was based upon integration and onboarding and specifically Bauer’s onboarding model (Bauer, 2010). The original questionnaire is attached as an appendix to our study.

### **3.5 Selection of Companies**

The selection of the companies in the thesis is based on the fact that they are Swedish companies with subsidiaries in Japan. With help from the Swedish Trade Council we were provided with a list of 29 Swedish companies operating on the Japanese market. Afterwards we found their contact addresses through a search on their websites. We contacted each company via phone to ensure a quick response. We decided to not

exclude any company due to size, location or sector since we wanted to attain a broad understanding of why Swedish companies in general are having a positive development on the Japanese market. Although we made a huge effort to convince all companies to participate in our study and answer our questionnaire, only seven companies of the 29 requested companies were willing to participate. Overall we got positive response on our thesis subject from the requested companies but the main reason to why most of them could not help us was due to limitations in time.

### **3.6 Validity and Reliability**

Validity and reliability are two factors that need to be taken into consideration when conducting a scientific research.

#### **3.6.1 Validity**

Validity is the measurement of how closely related and well founded the results from a study are to the reality (Bryman & Bell, 2005). In our case, validity relies on how well our empirical findings match our theories chosen. All the respondents we interviewed possesses high knowledge and experience in the field of cross-cultural management, especially with focus on Japan. This indicates a high level of validity to the answers gained from our questionnaire. From the received information we were able to get an insight of how Swedish management and onboarding processes are perceived in Japan and whether they have contributed to the success of the companies interviewed. It also made it possible for us to draw conclusions to our research question. All of our interviews are deep and qualitative, recently conducted and executed with highly competent respondents. Also, the companies interviewed have rather significant markets shares in Japan and good experience of doing business in Japan. Together, this ensures a higher validity of our study. Although, our research could have been more trustworthy with a higher amount of interviews. Therefore we can only discover a tendency but not fully rely on our findings when drawing our conclusions.

According to Crouch and McKenzie (p. 485, 2006) in depths interviews “target the respondents’ perceptions and feelings rather than the social conditions surrounding those experiences; at least, the collection of the interview material and its

interpretation and analysis are not primarily directed towards establishing objective facts concerning these conditions”. This argument strengthens our choice of theory utilized, “looking awry”. They also argue that a small number of interviews will facilitate the researchers close association with the respondents and in haze the validity of the interviews. This reference convinced us that the validity of our research would be strengthened by a fewer amount of interviews but with deep context, instead of many quantitative interviews.

### **3.6.2 Reliability**

A high level of reliability ensures the possibility for another investigator to repeat the same procedures and use the same methods and thereby get the same results and conclusions. According to Bryman and Yin (2011, 2003) it is essential for the authors to minimize the aspects of bias and errors in order to increase reliability of the study. To achieve this, we have taken some measures in this respect. First of all, all interviews were recorded to ensure that no own misinterpretations and bias would undermine the empirical findings. Second, during the interviews we assured that we had understood the respondents’ answers correctly by asking the respondents if we had understood their answers accurately.

## **3.7 Source Criticism**

When conducting a study it is important to critically evaluate the quality and relevance of your sources.

### **3.7.1 Primary Sources**

The primary sources used in our study consist of qualitative interviews with seven companies. The respondents positions within the company were; Country Manager Japan (H&M), CEO (Scania), former CEO (Sandvik), Vice President and Head of Asia Pacific Region (Volvo Business Services), CFO and Vice President (Synchron), Employer Brand Communication Manager (Atlas Copco) and CEO, Board Member, founder (IKEA, H&M, Kullberg & Partners). All of them were performed via Skype,

email or through personal meeting and lasted between 30 to 50 minutes. To give the respondents an opportunity to prepare for the interview, research certain information they did not already possess and minimize the time occupied we sent out an outline of the questionnaire a few days before the interviews were held. Criticism to this is that it might give the respondents the opportunity to prepare the answers in a biased way, and therefore more official than personal (Leung, 2001). Although we believe that it was rather more rewarding than negative since it enabled them to answer the questions properly. As all our interviews, except one that was collected by email, were recorded and directly transcribed it prevented own thoughts, values and bias to affect the context.

### **3.7.2 Secondary Sources**

Our secondary sources consist of academic journals, publications, dissertations and statements made in newspapers. The secondary sources might be biased, which we are aware of and thereby have been trying to avoid by investigating the research field and afterwards carefully selected the most relevant and renowned theories. However, a complete coverage of the available literature is with the limited time and resources not possible. We have also carefully analyzed and questioned each source's reliability and thereby only included the most relevant sources for our study. Questioning the sources reliability consisted of examining the author, the age, the reliability and if the source was biased in any way. However, we are aware of that we may not have covered the entire research area.

### **3.8 Origin**

When searching for different sources it is of high relevance to qualify the source origin. To able to do so we carefully checked whether the researcher was acknowledged on the subject, whether the purpose of the creation of the source was relevant for our study and whether it was published within a reasonable time constraint.

## 4. Empirical Findings

In the following section we will provide the empirical findings that we have collected during our interviews. The aim is to provide a deeper understanding of the companies' perception of the managerial differences in Sweden and Japan but also provide knowledge about how an onboarding process should be implemented in the best way. We would like to emphasize that the information below is collected from interviews with only one person from each company and is therefore based on the interviewed company representative individual answers and perception, but are often referred to as the company name. The respondents agreed with representing the company and being referred to the company name in our study.

