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TEAM DEVELOPMENT

The influence of using a team development program on team cooperation and performance: Perspectives from team leaders

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Abstract

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Purpose: The purpose of this study is to investigate the outcomes of an internal team development program from the perspective of team leaders in a global company based in Sweden. The focus is on how their team's cooperation and performance developed after the program. The team development program is based on the Group Development Questionnaire (GDQ) team assessment.

Theory The Integrative Model of Group Development was used for the main analysis of the results.

Method: With a phenomenological approach, a qualitative study was conducted using semi-structured interviews. Nine team leaders were selected from the company for interviews. The results from the interviews were analyzed by a thematic analysis.

Result: The analysis resulted in six main themes and 40 sub-themes. The results show that team leaders perceive their teams to have made several changes in their cooperation and way of working, which has resulted in better performance of the team in relation to their stakeholders. The team leaders also reported that the program gave both them and their team members' insight into what they needed to change to improve their cooperation, as well as the changes they needed to make after the program to improve team performance.

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Introduction

Soft skills have become highly relevant skills in workplaces. Companies and organizations around the world need workers with various soft skills, particularly the ability to work as part of a team. Despite soft skills, such as team work, being increasingly emphasized in higher education curriculums, employers are still not happy with the soft skills graduates bring with them to the workplace (Bolli & Renold, 2017). Studies have shown that soft skills, such as team work, can be acquired more effectively in a workplace than in a school setting (Bolli & Renold, 2016). Learning teamwork in the workplace, compared to a higher education institution or a school setting, is easier because the motivation to learn about teamwork at work is often higher (Zane, 1998). This is because work teams usually have a common purpose, work together for a longer period of time, and spend a lot of time managing internal and external stakeholders, compared to educational settings (Zane, 1998).

Teamwork is a relevant subject for all organizations today, as most workers need to work in group constellations. Many people belong to one or several groups and need to work daily in these constellations. Organizations rely on work teams as the primary source for accomplishing organizational goals and improving productivity (Wheelan, 2005). Employees are expected to collaborate more than they have ever been before. For example, managers and teams report a 50 % increase in the amount of time spent in team- related work tasks, and there is an even greater increase in the healthcare, engineering, technology and science sectors (Lacerenza, Tannenbaum, Marlow & Salas, 2018). One possible reason for the rise in team-related work tasks is an increasing understanding that many of the tasks performed today have such complexity that they require cooperation. It takes too much of knowledge and skill for one individual to be able to perform the tasks in a successful way. Therefore teamwork is very important for most of today's organizations (Wheelan 2014).

Effective teams can produce desired outcomes, but with the increased need for teamwork in organizations, there comes a need for interventions that can enhance team effectiveness (Lacerenza et al., 2018). Therefore it could be of value for groups to learn and understand what is fundamental for them to become effective and get support to achieve this effectiveness. Some groups manage to become effective, but many groups also struggle to find the best way of working together, to overcome conflict, and to create a climate of trust, for example.

A team is a group where the task requires them to work together to produce something such as a product, a service or a decision for which the members are collectively accountable (Hackman, 2002). A team is a collection of individuals who in their tasks are interdependent and who shares responsibility for the outcome. They see themselves and are seen by others as an intact social entity inside a larger social system, for example a business unit or corporation, and who manage their relationships across the boundaries of the organization (Cohen & Bailey, 1997). In spite of the need for effective teamwork, many organizations' work is performed by sets of people that are called teams, but are in reality co-acting groups (Hackman, 2002). Co-acting groups are not teams. The only thing they have in common is having the same manager. Each member has their individual job to do but their jobs do not depend on other people. In order for managers and groups to learn the soft skill of teamwork and to understand how they can develop effective teams, there is today extensive research that can help with understanding and teach groups about what they can do to achieve a state of high performance. Managers and groups need to be educated and understand how they can

become an effective team for the benefits of the organization and their own work satisfaction. Research indicates that high performing or effective teams have higher work satisfaction, less emotional exhaustion at work, take less sick leave (Jacobsson, Rydbo & Børresen, 2014) and satisfy their stakeholders in a better way (Wheelan et al., 1998).

1. Purpose and research question

This study will focus on the outcome of a training program that trains and supports leaders and their teams in becoming high performing or effective teams, as defined by the Integrative Model of Group Development, IMGD (Wheelan, 2005). The team development training program is offered by a company to leaders and their teams in order to support and educate them on how they can become a high performing team by applying some soft skills that are needed. The program is offered by the company's training department and is facilitated by internal certified facilitators. The program has been offered since 2015, and more than 100 teams have participated in the program since its inception.

The purpose of this study is to investigate how leaders in a company, whose teams have gone through an internal team development program, perceive the influence of the training program on the development of their teams' cooperation and performance. The study focuses on teams that have reached a higher level of maturity in their teamwork based on the IMGD and after completing the training program. Studying teams that have reached a more mature stage of team development is of interest since it can provide organizations with an understanding of what kind of positive outcomes, in terms of teamwork and cooperation, may be possible from investing time and money in team development trainings based on the IMGD. By studying teams that did not reach a more mature stage of team development, identifying ways that team performance and cooperation improved would not be possible. In such studies, the focus would instead be an evaluation of the training program and why the program did not produce the same results for all teams. Hence, this study is not an evaluation of the teams' cooperation and performance but rather a study of the ways in which the teams' cooperation and performance improved.

The company's internal program is based on Group Development Questionnaire (GDQ) team assessment, which measures the maturity of teams in relation to the IMGD. The teams for this study have undergone two assessments with around six month in between the first and second assessment. Some of the teams have also been offered some additional team interventions depending on their needs. This model will be described in chapter 3. The selected teams have been measured with the GDQ and were given support in finding out what their strengths and improvement areas were in relation to becoming a high performing team.

The training unit providing the training in team development has an interest in understanding what effect the program has on the teams. In what way can the program improve team cooperation and performance? By investigating this and getting concrete examples of what actually has improved for the teams, there is a greater chance that more teams within the company would like to participate in the training in order to create a good work environment as well as give their best performance and contribution to the company's overall business objectives. Based on this interest the research question is the following:

How do team leaders perceive the development of their teams' cooperation and performance after participating in the team development program offered by their company?

2. Background

Research about team development

Several scientists (e.g. Tuckman, 1965; Bion, 1961) have come to the conclusion that although groups play an important part in our lives as individuals and in organizations, team research has not received enough attention. In the 1950s there were an increasing number of studies of groups after the World War 2. Social norms, a pressure to conform, aggressive behavior, and the influence that leaders could have on followers was being acted out on the world stage. Studying groups, organizations, and processes in society was seen to be crucial in order to establish world peace (Wheelan, 2005).

The interest for team research declined in the 1970s. Emphasis shifted to the individual and research on individuals became the basis for social research instead of teams. One of the reasons for this was because research on groups is very labor-intensive as well as time consuming since most group research is based on observations where the researcher needs to analyze potentially thousands of units of behaviors (Wheelan, 1996). The lack of solid and practical research methods and statistical procedures for group studies might as well be an explanation to the decline (Wheelan, 2005). Some team research in the 1950s and 1960s could be worth mentioning since they lay a foundation for the team development model that is used in this study, that is Wheelan's (2005) Integrative Model of Group Development (IMGD).

Bennis and Shepard (1956) built a sequential stage theory in the 1950s where they compared group maturity with the maturity of a person. A mature group, according to them, knows well what it is doing, can resolve internal conflicts, mobilize its resources, and take the right actions. In their view a group moves from being preoccupied with authoritarian relations to preoccupation with personal relations. These movements define the two major phases of group development, specifically authority (dependence) and interdependence.

The two main phases were also broken down to sub-phases. The sub-phases of the dependency phase included dependency/flight, counter dependency/fight and resolution/catharsis. The second major phase consisted of the sub phases enchantment/flight, disenchantment/fight and resolution/catharsis (Bennis & Shepard, 1956).

In the 1950s Tuckman (1965) built a sequential model with the group development stages named: *Forming*, *Storming*, *Norming*, *Performing*, as well as a fifth stage named *Adjourning* that refers to a termination stage of a team (Wheelan, 2005). In his study Tuckman (1965) tested various types of groups, e.g. therapy groups, T-groups (Human relations training groups), and natural and laboratory groups, where he found a good fit between the observed stages in the groups and his proposed model.

He describes the first stage, *Forming*, as mainly concerning testing and dependency, where the interpersonal and the task behavior boundaries are tested and leader dependency is high. The second stage, *Storming*, Tuckman (1965) described as consisting of intragroup conflict, where the group members experience conflict and polarization around interpersonal issues and respond emotionally to task requirements. The third stage, *Norming*, he described groups as overcoming resistance and where in-group feelings and cohesiveness is developed. At this stage, new standards are expected to evolve and new roles are adopted. Here intimate and personal opinions are also expressed. In stage four, *Performing*, interpersonal structures become the tools to complete tasks, roles become flexible and functional, and group energy is

channeled into the task. Structural issues have been sorted out by this stage, and the structure can now be a support to task performance. The group becomes more effective at this stage as well (Tuckman, 1965).

Bion (1961) created a model called Basic Assumption, describing the group's development, not in sequence, but in cycles. Bion distinguished between "work groups" which he described as normal groups working on a task and "basic assumption" groups. In the "basic assumption" group he categorized groups that showed a behavior of dependency, flight and fight as well as pairing. A group being a basic assumption group will resist attempts to organize itself and stay in dependency, flight and fight mode and pairing.

The "work group" is a group of people that are able to work within the frames of the goals of the group, keep to the planning etc. The work is characterized by good communication and continuity and is made up of members that are able to talk about their expectations and experiences of the work. The work group can also be creative within the working frames (Heinskou & Visholm, 2005). Bion (1961) did not suggest any stages but instead suggested that the different behaviors of a group could occur in any order or time.

The Integrative Model of Group Development (IMGD)

The team development model used in this study is the Integrative Model of Group Development (IMGD) by Wheelan (2005). This was a later model and describes five predictable phases in the life of a group. The five phases are *Dependency and Inclusion*, *Counter dependency and Fight*, *Trust and Structure*, *Work and Productivity*, and an ending stage called *Termination*. This is a sequential model based on the idea that a group develops through an orderly invariant sequence of stages or phases (Wheelan, 2005).

The IMGD draws from other models in an attempt to integrate various aspects of earlier models. For instance, building on accumulated research in the area of team development (e.g., Bales, 1953; Bion, 1961; Tuckman, 1965), Wheelan (1997) concluded that groups move through successive patterns that can be demarcated and described.

Her model was introduced in the 1990s. Wheelan (1994) is very clear in her description of the model that not all groups will develop through each of the four stages. Some teams will remain at a certain stage for a long period of time. Other groups might take one step forward and two steps back. Some groups will never reach the final stage, but the majority of groups will progress (Wheelan, 1994).

Wheelan differentiated between the word *group* and *team* in the sense that when the group is at stage 1 or stage 2 in her model she calls them a group. When they have reached stage 3 and 4, she calls them a team (Wheelan, 1994). The purpose for differentiating between groups and teams is that the word team is used for a group that has reached a higher stage maturity, while a group could be a group of people, having the same manager, but not necessarily working in an effective way together.

In the following paragraphs all four stages of the IMGD (i.e. Dependency and Inclusion, Counterdependency and Fight, Trust and Structure, and Work) are described. Wheelan (2005) also describes a fifth stage called Termination, which describes the ending point of a team's development journey, similar to Tuckman's (1965) adjourning phase.

Stage 1. Dependency and Inclusion

This stage occurs when a new group is formed or the majority of the team members are new. A major characteristic of the first stage is that a significant amount of team members are dependent on the designated leader. When team members enter in a new group situation, tension and anxiety occurs because the situation is new and not yet clearly defined. Questions about safety, trust, rules, acceptance, the leader's competence and other concerns, are consciously or unconsciously in the minds of most members (Wheelan, 2005).

Since members' relationships in this newly formed groups are not sufficiently established, the members cannot rely on each other for either support or structure. The relationships and trust are not there yet. As a consequence the members are very leader focused and also leader dependent. The team members easily assume that the leader is capable and expect that the leader will provide leadership, structure and protection for the group and help to release tension (Wheelan, 2005).

