Leadership perspectives for Continuous Improvement

A Case study on leaders’ consistency for organizational transformation

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Every journey begins with a step! This thesis marks the end of a journey I began in August 2016 with Mid-Sweden University, in pursuit of a master’s degree in quality management and leadership (kvalitets- och ledarskapsutveckling). The learning experience has been wonderful and life-changing, one that will never be forgotten.

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Abstract

The changes experienced in society presents challenges that demands for reciprocal approach on continuous improvement within organizations. This entails fashioning work ways and standards that can adapt to these changes; a task that leaders or prospective leaders should be conversant with. Thus, this study investigates and present results that could assist leaders in understanding the importance of their engagement in continuous improvement as well as the relationship with partners.

Investigation through means of interview, survey, observation and documents analysis were conducted at LBS Creative Senior High School (LBS Kreativa Gymnasiet). The research presented description of how the school through its various leaders work consistently with improving the school and its students.

The result showed that the school, through relational leadership perspective operates with transparency, openness and the engagement of teaching and non-teaching staffs, which have enabled the transformation of work-culture to one that is consistence with improvement. The result also showed that the transformation has contributed to satisfaction as experienced by teachers, parents/guardians and partners, however partnership with companies was based on an order-deliver relationship and thus was not necessary to be part of the school’s continuous improvement plan.

Keywords: Leadership, Continuous improvement, Total Quality Management (TQM), Improvement kata, coaching kata, PDCA, Appreciative Inquiry (AI)
Sammanfattning

Samhället förändras med nya utmaningar. Detta skapa behovet för att organisationer ökar takten för att möta förändringen. Det innebär att arbetssätt och standardisering, kan bidrag till verksamhetsutveckling. Uppsatsen därmed undersökte and presenterade resultat som kan hjälpa ledare i olika organisationer att förstå ledarskaps betydelse för ständiga förbättringar både internt och med andra organisationer.

Studien som genomfördes på LBS Kreativa gymnasiet med intervju, enkät, observation och dokumentanalys som datainsamlingsverktyg, visade att skolan/organisationen, med hjälp av relations-baserat ledarskap, arbetar med transparens och öppenhet. Detta arbetssätt har bidragit till en förändrade arbetskultur och dokumenterade organisationens arbete med ständiga förbättringar.

I fortsättningsvis, visade sig att lärarna, vårdnadshavare och leverantör är nöjda. Resultat visade också att samarbetet mellan skolan och sin leverantör inte var en återkommande punkt i skolans systematiska kvalitetsarbeten.

Nyckelord: Ledarskap, Ständiga förbättringar, kvalitetsutveckling, Förbättrings kata, Coachnings kata, PDCA, Appreciative Inquiry (AI)
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1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter describes challenges faced by organizations and further present the purpose of the research as well as research questions.

1.1. BACKGROUND

Society at large, including but not limited to small, medium and large-scale organizations, are faced with challenges to determine their existence. According to an article from World Economic Forum Global Agenda Council on Employment that pointed out challenges of "matching skills and labour market need" (2014) or understanding and managing multi-ethnicity due to migration of workforce and outsourcing as presented by Miller (2002) or even the evaluation and improvement of strategic leadership skills that consider the complexity faced by organizations (Altman, Kelly-Radford, Reinelt & Meehan, 2004). The list is endless and continues to grow. A search on google scholar with the phrase “Challenges faced by organizations” between the year 2010-2018 produced 32,000 search results, ranging from a general perspective, where these challenges are the same irrespective of organizations (Miller, 2002), or unique for every organization.

Reasons for the endlessness in finding solutions to solve these challenges could be linked to changes in economic and government policies, technological evolution and cultural diversity/migration that are difficult for organizations to find a standard fix (Bergman & Klefsjö, 2012; Miller, 2002). In such cases, internal policies and leadership attitudes are adjusted to accommodate such changes. An example such as that seen in multi-ethnic organizations because of migration might be approached with policies that promote diversity and the understanding/acceptance of cultural differences (Yukl, 2012; Miller, 2002).

For challenges related to customer satisfaction with reference to participation, information dissemination or the ability to collaborate activities between different groups or communities, organizations utilize transformative processes, making it necessary to adapt during different dynamic circumstances to ensure profit marginalization and organizational sustainability (Yukl, 2012). Transformative process demands transformative leadership, defined as “an ethnically based leadership model that integrates a commitment to values and outcomes by optimizing the long-term interests of stakeholders and society and honoring the moral duties owed by organizations to their stakeholders” (Caldwell, Dixon, Floyd, Chaudoin, Post & Cheokas, 2012, p. 176). Embarking on transformative processes demands the participation of everyone/group within the organization and its partners. An example could be drawn from the quest for customer satisfaction through partnership between researchers, local organizations and community members where the collaboration is not mutual (Shultz, Oneha, Magnussen, Hla, Brees-Saunders, Cruz & Douglas, 2006), a challenge that can pave the way for applying transformative processes (Yukl, 2012; Caldwell et. al, 2012).

Challenges that organizations experience, like those exemplified above, if approached from various or different leadership perspective, could help in building relationship between employer, employees and partners (Bergman & Klefsjö, 2012; Runebjörk & Wendleby 2013; Yukl, 2012). This means that leaders could utilize for example, the relations created between employee, employer and partners, as channel to motivate individuals or groups to take initiative in handling challenges. The Relational aspect of leadership necessary for transformation could also pave the way for job delegation, participation and/or clear communication for the effective
flow of activities that aligns organizations to its vision and goals, yet organizations through its various leadership, find it difficult to cope with the challenges (ibid).

Researchers like Yang, Lee, & Cheng (2016) argued for the involvement of front line employees in continuous improvement initiatives, aimed to increase employee’s creativity and help in the search for innovative solution to challenges posed by service globalization, intense market competition, and heightened customer expectations, some of which are controllable or uncontrollable. Apart from the concentration on employee involvement, leadership perspective that accounts for involvement of employees and customers for development of processes, with the consideration of organizational culture and values which they uphold, creates avenue for continuous improvement (Bergman & Klefsjö, 2012; Shiba, Graham, Walden, 1993). Approaches consisting of organizational culture, tools and methods in combination with how organizations execute task to satisfy customers irrespective of challenges and/or circumstances, makes it necessary for leaders to actively participate and engage in continuous development processes (Bergman & Klefsjö, 2012; Shiba et. al. 1993).

Some researchers argue for engagement of leaders for continuous development while seeing leadership as those that reconstruct the path, through the execution of series of leadership task (Bergman & Klefsjö, 2012; Suwandeja, 2015; Greenberg et al., 2014; Sims, 2010; Fineman, Gabriel & Sims, 2010; Bolman & Deal; 2012). Sörqvist (2004) further emphasized the need for engaged leadership in continuous improvement, where management should actively participate, co-ordinate improvement programs; a way to strengthen workers engagement and mindfulness towards organizational goals. This fact has also been established in public sector organization, with example from Swedish Department of Education (2017) about the importance of leadership engagement in the continuous development of digitalization as a permanent exercise in the educational sector. However, most organizations have not succeeded in their continuous improvement and this raise the question about the stands leaders take when issues like customer satisfaction is not addressed as an integration of various activities, methods and processes; a question addressed by total quality management (Bergman & Klefsjö, 2012).

Total quality management (Bergman & Klefsjö, 2012) offers organizational practices that presents clarity and understandability of values of organization; their working methods and necessary tools that allows for the planning of continuous development programs. One of such is LEAN, which is famous for its focus on process optimization and engagement of workers, leaders and partners alike (Bergman & Klefsjö, 2012; Liker, J.K. (2009)). LEAN is utilized for reduction of wastage in processes but also request for LEAN leadership and knowledge about LEAN as a management tool and how it could be implemented. Another is the opportunity presented through improvement kata (Rother, 2013; Merguerian, Grady, Waldhausen, Libby, Murphy, Melzer & Avansino, 2015) enabling leaders to define path and systematically working towards their vision. However, many leaders struggle to work with continuous improvement or making it a natural phenomenon. With the availability of countless methods to be used by leaders for improvement initiative, most of which could be complemented or utilized progressively, as argued by Smith (2017), with reasons why LEAN as a tool for elimination of wastage, should be complemented with six sigma. The integration of tools from a holistic perspective should be encouraged by leaders through their commitment in continuous improvement.
1.2. RESEARCH PURPOSE

The research purpose is to understand how organizations succeed in continuous improvement, by exploring leadership engagement in organization and the relationship between organizations and its partners.

Within this scope, the following research problems are identified:

- How do organizations tackle continuous improvement?
- What motivate leaders to create purposeful work relationship with workers?
- Do leaders consider partners in continuous improvement plans?
2. **LITERATURE REVIEW**

This chapter introduces readers to previous research in total quality management (TQM), where the concepts “leadership” and “continuous improvement” are pinnacle of discussion. The concepts present different perspectives on leadership as well as methods to enable practical application of continuous improvement in organizations.

### 2.1. TOTAL QUALITY MANAGEMENT

Quality is a very important and well cherished word in households as well as organizations. For households, the search for goods and/or services with high quality is subjective. Customers tend to choose organizations that offers the best, both in price and quality. On the other hand, organizations strive to provide the best goods or services for large variety of customers, either to satisfy their needs or exceed customer expectation (Bergman & Klefsjö, 2012). The philosophy presented by Total Quality Management, where the mix of organizational values, work-ways and the combination of various techniques/tools, produces help organizations in producing goods or services with high quality to satisfy customers (ibid).

The combination of the principles above can only become productive with the engagement of management and leaders as facilitators. Apart from leaders being catalyst, factors facilitating TQM as presented by Suwandej (2015) revealed that the principle cuts across all aspects/areas of organizational operations. For organizations to be successful in line with the values of TQM, it needs to plan daily work activities with the support of relevant techniques. This techniques, methods or culture forms the pillars of TQM, consisting of five vital aspects for organizations to concentrate on.