One of our respondents, Tommy Kullberg, is one of the most experienced and well-respected Swedish expatriates of today. He is the former President and CEO for IKEA Japan, senior adviser and board member of H&M Japan, President at Gardelius, Commercial Counsellor at Swedish Trade Council, Embassy of Sweden in Tokyo and is currently running his own company Kullberg & Partners. His answers are therefore not representing a specific company but rather his personal experience from all of the companies where he was active.

In each section of this chapter we have included answers from all of the respondents. Therefore there might be some repeats or answers that resemble each other. All of the respondents did not provide the same amount of useful information to our study, which is why the paragraphs differ in length at some points. One of our respondents, representing Syncron, did not want to answer all questions since he did not possess all the right information. However, we decided to include his answers to some of the questions since it still strengthens the reliability of the result.

<b>Company</b>	<b>Respondent</b>	<b>Activity in Japan (since)</b>
Atlas Copco	Grace Sumoto, <i>Communication Brand Manager</i>	1979
Volvo Group	Ulrika Tofttevik, <i>President and Head of Asia Pacific region</i>	2007
Scania	Johan Lundén, <i>CEO Scania Japan</i>	2003
Sandvik	Anders Wallin, <i>former President Sandvik Japan</i>	2002
IKEA, H&M, Kullberg&Partners etc	Tommy Kullberg, <i>former CEO IKEA Japan, Board Member H&amp;M Japan, CEO and Founder Kullberg &amp; Partners</i>	1974(2006) IKEA
H&M	Christine Edman, <i>Country Manager Japan</i>	2008
Syncron	Dag Sjöqvist, <i>CFO and Vice President</i>	2008

*Table 1. List of interviewed companies, respondents and their positions, year when entering the Japanese market.*

#### **4.1 Challenges in Management**

*This part will cover the companies' perceptions of managerial challenges between two countries with both large geographical distance and seemingly very different cultures. This section will work as a foundation for the analysis where we will discuss whether there are some underlying similarities between Sweden and Japan.*

**Atlas Copco** argues that there are both similarities and differences between Swedish and Japanese management. They have seen similarities in the way both countries values teamwork as a main contributor to profitability and engaged employees. Teamwork is more appreciated than individual performance and they both try to avoid conflicts as much as possible. Both countries also values consensus highly.



*“In Japan they care about consensus, but at some point they have more hierarchy. More or less, the manager decides things and the team members will be the ones to implement.”* Grace Sumoto, Atlas Copco, 2013

Despite the similarities there are obviously some differences. The most outstanding difference in aspects of management is the hierarchy. In Japan the manager has a much stronger influence than in Sweden, which makes his words and decisions more valuable than the employees opinions. This is clearly visible at meetings where the manager informs the employees what should be done and the employees should give their inputs. In Sweden, the employees are expected to speak out their own opinions. Therefore it is essential with several group discussions to ensure that each employee feel satisfied with the decisions made.

**The Volvo group** agrees with Atlas Copco when arguing that the largest difference from Swedish management is the hierarchy. In Japan, age equals rank, which makes the oldest person the most important. The Japanese employees have an enormous respect for their workplace and bosses. In terms of management, Volvo Group believes that Swedish tend to be more democratic. With this they mean that employee participation is more frequently seen in Sweden, which Japanese employees are not as used to since they prefer to get clear directions. Volvo Group indicates that Swedish employees are encouraged to take responsibility to ensure correct decision-making. It is expected that they give response and directly inform whether something is wrong or not. In Japan employees are not giving away any material unless it is perfect since the consequences and risks to loose their work are too high. Moreover, Volvo Group points out that it is extremely important for Japanese employees and managers not to “loose their face”, which makes them much more respectful within their work environment.

**Scania** hold the opinion that how management is perceived is individual. However, if generalizing, Scania also argues that Japanese management is noticeably more hierarchic and commanding than Swedish. A Japanese manager is usually more controlling and less open than a Swedish manager. Scania aim to have open dialogues with their employees and wish their management to be adjusted for specific situations and individuals. One of Scania's core values is called “Respect for the individual”

which implies taking care of each individual's personal competencies and knowledges. Japanese employees are not as familiar with open dialogues and "brainstorming".

*"I want to believe that there is no general Swedish or Japanese management. Every manager is unique."* Johan Lundén, Scania Japan, 2013

**Sandvik** argued that Japanese management is closely connected to Swedish in the way they care about consensus principles and try to avoid conflicts.

*"Japanese people have a tremendous respect for the top"* Anders Wallin, Sandvik, 2013

Once again, the hierarchy is seen as a huge difference between management culture in Sweden and Japan. However, Sandvik indicated that it is primarily the age that determines the rank. For example, elderly employees are always treated with respect even if they do not possess a remarkably high position.

**Mr. Kullberg** emphasize that the most distinctive difference in management is the level of formality. The Swedish management is very informal, while the Japanese management is extremely formal. Despite the level of formality there are some clear similarities. The two countries share the same philosophy, same consensus and they do not disagree if not necessary. They are both also are rather good listeners. They listen and think before they say something. In that sense, they have the same way of behaving and ability to listen.