At this stage the group members are usually eager to please the leader. Members at this point also test what is allowed or not in the team, for example to determine the rules, roles and the structure of the group. However, at this stage the testing is usually very tentative and polite since there is a great amount of fear of being perceived as deviant from other members. The members fear being excluded or attacked at this point. They therefore want to conform to the group norms and rules (Wheelan, 2005).

Very few or no one challenges the leader or other group members, and the group relies a great deal on the authority figure. Independent action by the group members occurs seldom or not at all. Politeness, tentativeness, and defensiveness dominate the group members' behavior in this early stage in relation to other members. Since doing real work might create some situations for conflict, members tend to avoid work by engaging in flight, or topics not related to the groups tasks. Works occurs in the team but at minimal levels in this stage (Wheelan, 2005).

In order for a stage 1 group to mature, the group members need to feel a sense of belonging and have a sense of loyalty to the group. Having a sense of belonging will also help the members feel safe enough to contribute with ideas and suggestions about how the group should function and how the members shall go about accomplishing the tasks of the group. When this climate has been established, the group moves into the second stage of group development. Consequently, the feeling of safety and a willingness to contribute is important for the move to the next stage (Wheelan, 2005).

Stage 2. Counterdependency and Fight

This stage is characterized by conflict between members and the leaders, or among group members themselves. It can also be characterized by an avoidance of tasks or flight from actual work in the group, as well as tension avoidance. Conflict is described by Wheelan (2005) as essential to develop cohesion in a group. It also helps to define common values for the group even though many people fear conflict in groups.

Tension produced by conflicts gives an opportunity to establish and clarify psychological boundaries, which in itself has the potential to create additional stability for the group through the necessity to establish shared values and norms. The aim at this stage would be to create a unified group culture and structure as well as clarifying the group's goals (Wheelan, 2005).

Disagreements within the team and between the leaders and the team members are unavoidable at this stage. Here members struggle with how the group will operate and what role they as members will play. Still, being leader dependent and at the same time having some frustration and conflict within the team, the team members start to liberate themselves as a natural step from the perceived control from authority figures of the team, usually the leader. In order for the members to achieve more independence, the individuals start to articulate their own interpretation of the group's goals and the structure. Individuals with similar ideas and values start to form coalitions and as a result a split occurs in the group. At the same time the leaders start to be attacked by some of the coalitions, and defended by others. This can evoke a lot of anxiety within the team (Wheelan, 2005).

In the process, an attempt to outline structure, roles, and goals starts as a way to try to reduce the anxiety that the conflicts create. Clarification of the roles and goals helps in the process. Conflict is necessary at this stage and part of the process in order to find one unifying direction out of divergent points of views in the group, in order to help the members to work together in a productive manner. Conflicts are necessary for establishing a safe environment on a psychological level since it helps to develop trust. It is easier to develop trust with an individual or within a group where we feel we can disagree and will not be abandoned or hurt by having different views from the others. It is difficult to develop trust if someone denies us being ourselves. This is also true for the work teams that develop in stage 3 and 4 (Wheelan, 2005).

Conflicts can create a sense of authenticity and can deeper intimacy and collaboration. But in case conflict are handled poorly, it can also lead to the opposite. Some groups will not be able to handle their conflict and thereby get stuck in stage 2 and are therefore not able to progress. But this stage cannot be avoided in a group's maturity process. Groups that do not pass this stage will stay at stage 1 and remain dependent, insecure and not capable of true collaboration and productivity (Wheelan, 2005).

Stage 3. Trust and Structure

If the conflict stage is successfully navigated, the team members will start to feel more secure and have more trust in each other and the leader. At this stage the group can start a mature negotiation process about goals, roles, organizational structure, division of labor, and work procedures. They can also decide on norms and rules in the group. Communication becomes more open and focused on tasks and work. The power struggles and conflicts will still occur but in a less intense way as in stage 2. At this stage it is easier to give each other feedback within the team, and the feedback will be more task focused than related to a hidden agenda or emotion. The team members and leader will also share information more openly between each other, rather than use it to gain status or power (Wheelan, 2005).

You could say that the group is designing itself in this stage. It is laying the foundation for their work and planning the ways in which it will accomplish their tasks. The focus on structure and roles at this stage significantly increases the group's capacity to work more productively and effectively. In this process relationships are being more defined as well. Role assignments are made on the basis of talent and competence rather than fantasy or wishes for power and/or safety (Wheelan, 2005).

Stage 4. Work and productivity

The fourth stage, also called the work and productivity stage in Wheelan's (2005) model, is a time of intense productivity and effectiveness within the team. It is at this stage that a group

truly becomes a team, according to her model. Having solved many of the issues and uncertainties in earlier stages, the team can now focus on getting the work done and reaching their common goals. The team is able to produce better quality work at this stage as well. The team is eager to get the work done, take decisions, strengthen its cohesion, as well as resolve task-related conflicts and keep up a high level of performance. The groups' work goes easier and smoother at this stage (Wheelan, 2013).

At stage 4 the most important task for the group is to get the job done in a good way, to remain cohesive while being able to navigate through task-related conflicts, and maintain high performance over a long period of time. Here goals, roles, norms, and structure are well established and the group can work more effectively. The group becomes productive will accomplish what is needed, and not spend a long time discussing in meetings without getting any product out of their work. In order to get the work done individuals must trust the other members of their team to be able to communicate freely about ideas and openly share information. If group members feel fear of reprisals for giving suggestions, ideas or giving feedback, important information will be withheld from the group and the result will be an inferior product (Wheelan, 2005).

Groups at this stage are highly aware about that work occurs within a time frames. Groups that are always working are probably not working effectively according to Wheelan (2005). A group at this stage spends about 80% of their time working. The rest is time for dealing with emotional and relational issues that arises since we are all human beings. Workaholic groups are unlikely to produce the best possible results. A group needs to deal with the human side as well. For work to occur the group need to be able to use available resources, such as information, individual expertise, and materials that are necessary to accomplish the task (Wheelan, 2005).

The team can easily fall back from this stage to earlier stages if they are not attentive. Some norms important to the team at this stage are, for example, that teams encourage high performance and high quality, encourage innovations, and are attentive to details. Other factors important for an effective team, is decision making and that the team uses enough time to define problems that need to be solved or decisions needed to be taken. The team needs to have enough time to plan for problem solving and have good methods for decision-making that is built on participation from team members. The team also needs to implement their solutions and decisions (Wheelan, 2013).

Conflicts will continue to arise at this stage, but teams have developed strategies to solve conflicts quicker than in earlier stages. The team also needs to give and receive feedback about its efficiency and productivity and evaluate their performance to avoid getting stuck in old routines and way of working (Wheelan 2013).

Stage 5. Termination

Most groups have an end point when the tasks are completed or the group needs to split, for example in an organizational change or if individual group members choose to leave. When functional groups reach the end, they tend to evaluate their work, give each other feedback, as well as express feelings about the group and each other. Of course all groups do not do these things, but when they do this they can enhance the individual's capacity to work effectively in future groups. If there is a threat that the group will be terminated, it usually triggers regression to earlier stages. Consequently, the termination point for groups can trigger conflict and negativity in the group again (Wheelan, 2005).

Also, significant changes in group membership, changes in the psychological state of the members, external demands or serious internal conflicts can also affect the structure of a work group. High turnover rates or downsizing of a group often triggers regression to an earlier stage and require a rebuilding of the group. According to Wheelan (2005) this fact is often ignored or unfamiliar to organizations, team members and leaders, and creates a more chaotic state in the group, during for example organizational changes.

Groups can also get stuck in particular stages, and the consequences can be serious. Many groups remain in the counter dependency and fight stage for long periods of time. These groups can spend a lot of time fighting with the leader of the group or with each other to determine their task as a group. Groups might also get stuck in stage 3, trust and structure. If in this stage they spend a lot of energy dealing with the emotional side of the group life, but has difficulties to establish agreements about the structure and way of working to accomplish the task. These groups are more concerned with developing relationships and good feelings than achieving their tasks (Wheelan, 2015).

Finally some groups will remain very leader dependent over long periods of time, for example, when the leader is not present the group cannot get any work done. These groups avoid conflicts and are therefore incapable of collaborative and fruitful work. They will only do what they are told to do but not more. They are not capable of questioning, challenging or giving and receiving constructive feedback (Wheelan, 2015).

Group development and the role of the leader

A common view on leadership is that the leader is a key figure in the success of the team. This can put great weight on the shoulders of the leader with the expectation that the success and failure of the team only depends on the leader. This great weight of responsibility can have a negative effect on the leader and make the leader become stressed from all the responsibility on their shoulders (Wheelan, 2013).

An effective leader does not need to be a very special person with specific gifts. They can be an average person, but they need to be flexible and willing to learn and develop some basic skills and competences. On the contrary a charismatic leader can prevent the team's development by his or her dominant presence and make the team members less motivated to take on certain tasks necessary for the success of the group (Wheelan, 2013). What is important according to Hackman (2002) is that leaders have an emotional maturity since leading a team is emotionally demanding, especially when dealing with anxiety in the team. The leader needs to be able to deal with his or her own anxiety as well.

Leaders that are emotionally mature, are willing and able to move towards situations and discussions that may evoke anxiety, in the interest of learning about them, and supporting the team rather than moving away anxiety evoking discussions and situations. (Hackman 2002). This is equivalent to Wheelans stage 2. According to Wheelan (2005) the team dynamic in stage 2 will increase the anxiety in the team, and it is crucial how the team leader deals with this stage in order for the team to progress and mature. Sometimes it is necessary for leaders to take actions that will temporarily raise anxiety in the team to lay the foundation for necessary learning or change.

A more balanced way of looking at leadership is that there is a mutual dependency between the leader and the group members. The organization, outer factors and the group members each have an impact on the group successes or failures (Wheelan, 2013).

According to Hackman (2002) there is no specific action a leader can take to make sure the group will develop, like all human and social systems work groups develop in their own way. Research does suggest though that training team members together, rather than separately, can help to start up the process of enhancing team performance. When the members learn how to work and stay together to build their collective team competencies, it is more certain that a team develops into a more effective and well-performing team.

An assumption about leadership is that a leader's behavior causes team member's behavior and the team dynamic, but in fact leadership style may in many cases be a consequence of group member's behaviors. If leaders perceives their teams as consisting of competent and cooperative members, leaders are likely to use a more considerate and participative leadership style, than if the team members are not competent in carrying out their work tasks. This might also be the case when team members are hostile towards the leader. Then the leader might show a more structuring, directive and autocratic leadership style. No team leader's style is fixed; it depends on the maturity of the team (Hackman, 2002).

Research has shown that there is not one leadership style that works across all situations. A specific style that works well in one particular context, for example in a team that is highly developed and mature, might work poorly when a newly formed team encounters a crisis situation that needs a rapid and decisive response from the leader and the team (Hackman, 2002)

One and the same leader is not necessarily a good leader for all contexts. Many organizations tend to move leaders around between different areas without taking into consideration the leaders competence and knowledge in the area. Research has shown that this is not the best way since in order to be an effective leader, leaders need to have a deep understanding of the work and tasks the teams are doing (Wheelan, 2013).

Some factors defined by research about effective leaders are that effective leaders tend to have more task-oriented skills and they are more social and more motivated by wanting to be leaders than others. If a leader has multicultural skills, the achievement of a team consisting of members from diverse cultures will be better. Leaders that establish individual relationships with their team members will also increase their team's achievement and effectiveness (Wheelan, 2013).

All leaders need to be able to adapt their leadership style to different situations and occasions in order to boost the progression of their groups. Groups that manage to progress are groups that are able to challenge the relationship between themselves and their leader. When group members' roles develop, they can overtake part of the leadership functions within the team. The dominant position of the leader becomes unnecessary and can even be destructive for the group. The leader is important for the coordination but also group members can participate in these tasks when the team has progressed enough (Wheelan, 2013).