![Diagram of Pillars of Total Quality Management](image)

*Figure 1. Pillars of Total Quality Management (Bergman & Klefsjö, 2012)*

Although, Ooi, Lin, Tan & Chong (2011) in an investigation on TQM and its relationship between customer satisfaction and service quality, revealed how some of the pillars of TQM are directly or indirectly related to customer satisfaction. From a general perspective, all plans carried out with the principles offered by TQM, provides opportunity for organizations to engage in continuous improvement.

#### 2.1.1. CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

For organizations to have a competitive advantage for the present and future to guarantee customer satisfaction, the need to continuously improve its operations should be of utmost
prioroty. According to Lillrank et al. (2001); Kofoed et al. (2002) in an article presented by Hirzel, Leyer, & Moormann (2017), defined continuous improvement as the utilization of tool and techniques to systematically improve processes; the continuity creates a new organizational culture built on the principle of constantly effecting changes. This constant improvement guarantees to take organizations from the present level of affairs, to a better one and this goes on and on (Sörqvist, 2004). Toyota manufacturing company for example, is one of such that has adapted constant improvement irrespective of how little each improvement step might be or contribute, likewise, that these steps should be a natural occurrence in daily activity (Liker, 2009; Sörqvist, 2004). An article by Li (2011), described how Toyota utilizes continuous improvement in its factories.

Over the years, researchers as well as organizations, have developed and tested various methods for continuous improvement such as Six Sigma by Motorola; TPS/Lean by Toyota; and the PDCA cycle by Shewhart as further modified by Deming (Liker, 2009; Sörqvist, 2004; Bergman & Klefsjö, 2012). Methods utilized are sometimes determined based on type of organization or the knowledge the organization possess about specific improvement methods. For instance, automobile organizations might be conversant with and utilize the Toyota Production system (TPS)/Lean because of its flexibility in resource minimizing. Likewise, this method has also been widely adapted by organizations specialized in services, for its advantage in satisfying customers within minimal use of resource (Sörqvist, 2004).

While applying improvement methods, it is important that the present normal be secured and maintained. This is described by Sörqvist, (2004) as one of the dimensions of organizational development because it helps to create a standard. The other aspect is continuous improvement which is described to be dynamic.

### Figure 2. Comparison of two dimensions (Sörqvist, 2004)

Rother (2013) described how the dynamic nature of organization to societal demands is unpredictable and that no organization know exactly what lies ahead. Methods or tools for continuous improvement should be capable to be applied to any situation. One of such methods is the PDCA which is a basic concept for continuous improvement (Ljungberg & Larsson, 2012; Bergman & Klefsjö, 2012).

#### 2.1.2. PDCA

Originally proposed by Shewhart PDCA quality improvement circle can be said to be symbolic for continuous improvement (Bergman & Klefsjö, 2012; Ljungberg & Larsson, 2012), in the sense that its simplicity yet systematic way of tackling problems, could be used by anyone within an organization. Deming further developed the PDCA by replacing the verb “check” C
with S “study” to become PDSA, in the sense that activities within this stage is monitored, observed and used to gather information relevant to understand the phenomenon; thereby giving organizations the ability to deeply study the processes and outcomes (Bergman & Klefsjö, 2012). Apart from it being a basic tool for continuous improvement, it serves purposes for problem solving, experimentation and quality management (Bergman & Klefsjö, 2012; Rother, 2013). The 4-phased cycle of Plan-Do-Check-Act (PDCA) or Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) could be utilized iteratively and continuously. Rother (2013) explained how the PDCA could be used as experimental tools since the future is unseen and organizations need to test boundaries for outcomes (positive or negative). Likewise, the tool according to Toyota, gave leaders the task to be engaged in continuous improvement stages by “going to see”, what is happing or rather being part of all stages of the PDCA cycle.

**Figure 3. Shewhart PDCA Circle (Rother, 2013)**

**Figure 4. Shewhart PDCA Circle modified by Toyota (Rother, 2013)**

**Plan:** Presented by different based on the subject in question, this stage is used to break down problems into smaller proportions easier to be dealt with (Bergman & Klefsjö, 2012; Sörqvist, 2004) or used to define hypothesis or predictions on what should be done (Rother, 2013). The latter places this stage within the context of continuous improvement because leaders and organizations should always seek for newer approaches through various experimental approaches thereby creating a learning organization (Bergman & Klefsjö, 2012).

**Do:** For Bergman & Klefsjö, 2012, this stage matches the identified problem to a group of people tasked to find solution, Rother (2013) would test the hypothesis defined in the earlier stage. Both researchers emphasized the possibility of executing this task in smaller proportions while carry out observation in preparation for the next stage.

**Check:** With the observations gathered from the previous stage, either by Bergman & Klefsjö, 2012 problem solving perspective or Rother’s (2013) result on the testing of hypothesis, the situation is studied and results/outcome tested against expected result.

**Act:** Working solutions are applied to organizational context and standardized to become a new normal. Also, this stage enables the organization to consider the entire process and in cases where the outcome is negative or unfavorable, the process will have to be repeated.
2.1.3. AREAS TO FOCUS FOR CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Although the effect of continuous improvement if applied, might be noticed on a general level, but identifying exactly the area to focus on, is very important. Improvement could be focused on customer/processes; functions/product; or revenue/cost, which are separate aspects of organizational operation, but need to balance these aspects to achieve optimum level of improvement (Sörqvist, 2004). This implies that effective process will lead to customer satisfaction as well as high quality product/services. With this aspect checked, the organization can have a greater understanding on how the cost and revenue will be improved due to rate of demand and supply caused by the process effectiveness. But the major concern is to ensure the constant check and balance of these improvement areas from a holistic perspective and that leaders are always updated and concerned with the fluctuations experienced, if less focus is placed on only one of these focus areas.

**Customer vs Process**: These are two different aspects that determines the sustainability of an organization. Customers are the group that all organizations create value for as well as those that are affected by the organization. This includes external people/group that are direct consumers of products and/or services, as well as employees of organizations that serves as internal customers to employers (Bergman & Klefsjö, 2012; Sörqvist, 2004). Continuous improvement from this perspective helps in identifying customer’s needs while trying to always meet up to their demands. Costumers define products/services; they know exactly what they expect in terms of quality and price.

Processes on the other hand, defines the various interconnected activities in an organization, transforming inputs in form of raw materials, to an output, goods/services to add value to customers (Ljungberg & Larsson, 2012). Continuous improvement on processes ensures that the flow of the activities in a standard process, is continuously examined/monitored to maximize production, time and resources (Sörqvist, 2004; Hirzel et al, 2017). For example, an estimate of how long it takes for a raw material to become finished goods, without registering wastages which might be caused due to machine breakdown and in turn affect quality. High level of wastage means more material usage and more production time. Therefore, it is necessary that focus is placed on processes and its improvement. One such method specifically created to continuously improve processes is TPS/Lean (Liker, 2009; Sörqvist, 2004; Bergman & Klefsjö, 2012)

**Operation vs product focus**: Both dimensions are mandatory for organizational sustainability. Operation in this aspect refers to departments or organization, where leaders are responsible to focus improvement on areas like employee satisfaction, work load or conducive work environment, while creating possibilities for workers to carry out their daily task (Sörqvist, 2004). By focusing on continuous improvement on product (goods or services) gives organizations a cutting-edge advantage over its peers. Apart from reducing the error rates or improving quality, knowing what customers want could help in making the products suitable to their needs. This is done by constantly communicating and informing customers, trying to capture every variation of their needs to constantly improve the product (Sörqvist, 2004).

**Revenue vs Cost**: It cost organizations to carry out production and in turn expected to get back invested resources (time, money) in form of revenue. If the cost or resource is greater than the revenue, then the organization will find it difficult to exist. Sörqvist (2004) described the need for organizations to utilize marketing strategies to increase revenue. Likewise, a thorough
analysis on return of investment (ROI) assist organizations in making decision for how to improve revenue (Rother, 2013). It is only when organizations focus on understanding the dynamics of marketing as a relationship between product and customer, customer loyalty and affordability, that revenue can be marginalized.

Having established areas that organizations could focus on for constant improvement, the questions now lies on responsibility and mandate, as to who is responsible to initiate continuous improvement plans. The above focus areas with reflection to the definition of leadership, as achieving vision and goals of organizations (Richards & Engle 1986), by setting various target that will systematically take the organization to its goals and vision, places organizational leaders as owners and initiators of such improvement plans (Rother, 2013). This is evident based on the mandate, resources and time they could allocate for such task to be executed.

2.1.4. IMPORTANT ROLES FOR CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

For organizations to continuously improve their operations, the involvement of certain key facilitators is vital. Responsible for resources in form of time, budget or overall information about organizational goals, leaders of department are responsible for managing all continuous improvements (Sörqvist, 2004). One of such responsibility is the empowerment of workers within the department, to adapt, learn and understand the importance of why continuous improvement is necessary, which according to an analysis by Hirzel et al. (2017), produced evidence that continuous improvement is achievable through direct empowerment of employees. This is true from a leadership perspective, if there exist roles responsible for continuous improvement. These roles according to Sörqvist (2004), when translated directly to English are “the governing role”, “the performing role” and “the supporting role”.

The governing role: Provided or facilitated by leaders, the role enables continuous improvement as a natural phenomenon. It provides the possibility and basis for decision making. The higher the hierarchy, the more responsible the leader becomes (Yukl, 2012). The key elements for this group according to Sörqvist (2004) are as follows:

- To prioritize and make decisions about what improvement should be conducted
- Make resources available for improvement
- Make decisions on the implementation of identified solutions for continuous improvement
- Continuously follow-up and question the results.

The performing role: Continuous improvement activities are for everyone, both leaders and employees. Although, when executing these improvement, the need to have a specific group for the purposes of managing continuous improvement plans/activities is inevitable (Bergman & Klefsjö, 2012). Members that form this group might include but not limited to employees working with the specific areas that needs improvement, those aware of the problem situation and have necessary information to support problem definition (Yukl, 2012); external consultants or cross-functional groups, with the purpose to understand, analyses and identify improvement areas (Sörqvist, 2004; Bergman & Klefsjö, 2012). Leaderships effectiveness could be a result of how these groups together with leaders work towards the same goals, making effective leadership a participatory assignment (Sims, 2010).
The supporting role: For the two previous roles to effectively function, the need for experts and professionals in the relevant fields is of no doubt a determinant for either a failure or success in improvement. Sörqvist (2004) provided to two sub-roles within the supporting role. The first is the role of the supporting individual/group with expertise like those of technical competences within the areas that need to be improved (Yukl, 2012). Individuals/groups with this role are tasked with “identifying improvement possibilities, present alternatives, support project initiations, follow -up the initiatives and communicate results and experiences” (Sörqvist, 2004).