**H&M** believes that there are two main differences in terms of management; hierarchical versus flat organization and manual driven versus entrepreneurial spirit. Fundamentally most Japanese organizations function as a strictly hierarchical organization with primarily seniority based promotions. In contrast most Swedish companies tend to be flat organizations with performance-based promotions. Most Japanese people feel more comfortable to work within clear frameworks and guidelines. As Edman (Interview H&M, 2013-05-20) argued; *"Japanese are excellent executors once a detailed plan has been formed. Therefore detailed manuals that*

*dictate every decision needed in every step of execution is highly appreciated and valued.”* In contrast, Swedish companies are more entrepreneurial. There is a freedom to take personal decisions and sometimes even testing boundaries in Sweden.

Both Japanese and Swedish management styles are similar as they highly value teamwork. It is not the performance of an individual but rather the concerted efforts of a group that is recognized and respected.

**Syncron** is another company to point out the difference in hierarchy between Sweden and Japan. Syncron also considered the level of openness and clarity in the national behaviour as a difference between the two countries, where the Japanese people can be “hard to read” for Swedish people.

*“There is certainly hierarchy in Japanese workplaces, even though it might not be obvious for Swedish people. I would call it a ”silent hierarchy” – Everyone knows his or her place and role even though it is not out spoken.”* Dag Sjöqvist, Syncron, 2013

## **4.2 Cultural Leadership**

*This section will cover the companies’ perceptions about how managers must adjust their leadership style towards the Japanese culture and norms. It also covers a brief evaluation of leadership properties according to the GLOBE study.*

All of the respondents were all very consistent when discussing cultural leadership. When entering the Japanese market Swedish managers must take into account how to manage Japanese employees in a good and appreciated way. One must understand the organization to be able to involve all employees in the best possible way. The hierarchy business culture affects the management in Japan and it is therefore a vital part for Swedish managers to understand that they have to be able to take decisions by themselves. It is important to show a certain leadership style to ensure that the Japanese employees know whom they should listen to. Swedish managers must adjust their management by finding the perfect balance between the both styles and in addition be extra clear in their instructions, since the Japanese employees usually do

not ask their managers if they did not fully understand. Managers have to inform the employees what they should do in detail. The importance of having a good work environment is something that all the respondents believe is another central part to work on. This can be achieved through communication building activities such as “after works”.

When evaluating leadership skills according to the GLOBE study, **Atlas Copco** would classify team-oriented as a distinctive property for both Japanese and Swedish leaders. A clear difference is that Japanese employees need leaders who are decision-makers and who give clear instructions about what should be done. Swedish people more care about consensus.

**The Volvo group** personally assessed the characteristics of leadership from the model in the exact same order for both countries, starting with team-oriented, followed by human, then self-protective and last charismatic. Added to the evaluation was that charismatic was more distinctive for leaders in Sweden than in Japan since it is a sign of interest and involvement in a certain subject. Additional characteristics that were “missing” in the GLOBE study was “decisive”, that Volvo Group considered very relevant for leaders in Japan compared to leaders in Sweden. From the employee’s point of view, the Japanese employees value properties like clear, trustworthy and team-oriented of an ideal leader.

Even **Scania** argues that the property from the GLOBE study that is most distinctive for a Japanese leader is team-oriented, which also applies to Swedish leaders. Another distinctive observation is that Japanese leaders are in general less charismatic than Swedish leaders. The employees at Scania value properties like participating, involved and knowledgeable.

**Sandvik** believes that the most distinctive leadership properties for managers in Japan are team-oriented, human and participative. Japanese people treat their managers with respect but also make sure to build strong, long lasting connections by for example inviting them to dinners to show their appreciation.

**Mr. Kullberg** argues that adjusting to the Japanese management is more a question

about corporate identity, philosophy and positioning versus the way Japanese see things. Companies like IKEA and H&M obviously have a very strong profile and strong positioning. They have specific routines how to do things and they are not really ready to change. In that way, it is depending on what company you are representing when individual managers should adapt their local management.

*“Swedish people are rather humble, they are good listeners and they give enormous opportunities to the staff” Tommy Kullberg, 2013*

Mr. Kullberg has no doubt about that the Swedish management has contributed to the success of the company he represented. At the end of the day Swedish culture is rather close to the Japanese way of thinking, which probably is one of the underlying reasons to why Swedish companies are rather successful in Japan.

As all of the other companies, Mr. Kullberg also classifies team-oriented as the most important and significant leadership property from the GLOBE study for both countries.

In terms of leadership properties from the GLOBE study, **H&M** argues that team-oriented is distinctive for both Japanese and Swedish leaders but Japanese leaders are more self-protective and Swedish more participative and human.

*“Involving team members in decisions and making sure that the decision benefits the group as a whole is very important in both countries. However a Japanese manager with an idea would first convince his employees individually, then share the idea to the next level of management until presenting it to top management. A Swedish manager would instigate an open discussion and ask for comments and feedback regardless of position.” Christine Edman, H&M, 2013*

### **4.3 Perception of Swedish Management**

*In this section we will cover the companies opinion about how Sweden and Swedish management are perceived in Japan.*

All of the respondents believe that there is a general positive view of Sweden and Swedish management that has been a contributing factor to the success of their establishment in Japan.

*“I have never heard anything negative about a Swedish Company or their management in Japan. Even though Atlas Copco is working business to business there is always a positive response to what we do. I feel very proud of the company.”* Grace Sumoto, Atlas Copco, 2013

All companies believe that the reason why Japanese people have a positive view on Swedish management is that the mindset of both countries' inhabitants are very similar. Although the difference between the countries is huge, the way they think and work is very much the same.