It is important for leaders to adapt to this situation and not to feel worthless, for example after being challenged or not being needed in the same way as before, when teams mature. In mature teams, the team members take on many of the leadership functions the leader earlier had. In order for this to happen the leader needs to be less directive and more consultative. He or she needs to adapt their leadership style to the groups' needs and to understand what groups need in various development stages (Wheelan, 2013).

Leaders for a stage four team, a mature team, according to Wheelan (2005) need to take a step back and be able to relax a bit more. The work should go more smoothly at this stage than before. The members have taken on the responsibilities for the tasks and work actively to achieve the goals of the group. The leaders act as a consultant for the group but also participate in the group to help achieve their goals and to be successful. However, both members and leaders need to be conscious every time a member quits a team and a new one enters, when tasks and goals change or new tasks are introduced, or outer factors change. The leader needs to understand how these situations affect the team and be able to discuss the circumstances and proactively identify problems that can arise in the future. In this way the team can make necessary adaptations.

Teams cannot keep a high level of productivity during longer periods of time. People and groups need time to rest, relax and talk about what they are happy with and dissatisfied with. Unrealistic expectations on human capacity are the biggest threat to the individual performance and effectiveness of teams. This is important for leaders and teams members to understand (Wheelan, 2013). To further understand what a team needs in order to become and to stay effective as a team, the Group Development Questionnaire (GDQ) can be of help.

The Group Development Questionnaire (GDQ)

Due to the very time consuming work it takes to study groups and the lack of instruments that could speedily and accurately measure group development at different points in time, Wheelan created an instrument called the Group Development Questionnaire (GDQ) in the 1990s. This questionnaire was used to measure the teams that participated in the training program.

The aim was to accurately measure group development by using previous group research as theory. Wheelan developed the IMGD, where she identified characteristics of groups at the various stages of group development, described in the earlier in this chapter. From these characteristics she generated items for the questionnaire, and made thorough validation studies of the instrument (Wheelan, 1996). The GDQ contains the following four scales. Each scale corresponds to the first four stages of group development in the IMGD theory.

Scale I: Dependency and Inclusion, corresponds to Stage 1.

Scale II: Counterdependency and Fight, corresponds to Stage 2.

Scale III: Trust and Structure, corresponds to Stage 3.

Scale IV: Work and Productivity, corresponds to Stage 4.

Each scale contains 15 items. For example the items on Scale I measure the amount of energy a group spends in an attempt to deal with issues of dependency and inclusion (Stage 1). Scale II is designed to identify the characteristics of a group at Stage 2. The questions for this stage seek to identify to what degree groups focus on issues of conflict and counter-dependency as well as other issues associated with Stage 2. Scale III measures to what degree trust and structure are present in the group and is related to stage 3 of IMGD. Scale IV measures to what degree the group is working on goals and tasks and the effectiveness of the group. This scale is associated with Stage 4, which is the stage when the team becomes an effective and high performing team (Wheelan, 1996). Using the results from the questionnaire, an effectiveness ratio is formulated. This ratio is then used to help teams determine how effective

they are in comparison groups with average scores. Average scores are calculated by dividing a group's actual mean score in the GDQ scale IV by its potential maximum score of 75 (Wheelan 1996). The group members, which also includes the leader, grade their own perception of their productivity.

The GDQ is now also widely used as an assessment tool in various types of organization, with the aim to support teams in understanding where they are in relation to being an effective team. Consultants are being trained and certified in the instrument and research continues to be done using the instrument. The team leaders that were interviewed for this study have all participated in workshops where the GDQ was used to assess which stage their team.

Team building and team interventions

According to Buzaglo & Wheelan, (1999) brief interventions in teams can produce a significant level of change in how the groups function. Some conclusions they draw from a study on team facilitation in Central America was that in order to support a team in its development there needs to be an accurate and detailed assessment of the group's current developmental level. Information about the team's current status can be difficult or even impossible to obtain by interviews, since team members tend to frame the problems in the team as interpersonal problems, which makes it difficult to discover more system related problems. Intervention can support improvements within the team, providing the team with strategies and information needed to solve their own problems.

According to Buzaglo et al. (1999) successful team intervention do not focus on individuals, personal or emotional issues but instead focus on groups as a system. Team interventions focus on how the system functions and what the team members can do to improve their group's effectiveness and productivity. Team interventions must be guided by information, which means educating the members about group development, what characterizes an effective team and the importance of looking at the group problems from a systemic view. It is important not to look at group problems from individual or interpersonal views since this way of looking at group problems makes it very unlikely to be able to make positive changes in the team. Such a view is often taken personally, causes hurt and humiliation, as well as encourages retaliation. It usually produces cycles of blame, attacks and counter attacks as a typical result. If members take a systemic view, then they are able to work together to improve the way the system functions. No individuals should fear being blamed or threatened (Buzaglo et al.,1999).

The one main key to successful intervention is to find a strategy that enables the group members to decide what and how to change in the identified areas. The more directive the consultant is, the less likely the group is to change and develop, since with a directive consultant the group becomes dependent on the consultant for guidance or may resent the consultant's advice. Consultants that act as educators and design a process in which the group can take their own decision appears to have better results according to Buzaglo et al. (1999).

Team interventions, when properly conducted, can have a positive impact on organizations regarding their financial measures of organizational performance. Out of all organizational interventions, interventions focusing on team development has the largest effect on organizations measures of financial performance (Klein et al., 2009).

Interventions to create group cohesiveness/Shared cognition in teams

Due to the increased complexity and intellectually demanding tasks for teams, a shared cognition of various team goals are important for the development of team effectiveness. The team needs to share, process and integrate information, as well as share tasks among their members (Jacobsson, 2017). There is a positive correlation between team cohesiveness and performance (Cohen & Bailey, 1997). Studies on why some teams are more successful than others has concluded that the following three aspects are important for developing the capabilities to perform in the future: the team satisfies internal and external clients (stakeholders), the team members find meaning and satisfaction within their group, and the team members felt that their teamwork were meaningful and satisfying (Jacobsson, 2017).

Jacobsson (2017) states that a team needs to have both internal as well as external goals. Internal goals concern the team itself and are important for the team in order to have meaningful as well as satisfying work. External goals concern what the team is expected to deliver to others, e.g. the team's stakeholders, customers or what other parts of the organization expect from the team (Jacobsson, 2017).

The below six goals and interventions have been used as team interventions by some teams in the current study to help them build a shared cognition around their goals. These will be referred to in the results and discussion chapter.

Jacobsson (2017) suggests six goals around which teams can benefit from building shared understanding (i.e. shared cognition) in a team which he refers to as a goal-matrix. These goals are the following:

1. Internal standards (standards of cooperative behaviors in the team).
2. External standards (standards of behaviors of interaction in relation to the teams' stakeholders).
3. Development goals (how teams want to cooperate together as a team in the future).
4. Operative goals (goals for the teams' expected delivery to their stakeholders).
5. Guiding stars (ideas on how or in which atmosphere the team wants cooperate).
6. Vision (a possible future state for teams regarding their stakeholders).

In addition to the above, a team also needs to have a common understanding of their own purpose as a team. Why do they exist? What is their organizational function? The roles of the team need to be clarified and made clear, and the team members need to know who shall work with what in order to serve the stakeholders. Finally the team needs to identify and know who their stakeholders are in order to be able to serve them in the best way (Jacobsson, 2017).

Lacerenza et al. (2018) suggest mainly four interventions designed to help foster improvements within a teams. These are goal-setting, interpersonal-relationship management, role clarification, and problem solving. For example, setting difficult but specific goals can improve the performance of a team. The interpersonal relationship component to team development focuses on developing trust and helps the team to learn how to resolve conflicts. The role clarification component helps uncover ambiguities and conflict in relation to unclear roles by establishing clear roles within the team. Problem solving helps team members to identify task-related problems and work with how they can implement solutions accordingly. This helps teams to enhance their effectiveness since it provides structure for the teams to

work together and uses different individual resources and competences. Problem solving enhances decision-making skills, which also is linked to more effective teams.

According to meta-studies done on team development intervention, the conclusion drawn was that goal setting and role clarification help build shared understanding (shared cognition) that foster changes in the team process. Goal setting, for example, improved performance through four mechanisms: by directing attention toward the defined goals, by energizing the team, by affecting persistence, and by action through the use of knowledge relevant to the task. Goal setting at a team level needs to be relevant to all members and to focus on team's outcomes (Lacerenza et al., 2018).

According to Hackman (2002), effective self-management in teams is impossible to reach without setting the direction for the team's work. In order to do this the leader needs to consult the team members so the direction can be tested and revised. To consult the team and make revisions of the goals, the chance of getting the direction right increases and its acceptance by the team members is fostered. But the team member with the authority, usually the leader, must step up and help set a direction for the team's work. A team's performance is greatly dependent on how well this is done, especially in the early stages of the group's development.

Setting directions for the team's performance and aspirations helps energize the team by giving purpose and meaning to the team's work. With purpose and meaning, motivation arises and increases. If a vision or goal is not inspiring, people quickly turn away from it. A clear goal and purpose helps the team to get a collective focus to orient towards and protects against every team member heading in the direction that they personally prefer. A team needs a vision but also something more concrete in terms of goals for the day-to-day work and decision-making. Teams without any clear sense of direction will be deprived of managing themselves effectively. It will result in endless discussions and debates about their main purpose (Hackman 2002).

Having a good sense of direction will fully engage the team members' talents. Members tend to work harder when what they are doing is important and has a value and meaning for them. It will also make them pursue the collective purpose by using all knowledge, skills and experience within the team. All team members will make sure to use their talent to reach the goals and get the tasks done. Each team member will do the part of the work that they can do best and others that have specific knowledge and skills will reach out to those in need for support to assist their colleagues who are still learning (Hackman, 2002).

The effect of team development using GDQ and the IMGD

There have been several studies made by Wheelan and other researches about the effect of team development. They are based on Wheelan's IMGD and the Group Development Questionnaire (GDQ). Studies have shown that groups that function at the higher stages of the IMGD are for example more productive. The link between the stage at which a group is functioning (Stage 1, 2, 3 or 4 in the IMGD model) and group's productivity has been established in quite a number of studies (Wheelan, 2009). For example, studies have been conducted about financial teams functioning at a higher stage of group development, equal to stage 3 or 4 in the IMGD model, showing that they are more productive, earn more money in less time, and were rated more positively with regards to customer services (Wheelan et al., 1998).

A study done in an intensive care units with teams functioning at higher stages of group development (stage 3 or 4) were shown having better patient outcome than other intensive care units functioning on less mature stages of team development (Wheelan, Burchill, & Tilin, 2003).

Another study was done on students whose faculty groups functioned at a higher stage of group development and showed that the students performed better on standardized tests. When faculty members work together to become more trusting, work oriented and cooperative, student learning can be positively affected (Wheelan & Kesselringer, 2005; Wheelan & Tilin, 1999).

A study by Jacobsson (2017) investigated if the quality of the cooperation within teams had any link to employees' health and well-being. In the study, they followed a team development project within schools and preschools where consultants did interventions with the GDQ assessment and a goal matrix, to build shared cognition in teams, with the aim to increase their effectiveness and cooperation (Jacobsson, 2017). The teams were measured before and after the team interventions in regards to how effectively they cooperated and how they perceived their job satisfaction, levels of stress and emotional exhaustion. The result of the study indicated that the teams developed towards more effective cooperation over time since measures of dependency and inclusion decreased as well as levels of conflicts. The result of the study also indicated that job satisfaction increased over time in teams that had stable team membership, and decreased over time when team membership was unstable or fragmented, merged with other teams or faced an impending closure (Jacobsson, 2017).

Another study by Jacobsson et al. (2014) investigated the relation between levels of group development according to the IMGD and three health-related aspects of working life. The aspects for investigation were: work satisfaction, emotional exhaustion, and sick leave. This study was made with 30 groups in a manufacturing company using the GDQ and self-reported measures of work satisfaction and emotional exhaustion. They also used company data on occurrence of sick leave occasions. The results showed a strong relationship between levels of group development according to the IMGD and work satisfaction, a moderately strong relation with emotional exhaustion, and a weaker or less clear relation with sick leave.