The second sub-role is responsible for all on-going improvement plans; plans that have been approved to be implemented, led and/or monitored. Examples of such roles could be found within Toyotas continuous improvement method as well as its coaching techniques, where processes are improved by process leaders, likewise the role of a mentor and adept within continuous improvement (Rother, 2013).

Defining how continuous improvement is affected could be tricky because sometimes organizations misinterpret the concept “project” for “continuous improvement”. An example could be drawn from the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), an EU regulation on information and data security. Some organizations might tend to implement this as a project, while others as continuous improvement. Whatever the choice might be, the bottom line is the knowledge on how to make the new regulation part of the daily routine of the organization, thus asking the question on ways to carry out continuous improvement.

2.1.5. Engaged Leadership and Continuous Improvement

Engaged leader is an involved or committed leader. The recipe for producing a leader that is always involved or committed in organizational activities could be found in the pillars of TQM - Bergman & Klefsjö, (2012). Organizations that are interested in customer satisfaction while producing goods or services that exceeds customers expectation, should develop a strong employee and leadership engagement throughout the organization.

Some characteristics/leadership behavior, if utilized, will navigate a leader towards fully engaging in activities. The word “engagement” in this aspect is synonymous to “commitment” or “availability”; engaged leaders should be readily available to their workers, give precise and clear information/communication on task to be done. This behavior would give workers the confidence they need and thus become motivated (Bergman & Klefsjö, 2012).

The result of being engaged, is a continuous communicative relationship between leaders and workers. This routine helps to cement ongoing work activities, giving both parties the ability to continuously improve their work engagement as well as continuously improving the organization.

2.2. Finding a Pattern for Continuous Improvement

It has been established within this report that one of the ways leaders continuously improve organization, is by focusing on certain areas (e.g. processes) and understanding the roles that are catalytic for initiating and monitoring all improvement plans. An important question to further analyze is the ways by which such continuous improvement is planned and implemented. PDCA cycle (Bergman & Klefsjö, 2012) demonstrates a pattern on how to
systematically improve organizations, but this could be placed in a more appropriate context for organizations to easily grasp.

Bergman & Klefsjö (2012) discussed continuous improvement programs within the context of Six Sigma, known for its strength of eliminating or reducing variations in processes that aims to satisfy customers. Within this method lies the PDCA circle, but with a name at which Six Sigma is built upon. Despite this name change, the work process still maintains the originality of the PDCA. Within Six Sigma, organizations develop different types of models that are in line with the nature of their work. One of such is DMAIC (Define, Measure, Analyse, Improve, Control), a concept from Motorolla, which has also supported the model for defining special roles and competences for organizations (Sörqvist, 2004).

Another method associated with continuous improvement is the Toyota Production System (TPS) popularly known as LEAN with 14 principles grouped into four different categories. With focus on its strength on process effectivity, eliminating wastage and satisfying customers with as little resource as possible, LEAN also incorporates the PDCA in almost all its processes. An example is the modification of the PDCA circle, to include one of the 14 principles of the TSP; how continuous improvement could be made through verification of information to find what areas to improve (Liker, 2009; Bergman & Klefsjö 2012). Continuous improvement entertains everyone, participation and idea sharing. For leaders to succeed, a simpler way to explain continuous improvement program is the pedagogical approach presented by Rother (2013) on how PDCA could be systematically applied in every improvement plan, referred to as Toyota Kata; an initiative from how Toyota continuously improve its organizations (leaders and workers) with a mentor-adept relationship.

Continuous improvement is achieved through repetition of specific activities. This repetition when carried out in specific order, creates systematic patterns. It also alters the behavior of how leaders and employees address changes due to the outcomes of every improvement circle. Toyota calls it KATA; a pattern, standard procedure or an exercise (Rother, 2013). This pattern defines paths that lead organizations to its visions and goals and it is the duties of leaders through their various leadership roles, to inform, teach and lead employees in the direction of continuous improvement. Kata could be applied on improvement of organizational processes or as a coaching technique that alters the behavioral pattern of how organizations learn and adapt to changes (ibid).

The pattern does not define specific contents/details on what to improve, it only focuses on the paths to take. According to leadership processes (Yukl, 2012), situational variables or variables experienced due to behaviors of employees, warrants the use of various leadership perspectives, like how kata handles improvements that varies in time or space to gain effectiveness in achieving goals (Merguerian et. al, 2015). This means that different kinds of methods, tools or techniques could be applied on kata. For instance, Jusko (2015) presented an article on how LEAN was incorporated in kata and its effectiveness as a continuous improvement tool, utilized daily. This confirms that kata, unlike every other method, produces instant and long-term results that could be used both for improving organizational processes (improvement kata) as well as a tool employed by leaders to teach about kata (coaching kata) – Rother (2013).
2.2.1. Improvement Kata

Improvement kata as it is called, handles both improvement in terms of systematically and scientifically taking organizations from a current position, closer to their vision; in which the vision is a mental picture that directs workers within an organization, towards the same direction. A vision serves as a reminder that an organization have a purpose for its existence and thus continuously ask the question “where are we heading to” (Bergman & Klefsjö, 2012; Sörqvist, 2004). Improvement kata tries to answer this question by defining a path from the present, towards the vision and identifying target conditions that are hurdles/obstacles. These targets create avenues for collaboration and participation between everyone upholding the same vision, while continuously asking the question “what do we need to do” (Rother, 2013). Asking such open question creates arena for constructive discussion without limitations.

According to Rother (2013) and further established by Toivonen (2015), improvement kata is explained by four steps.

1. Understanding the path between the current situation and the vision
2. Creating a deep understanding about the challenges along the path using analysis and observation. For effectivity, this activity should be carried by groups such as the “performing role” for continuous improvement
3. Define the target. This is a position between the vision and the present position. It is important to define targets that are realistic and achievable.
4. With systematic approaches using the PDCA, work towards eradicating the obstacle.

Figure 5. Improvement kata (Rother, 2012)

2.2.2. Coaching Kata

Improvement kata is a technique suitable for organizations interested in improving their processes. Its utilization needs to be felt throughout the organizations, ranging from leaders to specialist and those working with processed. Its effectiveness relies on the knowledge about how improvement kata is applied. Coaching kata on the other hand creates the avenue for teacher-student knowledge sharing, relationship building and the use of actual work scenarios for teaching. This resembles the definition of a learning organization according to Garvin (1993) in Bergman & Klefsjö (2012), as “an organization with ability to create, procure and spread knowledge and ability to adjust its attitude based on new knowledge and insight”. The role of leaders is of great important because they act as teachers/mentor for transferring knowledge to boost the improvement capacity of workers that utilizes improvement kata in their daily activities (Rother, 2013; Yukl, 2012).

The recipe for a successful mentor-student relationship is the use of dialog in solving actual challenges within the path to organizational vision. The dialog encourages the student to search
for answers with the guidance of the mentor, using practical problem-solving questions that illuminates the practical inquiry process (Rother, 2013; Toivonen, 2015; Enakeyarhe, 2016).

Coaching kata suggest that leaders should be actively engaged in learning about improvement kata so that they in turn can become mentors. Although, organizational structure is not a factor for kata, meaning that leaders do not automatically become mentor. A mentor is anyone that is an expert with improvement kata and does not deviate from its principles (Rother, 2013; Toivonen, 2015).

Subsequently, the product of coaching kata, apart from teaching students to become kata inspired, is that it creates a new habit or culture on how continuous improvement should be natural.

![Figure 6. Coaching kata (Rother, 2013)](image)

### 2.3. Importance of Partnership

Leaders of organizations that adapt the culture of continuously improving product and services, does so to satisfy their customers. Apart from this goal, there exist another group of people and organizations beyond organizational boundaries, where partnership for purposes such as outsourcing certain competences is possible. According to Toyotas principle of partnership development and management, the success of one organization could also be the success of their partners because if continuous improvement plans lead to increase in productivity, partners that are engaged in mutual collaboration will stand to benefit. Some organizations tend to synchronize their continuous improvement programs with partners to grow together and achieve sustainability (Sörqvist, 2004).

Organizations need partners to survive and most importantly to learn together. Liker (2009) presented ways at which partners could survive, this includes developing long term plans; carry out learning strategies as well as helping each other in time of difficulties. All these are ways
at which Toyota engages its partners, likewise the necessity to reduce wastage and utilizing the competences of partners are some of the reasons why Bergman & Klefsjö, (2012) advocated for closer co-operation in partnership.

Leaders have the responsibility through various leadership perspectives to fashion strategies that will help in strengthening relationship with its partners. Some of the leadership attributes utilizes the act of collaboration, a natural way for organizations to survive competition and societal changes (Whitney, 2014 p 201), while continuously extending its network based on how the collaboration pays off. An example could be drawn from how local municipality collaborate with companies within, working towards the same goal; satisfying citizens. The way at which the municipal treats its partners will determine partnership with other companies with interest of investing resources in the municipality.

Conclusively, for leadership to be termed effective, leaders must possess certain characteristic like those built on relationship, which in turn opens the doors for discussion and inclusion for continuous improvement programs, while focusing on key factors like organizational processes and customers.

2.4. Leadership

Leadership; a concept simple to define by man yet complex and complicated to comprehend by organizations and researchers. For instance, Bass theory of leadership established that anyone can be a leader; either by trait, situation or through learning; phenomenon visible in every living organism (Stogdill, 1989; Bass, 1990). Likewise, Sims (2010 p. 256) argued that leadership “is put together by several people”, as such that the concept should be viewed from a participatory perspective. With these perspectives, leaders, aspirants or groups possess different characteristics, personality and competences thereby making them paint different or unique pictures of what leadership is all about. Researchers over the years have studied the evolution of this concept and how it changes its characteristics based on organizational situations and time.