According to **Scania**, Sweden as a country has a strong brand in Japan. It is rather common for Japanese people to work for Swedish, or Western, companies with the purpose to experience another type of leadership.

**Tommy Kullberg's** response to the question about how Sweden and Swedish management are perceived in Japan overall:

*“It is difficult to answer that question, it is boiling down to the character and personality of the individual rather than a collective bunch of Swedish managers. Sweden has a very good image and reputation in Japan and we are very well respected but at the end of the day it is up to the individual person to make an imprint.”* Tommy Kullberg, 2013

**H&M** believes that Swedish management style is much appreciated in Japan primarily because of the emphasis placed on work life balance. According to them, Swedish companies focus a lot on work life balance and encourage staff to take vacations to maintain a healthy balance, which Japanese sees as positive. Not taking vacations and working overtime constantly are viewed as bad managerial skills. However in Japanese companies vacation is something you collect, don't use and cash

in for money when you leave a company. Taking a long vacation only results as inconvenience for fellow colleagues who have to cover your responsibilities and if no one has to cover any responsibilities your importance to the company is questioned.

Moreover, H&M believes that Swedish management style is appreciated in Japan because of the opportunities afforded for women. They argue that Swedish companies treat women equally and offer job possibilities and career progression equally. In Japan, without a solid infrastructure to support working mothers (day-care and family support etc) women have no choice but to leave their companies once pregnant or giving birth. Even if women return to their workplace, their limited hours limit their job opportunities and career progression.

According to **Syncron**, the Japanese people strongly respects technical and engineering knowledge and they are open to adapt new technologies. This is one of the reasons to why they are very positive to Swedish companies like Syncron.

#### 4.4 Onboarding

*In this section we will cover how each company work with integration of new hires and whether they think that local adjustment of onboarding processes is necessary.*

**Atlas Copco** uses a formal onboarding program, which often is referred to as an introduction program. The HR department has an orientation day to enable the new hires to get to know the whole company, its culture and core values. In each of the four business areas there is a specific orientation program to show employees how each business unit operates and work. There is also an information- and learning process that informs new hires their role within the company. When the new hires are onboard they continue to get local explanation and regular training from their managers and HR department.

Atlas Copco holds the view that an onboarding process has to be locally adjusted to achieve engagement and loyal new hires. It is therefore essential to adjust each program to every specific country that Atlas Copco operates in to be able to integrate

new hires in the best way possible. It varies by country how long time it take to integrate new hires. Depending on if the employee will work locally or globally the length of the onboarding process differs.

**The Volvo Group** also uses a formal onboarding process to integrate new hires. The same onboarding programme is used in every country where Volvo is established but a few adjustments are often made to the local culture. The model covers several various categories. The first step refers to what Volvo calls “The code of conduct”, which refers to basic information and used strategies but also information about how to behave at Volvo. The next step of Volvos onboarding process is their “personal business plan”. The aim of the plan is to identify and develop personal skills and expertise needed for the specific role that the individual employee holds for the moment. The personal business plan is optionally followed by the “development plan”, where employee is encouraged to advance their role and responsibility to a higher level. Volvos ambition is, for each new employee, to complete the onboarding programme within ten weeks after the official employment at Volvo.

**Scania** usually has internal development programmes that aim to develop their employees and increase their business advantage (Scania Careers, 2011). But since Scania is relatively new on the Japanese market, with only 20 employees in total, they do not have a formal onboarding programme to integrate new hires in Japan specifically. Their focus lies on teaching new hires about Scania as a company, their core values and missions. Each individual did so far get a personalized education for their particular role within Scania, which matches their core value ”respect for the individual”. At the moment Scania do not focus on social integration between new hires in Japan. Nevertheless, they believe that it would have been an advantageous action to include in the process when hiring new employees.

Like the three companies above, **Sandvik** uses a formal onboarding programme to integrate new hires. Their process simply resembles a checklist that has to be fulfilled within six months to ensure that all the employees are fully integrated and familiar with the company. The programs differ to some extent depending on business unit or country.



**Mr. Kullberg** argues that all the companies he has worked on use a formal onboarding programme. The length of the program varies according to position and country. However, it usually takes two to three times longer to integrate new hires in Japan than elsewhere. In Japan they also care much more about the University you graduated from rather than your personality and character when recruiting. Mr. Kullberg indicated that this is an enormous different from Sweden, where the focus lies on the character.

As well as the others, **H&M** use a formal onboarding program when new employees begin their career. This is primarily an introduction classroom based training that covers the brand history, values and principles. It also involves basic trainings focused on operations and customer service. Once the training is completed all new employees begin sales advisor training in the store to experience basic store operations and interaction with customers. Regardless of the position the new hires are hired for, they must undergo store based training to gain a deep understanding of the customers' needs as well as an overview of basic store operations. H&M argues that the length of the store training depends on the position one was hired. They also believe that an onboarding program has to be locally adapted. As example, it often takes longer time to integrate new hires in new markets where the brand awareness and brand communication still is low.