A third study made by Jacobsson et al. (2016) examines a multitude of intervention programs within the manufacturing industry having the purpose of improving cooperation and health among management- and production teams. Included in this intervention program were 31 management teams and 132 production teams. All the management teams were given a budget of nine hours of consultation time each, as well as a GDQ-measurement. The results of the study focus on the consultants' versus the managers' perceptions of the intervention process, but not the outcomes or the result of the intervention performed. The interviews focused on various critical aspects associated with either success or failure before, during and after the intervention programs within the industry. In the study, similarities and differences between consultants' versus managers' perceptions of the intervention processes are discussed.

In a master thesis by Lindberg (2013), 10 production leaders in a manufacturing industry were interviewed about how they perceived the team development interventions done with their teams. The groups were measured by the Group Development Questionnaire (GDQ) and five of the leaders that were interviewed belonged to groups that had progressed in the team development stages according to Wheelan's (1996) model. The other five leaders belonged to

groups that had regressed in the stages. The result from the study showed that all the production leaders appreciated the interventions and in the teams that had progressed, the team leaders were able to adapt to the teams' needs to a greater extent than in the groups that had regressed.

Another master thesis by Måhlin and Pettersson (2013) investigated how processes and conditions in a team development intervention in a manufacturing industry promoted and respectively hindered the teams' development towards a higher state of maturity according to the IMGD. Based on interviews with the team leaders they found out that the factors that promoted the teams' development mainly consisted of processes such as feedback of the GDQ results, discussions, and insights. The factors hindering the team's development mainly consisted of factors such as time, economic conditions, day-to-day organizational issues, and the company culture.

A meta-analysis by Klein et al. (2009) examined the impact of four specific team-building components (i.e. goal setting, interpersonal relations, problem solving, and role clarification) on cognitive, affective, process, and performance outcomes. Their findings suggest that team building had a positive moderate effect across all team outcomes. In terms of specific outcomes, team building was most strongly related to affective and process outcomes.

3. The current study

This study has a somehow different focus than the previous since it focuses mainly on in what way the teams' cooperation and performance has improved after their participation in an internal team development program from the perspective of team leaders. This has not directly been captured with interviews in earlier studies, even if the leaders' insight and learning from the interventions were captured in Lindberg's (2013) study. Lindberg's focus was, however, on how the team leaders perceived team interventions and not the outcome of the interventions. The current study focuses on leaders' perception of what has changed after they have finalized the company internal team development program based on GDQ and the IMGD. Here the focus is only on teams that have progressed in the team development stages based on IMGD between the first and second GDQ measurements, with six month in between the measures, and not on teams that remained at the same stage or regressed.

The focal company in this study is part of the global manufacturing industry with operations in over 190 markets around the world. It has around 100 000 employees and production facilities in 18 countries. The company provides team development programs for leaders and their teams with the aim to support them to understand how they can become a more effective team. The model used for the program is the IMGD.

The training organization within the company has offered the team development program since 2015. Until today around 100 teams have participated in the programs. The target groups for the programs are work-teams in the organization with 3-16 members including the team leader. Work-teams are defined as continuous work units responsible for producing goods or providing services. Their membership is typically stable, working full time and well defined within the organization (Cohen & Bailey, 1997).

In short the training program set-up is the following. The program starts with the entire team, including the team leader, filling in a Group Development Questionnaire (GDQ). The questionnaire has 60 questions about team cooperation. Based on the GDQ the team gets a full day feedback session led by an internal certified facilitator. The feedback session starts with a description of the IMGD and is then followed by a presentation of the specific team assessment results. The team then discusses the results and its implications together with the facilitator, and at the end of the day the team is encouraged to make an action plan based on the GDQ result and the discussions during the day, and then work actively on the actionplan during the coming months. After six months, the teams are offered a half day follow-up workshop to find out if they have progressed within the IMGD stages compared with the first GDQ assessment result. Before the follow up workshop the team answers the GDQ survey again.

Some of the teams, specifically those in the early stages of the Integrative Model of Group Development (Wheelan 2005), will be offered additional team interventions. These interventions are the ones written about under the section "Shared Cognition in teams, such as Internal standards, External standards, Development goal Operative goals, Guiding stars and creating a Vision (Jacobsson, 2017). All teams are not doing all the interventions, but the interventions are adapted to and based on the specific team results and needs.

Method

This study is a qualitative study. Qualitative studies aim to investigate what characters a phenomenon has and how it should be identified. Qualitative studies are necessary when studying subjective experiences that cannot be directly measured (Wallén, 1996). A qualitative approach is the best option to study how a phenomenon is experienced (Larsson, 2011). To answer the research question “*How do team leaders perceive the development of their teams’ cooperation and performance after participating in the team development program offered by their company*”, a qualitative study is best suited to capture a more in depth view of the team leaders’ perceptions, as well as getting concrete examples of what changes there has been in the teams’ cooperation and performance than for example a quantitative survey.

Phenomenology in qualitative studies is a term pointing at the interest to understand a phenomena from the subjects’ own perspective and how it is perceived by them (Kvale, 2014). For a qualitative interview study using a phenomenology perspective will help give a more in depth view of a phenomena and analysis, in this case, of how teams have developed after doing a training program based on the GDQ.

Semi-structured interviews

A fundamental method to investigate how a person experiences something is simply to ask them. Standardized questionnaires or interviews are not always enough since there sometimes is a need to adapt the questions to the respondents’ answers and situation, as well as to be able to follow up with more in depth questions (Wallén, 1996). In this thesis a semi-structured interview was chosen for the possibility to adapt and follow up the respondents’ answers. Some basic questions were used as the basis for the interviews and were asked to all respondents. Follow up questions were also used when needed to better grasp the phenomenon.

The interview template consisted of 7 questions and the interviews lasted in average of 30 minutes each. See the questions in Appendix 1. In order to get a real dialogue the interview situation must be real and genuine with some give and take between the interviewer and respondent. The interviewer needs to act and relate as a person, not as an objective expert in relation to the respondent (Wallén, 1996). To be neutral and at the same time genuine can be a bit of a challenge. In this case the author did not want to affect the answers by being too engaged but at the same time it was important to engage in finding the right spontaneous follow up questions to support the respondents in being more concrete in their answers when needed.

Respondents

The respondents selected for the interviews are leaders of 10 teams that from the GDQ were measured as progressing from phase 1 or 2 to phase 3 or 4 according to Wheelan’s (1996) IMGD. The teams were selected among 100 teams going through the program in 2016 and 2017, and they were selected because they had made major progress in their development as teams, compared to other teams. All teams are white collar teams working within different businesses, divisions or support functions within the company. While contacting the team managers the author discovered that nine of the teams selected from 2016 and 2017 that had progressed were still intact with the same manager and the majority of the team members still

in the team. However, one team had dissolved and therefore could not be interviewed for the study. The interviews were carried out in October 2018.

Reliability and Validity

In regards to reliability in a qualitative study, it is valid to reflect upon whether another interviewer would get the same result asking the same questions to the respondents, as the interviewer of this study? Could the study be repeated? This can of course be discussed since the interviewer and the author of the study has experience and knowledge within the field of study that could help clarify responses that were not so clear by using relevant follow up questions, in order to get concrete examples of changes in the team's cooperation and performance. Would an interviewer with less knowledge in the field get the similar answers? It is hard to say. They would probably in the first set of answers, but having knowledge within the field in the interview situation, helps to dig further down in the answers of the respondents and provide the right follow up questions. Therefore the results would probably be at least somewhat different if the study was done by for example someone with less knowledge and experience in the field of study.

Validity means if the study measures what it aim to measure (Stukat, 2014). The intent of the study is to measure the leaders' perception of the development of the team's cooperation and performance after participating in a team development program. First of all it is of course difficult to "measure" anyone's perception. Perception is something in itself that is subjective. So in order to get some concrete "measurements" for the study, the interviewer needed to get as many concrete examples as possible from the respondents on what changed within the teams after the program compared to before.

An important validity question is also whether some of the changes the leaders discussed could be a result of what has happened since ending the program rather than of the program itself, since the teams went through the program between 1-2 years ago. It could of course be the case. Teams develop as well over time. To prevent this to be the case for this study the interview questions during the interviews were asked in such a way that the leaders should answered in relation to what happened more directly after the program. But being 1-2 year back it might not be easy, or even possible, for the leaders to fully remember and relate all changes to the program. This needs of course to be taken into consideration reading the result.

Approach

The interviews were done over Skype and pre-booked a couple weeks ahead. The interview questions were also sent to the leaders in the Outlook calendar booking system, so they would have the possibility to see the questions in advance, in order to reflect and also prepare for the interview situation. Some of the respondents had reflected on the questions in advance while some had not read or reflected on the questions before the interview.

The interviews lasted between 20-40 minutes depending on how detailed the respondents were when answering the questions. In the semi-structured interview set up there was also room for follow-up questions by the interviewer. Some respondents described very detailed changes that had been made so the interview took more time, while some were more concise in their responses.

As the interviewer it was important to get as concrete and tangible examples out of the respondents as possible so that they could be used for the analysis. Therefore the interviews lasted as long as needed. All interviews were transcribed right after the interview and in the language they were recorded in. Some of the interviews were done in English and some in Swedish, depending on the location of the respondent. The interviews done in Swedish were then translated to English when a quote was used in the results section.

Ethical aspects

According to Kvale and Brinkmann (2014) some ethical problems may occur throughout an interview situation. Therefore potential ethical problems should be considered from the beginning of the study. They describe four of the areas that are commonly discussed in ethical guidelines for researchers: informed consent, confidentiality, consequences, and the role of the researcher (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2014).

In terms of informed consent, all respondents in this study received a written request if they wanted to participate and they were told about the purpose of the study by the internal facilitator who had supported the team. Before the interview began, the respondents were informed again about the purpose of the interviews and how their interview answers would be used. They were also informed that the interviews would be recorded only for the purpose of transcription. After receiving the consent the interviews could start.

The respondents were also informed that their answers would be handled confidentially and that only the author of this study would know who answered what, but any information that could reveal which departments the respondents were taken out.

Regarding the third aspect, the consequences for the respondents, the author could not see any major ethical consequences since no teams were revealed in the thesis and the results would be presented confidentially. The respondents had also been selected because their team had progressed very well in the IMGD stages, so the respondents seemed to be quite proud when they spoke of the changes that had occurred in their team's cooperation and work.

The role of the researcher is the fourth aspect mentioned by Kvale and Brinkmann (2014). The integrity of the researcher is crucial for the quality of the study and ethical decisions. Qualitative research is an interactive research method where there is interaction between the respondents and the researcher. In such situations, there is always a risk that the interviewer may identify with the respondents' answers and cannot keep an objective distance when interpreting and reporting the material. The author of the study work in the same organization as the respondents and are responsible for the program being investigated. The challenge is therefore to be as neutral as possible in questions in order for the respondents' answers to be fully based on their own perception and experience, without any interpretations or leading questions from the interviewer.

At the other end it is also important to create an open climate for the interview situation in order to create good dialogue, confidence, and transparency among the respondents. It was very important that the leaders wanted to share their experiences for the continuation of the team development program and for the thesis to get good and solid material to analyze and process, which they also did very openly.

Data processing

In a phenomenological approach the researcher usually has an inductive way of working, trying to be as open as possible when approaching the field of study. The most common form of data analysis in a qualitative interview study is by categorizing the interview quotes. First the researcher needs to transcribe the interviews, then read them through them thoroughly and finally code or categorize them to get an overview of the material (Kvale, 2014).

To code means that the researcher ties one or several keywords to a sequence of texts to later facilitate identification of a quote. Conversely, categorizing is a more systematic approach to conceptualize identification and is a prerequisite for quantification. Both terms are often used in parallel with each other. Coding often leads to categorization, which means that long interview statements are reduced to a few simple categories (Kvale, 2014). This has been the case in this analyze. Since all quotes cannot fit in the results section, a summary of the answers has been made for each sub-category and is reinforced by a quote from one or two of the respondents.