Evidence from this long ongoing research presented leadership researches in qualitative and quantitative analysis where its theories are matched with various authors and their central idea of what the concept represents (Bolman & Deal, 2012). Different schools of leadership as experienced from the nineteenth century, where the trait school of leadership assumed podium, through the twentieth century, with transformative leadership evangelized as the new leadership perspective (Antonakis, Cianciolo & Sternberg, 2003; Bolman & Deal, 2012; Yukl, 2012; Caldwell et. al 2012). These researches have contributed immensely to how the concept had been and will be applied in organizational context, with the aim to strengthen processes and leadership ideology.

2.4.1. Definition

The various leadership theories had made it difficult for an accepted definition of the concept but a broad definition that is understandable for organizations could be agreed upon (Antonakis et al, 2003). This agreement does not mean that the definition from its various theories could not be used for educational purpose, rather it creates a distinction on how its evolution and application in the past, present and future can be referenced. Some researchers defined
leadership as a process to direct activities of employees (Smircich & Morgan, 1982; Rauch & Behling 1984; Jacobs & Jaques 1990; Drath & Palus 1994; Northouse, 2007; Jago, 1982). Others, as a behavior of an individual to mobilize and impact groups (Hemphill & Coons, 1957; Burns 1971; Kotter 1987) or understanding of vision and goals of organizations (Richards & Engle 1986).

Of course, to assume leadership role, there must be followers, groups or individuals; a group that has permitted to be led (Jago, 1982). The word “followers” might sound inappropriate but it has found its way into the concept of leadership. Leading groups mean that certain behavioral patterns, as a product of skills, knowledge and attributes of the leader is used to co-ordinate activities towards achieving goals, results and promoting workers satisfaction. For this research, the definition of leadership according to Yukl (2012, p11) will be used.

*Leadership is the process to influence others to understand and agree on duties to be performed and how it will be done. Leadership is also the process that simplifies both individual and group task against shared goals*

By this definition, it could be deduced that;

- Leadership is a process
- Leadership is relational
- Leadership is transformational

### 2.4.2. LEADERSHIP AS A PROCESS

All activities coordinated by groups draw organization closer to its goals. Certain group of tasked with leading one or more of these activities by continuously influencing and motivating others directly or indirectly (Yukl, 2012). To succeed, leadership personality, skills and behavior are required at any given situation. The combination and integration of these factors in a systematic pattern to influence a group in achieving results can be referred to leadership process (ibid).

![Figure 7. Relationship between types of leadership process (Yukl, 2012 p15)](image)

The combination of skills, personality and behavior can be used as leadership mechanism but from the perception of others, meaning that employees for example will need to recognize a leader through these attributes (Jago, 1982). Skills and/or behavior are separate concepts within leadership that are sometimes mixed or hard to separate because of the thin line and proximity
between them (Yukl 2012). The former could in this case be related to knowledge about specific work methods, tools or routine mostly gained through learning, coupled with interpersonal relationship that are of social characteristics. The latter represents personal characteristics that are mostly connected to leadership traits (Yukl, 2012; Jago 1982).

In a study reported by Yukl (2012), personal characteristics/behavior were studies and analyzed for effective leadership. The results revealed that emotional stability and maturity, confidence, inner control and motivation are important aspect of effective leadership. Same factors could be found in Jago’s (1982) presentation of leadership traits, with skills and behavior within the same category. Although it revealed that intelligence which is one of the leadership traits skillset, is important for leadership but does not guarantee its effectiveness due to circumstances. For example, size of organization, relationship amongst leaders, employees attitude, organizational culture, specific goals or employees attitude (Jago 1982; Yukl 2012; Bolman & Deal, 2012). All these could alter the search for effective leadership because they fall within different situational conditions.

Further research into situational based leadership confirms that the skills and/or behavior a leader possess could be effective in different ways, meaning that despite the situation at hand, the skillsets are still viable and could be productive if applied in situations that are compatible for effective leadership. It can therefore be agreed that a leader’s behavior as well as employees’ perception are dynamic throughout a leader-follower relationship (Yukl 2012). The question now will be “how do leaders maintain or manage the variables for effective leadership? A possible answer to this question can be extracted from researches presented by Jago (1982, p 318) that documented the “degree of two-way communication and consultation, mutual trust, respect, and warmth a leader exhibits toward his followers” and how leaders structure groups and task. Yukl (2012, p 104) on the other hand presented results revealing “task oriented leadership behavior, relation oriented behavior; participatory leadership and comrade leadership”.

Deducing from these results, the degree of effective leadership is determined by how the above is applied through leadership process. An example could be drawn from leadership openness and transparency, where information relevant to groups are conveyed to them. Also, how the information is conveyed is very important and thus connects to social characteristics of leadership (Jago 1982; Bergman & Klefsjö, 2012). Communication therefore presents a landscape for effective leadership thereby allowing leaders to development understanding about who is being communicated to; the language of communication to convey the message and ability to charismatically elevate the meaning of the message to the listener (Bergman & Klefsjö, 2012). The result is employees’ satisfaction and relationship building based on a leader-member exchange - LMX (Uhl-Bien 2006).

2.4.3. RELATIONAL LEADERSHIP

Leader-member-exchange relates to the ability for leaders and workers to develop effective relationship (Uhl-Bien, 2006). Meaning that for effective leadership to thrive, there need to be effective relationship. Furthermore, relationship should be multilateral, one built on mutual respect and understanding (Bergman & Klefsjö, 2012; Bolman & Deal, 2012; Yukl, 2012). Uhl-Bien (2006) defined relational leadership as relational and ethical process of people who are collectively attempting to accomplish positive change. Meaning that the achievement of
goals should be collective but only achievable if the leader possesses social characteristics for open communication, leadership maturity and complex relationship building (Yukl, 2012).

Sometimes, organizational goals make it mandatory for leaders and workers to build and maintain relationship, where leaders motivate and instigate workers to take initiative but according to Whitney (2014), these relationships already exist within the confinement of organization. It only changes when a new member or leader is introduced. Leaders therefore have the utmost responsibility to maintain the relationship based on the situation and attitude of each worker. The existence of leader-worker relation as organizational values might sometimes warrant organizations to recruit leaders that already possess the relational leadership skills within the organization, making them conversant to how the organization perceives leadership (Jago 1982).

Relationship within organizational context is vital for organizational existence and workers satisfaction because it paves the way for inclusion, participation and delegation. The path towards this coexistence is determined by the relationship-oriented behavior of leaders characterized by trust, competence to understand workers needs/problems in terms of competence development, information dissemination, motivation and individualizing worker’s needs (Bolman & Deal, 2012), which is also the base of transformative leadership; a value adding leadership process for both workers and organization (Jacobsen & Thorsvik, 2013; Yukl, 2012).

2.4.4. TRANSFORMATIVE LEADERSHIP

While relational leadership focuses on achieving social relation within work groups, transformative leadership aims at informing and mobilizing workers on the ethical perspective associated with organizational reformation to achieve effectiveness (Yukl 2012). Transformative leadership upholds values and morals and helps to integrates it into society through how workers are informed and inspired (Jacobsen & Thorsvik, 2013).

According to Caldwell et. al (2012), transformative leadership incorporates other forms of leadership perspective. This implies that transformative leadership could fit in several situations. However, due to the integration of other leadership perspective within transformative leadership, researchers have argued against its effectiveness, its lack of clarity as a concept and its lack of grounded leadership functions (Jacobsen & Thorsvik, 2013). This could be understandable because transformative leadership concept acts as a point that converges other leadership theories/perspectives and probably might not need to establish a separate one. Although, researchers maintain strong theory about transformative leadership being beneficial for organizations that are dynamic or rather changes their orientation in line with societal demands/changes (Jacobsen & Thorsvik, 2013). Relational leadership perspective for example can support this quest by establishing openness in leadership communication and create trust amongst leaders and workers. Leaders can use this relationship to seek innovative solutions or newer ways to solve problems and add value to organization (Caldwell et. al, 2012).

Transformative leadership adds value to workers using various motivational and inspirational approaches by creating an understanding of the world beyond organizational boundaries and how everyone could continuously improve (Jacobsen & Thorsvik, 2013; Caldwell et. al 2012). By “optimizing long-term wealth creation” transformative leaders ensure that the organization achieve its vision and goals for effectiveness (Caldwell et. al 2012 p 117).
Features of transformative leadership was presented by Caldwell et. al (2012 p 117), converging six different leadership perspectives “transformational leadership, charismatic, leadership, level 5 leadership, principle-centered, leadership, servant leadership, and covenantal leadership”. Within these perspectives lies various leadership characteristics, some already discussed (relational leadership) while some could be found in organizational culture (principle centered leadership).

![Figure 8. Transformative Leadership perspectives (Caldwell et. al, 2012)](image)

The underlying fact is that leaders within the transformative leadership realm seem to be engaged in developing the workers, organization and the society (Hewitt, Davis & Lashley, 2014). This kind of engagement is developed within the Total quality management perspective as explained Bergman & Klefsjö, (2012) and could be a key to continuous improvement.
3. **METHOD**

This chapter presents and describes the entire process for the research. It described in detail the literature search, qualitative research design and the various data collection methods/tools (interview, survey, observation, documents). Finally, it presents method for analysis categorized within the concepts “leadership” and “continuous improvement”

3.1. **RESEARCH PROCESS**

Embarking on a research demands a well formulated research question as well as defining a title with phrases that convey to readers the purpose of research (Creswell, 2012). In this paper, the researcher aimed to understand how organizations succeeds in continuous improvement, by exploring leadership engagement in organization and the relationship between organizations and its partners. This is because organizations still struggle with continuous improvement approaches despite the numerous reports and articles on the research area. The researcher began by embarking on related topic and literatures, considered as the first step for any research process (ibid).

Subsequently, literatures on areas within the research question were presented because it is necessary according to Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill (2009), to build on previous information rather than reinventing the wheel. This research builds on literature from total quality management while further expanding on continuous improvement and leadership.