#### **4.5 Bauer's Onboarding Model**

*This section will provide findings from when we asked the companies to evaluate Bauer's four onboarding levels. We also asked them to make a preferable sequence of the levels in order to profit as much as possible from an onboarding programme.*

**Atlas Copco** argues that the most important thing and therefore the first part of integrating new hires according to Bauer's (2010) model is *knowledge of culture*. Without knowing the culture employees are unable to know whether they will feel satisfied in the work environment. The second level of the onboarding process is *role clarity*. If the employees do not know the expectations and what role they have they

get lost. Once they are clear with their role the *social integration* can take place. When each of these steps is fulfilled *self-efficacy* naturally empowers the employees.

**The Volvo Group** also holds the opinion that the most important step of the onboarding process is *knowledge of culture*. Volvo highlights the importance of knowing- and being able to stand up for the companies' values and missions. This is therefore considered as the first step of the onboarding process according to Volvo. The second most important step of the onboarding process for Volvo is *social integration*. Strong relationships build a solid and congenial workplace. Third most important according to Volvo is *self-efficacy*, which is followed by the fourth and last step, *role-clarity*.

Out of the four steps included in Bauer's onboarding programme **Scania** find *social integration* the least prioritized so far for their subsidiary in Japan. Except for that area, they work with all of the steps included in Bauer's onboarding programme to some extent, but prioritized in the following order; *Knowledge of culture*, *role clarity*, *self efficacy*. Scania argues that role clarity represents a clear part of the management in Japan nowadays since it is a newly established subsidiary, as Johan Lundén expressed himself "*The roles change just as the company does*". Scania also believes that it is important to work with their employees self confidence especially since their roles within Scania might imply more responsibility and different tasks then what they are used to from previous employment.

**Sandvik** believes that *knowledge of culture* is after all some kind of platform from which employees can build their confidence. *Role clarity* is according to Sandvik the second most important step within the onboarding process. It is essential to early know what you have to do and to understand the situation you are in. *Social integration* is what comes next and the last step of the process is according to Scania *self-efficacy*.

"*Self-efficacy is a consequence from fulfilling the earlier steps of the programme*"  
Anders Wallin, Sandvik, 2013

When discussing Bauer's onboarding process **Mr. Kullberg** believes that *role clarity* is the most important part to integrate Japanese employees successfully. Japanese are often asking for clear directions, duties and responsibilities. They want to minimize their responsibility by delegating duties upwards as often they can. Secondly, *social integration* makes sure that Japanese feel that they belong to a group. Social activities such as an after work are extremely important in the Japanese business culture. Further on, Mr. Kullberg argued that the Japanese are probably not as interested in *knowledge of culture* as the companies are keen to show the employees how they work, which core values and key attributes they possess.

**H&M** agrees with Volvo Group and argues that the most preferable order for an onboarding sequence is the following; *Knowledge of culture, social integration, role clarity* and *self efficacy*.

## 5. Analysis

This chapter will cover a discussion and analysis of our empirical findings compared with our theoretical framework. It will also present the companies attitudes and perceptions about whether they believe that there are any underlying similarities in terms of management culture between Sweden and Japan despite the huge geographical and cultural distance. The analysis will also provide a foundation to answer the question; how should Swedish companies adjust their management and onboarding processes towards the Japanese culture and norms?

### 5.1 Challenges in Management

In terms of management differences, all of our respondents find the hierarchy the most distinctive difference between Sweden and Japan. They are also agreed on that managers in Japan possesses a much more respected role than managers in Sweden. This confirms what Chhokar, Brodbeck and House (2008) described when placing Japan in the Confucian cluster where performance orientation and institutional collectivism are two of the most distinctive properties but power distance also plays an important role.

According to the respondents, performance orientation was clearly identified in Japan. For example, Japanese managers do not surrender any material unless it is flawless (Toftevik, interview, 2013-04-24). Moreover, we saw a clear tendency from all respondents that they found the Japanese employees very respectful, scared of conflicts, polite and in a need of clear directions to perform (Sumtoto, interview, 2013-04-24; Toftevik, interview, 2013-04-25; Lundén, interview, 2013-05-02). Especially Edman (H&M, interview, 2013-05-20) expressed that Japanese employees tend to need clear frameworks and guidelines. However, once they have a detailed plan formed, they are excellent executors. According to the GLOBE study these are all distinctive properties for the Confucian cluster.

However, all of our respondents contradicted the differences by demonstrating some clear similarities in the mindset of Swedish and Japanese employees that they believe

have contributed to the success of their business in Japan. Despite the geographical challenge, all of our respondents admitted that there are several similarities when we encouraged them to look awry on why Swedish management and onboarding processes have been successful. This confirms what Žižek (1992) believed is essential to be able to achieve a greater knowledge and understanding of existing management models.

The similarities discovered by our respondents are that both Swedish and Japanese employees try to avoid conflicts and prefer not to make big scenes or stand out from the norm. Equality is desirable and showing off is considered negative (Sumtoto, interview, 2013-04-24; Toftevik, interview, 2013-04-25; Lundén, interview, 2013-05-02). Are these similarities the underlying reason to why Swedish management is well received in Japan? Is this the interface that reduces the challenge of the geographical distance?

## 5.2 Cultural Leadership

When evaluating cultural differences in terms of leadership we utilized leadership properties from the GLOBE study; team-oriented, human, self-protective, autonomous, charismatic and participative (Guptaa, Hangesb & Peter, 2002). When asking the respondents about what leadership property that was more distinctive for each country, they all answered that team-oriented was the most distinctive property, *for both countries*. This might indicate that beyond the most distinctive and obvious cultural differences, the management styles resemble each other.