Transcribing the recordings after the interviews took place helped with the categorization and analysis of the responses. After the transcription, a thematization of the answers was made in order to find general themes in the interviews that could be categorized for the results section. In this case two main themes were drawn from the research question: team cooperation and team performance. Under the main themes, subthemes emerged from the interviews that give more in depth explanation to what changes had actually been made in the teams after they finalized the team development program and were re-assessed using the GDQ. The main themes and subthemes are presented in Table 1.

Thematic analysis

For this study thematic analysis is used for analyzing the interview data. Thematic analysis is a method used for identifying, analyzing and reporting different patterns or themes within data (Brauns & Clarkes, 2006). It can help describe the set of data in detail. Thematic analysis is a method that can work to reflect on reality, or to go beneath the surface of “reality”. A “theme” in this method is described as “*something important about the data in relation to the research question*” (Brauns & Clarkes, 2006 p.10).

The method does not have rigid rules for the determination of a theme but leaves it to the researcher’s judgement to define it. There will also be overall themes and subthemes with the main themes. The most important is to be consistent in how the researcher does the thematization within the particular analysis. The thematic analysis can either be deductive, top down or inductive, bottom up. In this thesis the main themes are based on the research question and the subthemes are retrieved from the interviews answers and in this case from a bottom up analyzing process. A theme needs to capture something of importance about the data in relation to the research question and give some meaning to the set of data (Brauns & Clarkes, 2006).

In a thematic analysis there is no “hard” answer to the proportion of the data set needed to be considered to be a theme, for example that 50 % of the respondents answered in one way. Rather the judgment of the researcher is necessary in order to determine a theme (Brauns &

Clarke, 2006). The analyses for this thesis have been done by looking for patterns across the data from the nine interviews and then summarized in categories, main themes and sub themes, and presented in a table to give readers an overview of the themes and subthemes (Table 1). In the analysis chapter, the main themes and sub themes are analyzed from a theoretical point of view in order to draw conclusions from the theoretical framework of the thesis, which is the IMGD.

4. Result

The results from this study are first presented in the table below (Table 1). Within this section the results are then further presented on a more detailed level and are categorized into main themes and sub-themes. The analyses of the results have been done by looking for patterns across the data from the nine interviews and then summarized in categories, such as main themes and sub themes, and presented in a table to give readers an overview of the themes and subthemes (Table 1). In some cases only one or two respondents' answers form a subtheme and in some subthemes there might be three to five respondents with similar responses to the interview questions. The subthemes presented below are then further reinforced with quotes from the respondents, providing a good example of the subtheme.

Table 1. Main themes and subthemes regarding team cooperation and performance

<i>Changes in team cooperation</i>	<i>Changes in team performance</i>
1. Changes of behaviors in team cooperation.	1. Changes in team productivity
1.1. The team acts more as a team	1.1. Improvement on efficiency
1.2. The team cooperates better	1.2. Proactively working with risks
1.3. The team has shared common rules	1.3. Better measures on KPI:s
1.4. The team are less leader dependent	1.4. Saving money for the organization
1.5. The team communicates better	1.5. Provides better quality
1.6 The team has more open discussions	1.6. The team adapts quicker to change
1.7 The team has better self-confidence	1.7. Better time management in deliveries
1.8 The team is better on handling conflicts.	
1.9 The team has a common language	2. Changes in relationships with stakeholders
1.10 There is more information sharing within the team .	2.1. Internal customers are more satisfied
	2.2. Better feedback from the stakeholders
2. Changes in the teams way of working.	2.3. More proactive towards stakeholders
2.1. Better meeting structure and effective meetings.	2.3. Acts more as one unified voice

Tabell 1 cont.

- | | |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 2.2. More of shared ownership for the team | 3. Challenges to keep up the team performance |
| 2.3. Better use of the competencies/skills and distribution of workload | 3.1. New development opportunities |
| 2.4. Better support structure within the team | 3.2. Keep up the engagement |
| 2.5. The team has a common vision and goals | 3.3. How to keep up an already high level of performance |
| 2.6. The team regularly reflects on its behavior in relation to company values | 3.4. Keep up the common work when there are changes within the team |
| 2.7. The team celebrate achievements together | 3.5. Get out of the expert role and work more together |
| 3. Changes in cooperation between team leaders and team members. | |
| 3.1. Investing more time to be a leader | |
| 3.2. Giving more feedback to the team | |
| 3.3. More coaching and supporting | |
| 3.4. Provides better meeting structure | |
| 3.5. Delegate more and involve the team in leadership functions | |
| 3.6. Better conflict handling | |

Main result

In the analysis chapter, the main themes and sub themes are analyzed from a theoretical point of view in order to draw conclusions from the theoretical framework of the thesis, which is the IMGD. The analysis resulted in six main themes and 40 sub-themes. The results showed that the teams made different changes in their cooperation and ways of working, which resulted in better team performance in relation to their stakeholders. The program gave both leaders and their team members insight in what they needed to change to improve their cooperation and the changes they made after the program improved their performance as a team.

1. Change in the team's cooperation. From the interviews the team leaders gave descriptions on how cooperation within the teams changed in several ways. Below is the detailed result of what actually changed in the cooperation and the way the teams work today from the

perspective of the team leaders. They describe what behavior changed within the team after the program.

1.1. The team acts more as a team. The results show that the program has helped the teams develop from being a group to a team. To illustrate, they now act more as a team internally towards each other, as well as externally towards the organization and their stakeholders.

“Yes, above all we are much more of a team now than before. Earlier I experiences it much more like a group of individuals. Today I think the natural cooperation between the team members are much better.”

“The behavior of people changed in order to be more collaborative and support each other, and we have now “one voice” from the department. We have the agreements in the discussions or meeting in order to know how we are going to support the business outside our department. And the behavior of people changed a lot in order to be more collaborative with each other”

Having a natural way of cooperating, having one voice as a team, and a common picture of how to support the business and stakeholders make them feel and act more as a team now than before the program.

1.2. The team cooperates better. The teams now work together more spontaneously compared to before the program, according to the respondents. The respondents gave examples of how two or three members within their team would take initiative to work together with different areas. The team members support each other without the involvement of the team leader and take the initiative needed to get the work done.

“The team support each other without my involvement, they help each other and have a lot of discussions among themselves, without me being involved/.../. They take the initiative needed to keep the ‘ship’ floating and in the right direction”

Team members also show willingness to provide support even outside their area of responsibility, according to the leaders, and to solve things together as a team in other ways than before.

1.3. The team has shared common rules. During the program some of the teams made common rules of behaviors that they wrote down regarding how they wanted to act towards each other. The rules were described as being important for the cooperation but also were needed less often when the teams matured. While the teams have the rules, they look to them more and more seldom since the rules have become part of the day to day work.

“We had written down rules on a slide that we looked at the first thing we did in every team meetings, but later I did not think we needed to look at them anymore since they had become a part of everybody’s behavior and interaction towards each other”

The following are some examples of the rules mentioned by the leaders: team members should always inform each other where they are if they were not in the office, how to act in meetings eg. listen to each other, and involve more team members in discussions, be present

and shut down the laptop or mobile phone during meetings. These are said to have created much more effective meetings.

1.4. The teams are less leader dependent. There is a common thread in the respondents' answers that the team members are less leader dependent after the program than before. They are described as more independent, cooperative, and have better cross-communication. One respondent describes it as *"a mental shift from the team members, being more empowered and less dependent"*. They take more initiative as a team to drive the work forward and feel more responsible for the team result now than before. The teams has become more independent and self-driven

"They are doing what they need to do since they are responsible for it. It empowers them to take action, with proper quality, in the right time and within the agreed budget"

"Independence, cooperation and cross-communication now go more on a lower level than before. It's easier to take these pieces without my involvement now than it was before, between different individuals."

1.5. The team communicates better. Some of the respondents described how their team has become better at communication and how they work together to achieve goals. For example, they compile and review information together and have frequent dialogues amongst themselves and with other parts of the organization (e.g. upper management, other teams, stakeholders, and suppliers). One respondent also talked about a warmer and more accepting atmosphere in the team, where members interact more naturally both in small talk and in team discussions.

"Currently I see a great progress with communication with how they achieve the goals together, without me even. So this is a big step and I think this is the biggest achievement of this course and the journey that we made together. They are mostly project managers, they compile information, review information and communicate with a lot of people."

1.6. The team has more open discussions. The team members are reported to have become secure and dare to have more open discussions and dialogues. There is a more open atmosphere and team members feel more at ease. Trust has developed in the teams.

"It is a very big differences how open we are today, all are much more open and honest in the communication. It was not the case before. And I feel that all are happier/.../. It is a happier atmosphere. I can see how they feel more at ease at work. And it is not only me who said this, but others as well. I have got feedback from people around I the same open office space that they can feel when they pass by us that there is a good atmosphere."

1.7. The team has better self-confidence. Several leaders reported how his team got better self-confidence, not only as individuals but jointly as a team. They dared to take challenges in the organization when needed and in order for better decisions to be made. The teams were described as not being as quiet as before the training program and that they now interact in a different way with the surrounding organization, stakeholders, and steering groups.

“The team here gives advices and the people are very confident over how we advices the business. A lot of time we are involved in different matters here in order to support, and both the stakeholders and we are very confident. And the feedback we receive is amazing. I cannot say how proud I am of my team.”

One leader reported though that he still wants the team to step a bit more out of their comfort zone and that there is still some more work for him to be done this area.

“I think what still remains for some team members is to make first step from the comfort zone. Usually there are some discussions or arguing about this step. But it links also to the team’s maturity. Topic for me to develop.”

1.8. The team is better on handling conflicts. The leaders described the teams as better at handling conflict. One leader described how there is no conflict within the team anymore. Stress has decreased and they can focus their energy forward and working towards their goals. If they, due to a stressful environment, fall back into conflict then they know how to handle it now and what they need to do. The leader described it as having a common language that they can use if they need to adjust their behavior or speak about issues that need to be discussed in order to avoid conflict.”

“Now there is no stress and no conflicts, since all of us just want to move forward and we see immediate result. When we have been into conflict, we know how to move through the conflicts and what we need to do/.../.We use the common language, and change our behaviors and bring up stuff to the table.”

By having a common language and an open climate, they can more easily communicate when there is tension in the team and have a common “team” language to reference.

1.9. The team has a common language. Several leaders said that the team got a common language as a result of the program and the IMGD that was used in the program. They use the vocabulary they learned from the program and the IMGD

“We have got a common language and reflect around it which makes it very obvious to us what we need to do.”

Some leaders use the model to analyze their team’s current state and to be able to see when they regress in some areas.

1.10. More information sharing within the team. Some of the respondents said that their teams share more information between each other now than they did before the program. They use the information to develop and improve the work they do, for example sharing best practices. They take responsibility for tasks, goals, and improvements.

“We are sharing best practices and improvement that can be implemented”

2. Changes in the team’s way of working. The changes in the teams’ way of working was chosen as a main theme to emphasize the changes made in the teams’ work habits, for example: meeting structures, the distribution of workloads, and role distributions. These

changes in the teams' ways of working are referred to as sub-themes below. This theme has more to do with the structure of work but is a result of better cooperation.

2.1. Better meeting structure and effective meetings. Several of the leaders described that the team meetings became more effective and structured. The team members became more involved in preparing for meetings and in suggesting agenda items. For example, the teams have around the table sharing (i.e. where every team member shares what they are working on) and discussions on how the workload can be distributed if someone has too much work. One leader described that they have fewer topics on the agenda and more focus in certain areas, as well as space for the team members to discuss necessary items, which makes the meetings more focused and effective.

“We have got much more effective meetings, we use the time more effectively and focus on what we need to do. That also creates better discussions.”

“Thanks to the program/.../and that we have a common picture as a team, we are having more effective meetings, since we do need to spend a lot of time on reasoning to be on the same level and have the same picture anymore. I experiences that that suddenly changed and we became more efficient in how we took decisions and communicated with each other”

The leader above describes that having had thorough discussions within the team about the team's purpose, clarifying why they existed as a team as well as clarifying goals, helped them to be more effective in team meetings and with decision making.

2.2 More of shared responsibility/ownership for the team result. Some leaders report that they experienced the team taking greater ownership for the team's deliveries to the stakeholders and the result after the program, compared to before. They report that the team is more proactive in taking action and delivering work tasks in time and with good quality. The team also feel responsibility to solve the task needed.