Furthermore, the research design or research onion according to Saunders et al (2009), presented guidelines on how the rest of the research is conducted. The need for a strategy or path for planning, deciding and executing activities that draws the researcher closer to answering the research question, characterizes a research design (Creswell, 2012). Although the path might seem blurry and situations change based on real scenarios, but despite these variations, the research design is always like an architectural construction, where the blueprint presents the idea of what, how and in what sequence (Saunders et al 2009). With this information, the research design, strategies and methods for data collection was also decided.

For data to be collected, the researcher selected LBS Kreativa Gymnasiet (LBS Creative Senior High School) as the research object, due to the recent award bestowed on the school from the Swedish Institute for Quality (SIQ) for their systematic process. For data collection, techniques that supported qualitative data collection through interview was utilized, likewise the analysis of document from the research object. For another group of respondents, survey was used to gain insight on their satisfaction level and finally, an observation was conducted by the researcher. The data was then presented, analyzed and discussed, with a conclusion on further research into advancement of continuous improvement as a cross-sectional activity for understanding and retaining customers within a progressive curve.
While the research question focuses on concepts of leadership and continuous improvement, the strategy for planning all activities that led to presenting a report, has been inspired by improvement kata (stage to stage progression as seen in the figure above) and coaching kata (communication and problem solving between the researcher and the supervisor). The aim was to present a final report based on the research question. This led to constructing the path, with various stage representing the various targets, as the supervisor guides the researcher through various obstacles. The researcher on the other hand utilized the PDCA after every supervision.

### 3.1.1. LITERATURE SEARCH

Literature search is one of the most important aspects of a research. This enables the researcher to position the research question into aspects relevant for the topic. The literature search was conducted at the early stages of the research, utilizing a general database (PRIMO) of Mid Sweden university. When a word or phrase is typed into the database, it searches a wide range of databases connected to Mid-Sweden university, with examples like Emerald and ScienceDirect. Using PRIMO as a universal database provided the possibility to search beyond the context of Quality Management because leadership and/or continuous improvement are concepts found in every field of study, so why limit it to only one field?

Words or phrases used for the primary databases could be found below. These words were selected to gain a better understanding about the research question. Some of the words are associated to factors that drives improvement while others serve as mechanism and methods for the same course. Secondary literature search was made based on the iterative nature of the researcher and subject. For instance, the dive into various leadership concept was necessitate by the researchers’ curiosity to present a theoretical understanding to the concept.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Primary search phrases</th>
<th>Secondary search phrase</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Continuous Improvement</td>
<td>Transformative Leadership</td>
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<tr>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td>Relational Leadership</td>
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<tr>
<td>Engaged Leadership</td>
<td>Toyota Kata</td>
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<td>Total Quality Management</td>
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<td>Lean</td>
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<td>Challenges faced by organizations</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Partnership</td>
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*Figure 9. Continuous improvement work process on thesis*
3.2. **QUALITATIVE RESEARCH**

The proximity of social and organizational construct within the research topic, warranted a qualitative research approach. The researcher tries to gain more knowledge by investigating organizational environment to create a reminder of how business should approach continuous improvement (Creswell, 2009). Advantage the researcher had while using this strategy, lies in its inductive approach; one that permits the understanding and interpretation of collected data allowing for the formation of theory to support the findings. The results or new developed theories are mostly built on existing theories, where relationships are made or existing theories confirmed, new findings disputed (Saunders et al, 2009). The alternative (deduction) was not the case in this research due to its inability to create alternative explanation from the data (ibid).

3.3. **THE CASE STUDY**

Referred to as empirical inquiry set within a real-world-content, where multiple sources are utilized for the collection of data that clarifies the phenomenon (Yin, 2009), case study serves as a strategy for gathering facts as well as understanding the phenomenon within research object (Morris and Wood, 1991). Selected for this research, it amplified the researchers search into complex arenas while utilizing multiple sources of information channels. Its strength also generates answers to questions like “why”, “how” “what”, within appreciative inquiry, the interview method used in collecting data for this study (Whitney, 2014).

Yin (2009) emphasized the need for generalization in cases of multiple data sources as well as the ability to analyses the information to produce results in whole. The collection of data from multiple sources called for the use of triangulation; a word accustomed to the military or marines, used for navigation and to pin-point a specific location using several coordinates (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007), or specifying intersections in mathematical vector (Yin, 2009). Triangulation is the collection of data from two or more sources and further converging the gathered information to produce meaning (Cohen et al, 2007; Creswell, 2009). It provides researchers with the level of confidence in terms of the data collected as well as the results being presented.

Furthermore, the case study falls within the embedded case study category because data was collected from more than one organization, but since the research question was positioned within an organization, it therefore retains a single case study design (Yin, 2009). It was necessary to focus only on LBS Creative Senior High School because the organization through evaluation from SIQ, has demonstrated a high level of quality achievement and operate by a standard that supports continuous improvement. Their partners however operate beyond the boundaries of the school. But it could be interesting to understand the extent to which these partners contribute to student’s satisfaction; a criterion that may or may not be directly connected to continuous improvement; hence the focus on only LBS.

However, the idea of multiple source-multiple organization as this seem to be, due to different data sources from more than one organization, called for researcher’s ability to analyses and interpret the qualitative results and this process is guided by the researcher’s philosophical worldview of interpretivism or constructivist (Creswell, 2009; Saunders et al, 2009). This philosophy supports the awareness of social construct and that the study of phenomenon
relating to humans and their environment could be best described by humans. Since this research deals with social construct within an organizational context, the researcher through the means of interaction, gathered information to understand leaders and their perspective on continuous improvement.

3.4. RESEARCHERS BACKGROUND

Research processes and its outcome are guided by researcher’s value; that which defines how the researcher structures, analyze and present research results (Saunders et al, 2009). Meaning that the researchers previous knowledge through formal or informal education, type of job (past and present) and even future aspiration, forms the researcher’s values. Prior to this program (Masters in quality management) the researcher had acquired knowledge and experience within information technology - informatics. At the time of this research, the researcher works as a digital transformation specialist (digitalization) within the educational sector of a Swedish municipality and was interested in understanding leadership engagement in continuous improvement from a holistic perspective and how the municipality could benefit from the research results.

3.5. RESEARCH SITE

The research organization (LBS Creative Senior High School, Halmstad) is an educational institution located in the south of Sweden, for students in their final year of secondary education, with ages between 17 – 19 years. The school offers seven different programs which falls within three major categories. Population of students as at when this study was carried out is 196, with about 20 personals (teaching and non-teaching staffs). The school also have three major partners contracted to deliver services to students in terms of health, hygiene and the likes. The research site was selected based on the argument presented by Creswell (2009); that selecting a research site for qualitative research should be done with intent and that the site will help in answering the research question. This made the researcher initiated contact with the school principal, requested if the school is interested in becoming part of the study; thus, a self-selection process (Saunders et al, 2009).

3.5.1. SELECTION PROCESS

LBS Creative Senior High School, Halmstad, was selected due to the recent award bestowed to them by the Swedish Institute of Quality (SIQ) as the best school in Sweden for the year 2017, with the motivation that “LBS Halmstad have a committed, aware and goal driven leadership throughout the organization. The school has an open climate where the vision, values and ideas are discussed with the involvement of workers and their ideas, in a culture where the students are the focus”; recognition of how the school worked systematically in improving quality. SIQ’s model evaluates 13 different categories/areas within an organization, while assigning values to each category that sums up to a holistic evaluation. In January 2018, the model was updated but still focuses on aspects that are deemed vital for organizational excellence.

To gain further access to the research site, the researcher utilized Cohen et. al (2007) negotiation checklist inspired by Bell (1991), as well as the strategy for negotiating entry to gaining access to organizations (Saunders et al, 2009). This checklist/strategy revealed steps and procedure a
researcher should take to guarantee a transparent and formal negotiation with research organizations and participants. It was therefore important that the researcher followed these recommendations and the result was a positive research climate, built on purposeful relationship with the LBS.

3.5.2. PARTICIPANTS
Participants for the study were termed “leaders” in their respective domain. This consist of the school principal (leader of the school), Non-teaching staffs, program and/or subject teachers (leaders in the classroom) and parents/guardians (leaders at home). This groups were selected since the research focuses on leaders, not just leaders in higher positions within organization but anyone that has is by obligation deemed to lead certain groups of people. Parents are termed leaders within this research because they are responsible as parents/leaders.

Despite this classification and the purposeful selection of the research organization, participants were randomly selected within the organization. The researcher through the school’s website, randomly selected three courses offered by the school (Architecture & Society Planning; Game Development; Creative Communication) and requested that teachers responsible for the courses, as well as parents with children within the courses, become participants. This randomization was motivated by Creswell’s (2009) multistage procedure for selecting samples.

3.5. DATA COLLECTION TECHNIQUES
For this research, the utilization of interview, survey, observation and documents analysis will be used for data collection.

3.5.1. INTERVIEW (LEADERS IN SCHOOL)
Interview is best known for its ability to generate knowledge and information through the means of communication. For participants (interviewers and interviewees), the topic should be of mutual interest and help in gaining knowledge within socio-cultural environment (Cohen, 2007). It is necessary that the interview questions are designed for the purposes of retrieving information that could help answer the research question. Types of interview varies and are utilized based on the purpose of research (Creswell, 2009; Saunders et al, 2009). For this study, a semi-structural interview was applied because it enables an open discussion creating an atmosphere for the researcher to ask questions based on the interviewee answers. Also, the interviewee is extended the liberty to explain, describe and present information that could be beneficial to the study.

Appreciative Inquiry
Appreciative inquiry was used for constructing and administering the interview due to its strength in confirming positive advances on individual, group or organizational level. It allows for inquiry about success factors linked to positive change as against the inquiry about challenges, because workers need to constantly be motivated towards adapting to changes and the positive stories act as boost towards this advancement (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2003).

The act of inquiry contributed to learning and information sharing, an action that must be initiated, just like that seen in this study whereby the researcher tries to investigate and build
on knowledge within the research area. Likewise, the questions need to be formulated to affirm the contribution that individuals have made towards the success of the organization (ibid).