As Western (2008) argued, leadership is a social construction rather than a fixed identity, which implies that leaders are socially constructed by the ones following them. History, culture and norms that surround us builds frames and discourses that eventually constructs who we are and also constructs desirable leaders. When analyzing the respondents' answers, it appears that the mindset of both Japanese and Swedish employees resembles and that they desire the same qualities in a leader. Once again, this indicates that Japanese and Swedish employees are relatively alike despite the geographical distance.

Although team-oriented leadership is remarkable for both countries, our empirical findings still show a tendency that there are some differences in terms of leadership. According to our respondents the leader property that differs the most for the two countries is charismatic, where Japan is considered to have less charismatic leaders than Sweden. This agrees with what Chhokart, Rodbeck and House (2008) argued when claiming that Nordic European leadership is characterized by being charismatic. The Confucian cluster, identified from the GLOBE study, also showed a tendency to have charismatic leaders, which does not totally agree with our findings.

Overall, all our respondents found it quite difficult to distinguish the different leadership properties from the GLOBE study between the two countries. However both Atlas Copco and Volvo Group, argued that they found the leadership properties from the GLOBE study slightly deficient. They both commented that they would have like to add the property “decisive” to the theory. The reason behind their opinion is that they believe that Japanese employees require a more decisive leader. Scania also gave an example of this when he described how business meetings are held in each country. According to Scania, a Swedish manager encourages his employees to actively participate and share their opinions before a decision is made. In contrast, a Japanese manager often makes their own decisions in order to be effective, which is one example that indicates the hierarchy in the Japanese general business environment (Chhokart, Rodbeck & House, 2008). Once again, Westerns (2008) statement about leadership and followers is possible to applicate. According to him, leaders are constructed by it followers and in this case the Japanese desire the type of leadership that is practiced in Japan.

### **5.3 Perception of Swedish Management**

Through our interviews we saw a clear tendency that indicates that there is a general positive view of Sweden and Swedish management. The overall perception was that Sweden and its management has a strong brand and reputation and is well respected in the country. According to the respondents, the reason to why Japanese have a general positive view of Sweden and its management is the fact that their mindset is actually quite similar. They are both fond of consensus, team building and try to avoid conflicts.

Moreover, H&M expressed that part of the positive perception about Sweden and its management probably depends on the emphasis placed on work life balance but also the opportunities afforded for women. This does not occur as commonly in Japanese companies and is therefore something new and desirable for Japanese.

Jackson and Carter (2002) argued that most words and symbols have different meanings for each individual. Management is an example of a designation with a lot of different meanings, in other words, a signified with many signifiers. Since there are infinite numbers of different readings and perceptions of a specific signified there are some general agreements made to facilitate daily communication between people. The phenomenon we refer to is the one introduced in our theoretical framework, intersubjectivity. Our empirical findings imply that there most likely exists intersubjectivity in the mindset of the Japanese people regarding the general positive perception about Sweden and its management. Of course each individual has its own perception about whether Swedish and Swedish management is positive, but the society creates an institutionalized way of thinking and shared values and norms and according to our interviews those shares values in Japan are very positive. Additionally there are also some practical actions, such as work-life balance and opportunities for women, included in the Swedish management that obviously are desirable and will contribute to a general good perception of Sweden and Swedish management.

## 5.4 Onboarding

All companies interviewed affirmed that they had understood the great importance of investing in *people*, as the most important resource to improve effectiveness and profitability of organizations today. Without engaged employees there is no chance to achieve a healthy work environment, neither increase effectiveness and profitability (Bauer, 2010). This statement is something that all of the companies interviewed fully agreed on.

As Bauer (2010) argued, an onboarding programme is usually divided into formal and informal processes. All of the companies except Scania use a formal onboarding

programme to integrate new hires. The reason to why Scania does not use a formal onboarding process for their business unit in Japan is because they entered the Japanese market relatively recently. Even though an informal onboarding process is not regarded as efficient and empowering as a formal one, Scania expressed the importance of any social integration activity. All of the other companies had developed step-by-step programmes to ensure efficiency and guarantee satisfied employees.

No matter if a company uses a formal- or an informal onboarding process there is most often a need of local adjustments. Mentality and behavioural norms differ to some extent from to country to country. All of the companies interviewed clearly expressed the importance making local adjustments as a strategic part in the process of integrating new hires.

### **5.5 Bauer's Onboarding Model**

In the theoretical framework we presented our fundamental model for our thesis, Bauer's (2010) onboarding process. Bauer argues that in order to maximize the success of an onboarding process, four major components which all are related to work roles and social environment must be fulfilled. These four major components consist of self-efficacy, role clarity, social integration and knowledge of culture. What Bauer particularly pointed out with her onboarding model was the specific sequence that the four components should follow. Bauer believed that to motivate new hires in their work, the first part of an onboarding process should be developing the employees' self-efficacy, which should be followed by role clarity and then social integration. The last component to work with within the onboarding process is, according to Bauer, knowledge of culture. When we first read about Bauer and her onboarding model we found it intriguing to find out whether this specific sequence of components is the most effective way to succeed with the onboarding process in Japan. Could the Japanese culture and management demand an onboarding process where the components of Bauer's model are placed in a different sequence? Surprisingly, the results from our empirical findings confirmed our hypothesis.