“If something happen we gather the feedback and discuss together internally, and then come back to the stakeholders with one voice.”

“They are doing what they need to do since they are responsible for it. It empowers them to take actions, in a proper quality, in the right time and within the agreed budget.”

2.3 Better use of the competencies/skills within the team and distribution of workload. After the program, the leaders reported that there is better utilization of the competencies within the teams and current and future tasks are distributed in a good way due to this. One leader talked about “*the collective intelligence*” in the team, referring to how he can distribute the tasks and hand out responsibilities. Several leaders also indicated that roles have been made clearer in the teams as a result of the work they have done within the program.

“It has not been a big deal to distribute the work tasks, we discuss it and get an acceptance within the team. We also take responsibility for the consequences and decide to put other tasks aside and prioritize what we need to focus on”

2.4. *Better support structure within the teams.* Some teams also created better support structures regarding roles and tasks. Some examples of these support structures were team members providing back-up for each other's roles and tasks and, when needed, working in pairs on tasks to make the outcome better for stakeholders.

"The way of working has changed a lot. Regarding the roles for instance we created this support structure when sometimes we have one expert supporting one another in some matters that we have to deliver to the final customer."

2.5 *The team has a common vision and goals.* Many of the teams have been working with goals and visions as a part of the program. For example, the teams created a shared picture of their main stakeholders. One leader perceived this as an important change in the team's way of working together since they now not only had clear goals for the team but also for each individual team member. Another team leader referred to this as a foundation for the future:

"Currently it is a team first of all, with common vision, we create the vision together, and we discuss it during a lot of hours. Here we have clear goals for each person, and clear responsibilities. And this is the base for future effective work. I think this base helped us to move from stage 1 to stage 4. Because without this information (GDQ) it would be impossible."

Others have been working with clarifying the purpose of the team, why they exist as a team, and have had thorough discussions around this subject. Leaders report that this has helped the teams to be more efficient. They do not need to spend so much time discussing why they do certain things but can move on to make things happen quicker than before. The cooperation has increased this way.

"What I found most valuable and there we can see a change is that we took time to discuss about, what is our purpose, what are we doing what we are doing and why do we exist (as a team). It has simplified our prioritization and our day to day operation/.../ It has made our cooperation easier."

2.6. *The team regularly reflects on its own behavior in relation to company values.* Some of the teams have worked with shared values and discussed how they want to behave according to those values. Some have used the company values as a base for those discussions. Within these discussions team leaders report that they have formed a good base for decisions making and discussions within the team.

"We started to talk about what strengths we have within the group, what values were closest to us, and we choose the company's values, and that we work with all the time now /.../when we have discussions in order to reach a good decision."

2.7. *The team celebrates achievements together.* According to the team leaders, one change that happened in some of the teams is that they have started to celebrate successes and achievements together. They can now look at one or a few team members' achievements as an achievement for the whole team. They do not look for mainly individual achievement anymore.

“And additionally we celebrate together. If someone from the team receive a recognition, the recognition or award is for the full team and not just one person. If one person receive feedback the team celebrate together and not just this person. This is a main change is in the collaboration from working as individuals to work and collaborate as a team. And the program was very important since one gap that we had was that many people was very selfish and individual, and needed to changes their behaviours. And we had the opportunity to reinforce that we had to work as a team and not as individuals only. As a team we are stronger than working in an individual way.”

3. *Changes in cooperation between team leader´s and team members.* This theme focuses on how the leaders have changed their own behavior as a result of the program. The leaders' behavior and leadership style are important for the development of the team and therefore questions regarding this matter were asked in the interviews. The respondents understood and got insight about some changes they needed to make in their own leadership behavior as a result of the program. Below are some examples of the changes mentioned.

3.1 *Investing more time to be a leader.* All leaders seem to have understood that they needed to invest more time in the leadership role and to give space for it in the day to day work situation. They also reported that they have been better at informing and being open and transparent with information.

“I have tried at least, then it is difficult to judge if I have succeeded. But I have been trying to be more open, share more information, what is going on, what can be relevant for some or everybody/.../, not just sitting and working, and try to spend more time on being inclusive and make sure everybody is on onboard/.../. So mainly invest more time in being a leaders and less time sitting at my desk and just working.”

3.2 *Giving more feedback to the team.* Giving more feedback is mentioned as a change from the leaders, as well as showing interest in the team members' day to day work. For example, checking up on the workload and giving positive feedback when it's valid and when team members take good initiatives for the team were mentioned.

“In my leadership I make sure to have a dialogue, ask more how things are going, how things are, how is the workload, and I think I have been good on giving feedback.”

3.3 *More coaching and supporting.* The leaders described changing their leadership from being more directive to becoming more supportive. They felt they changed from being controlling, too directive, and acting like a decisive manager to asking more questions, coaching and providing a more relaxed atmosphere, giving more freedom to the team, having a good follow up structure. They do not want to “overrun” the team, but to listen more to what they have to say and make common decisions.

” My way of working was earlier more, directive, checking, giving orders/.../. Here I have completely changed. I'm more delegating, I ask more questions, and do more coaching.”

“I have come to see as absolutely necessary not to overrun my team in all questions, because then they are not needed if I shall decide about everything.”

3.4. Provides better meeting structure. Another change mentioned is that the leaders have become more aware of the importance of providing a good meeting structure, having regular weekly team meetings, as well as regular individual meetings with the team members in order to give the best support. The leaders are better at following up on items, such as answering questions remaining from the last meeting, writing meeting logs, distributing and dividing tasks within the team in a reasonable manner.

“Much have been better, like when we are planning, we are following up on uncertainties or open items since the last meeting. We do it in a structured way/.../who is responsible for driving the item to be completed. So we have all been more structured.”

3.5 Delegate more and involve the team in leadership functions. Many of the leaders describe how they have changed their leadership behavior after the program. They have been better at delegating, trusting the team, and giving the team members the authority to take decisions together or individually within their area of responsibility. They also describe the team members as being more independent.

“I think I have been thinking more about listening and show respect so they can be less leader dependent. And I try to listen more than I did from the start.”

“I have tried to make myself more available to the team than I was before. I also try to delegate task more to the team so not so much have to go through me, or that the team shall need to be dependent on me in too many questions.”

3.6. Better conflict handling. Due to the program, the leaders described that they have been better on handling conflicts. They mentioned for example how they would not let frustrations grow in the team but dig into the issues quicker than before to avoid it becoming a bigger issue. According to the leaders, they now try to deal openly with “hot” issues and discuss them within the team when they come up and to give space to talk and think about what issues could grow into conflicts.

“I have make sure we have workshop and take the discussions needed, and I might be even clearer to the team that if there are any issues, that we do not let them grow under the surface and start to “smell”, but get it out there and discuss it. So now there are very few conflicts within the team.”

Above we could read the changes in the team’s cooperation as described from the leaders. In the coming section the interview result about the team’s performance are presented as a separate category from the team’s cooperation.

1. Changes in team productivity. Several of the leaders described how their teams have become more productive after the program, and therefore manage to deliver very well in the organization. They report better efficiency, more proactively working with prognoses and risks, improved work with KPI measurements, and in this way save more money for the organization.

1.1 Improvement on efficiency. Respondents report better efficiency in the teams after the program. One leader described how the whole organization now performs better due to that the management team have gone through the program.

“We can see clearly how we have achieved a better performance also for our subordinates, since we give them the right prerequisites”

A leader describes that the team now has the same platform to stand on as a team and are now working more effectively together.

“If you talk the same language and have the same platform to stand on you become more effective. There is no doubt that we need to put less time on reasoning, so absolutely we have been much , much more effective I would say/.../ and the more effective we are the more we get done.”

Since the team is more developed and works better together, several of the leaders said that they can put more tasks and responsibilities on each team member and therefore get more output from the team’s actual work. One refers to a better atmosphere in the team, which makes them get more work done. For example, the team members are happy and motivated, can take on new tasks, divide tasks in a good way, as well as support each other.

1.2. *Proactively working with prognoses and risks.* Many of the leaders talked about how after the program they have been better at working more proactively as a team and in this way proactively preparing for potential risks in projects or other kinds of work they are doing. They talked about being able to avoid risks and, in doing so avoiding increased costs for the company. It was also mentioned that the teams are working actively to change their way of working in order to support their stakeholders in a better way. They also expressed being more proactive toward other parts of the organization and stakeholders, to working in a more strategic way with a long term perspective and working towards a good end result.

“When we work in this proactive way and analyse risks in an upcoming court case for example we make a risk analysis. In the court maybe we will lose this or that and it might cost that amount of money. After the analyse we work on how to reduce the risks. What action could we do? And after starting with this methodology/.../ we reduced a lot of court cases by working proactively, but also improved our successes in the court with the amount of cases we win”

The leader cited below also expressed how they, as a management team, have improved in working more proactively anticipates risk in the projects after the program compared to before. This management team is responsible for several projects within their organization and has become better at supporting the project leaders to succeed.

“Now we work with prognoses forward. It goes up and down but we know now more exact why it goes down, and then we have taken conscious decisions and actions, and as a management team supports in the project when needed. We know now why the curves goes up and down and work with looking proactively at the risk s from a management perspective.”

1.3. *Better measures on Key Performance Indicators (KPI:S).* Some of the respondents said that they have become more effective as a team and that they see improvements in measures

and objectives. They said that they get feedback stating that they as team deliver better quality now than earlier.

"We have also set up KPIs, it was one of the things we worked with. We have had some KPIs, but we did not want a KPI to be" just "a KPI and then reactively working against them, but we want the KPIs to show where we were /.../So that we and our co-workers could understand where we were./.../Eg. because we work with projects, we measure that we pass gates in the right time and also QDCF (Quality, Delivery, Cost Function). NOW, we had 100% last which was fantastic."

1.4. Saving money for the organization. The respondents also gave actual examples of how they could save money for the organization by being more proactive, as well as more innovative as a team. They also described giving better support to the organization, for example in reducing risk in projects or court cases where high quantities of money are saved. The example below is from a factory context and is described as a result of a more innovative mindset in the team:

"Another example of savings is 3D printing. We have 3D printers on the plant and we need to print some parts for different departments, but it is huge economical cost here/.../ We did several test with serval parts and the lead time decreased in 17-18 weeks approximately comparing printing with ordering from suppliers. It is 10 time less expensive than the suppliers cost. It's linked to the mindset we have within the team to think out of the box of how we will save money. Only in a few weeks we have done savings, and in the future we will save more."

1.5. Provides better quality. The team leaders reported that the teams received feedback that they deliver better quality to their stakeholders, as one effect of becoming a more effective team after the training program.

"Then, in relation to Sales that are our customers, yes we have better quality as well, efficiency and quality absolutely. I could probably measure that as well, it is not difficult"

"What has happened is that I think we do better deliveries on time. Time has not been our major problem, but I think we have somehow better quality assured deliveries. And I think above all, that we see earlier if we risk losing time. We are more proactive."

1.6 The team adapts quicker to change. Due to the maturity of the team the respondents said that the teams became more proactive, quicker to change areas needed to be improved, and in that way also more quickly accommodated to change.

"Now we know how to work together and we are very accommodated to change often and improving the processes, how to work and making implementation of improvements/.../. Even the communication has changed, the patience, the customer success and now we have this concept in order to improve our work and now we celebrate together in the department. We are sharing best practices and what improvements can be implemented"

1.6 Better time management in deliveries. Some of the leaders described that the team is better at delivering on-time now than before the program and that they can see that the quality

in the delivery is better as well. The teams are more proactive and take action if there is a risk of not delivering on-time more than they did earlier.

“What has happened is that I believe we are giving better deliveries on time. Time has not been our major problem before, but I think we have better quality assured deliveries. And I think above all, that we see earlier if we risk losing time. We are more proactive.”

2. *Changes in the team’s relationships with stakeholders.* The respondents described how there has been an improvement in the teams’ work with the stakeholders due to the work they have done through the program and after. They report having more satisfied internal customers, receiving better feedback from stakeholders, and working in a more proactive way towards stakeholders.