**Procedure for data collection through interview**

At the beginning of the case study, communication between the researcher and the school participants went through the principal. A formal letter was sent to the school authority, requesting for permission to carry out the research. This stated the purpose of the research and the required participating groups. The letter was inspired from a previous course within the master’s program in quality and leadership development, where the researcher was one of 5 students that developed the letter (see attachment “A” for reference).

Furthermore, interview questions were designed. The questions were inspiration of an interview guide from Mid-Sweden University and a sample guide from Ontario education services corporation. The interview guide, accompanied by a letter of consent, was design for the principal and teachers. For accuracy, it was tested with a colleague and necessary correction were made.

Another interview guide was design for organizations/partners connected to the school, basically to collect information about level of collaboration.

The interview guides (with questions for the school principal and teachers) were then sent to the school principal by email, which was further distributed internally to the participants. The principal presented the information in one of the school meetings, asking if anyone is willing to participate and then collected the names of the willing participants. After that, mail was sent to the researcher with scheduled dates for interview. All correspondences, interview guides and interview were conducted in Swedish language.

Even though participants had, through the principal, accepted to take part in the study, the researcher began each interview by seeking a face-to-face consent from the participants (Saunders et al, 2009), reconfirming their interest to participate. Due to the communication channel used to deliver information to the participant (through the principal). It was necessary for the researcher to convey information about participants anonymity, confidentiality, what and how the data collect will be used. It guaranteed that the participants understand their rights (ibid). Duration for each interview were between 33 – 40 minutes, except for a group-interview with 3 non-teaching staffs, which lasted for about one hour. The total number of interview conducted was 9, with 13 participants in total.

**Interview with External partners:** For external partners, the contact information for three organizations were given to the research by the principal. The researcher initiated telephone communication with the organizations to negotiate entry. All three were positive and demanded to be contacted by email. An information letter as well as the interview guides were then sent to them via email. Despite this positive response, the researcher could only conduct interview with one of the three partners. The interview time was shorter compared to the interview with the school because the questions were shorter was mostly on understanding collaboration between the school and the partner as well as quality/good.

At the end of each interview, the researcher transcribed all the information using an online digital service (otranscribe). This entails playing the interview over again and taking note of essential/important words/phrases that reflects positivity in participants experiences. The transcribing tool could enable fast-forwarding of the recorded audio as well as lowering or
increasing the audio pace. Also, being that the interview was conducted in Swedish language, the identified words/phrases were later translated to English language because the researcher understands both languages fluently.

**Tool for data collection (interview)**

A smartphone application was used to record all the interview sessions. Files were created in advance to store audio data from each interview session. After each interview, the researcher transferred the data to a computer and erased it from the smart-phone. This was to avoid storage problem as the smartphone has limited storage capacity. Also, vital data that revealed unique information was noted on a paper during interview sessions.

### 3.5.2. Survey (Leaders at Home)

To describe the relationship between information gathered from parents in the school and that collected from the category of leaders, as well as external partners, surveys was also used (Cohen et al, 2007). The survey was also AI inspired and focused on collecting data relating to positive experiences and collaboration as registered or witnessed by parents/guardians, either directly or through their children. The survey was needed due to the inability of the researcher to conduct interview with parents and guardians, likewise, most of the students are already age 18 as such have responsibility for their affairs. The survey was designed as an opened ended-question, allowing respondents to provide information in text.

**Procedure for data collection through survey**

Like the previous interview question, the survey was also sent to the principal by email and was further sent to the parents/guardians through email. The school utilizes a learning platform which has the information of parents and email address but some parents do not have their email addresses filled in. This means that parents without email addresses may not have received the survey. The survey was sent to 50 parents and the response during the first instance was 3. The researcher communicated with the principal and both decided it will be better to send a reminder to parents. A reminder was then sent by the school head and an additional 2 responses came, bringing the response rate to 10%. For this reason, a statistical analysis was not necessary, rather a qualitative presentation/analysis of result seemed more adequate. This was because the survey questions are open-ended, meaning that responses were collected based on a descriptive presentation of the respondents understanding of the questions and their experiences.

**Tool for data collection (Survey)**

Google form was used to design a digital version of the survey. The link to the survey was sent alongside the letter that accompanied the survey.

### 3.5.3. Observation

Labelled as one of the various sources for collecting data within case study research (Lin, 2009), observation is known for helping researcher systematically note down, describe analyze data, especially when it concerns researches in social sciences (Saunders et al, 2009). With either participant observation (where the researcher is involved, is or becomes part of the participant) or structured observation (where the researcher is detached from the research group), the utilization of the human sense organs is a determinant for documenting observations as basis for analysis (Yin, 2009; Saunders et al, 2009; Creswell, 2009). For this study, participant observation provided opportunity to data that other methods were lacking. The observer/researcher participated in a seminar organized by the LBS Creative Senior High
School, with the aim to gather data to support the case study. It was important that the observer/researcher did not partake in activities, rather declared the intention of merely observing as a spectator (Saunders et al, 2009).

**Data collection tools for observation**
The human 5 senses were the major observation tool, supported by documentation using both a digital device (iPad with the app “pages”) and a note book.

**Procedure for data collection through observation**
The school organized a two-hour seminar, where audience received information about how the school has systematically achieved quality in their processes. The two-hour session was divided into three parts, with different speakers; one representing the teachers, another representing non-teaching staffs and the third was the principal. Six people were in attendance and all introduced themselves and their respective workplaces. The researcher also presented himself and the reason for attendance.

**The introduction**: Attendees presented themselves and their workplaces. After each presentation came a follow-up question from the audience. The first question was related to “factors that brought about initiative for quality improvement; as well as collaboration among everyone in the school”?

The principal answered the question by describing the challenges experienced before the position as “school principal” as well as in the early stages of the appointment as school head (see section 4.3). Thereafter, the group went for a tour round the school.

**School tour**: Lead by a non-teaching staff who informed about the planned reconstruction of the school, scheduled for summer 2018. The important fact about the reconstruction was that students have been part of the process, giving input on what they think should be done and where. The group assembled after the tour, which immediately followed by the presentation from the school nurse.

**Presentation 1: Non-teaching staff (school nurse)**: The team concerned for health and welfare of students consist of a doctor, psychologist, nurse, curator and a pedagogical specialist. The doctor and psychologist are not permanently on the school premises, they are called in when needed. As a team, their focus is the health and welfare of students and to ensure that they achieve their goals/good results.

Over the years, the group have undergone series of competence development program, one of which is the “specialpedagog skol myndyghet” best for working structurally. This knowledge contributed to how the team designed a process for meeting with teachers on matters that are student related. The group operates proactive; using the schools learning platform to identify students that have a high percentage of absenteeism in class, an attempt necessary to help identify students in need of individual coaching or discussion. In such events, they schedule meetings with respective teachers and parents.

**Presentation 2 - Teaching staff**: The presenter described how the teaching group (all teachers) work from a strong leadership perspective, where the classroom is a vital domain for learning and sharpening of student’s behavior. The team (part of them) undergo continuous improvement of classroom situation, taking inspiration from “leadership in class room” a book known for its prominent hands-on guidelines that reflects a teacher’s normal work-day, as well
as offering alternative solution to a variety of scenario. The teachers have together over the years read chapters from the book, reflected upon it, practically applied the suggestions and discuss the output; a systematic way of improving classroom activities. This pattern according to the presenter, has created opportunities for students to take initiative about their learning path as well as understanding classroom regulations.

The representing teacher also informed about how one of the teacher is undergoing a competence development on “action research”, with an aim to gain information on how to lead other teachers to becoming effective leaders.

**Presentation 3 – Principal:** The principal summarized how the school and its processes are connected. Each group (non-teaching and teaching staffs) have processes they actively work on, processes that are repeated daily or weekly or in short, continuously. The health and welfare team is responsible for processes that support equality; value based orientation and healthy work-environment for everyone. On the other hand, teachers are concerned majorly with plans that are student-centered, like teaching plans. Activities from this two groups are extracted from a central work plan generated after the analyses from the report on quality improvement.

Furthermore, the presentation highlighted how the school work continuously on improving its quality by defining three different quality dimensions:

- **Functional quality dimension:** Aspects that are directed to making sure that students fulfill their goals
- **Instrumental quality dimension:** Focuses on the daily structuring of work within the school (planning and evaluation).
- **Quality dimension from students’ perspective (experienced quality):** Aspects that focuses on getting information from students to continuously work on improvement

There is a forth quality dimension utilized by the owners of the school, which is beyond the scope of this study.

The different quality dimensions are identified in the continuous improvement cycle developed by the school. *(See data from collected document for more information because observation as a means of data generation was not enough to describe the process and their connection in detail)*

### 3.5.4. DOCUMENTS

Classified as a source for secondary data collection, documents are important for supporting primary data collection. Document could be in form of written materials such as “email correspondences, reports and journals”; or cold also be non-written materials such as “voice or video recordings” (Saunders et al, 2009, p 259). The choice of written materials as a source of information was appropriate for this study because documents from the organization relatively tells how the organization carries out their continuous improvement plans. Going by the research question, some of the documents the researcher received/requested do not contain information that will bring the researcher closer to answering the research question. Therefore, emphasis will be placed only on documents that describes various goals as well as document that reflects/visualize a systematic approach, method or description to achieving the goals of the school. These are:
• Teaching plan (undervisningsplan)
• Quality Report (kvalitetsrapport 2015/2016)
• Combined plan document (samlat plandokument)
• Improvement cycle (årshjul)
• LBS teachers’ evaluation (undervisningsvärdering)

**Sources for data collection**

The above documents were collected with permission from the organization. Sources were from the principal through email, the school website and during the seminar organized by the school where the researcher conducted observation and from a teacher.

### 3.6. Method of Analysis

The research question focused on both leadership and continuous improvement within organizational context. These concepts formed the basis for categorizing the data gathered from interview, observation, document analysis and survey. The categories and connection to data sources could be seen from the diagram below, which formed the basis for categorizing results as well (interview, survey) and further presenting a descriptive analysis of the results.