After having compiled all results from our empirical findings we saw a clear tendency that the *sequence* of the components from Bauer's model actually differ. Further expressed, this part of our empirical findings did not fully match her model, presented in the theoretical framework. Our questionnaire enabled the respondents to outline the most preferable sequence of the four components in order to successfully integrate new employees in their opinion. Atlas Copco was the first company to express the importance of the component knowledge of culture when arguing, "*Without knowing the culture employees are unable to know whether they feel satisfied in the work environment*" (Sumuto, interview, 2013-04-24). Even Volvo motivated knowledge of culture as the component to begin an onboarding process, they argued, "*I think an onboarding process should start with understanding the corporate culture of the company. The corporate culture has to be considered even before applying to the job, and therefore it falls naturally that knowledge of culture should be the first step after recruitment is done*" (Toftevik, interview 2013-04-25). Actually, all of the respondents were agreed with the fact that an integration process should start with getting to know the culture.

Concerning the second most important step of Bauer's onboarding model, our respondents were this time not totally agreed. However, substantially all of them classified role clarity and social integration as the two middle functions of the process. This result matches Bauer's onboarding model where role clarity is the second- and social integration the third step of the model. All respondents argue that without clear role definitions the quality of the work might fail. To quote Atlas Copco "*If the employees do not know their expectations and what role they have, they get lost.*" Sandvik also expressed the importance of role clarity with "*It is essential to know what you have to do and understand the situation that you are in.*" According to Volvo and H&M, the second most important step of the process should be social integration "*Strong relationships builds a solid and congenial workplace which is why it should be the second step in an onboarding process*" (Toftevik, Interview, 2013-04-25)

Self-efficacy is, according to Bauer's model, considered to be the first step of the process. She argues that to improve organizational commitment, work satisfaction and turn over the employees have to have self-confidence in their work, which is why she

believes that self-efficacy should therefore be the first step of an onboarding process and work as a foundation when working with the remaining steps. This argument was not in line with the respondents. In contrast to Bauer, Atlas Copco argued that all of the other steps have to be fulfilled before self-efficacy can be achieved. Even Sandvik resonated in the same way when arguing, “*Self-efficacy is a consequence from fulfilling the earlier steps of the programme.*”

As presented above, our empirical findings tended to show a contradicted result compared to our theory chosen, Bauer’s onboarding model. The first and the last step of the process totally swapped places. We found this discovery very interesting and asked ourselves which underlying reasons that had been crucial for the result. We suspect that the result is connected to the running theme through our thesis, the “looking awry” perspective.

Some of the respondents were familiar with Bauer’s onboarding model since before but to ensure that everyone knew what the model looked like, we gave a short introduction to the model in our questionnaire. As Žižek (1992), introduced in our theoretical framework, believed; to achieve a greater knowledge and understanding is it essential to look awry at existing management models. On the basis of Žižek, our aim was to make the respondents consider the model and reflect the situation from a different point of view that corresponds to their experience from doing business in Japan. The result from looking awry was that the respondents actually came to the conclusion that Bauer’s onboarding process should be practiced in the opposite way as the theory states.

To sum up the analysis chapter, we identified the underlying similarities in terms of management culture that may have contributed to the success of Swedish companies operating in Japan. We could also derive guidelines for Swedish managers in regards to what management that suits the Japanese market best. Additionally, our empirical findings contradicted one of the most renewed researchers in the area of integration programs for new hires, Bauer. This will be further discussed and submitted in the concluding chapter.

## 6. Conclusion

The purpose of this thesis was to investigate whether there are any underlying similarities in terms of management culture between Sweden and Japan, as well as examining how Swedish management practices and onboarding strategies have been received and should be practices in Japan. This has been done with two main questions in mind; i) Are there any underlying similarities in terms of management culture between Sweden and Japan despite the huge geographical and cultural distance? ii) How should Swedish companies adjust their management and onboarding processes towards the Japanese culture and norms?

### 6.1 Research Question 1

Are there any underlying similarities in terms of management culture between Sweden and Japan despite the huge geographical and cultural distance?

**Yes, there are certainly several underlying similarities in terms of management culture between Sweden and Japan despite the huge geographical and cultural distance.**

Drawing any simplified conclusion regarding the underlying similarities poses many challenges. As all companies are in different situations regarding industry, size and years of activity in Japan, and are affected by our respondents personal experiences and opinion. In order to get a clear understanding of the similarities it is necessary to perform a large number of interviews with both managers as well as Japanese inhabitants. Despite the problem we did however manage to find some very interesting results. All of the interviewed companies acknowledge that there certainly are some underlying similarities in terms of management culture between Sweden and Japan, despite the huge geographical and cultural distance.

A shared view in all of the interviewed companies is that they consider the mindset of Swedish and Japanese employees to resemble each other in many different aspects. One of the main similarities discovered through our interviews is that both Swedish

and Japanese employees try to avoid conflicts. Conflicts are in both cultures considered to be extremely impolite especially since the Japanese are keen about not loosing one another's face. In Sweden, as well as in Japan, it is inappropriate to stand out from the norm and therefore one should not show off, neither make a big scene out of a conflict.

Moreover, according to the Swedish managers we interviewed in this study, the two countries share the same philosophy and same consensus. They are both rather good listeners and think before they say something. In that sense, they have the same way of behaving and ability to listen, which also indicates the humility found in both cultures.