2.1 *Internal customers are more satisfied.* One team leader described how they as a team perform better in internal customer surveys and that the stakeholders are more satisfied with their new way of working.

“Yes we have now 99,9 %positive feedback from our internal customer survey about our performance in the team. The stakeholder are very happy with our performance and how we support the TDBA;s (Business areas) and the businesses. A year ago our rate was a most 83 % and this year it was 99.9 %. We are very proud about the result.”

2.2. *Better feedback from the stakeholders.* The team leaders gave examples of the positive feedback they receive from stakeholders. Many of the leaders talked about how the teams now work in a better way and cooperate better with the stakeholders. Several of them gave examples of how they received very positive feedback from their stakeholders due to the development of the team.

“We have for example received feedback in an area that are very complex, fantastic feedback, where they say that we keep things in good order and are clear and specific. For example in an area where we work together with several stakeholders/.../ and now we all have a common commitment and it is clear to us all that we need to act together in order to move forward.”

“Yes, absolutely. I have received feedback, from our biggest stakeholder/.../an important stakeholder and we have very good cooperation. I get very good feedback. So I can answer that. It was not bad before but it is based on feedback, that they get very good service from the group. My boss also notice a big difference so he has given me very positive feedback. There really is a difference in your group now comparing before and after, he said. He does not always have to go hierarchically through me, but can go directly to someone in my group and get support.”

2.3. *More proactive towards stakeholders.* Several of the respondents described how their team became more proactive in their work with stakeholders. They take more initiative in their area of responsibility and make sure to do what is needed for the best possible cooperation and way of working for the company.

“Yes, I believe so, it feels like that since we have taken a step forward we are the ones presenting more and taking more initiatives , specially towards VT. And it feels like we have taken a step forward there/.../ we have a very good cooperation, the shyness has disappeared/.../We are coming with suggestions and more concrete suggestions, than we did before. Then we have a discussion and dialogue and work together to get a final result.”

Another leader referred to how they work proactively with their internal stakeholders in order to save money for the company, and described how they educate the stakeholders now in order to avoid expensive claims and court situations.

“In the last year we made a customer avoidance of 25 million dollars/.../ and we could demonstrate to many stakeholder how we should work to improve and what action to take to avoid a risk. We have a map here with dealers where we have a problem with customer claim, what kind of part in the vehicle are creating a problem to the final customer/.../And we work together with the business areas to avoid these situations and some problem that we face/.../and we created a managerial report to inform the BA:s, what is your problem, what is the focus, let’s check this and this to avoid some problems in the near future. Then we work in a proactive way and train the businesses in these areas as well/.../The team has become more proactive than reactive. We created a vision for the department, and one of our sentences there was that we want to work in a proactive way.”

2.4 Acts more as one unified voice. Some of the leaders use the term “unified voice” when they talk about the teams’ development. For example, how they not only have a climate of open discussion within the team meetings, but they also act with one common voice and show alignment towards the outside organization.

“We started a discussion within the group on how to work with each other/.../ The behavior of people changed in order to be more collaborative and support each other. And we have gotten “one voice” from the department. We have the agreements in the discussions or meeting in order to know how we are going to support the business outside our department. And the behavior of people changed a lot in order to be more collaborative with each other. The task should be solved by us now/.../We had a lot of changes how to work and how to make the measurements of the demands we have her in the department”

3. Challenges to keep up the teams’ performance. Since all respondents were leaders with teams that made good progress in the team development stages according to the IMGD, they were asked about challenges to keep up the level of engagement and performance within the team. Below are the challenges mentioned by the leaders.

3.1. Finding new development opportunities. Since the teams have developed in such a good way, one challenge that was mentioned was to find new development opportunities for the team members.

“Yes actually it is more challenging than moving the team from stage 1 to stage 4. Because I need to be a role model if I want my team members to be role models, and it is hard to find opportunities for them to develop now. It is not so easy to find the task and motivation for

them to develop further. It is an endless story. I'm discussion this a lot with my manager. It is a great challenge but very interesting."

3:2 Keep up the engagement. The leaders are very aware that being at stage 3 or stage 4 is not a stage where they will stay forever but that it will change due to new members or new challenges within the team. The respondents are also aware that it needs constant work from them as a leader to keep up the energy, engagement, and to make sure to find new development opportunities for the team and its members.

"The challenge is to keep the motivation and engagement of the people. We have a lot of challenges to keep. To go to the top is difficult but to stay at the top is the main problem. To keep it as a high performing team is difficult and to have a lot of things to do. And with the recognition of people with the salary, the benefits, the recognition. We have to trust each other to keep us at this stage, when we trust each other we can move forward. But it is motivation about new challenges as well. Sometimes it is not easy to do that. But we are trying to work together to keep up the performance for everyone."

"I think the challenge is to keep them stimulated and engaged in their work tasks. Now it starts to become like this, now we have had a year where we had a decent stability within the team/.../ there will come a period when some team members will leave to find new jobs and then you need to start all over again in a sense. So it will always be an ongoing iterative process. I have no image of that we will stay forever in stage 3 or 4 but we will for sure fall back when new members are added or there will be other things affecting the team. So it is important to keep this alive and keep up the energy."

3.3. How to keep up the already high level of performance. Having reached a high level of development within the team, it can be difficult for the team when things are not going the way that they have planned, even if the leader and the team have done all they can to proactively do the right things to avoid problems. It is mentioned as a challenge to keep up an already high level of performance when they already are doing the best they can as a team.

"It is a great challenge I would say, I have also discusses this with other leaders as well/.../ it was a boost for us to run the program and to look at how we will come there and to see the result. It is fantastically fun, we see our performance directly, we get feedback from our stakeholders. It gives a great boost! But then to keep up. Since there are changes coming around us. For example that a project suddenly dips down although we have taken all possible actions and we have the methodology for how to handle it. And at that point I think I need to look at myself as a leader and take a step back and take lead in lifting it up again/.../ And we can handle the challenges much better, since we are already at such a high level of performance, but it is absolutely difficult to remain here. I don't think you can do that constantly either"

3.4. Keep up the common work when there are changes within the team. Since team members are not always constant for long periods and there are changes in the organization, one of the challenges the leaders mentioned is to keep up the good work when there are changes of members within the team. Many of them referred to the process of doing the assessment and that team interventions made the team get closer in the journey. When someone is new to the

team and has not been on the same journey doing the program, the new members need to be on board. It could sometimes be a challenge to keep the work up.

“There is always changes within the team, which means that team members will be replaced, and when it comes to getting along, and at the same time, when you do this program and the interventions itself, you get a bit welded and feel that you have a common goal /.../ So, it’s a challenge to keep it like this. You need to work constantly, I think.”

3.5. *Get out of the expert role and work more together.* Some leaders who have a lot of experts working in the team find it a bit more difficult to get the team members to work together, which is a challenge and something they struggle with.

“What I do not really feel we have succeeded with is that everybody feels they are doing their own stuff. They say that they would like to have cooperated if they could, but that they cannot cooperate since their tasks that does not allow it. But I think there's more to do there, and I think sometimes there is a picture they make themselves, so it's a little self-fulfilling because they've decided that it's so. It's very hard to get through and it's because the role is very much of an expert role and they like it. You must have respect for that you cannot change it fundamentally. But you can rub it a bit, and I think that's fine.”

To keep up the level of performance, the cooperation and engagement, as well as handling changes in the team is described as challenging. The leaders are aware of the challenges and are doing their best to proactively make sure the team stays at a high level of performance.

5. Discussion

*The research question for the thesis was the following: **How do team leaders perceive the development of their teams' cooperation and performance after participating in the team development program offered by their company?***

Out of the results from the interviews, the research question could be answered. The respondents gave examples of how their team's cooperation has changed and improved after reaching a higher maturity stage with support from the company's internal team development program. They also gave examples of how team performance had improved after they reached a higher stage of maturity. Many of the changes described by the respondents clearly relate to the interventions that were made within the team development program. In this chapter, the results are put into a theoretical perspective and further discussed according to the two themes mentioned in the research question: *team cooperation* and *team performance*.

Team cooperation. Regarding team cooperation, there were many new behaviors mentioned by the leaders that describe what changes actually took place. The teams found ways to cooperate and communicate in order to achieve their goals. They get their job done in a good way and maintain high performance over a long period of time. The respondents shared examples on how the teams have been better at cooperation through communicating in a better way. Some examples given included better discussions in meetings, as well as more of the team members being involved in the team discussions. The teams now also openly address issues needed to be worked through in order to move forward and that could otherwise create conflicts. The examples the respondents gave, that is the increased openness, sharing, daring to talk about the difficult issues, as well as a more relaxed atmosphere, show that there is more trust in the teams. These findings reflect what Wheelan (2005) calls an effective team. That is, a team that has clear goals, roles, norms and a structure that is well established so that the group can work more effectively.

In a mature team, communication becomes more open and task focused (Wheelan, 2005). The leaders described several examples of how their teams communicate more openly and in a task-focused manner. For example, the leaders mentioned how problems are discussed in meetings and problem solving is driven by team members themselves. They have a common voice and common language and act as one team in relation to other parts of the organization and to the stakeholders. They discuss and solve problems more effectively within the team now, compared to before, and work in a more proactive way towards the organization.

The teams reportedly cooperate better and work more together than earlier. The team members take more initiative in the cooperation and work, and support each other without needing to involve the team leader. Several of the teams have worked on shared rules and values, which have made them have a common platform on how they want to interact between themselves and the organization around them. Jacobsson (2017) writes about the importance of developing standards of cooperation behaviors in teams. The leaders mentioned how they have worked with common values and from these defined behaviors of how they want to interact within the team.

Other interventions mentioned included working on defining the purpose of the team, which made the meetings and prioritizations easier and quicker since the teams do not need to spend time on defining the purpose and what they need to do, as one of the leaders described it.

Jacobsson (2017) stresses the importance of a team to understand their purpose as a team, to understand why they exist. Defining the purpose has clearly been a game changer for this specific team and simplified the way the team prioritizes. They can more easily choose what to spend time on and focus on since they now have a common picture of their purpose.

The leaders express how the teams take more shared ownership for the team results now than before, which is probably a result of having clear purposes and goals within the team. After discussing purposes and goals together, it is easier to get a buy in from team members with differing direction and goals, according to the respondents. Clear goals and direction give meaning to the team members, and meaning gives energy and engagement to achieve the goal and purpose of the team (Hackman, 2002). The respondents shared that it became easier to distribute tasks within the team once they had agreed on the purpose of the team.

Less conflicts and better handling of conflicts is also mentioned. Some team leaders reported that they themselves have become better at handling conflict and raising and talking about “hot” issues that need to be addressed, to avoid them growing into a bigger issue or eventually a conflict. Hackman (2002) talks about the importance of emotionally mature leaders who are not afraid when anxiety is created in a situation within the team. He also means that the leaders need to be able to bring up issues that can cause anxiety. Several of the leaders gave examples of this behavior and maturity that they consciously bring difficult issues to the “table” when they feel it needs to be dealt with. Sometimes it is necessary for leaders to take actions that will temporarily raise the anxiety in the team in order to lay the foundation for necessary learning or change according to Wheelan (2013).

Some leaders also said that they give time and space for regular workshops and meeting with the team to discuss important topics. Factors important for a high performing team are for example that the team uses enough time to define problems that need to be solved or decisions that need to be taken. Teams need to have enough time to plan for problem solving and have good methods for decision making, built on participation from team members (Wheelan, 2013). This is something several of the leaders seemed to take into consideration. This provides their teams with enough time to discuss and solve issues that needed to be solved, but in relation to goals and tasks. This is said to have improved the cooperation within the team as well as with outside stakeholders.

When group members’ roles develop they can overtake part of the leadership functions within the team according to Wheelan (2005), and this is what the leaders in the interview talk about. They take a step back and give more of responsibility to the team. Leaders can then delegate more of the leadership functions to the team. When group members’ roles develop, they can take over part of the leadership functions within the team. The dominant position of the leader becomes unnecessary and can even be destructive for the group. The leader is important for the coordination, but also group members can participate in these tasks when the team has progressed enough (Wheelan, 2013).