![Diagram showing categories and concepts for data analysis]

**Figure 10. Categories and concepts for data analysis**

### 3.7. Validity and Reliability

Validity and reliability are important aspect for in a research to guarantee that its worthful or that the research fulfill its purpose. Research validity relates to whether the purpose of the research and its outcome measures what it is intended to measure (Cohen et. al. 2007; Saunders et al, 2009), by explaining that the data collected, events or phenomenon could be supported by the result (internal validity). In this case, the internal validly should demonstrate accuracy and that the results are sustained by the data collected. External validity on the other hand demonstrates generalizability of the research results; the extent at which the results could be utilized or beneficial to other population (Cohen et. al, 2007)

Reliability refers how result gathered through various data collection techniques is consistent. This consistency extends also to analysis of results. Although argued by researchers, reliability in quantitative and qualitative research have different meanings. While “Reliability in quantitative research is essentially a synonym for dependability, consistency and replicability
over time, over instruments and over groups of respondents” (Cohen et al, 2007), reliability in qualitative research relies mostly on researchers’ position, method of data collection and analysis and the environment at which research was conducted (ibid).

It is therefore important that research processes are documented to allow for replicability if other researchers find it interesting to go through same path. Although, biases and errors from both researchers and participants might affect replicability, such as level of enthusiasm from respondents or structured processes in cases of information gathering and analysis from different researchers (Saunders et al, 2009). This research has maintained a high level of reliability in respect of how the data were gathered and presented from the researcher’s perspective.

To achieve validity, the data collection method as well in line with the research purpose. For example, the interview questions were constructed with the research purpose in mind (leadership and continuous improvement); the observations documented data about purpose of the research, likewise the researcher selected documents that were related to the research purpose only. Furthermore, it was necessary to abide by the AI principle of interview; the researcher asked questions and documented answers of positive experiences. Transcribing the interview was necessary and helped in selecting data that explained these positive experiences. To achieve a high degree of repeatability, the researcher documented/described every step of the data collection process; but achieving exactly same results according to Cohen et al, 2007, is dependent on whether the researchers possess the same characteristics. This fact holds for statistical data collection and analyses but not for qualitative researchers because the researchers personal lifelong learning and values constructs how data are interpreted and analyzed.

3.8. Ethical Consideration

Ethical aspects of research as well as how the researcher goes about ensuring that the research process, respondents as well as collected data, should be carried out appropriately. This includes respecting the right of respondents, the culture of the studied organization as well as the integrity of information collected, which should be done with openness and honesty (Cohen et al, 2007; Saunders et al, 2009). This aspect covers the entirety of research, beginning from the researcher negotiates access and the information that is conveyed alongside the negotiation. For this research, ethical aspects were upheld I high esteem; the issues of integrity and confidentiality were considered during every step of data collection, both in writing and during interview with respondents Although the name of the research object was made known in the research, this was agreed upon by the principal and the researcher because the school prior to the validation by SIQ, intend to share their way of work. Finally, the report was sent to the school principal in advance, to ensure that information within the report are not against the ethics of the school in general. A mail confirmation was received from the principal, approving the contents within the report.
4. **RESULTS**

This chapter presents the result of data collected. The four different data collection methods are presented differently. For interview, results are presented entirely according to table 2. For survey, observation and documents, the results are descriptively presented. Quotes from respondents are also presented. For clarity, point-list is used to present results that are vital and universal for all respondents.

4.1. **INTERVIEW**

The interview questions were categorized into Leadership and continuous improvement. The researcher was concerned about personal leadership perspective and experiences of positive leadership within or beyond a leader’s domain. Also, within the arena of continuous improvement, data relating to organizational level, roles and collaboration were collected.

Table 2. Table for categorizing and presenting interview results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Leadership</th>
<th>Continuous Improvement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leaders perspective</td>
<td>Organizational level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive leadership-</td>
<td>Roles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>experiences</td>
<td>Collaboration</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.1.1. **LEADERSHIP**

**Leadership perspective:** Interviewees perspective about leadership in their respective field varies. When asked about how attractive they find their job in relation to factors that motivate them as leaders, they all gave description that defined their characteristic as leaders. Also, the answers were related to how their roles as leaders in continuous improvement fare. For some, it is challengingly positive, fun filled and interesting. Others mentioned how interesting the course/subjects are, likewise the goals attached. The possibility that the lives and attitudes of students are reshaped by the leaders in classrooms, is the reason why they all come to work daily. According to a classroom leader, “leadership is a role and finding a balance between friendship and leadership is very important”

When asked about organizational culture, respondents described a positive leadership culture that embraces transparency and openness, which had led to a soft approach and acceptance during decision making. This openness according to a respondent has “created a culture for collegial learning and sharing of information between teachers with the same goal”. The words and phrases that defines their motivation and commitment as leaders as well as their involvement in continuous development are as follows:

- Challenges, both positive and negative
- Good school environment
- Communication with students
- Flexibility in work structure
- Interesting job
- Collaboration with teachers
- Personal improvement
• Transparency in organization
• Open climate in organization
• Good to be a teacher
• Social environment with students and teachers
• Develop students
• Influence other individuals
• Being role model to students
• Driving success for teachers and students
• Feedback from students
• Teaching students
• Test different leadership skills

• Attractive work time as teacher
• Balance between leadership and friendship with students
• Proximity to student
• Interesting profession
• nice to work with people
• meeting people with different age category
• Relational leadership
• Enthusiastic
• Relating to students in their comfort zone

Positive leadership experience: The result showed the obvious; that classroom teachers experience leadership concept from a teacher-student perspective. However, the result also show that the experiences are different because teachers handle situation uniquely due to their personality and other leadership characteristics. Factors such as leadership relation was mentioned by all the respondents, each describing the importance of how they found techniques to improve student-teacher relation. Some quotes from respondents were:

Teacher: “...when I was in high school, the physical education teacher had a distant and authoritative leadership style, everyone sat quietly in PE lectures that were supposed to involve physical movement of the body. For me everything felt odd, because it had to do with sports lecture. My teachers seemed tired, they were not interested. I decided that I will do things differently when I become a teacher. The few teachers that have inspired me have ability to for example relate issue to social environment. I want to be the type of leader that will make discussions real for students”.

Teacher: “...there was a student last year that was very negative with school activities, but over time, I have successfully turn him to the positive side. I now receive request from the student to grade his work and give feedback. This for me is a 180-degree turning point. I have gradually over time built a “bond of trust” that led to personal connection... this is a mechanism that works for most students”.

Teacher: “...we follow up with students to gather information on their experiences and it is good to understand their perspective because students do not always give immediate response that could be related to their satisfaction. The yearly evaluation helps in putting emphasis on issues that need to be focused upon based on what we need to follow up...It is good to get a confirmation about positive improvement, how we work and challenge ourselves to do more”.

Teacher: “...I was a supplement teacher with a different school and the class teacher had a very low tone when speaking to students but surprisingly, the teacher had full control of classroom situation. Students listen and are respectful. The positive thing with it is that he had developed relation with the students and is consequent with his classroom leadership. This is the kind of leadership I strive for; building a relationship with students, without raising a high tone or getting angry and still having control of classroom situation”
Principal: “… it’s hard to describe a positive experience because it’s hard to choose among all, but generally the positive experiences are reoccurring in the organization; structure, roles, openness and that I delegate responsibility and authority to someone else, that I am humble for the competences other possess, and this is very important”

4.1.2. CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Organizational level: When asked about the school’s work on continuous improvement and the positive experiences about it, the following phrases were used:

- Show things we can improve
- Find out student’s level of satisfaction
- Enable reflection on teaching strategies
- Allows for long term planning
- Effective lectures
- Opportunity to prove different methods
- Classroom visits between teachers
- Continuous improvement of teaching skills
- Practical evaluation of subjects
- Motivates classroom visit by principal
- Standardized improvement structure
- Provides avenue for discussion
- A part of the school’s culture
- Allows for participation
- Focus on questions about quality improvement
- Collective learning
- Allows job delegation
- Supports Proactive work processes

According to a teacher “…we try to always find out if workers and students are satisfied, trying to find something we can improve. We are also challenged to continuously improvement on our profession, going to courses and getting inspired”

Roles: The results showed that leaders all have assigned roles connected to activities. Although, one would imagine that the role of a class/subject teacher (classroom leaders) is automatically assigned due to their profession, but this case revealed the numerous dynamic and interconnected roles that teachers often have, which directly or indirectly focuses on student and their goals. The interview results also showed that various roles could be identified in different activities performed by classroom leaders, both with students in classroom or at organizational level. These activities could also be found in the organizations systematic improvement circle. For instance, when classroom leaders were asked about their leadership roles, they gave the following:

- Taking and monitoring attendance in classroom
- Problem solving in classroom
- Creating routines for easier conversation with students
- Participating in various discussion groups in the organization
- Testing various pedagogical tools
- Meeting with other schools
- Learning with others

For the health and welfare team, results show that their role in supporting psychological and health issues of students, have a strong connection with the roles of teachers in the path towards
continuous improvement. Apart from that, the group works proactively in providing support in form of:

- Classroom observation
- Relationship building between students
- Planning with teachers
- Organizing activities with students to promote social and health awareness

**Collaboration:** The positive effect of collaboration both internally (amongst classroom teacher, non-teaching staffs and principal) and externally (external organizations/partners delivering services to the school) presented the following:

- Increased competence
- Group building
- Creates a holistic perspective
- Transparency and openness
- Same pathway to goals
- Improvement in teaching techniques
- Happy Students
- Possibility for study visits

One of the classroom leaders mentioned that "discussion provides a holistic perspective on how we want the school to operate" while another collaboration to learning, “joint grading, I think it’s good to collaborate with teachers that have similar subjects/courses.... to discuss our different perspective on knowledge and grading results”

According to the interviewed partner when asked about collaboration with the school “…communication is good and the school follows the menu. Sometimes they make special order and we try to meet their request”, revealing that collaboration between the school and external partners has created satisfaction for students.

Further discussion with the interviewed partner revealed perspective of a contract agreement but with focus on delivering services ordered. For instance, the school sometime demand for special diet for students or orders that are outside the regular menu from the restaurant. This adjustment is always positively welcomed. Focus is placed on providing quality/good food to students, which according to the respondent “produces sound and healthy students”.