Our empirical findings imply that there most likely exists intersubjectivity in the mindset of the Japanese people regarding the general positive perception about Sweden and its management. The society has created an institutionalized way of thinking and shared values and norms about Sweden that are very positive.

To conclude our findings imply that there are several similarities, which are the underlying reasons to why Swedish management is well received in Japan. This interface has reduced the challenge for Swedish companies to successfully enter and stay on the Japanese market despite the challenge of the large geographical distance and huge cultural difference.

## 6.2 Research Question 2

How should Swedish managers adjust their management and onboarding processes towards the Japanese culture and norms?

**Swedish managers should adjust their management by showing a decisive, team-oriented and humane leadership style and practice the onboarding process in the following order; Knowledge of culture, role-clarity, social integration and self-efficacy.**

In our study we used relevant theories found in the literature regarding how successful management should be examined. Our empirical findings showed that Swedish managers are actually very well received in Japan thanks to their humanity and team-oriented way of managing. What has to be taken into consideration is that Swedish managers primarily must adapt to the hierarchy culture by showing certain decisive leadership style. Japanese require decision-makers that give clear directions and instructions to greater extent than Swedish. Thus, Swedish managers should preserve their seemingly successful management but make few adjustments in order become more decisive and powerful.

Further on, we utilized Bauer's onboarding model as a basis for our empirical study. Using the four different levels from the model we could derive and identify in what way Swedish companies should adjust their onboarding processes towards the Japanese cultures and norms. The first part of an onboarding process should according to our respondents be *knowledge of culture*. When entering a company it is vital to learn about the company's history, values and culture to feel satisfied and engaged in the work. This should be followed by *role clarity* and *social integration*. These two functions play an important role in the integration process. Without a clear role definition the quality of the work might fail. Additionally it contributes to prevent employees from misunderstanding their tasks and spending time on irrelevant things. Social integration builds strong relationships between employees and their peers and superiors. All of our respondents were agreed with the fact that *self-efficacy* should represent the fourth level of an onboarding process. It is rather seen as a result from fulfilling the earlier steps.

In conclusion, our empirical findings imply that Bauer's onboarding model is not suitable for Swedish companies operating in Japan. Actually, the sequence should be practiced in more or less the opposite way. We would therefore like to recommend Swedish companies operating in Japan to implement the onboarding process in the way identified in this study.

## **7. Suggestions for further research**

During our study we have found a few numbers of topics for further research and investigations which we would like to shed light on.

We would suggest other researchers to investigate the area further by doing a qualitative study that examines the perception of management and onboarding programmes among many individuals in one company. This would decrease the possible bias that can exist when collecting empirical material from one single representative for many different companies. It would have been interesting to find out whether the perception that the manager holds is the same perceptions that the employees hold and how this affects the strategies chosen.

Another interesting study would involve a quantitative method where the respondents would consist of Japanese employees. This would have added a different perspective and also confirm or contradict the result from our study. Moreover, it would have ensured if the employees' perception were in line with the managers view of best practices.

To conclude it would have enhanced the research further if we interviewed respondents from Swedish companies that faced more challenges on the Japanese market. This would have added a perspective that would explain and clarify which management practices and onboarding processes that either contributed to the success or were not suitable on the Japanese market.

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## 9. Questionnaire

### Personal Information

Name:

Age:

### Company Background

1. Please provide a brief summary of your company's activities in Japan.
2. What was your position within your company in Japan?
3. In terms of employees, how many are Swedish at your company in Japan?

### Swedish Management In Japan

- 4a. What are the differences between Swedish and Japanese management?
- 4b. What are the similarities between Swedish and Japanese management?
5. How do you think Sweden and Swedish management are perceived in Japan overall?
6. In what way must Swedish managers adapt their management in order to succeed on the Japanese market?
- 7a. Do you believe that the Swedish management has contributed to the success of your company in Japan?
- 7b. Which are the underlying reasons to why your company have succeeded on the Japanese market despite the large distance in geography and culture?

### Cultural Aspects and Leadership Properties

8. What do you believe are the most appreciated leadership skills according to your employees in Japan?

9. Which of the following properties do you consider most distinctive for a typical leader in Japan - Charismatic, Team-oriented, Self-protective, Participative, Humane, Autonomous?

10. Which of the following properties do you consider most distinctive for a typical leader in Sweden? - Charismatic, Team-oriented, Self-protective, Participative, Humane, Autonomous?

### **Onboarding – Organizational Socialization**

11. Does your company use a formal onboarding process when hiring new employees?

11a. If yes, how does it work?

11b. If no, does your company use any kind of programme to integrate new hires?

12. Is it essential to adjust the onboarding programme to new markets?

*Bauer argued that with a fixed sequence of activities onboarding contributes to improved employee satisfaction and adaption to a company's knowledge, skills and behaviors. When entering a company, new employees go through multiple adjustments to maximize their onboarding success. These adjustments can be summarized into four different levels: self-efficacy, role clarity, social integration and knowledge of culture.*

13. How does your company work to evaluate these four factors for each employee? (knowledge of culture, role clarity, social integration and self-efficacy)

14. In which sequence does your company in Japan work with these factors or which

sequence do you think is the most efficient way to integrate new hires?

Would it be all right if we contacted you again for potential follow up question?