Changes in the leaders’ cooperation with the team are also mentioned. The leaders described how they involve the team more in decisions compared to before the program when they made more of the decisions themselves, which is more of a stage 1 behavior according to Wheelan (2005). At an early stage the team depends more on the leaders for structure and decision making. The leaders have become more aware of the importance of delegating both tasks and also decision making to the team. The respondents have changed their leadership style from being more directive to becoming more supportive, from controlling to asking

more questions, coaching and providing a more relaxed atmosphere. They also reported giving more freedom to the team, along with having a good follow up structure. The team members are now more involved. If a leader has a competent team and cooperative team members, the leaders are more likely to use a considerate and participative leadership style (Hackman, 2002). This seems to be true in many of these cases, and the leaders seem to have shifted their leadership style along with the development of the team.

The support structure is something that several of the teams have been working with, to have back-up on roles and tasks and to support each other when the workload for some members is high. This is also a characteristic of effective teams and comes as an output from having a clear sense of purpose, direction, and commitment (Hackman, 2002).

Team performance. As a result of being an effective team, the performance of the team will increase according to Wheelan (2005). All team leaders that were interviewed were chosen for the study knowing in advance that the teams had developed between the first and second measurements. One of the purposes with this study was to understand how the development of the teams had influenced the teams' performance.

The leaders reported that the efficiency of the team had increased as a result of the program. They referred to meetings being more efficient and focused. They put less time on reasoning in meetings and could more easily prioritize together and have more efficient meetings now compared to before. Some leaders mentioned that they, for example, have fewer topics on the agenda and take time to discuss deeper the topics needed in the meetings. They are more aligned and need less time in discussing the "why" since they have a clear purpose and goals.

According to Wheelan (2005), a stage 4 team gets more task focused and spends less time in internal issues like conflicts and relationships within the team. The team meetings have become more effective in this way according to the leaders. A mature stage 4 team is more productive since they need to spend less time on meetings without getting any "product" out of their work. This has had an effect on the environment around them, for example towards the organization and the teams' stakeholders (Wheelan, 2005).

Due to the development journey the team has undergone between the first and second GDQ measurement, the leaders reported that the teams have become more effective in the sense that the leaders can distribute more tasks to each team member and in that way get more work done with fewer people. This of course reduces costs for the organization. The leaders could also distribute some of their tasks to the team and focus more on leadership.

Another part that has increased the performance of the teams is that they are now working more proactively in relation to goals and stakeholders. By being more proactive, as well as innovative, they report that this also saves money for the organization by reducing risk in projects, being innovative in finding cheaper ways of working, or by reducing risks to fail in court cases.

Having solved many of the issues and uncertainties in earlier stages, the team can focus on getting the work done and reaching their common goal according to Wheelan (2013). A mature team is also able to work quantitatively more. The team is eager to get the work done, take decisions, strengthen its cohesion, as well as resolve task related conflicts and keep up a high level of performance. The work goes easier and smoother (Wheelan, 2013).

The leaders report that the teams provide better quality in their work now compared to before. They have also become better in delivering their services, as well as products or projects in time. The teams have become better at cooperating with their stakeholders and receive feedback from the stakeholders that their deliveries are in “*good order and are clear and specific*”. They also reported that the team now has common goals and commitments and dialogue with their stakeholders.

The leaders also perceive that their teams receive better feedback from internal customers and stakeholders. They have improved their ratings in customer satisfaction surveys, as well as gotten direct feedback from stakeholders that they are satisfied with the team’s work and deliverables. According to Wheelan et al. (1998), groups functioning at a higher stage of group development, equal to stage 3 or 4 in the IMGD model, are more productive and earn more money in less time and were rated more positively with regards to customer services. Being rated more positively in customer satisfaction services are also what the respondents mentioned as an area that has improved after the program. Another team reported on reaching their own KPI:s in a more efficient way, passing for example project gates according to the company’s project management work process with a 100% in quality, delivery, cost and function.

Team interventions, when properly conducted, can have a positive impact on organizations regarding their financial measures of organizational performance. Out of all organizational interventions, interventions focusing on team development has the largest effect on an organization’s measures of financial performance according to Klein et al.(2009). From the statements of the respondents in this study, examples of how the work they have done within the team development program has made the teams improve some of their organization’s financial performance have been given. For example, the organizations are able to save money because the teams work more proactively with risk management.

There is a positive correlation between team cohesiveness and performance. Studies on why some teams are more successful than others have concluded three areas that are most important for a team’s performance. These three areas are: that the teams satisfied internal and external clients, that the members found meaning and felt satisfied within the group, and that the team had developed capabilities to perform in the future (Jacobsson, 2017). More satisfied stakeholders, by having the developed capabilities to perform, is what the teams in the study managed to achieve though the program and their continued work according to the team leaders.

An additional question that was asked in the interviews was if there were any challenges to keep the team on a stage 3 or 4, that is on a high level of cooperation and performance. All managers agreed that this was something they were working with and constantly will need to work with in the future. Areas that were mentioned were, for example, that it could be challenging to find new development opportunities for the teams as well as for the individual team members.

Another challenging area mentioned was how to keep up the engagement and an already high level of performance. Some mentioned that the journey to become a high performing team is in fact easier than to keep the team on this level of performance. As a leader you cannot lean back and think that all the work is done, but it is constant work to keep on this stage, one respondent said.

In one sense, leaders for a stage 4 team, need to take a step back and be able to relax a bit more according to Wheelan (2005). The work shall at this stage go smoother than in earlier stages. The members have taken on the responsibilities for the tasks and worked actively to achieve the goals of the group. The leaders can then act as more of a consultant for the group, as well as participate as a member in the group to help achieve goals and to be successful. But every time a member quits the team and a new one enters, or when the tasks and goals change, or outer factors change the members, leaders need to be conscious about it and be able to discuss the circumstances. They need to proactively identify problems that can come up in the future. In this way the team can make necessary adaptations (Wheelan, 2005).

When old members leave and new members come onboard, it is a challenge for leaders to get the new members on the right track, since the new members have not been part of the full team development journey, which includes working with goals, purposes or behaviors. This was mentioned by some of the respondents.

The team development journey, with the GDQ-assessment, interventions and discussions are mentioned as being an important factor for the development of teams. This has helped the teams to a level of shared cognition. New members who have not had the same shared view from start need to get on board with the leader and the existing team in order to get the same level of knowledge and understanding of the team's purpose, goals, and tasks. Several of the leaders highlighted this as a risk to keep up the level of performance and seemed to be aware of how quick a change could come, for example with adding new team members and losing an old member.

Another challenge mentioned is preventing some team members to go back only to their expert roles, but instead continue to support each other and work together. Some teams, specifically teams of experts, seem to have a natural tendency to go back to their individual tasks and experts roles. For some managers this was something that needed to continue to be discussed and highlighted within the team.

Overall all respondents could give examples on how the teams' cooperation and performance had developed after the program and could show that team development has made their cooperation improve and in that way also and made them perform better as a team.

6. Conclusions

The leaders being interviewed gave concrete examples of how and in what ways and performance improved. Cooperation improved in the following ways: team members act more as a team, have common shared rules, communicate better, and have a shared common language and “one voice” as a team. Teams also depend less on their leaders, have more open discussions, and are better at handling conflicts. From the perspective of team leaders, team performance became more efficient, such as in meetings and decision making. Teams also more efficiently reached their KPI:s and worked more proactively with risk management and innovation, and in that way saving money for the organization. The teams also became better in delivering results on-time and with good quality and in getting better feedback from their stakeholders and ratings in customer satisfaction surveys.

These findings confirm to some extent the research mentioned in the introduction that soft skills, such as teamwork, are best developed in the workplace (Bolli & Renold, 2016). For example, the respondents mentioned several soft skills that had been improved such as communication, self-confidence, adapting to changes etc., which had been developed due to the program.

Limitations, implications and future research

The study used qualitative methods, which means that generalizations of the results are not possible to do. The results consist of the experiences of the specific leaders that were interviewed in the study. A phenomenological approach does not try to generalize conclusions, but rather investigate what characters a phenomenon has and how it should be identified. Qualitative studies are necessary when studying subjective experiences that cannot be directly measured (Wallén, 1996). This study described the subjective experiences of the leaders of the team. The phenomena the study tried to capture is how the leaders perceived the development of the teams’ cooperation and performance after participating in the company’s team development program.

These leaders and their responses were in general very positive regarding the teams’ development and to the program. A reason for that might be because that they had progressed as a team. They also knew they were chosen for the interviews due to a good progression of the team development stages. This can of course impact the positive responses from the respondents. The engagement of the team and the team leaders are an important reason for the development of the teams’ cooperation and performance. The program has given them support, knowledge, structure and an insight in important factors for becoming an effective or high performing team. However, without the continuous work from the leader and the team, the effect would of course not have been the same. While the team development program provided support and guidance, the real work was done continuously within the teams.

Interviewing leaders whose team had remained on the same stage as the first GDQ measurement or even regressed after 6 months would of course give different answers. Teams that have done the program but have not put any effort into acting on the insight and knowledge they received from the GDQ assessments would probably not be this positive. Since the purpose of the study was to get an insight into how the leaders perceived the development of their teams’ cooperation and performance after the program, knowing that the

teams made good progress and reached stage 3 or stage 4 of the IMGD model was necessary in order to explore the research question.

An interesting reflection and perhaps a field for future research would be to interview the team members to find out if they have a similar view as the managers regarding the teams' cooperation and performance. Will they have a similar perception as their managers or will they have another view? Another avenue for future research could be to interview the team leaders of those teams that did not progress through the stages in order to try to understand why there was no further development after the program. It could be of interest to understand what why some teams remains on the same level and do not progress as a team. What is hindering them from progressing although they have got support and increased knowledge of team development from the program? Could the program do something more proactively to make sure they develop?

From this study, we gained insight into nine leaders' perceptions of what changed for their teams after participating in the company-specific team development program, based on Wheelan's (2005) IMGD and the GDQ assessment tool. This study can be of help for leaders and teams in the specific company where the study was made, and create an interest in their teams to try this program out, in order to increase teams cooperation and performance. It can also be of help for other organizations interested in undergoing a similar development program but perhaps hesitating if they would like to spend money and time on team development. Here they can read about leaders' perceptions of what changed within the teams, as a result of participating in a team development program. The study can also be of an interest for those aiming to study team development and its effects or anyone interested in learning more about team development.

For the internal facilitators of the program this can help enhance their knowledge and confidence by reading and sharing some of the findings in this study with teams they are working with. It provides them with concrete examples of what changes these teams have done in their cooperation due to the program, as well as how it has affected the performance of the team.

By choosing a team development model like the IMGD the GDQ assessment tool, and interventions based on extensive research, teams can be supported with real facts about what a team needs in order to become an effective or a high performing team. It can help the team reach their goals, get teams engaged and motivated, and create a sense of meaning and direction in their work together. There is a hope that this study can motivate and engage more leaders to invest time in team development activities and team interventions. Studies have shown that there is a strong relationship between levels of group development according to the IMGD and work satisfaction. They also earn more money and have more satisfied customers (Wheelan et al., 1998). This in itself is a great reason to invest time in team development.

As Klein et al. (2009) found out, team interventions, when properly conducted, can have a positive impact on organizations regarding financial measures of organizational performance. Out of all organizational interventions, interventions focusing on team development have the largest effect on organizations' measures of financial performance. As pointed out in this study, this study contributed to a greater insight in the concrete outcome a team can get from working with team development in regards to the teams cooperation and performance.

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Appendix 1

Interview questions

1. Have you noticed any observable changes of behaviors within the team, after the program, comparing to before they did the program?
2. Has there been any changes in the team's way of working after the program (roles, meeting structures, communication etc.)? If so what?
3. Has there been any changes in the team's relation to their stakeholders as a result of the program? If so what?
4. Have you noticed any changes within the team's actual productivity as an effect of the program? Eg. Economical result, efficiency, quality or other aspects?
5. Have you as a leader made any changes in your own leadership and leader behavior after the program?
6. Is there any challenge to keep the team as a stage 4 team? If so what? How to you handle that?
7. Is there anything that has not change but stayed consistent?