### 4.2. Survey

Results from survey presents experiences from parents/guardians. When asked “What they mostly appreciate about their child/children attending LBS Creative Senior High School” they gave the following responses:

- “That it is a small school and that the students get quality meal”
- “...comfortable with both teachers and students and that the education meets the expectations”
- “...seems to be a good school”
- “That it is a small family school”
• “Technical education is good; good school environment”

These positive experiences according to them, was a result of the “contract with restaurant nearby”; “teacher’s contribution” and “safety environment”. These input according to a respondent, “makes my child happy and in turn makes me happy”.

For collaboration with parents in terms of information sharing, parents receive information directly from the principal, alternatively they follow their child/children school progress and grades via the school’s learning management system with the opportunity for improvement meetings once per term; a communication and information sharing pattern that defines how the school collaborates with parents.

4.3. Observation

One of such challenges are those faced by former colleagues (a colleague rising to become a leader); and another is the fact that the principal had to make decision that affected former colleagues. Presently, 2/3 of the teachers are new; the answer from the principal when asked about the consequences of becoming principal in a school where the principal was formerly a teacher.

The results from observation showed that the focus on student’s wellbeing has necessitated the school to work with the following in mind which are factors that that brought about initiative for quality improvement; as well as collaboration among everyone in the school:

• Openness and transparency in information sharing: Creates an environment where information everyone is approachable, dismissal of hierarchy for information flow as well as the possibilities it creates during decision making.
• Clarity in responsibilities: With discussion on the reason why the school exits
• Participation: The involvement of everyone in processes
• Motivation: Necessary to boost the morale of teachers, making them understand that their efforts are recognized.
• Delegation
• Identifying key actors that drive improvement plans
• Collaborative work environment: Everyone is willing to share and learn from each other; there are no barriers experienced.
• Creating a mentor-adept problem-solving relationship
• Team building activities that create positive work environment
• Open discussions about work-load and possibilities to increase working percentage as well as reduce work-load.

4.4. Documents

The 2015/2016 quality report from LBS describes processes, goals as well as expectation from all perspectives (leaders and students). Apart from making sure that all students have good grades, other aspects of student satisfaction, such as conducive learning environment, security and ethics, are also of immense importance. Through continuous improvement of leadership competences for teachers and good teaching environment, the report presented areas that
needed improvement. The focus areas are further detached from the quality report for the purposes of defining specific structure and processes using various instrumental quality dimension (internal work structure and processes) as defined by the school.

In addition, the report specifies the roles and responsibility of different group such as the school health team consisting of school nurse, doctor, psychologist, curator and pedagogical specialist. Together with the school head as well as student representatives, they work proactively in increasing health condition of students by providing policies for handling offensive conducts and equal treatment.

The quality report from 2015/2016, produced a work-plan for academic year 2016/2017 with a theme “våga vara ledare” meaning “becoming a leader”. Its focus is on the development of leadership competences as well as various functional quality dimension (students expected outcome in school) according to the curriculum for high school studies; that school management should prepare students either for higher education studies or specialized (work) profession. These focus areas are precis, defined and easy to understand. An example is “achieving 100% high school leaving certificate for students”

Apart from the defined focus areas, the work-plan mentioned the groups involved in identifying the improvement areas, that is, preliminary stages that lead to the quality report was a collaborative process involving input from students, teachers and school inspecting group. As quoted “both students and personal as well as the school inspection have experienced the need for increased classroom coordination in school. We think that increased leadership in classroom as well as a more consistent approach could be a way to increase classroom coordination”

Furthermore, the goals are presented and explained from both a functional and instrumental quality dimensions with an accompanied method for each. The method also stipulates “what” tool will be used; “when” in terms of continuity; “who” in terms of responsibility; and lastly the result expected to the accomplished. The work-plan stipulated the use of a literature as a method to increase classroom coordination. Teachers meet every month to share ideas and classroom experiences after applying the method in the classroom situation. Classroom activity is also guided by a lecture plan, developed and managed by the subject teacher. This document is the closest to student because it specifies the central element of the course and the criteria for grading and assessing leaning outcome and student satisfaction with classroom activities and the school at large. Various forms of tools which the school termed “upplevd kvalitet” translated to be “experienced quality” helps in collecting information from students to record their satisfaction and/or experiences in previous academic year. The document “LBS teachers’ evaluation” is one of the avenues for collecting information related to quality experienced by the student. In this case, teachers are evaluated based on questions that helps in identifying areas that need to be improved.

4.5. CONVERGING RESULTS (SUMMARY)

Generally, results from all data collection techniques (except from partners), showed that LBS have an organizational culture that incorporate continuous improvement as a natural phenomenon in every aspect of their operation. The primary focus group are the students, the information that allows for improvement plans are collected from everyone within and beyond
the organization while the teachers/non-teaching staffs and school principal work actively with a standard (continuous improvement circle) that is consistent throughout the school. The following could be deducted from the various data collection:

- Results from observation could point to how LBS operates from a holistic perspective, with the explained roles/functions of teachers, non-teaching staffs and the principal.
- Documents revealed the documented approach confirming how LBS through their annual qualitative report, focuses on areas that needs improvement.
- The interview conducted could establish a solid leadership perspective based on openness, transparency; a relational and transformational leadership perspective.
- Survey present the level of satisfaction from parents, which could be correlated with the interview results from partners and their commitment towards providing quality service to the school.
5. **ANALYSIS**

*This chapter presents the analysis of results based on literature on leadership and continuous improvement.*

5.1. **LEADERSHIP AS A CRUCIAL FACTOR**

The concept of leadership and leaders is diverse but could be discussed in a smaller scale or alternatively based on the size of group being led. During this study it was established that leaders in classroom (teachers) have a very defined role to lead students, which according to a teacher, could be achieved if they “improve their subject area as well as collaborate with colleagues to improve the school”. Improving subject areas is necessitated because teachers strive for effectiveness as leaders in classroom and need to be updated within their domain, likewise gain the competences to handle different variations during lectures as was evident in results on classroom situation. This variation according to Yukl’s (2012) is a mix of the teacher’s leadership characteristic, students’ behavior and the different lecture scenario, all forming a process that demands effective leadership. This mix is never the same for teachers. Nevertheless, classroom teachers through the support from the organization, found individual solutions to balance the mix.

This individual solution is connected to their individual leadership characteristic of open communication, transparency, respect and consultation deemed important to manage a leader-follower relationship (Jago1982, Yukl, 2012). Examples of such leadership trait could be seen in how teachers in LBS, with shared goals, utilized different techniques in solving unique but similar problems, while trying to simply task for students (Yukl, 2012).

5.1.1. **RELATIONAL LEADERSHIP PERSPECTIVES**

Definition provided by Uhl-Bien et. al (2006) on relational leadership could easily be associated to the research object. The journey for achieving mutual relation between workers and students has been built on foundation that are stable enough to withhold any form of organizational turbulence caused by one or more behavioral variables. Whitney (2014) discussed how organizational settings are automatically relational. Although true, the student-teacher or teacher-teacher relation in LBS, based on the data collected through various methods, have proven to be different in the sense that repetitive actions have been taken to reform the organizational culture leading to a more open and transparent environment.

One of the word (pronounced repeated by teachers and as well experienced by the researcher) that paved the way for building relations was “openness or open climate”. While, Yukl (2012); Caldwell et. al., (2012) reiterated the need for openness in communication as a key to building relationship, data collected through survey, observation and interview, all confirmed that LBS has a culture that promotes open communication. For instance, data from observation revealed that openness and transparency has created a culture that embraces participation, decision making and collaboration between teachers. Also, interview results from teachers about LBS organizational culture, confirmed that openness is an underlying factor for building relationship. This word “openness” accompanied by the action it possesses, is one of the pillars of LBS. Between teachers and students, building relations might take time if for instance the
teacher is new. According to a teacher, “I have not attained the level of student-teacher relations but I will get there”. This statement is a confirmation of positive expectation and the fact that the teacher works on laying foundation for relationship building.

5.1.2. TRANSFORMATIVE LEADERSHIP PERSPECTIVES

Embracing different leadership perspectives or leadership trait like that seen in LBS, resembles the transformative leadership perspective (Jacobsen & Thorsvik, 2013; Yukl, 2012; Caldwell et. al, 2012). This aspect of leadership is centered at the top; where the principal in LBS uses this perspective as a driving force for improving the school in general as well as its teachers and students. For example, inspiring teachers to improve and develop skills, is a natural culture in the school. Likewise, motivating and encouraging teachers to strive towards ensuring that students goals are met.

In explaining this, the principal quoted “the most important factors that motivates me as a leader is the focus on success and to see individuals develop, both students and teachers... the ability to positively impact people...I want to see people succeed.

Aligning transformative process to Caldwell et. al (2012) perspective of transformative leadership, LBS is built on organizational culture that values relationship, principles of work processes, dynamic work cultures and the ability to see their contributions beyond the organization, all which has been demonstrated throughout the organization in terms of teacher-student relationship; teacher-teacher relationship and a relationship between students and the principal. This is achieved because the relationship which is key that opens all doors, is built on openness and transparency.

According to a teacher “an important aspect in LBS is openness, which possibly is not applied in other organizations”, has paved the way for processes that allows the school to adapt to changes. Results from observation and interview attested to the fact that openness and transparency is a fundamental culture necessary for a transformative process.

Furthermore, transformative leaders are principle-centered (Caldwell et. al, 2012). Being principled has supported the school in creating foundation for behavioral patterns both in students and teachers, compliant to the school’s vision. Document analyses revealed that the school has its principle of constantly following up on improvement. Likewise, classroom situations are organized based on shared principles of both teachers and students. Results on observation summarized areas that the school focuses on, which if simplified, are principles guiding the daily affairs of students and teacher. It could be confirmed that all leaders and students collectively work towards defining principles that uphold values (Jacobsen & Thorsvik, 2013).

5.1.3. ENGAGED LEADERSHIP

For improvement or any adjustment in organizational activities, the involvement of leaders as well as their total engagement is necessary. Bergman & Klefsjö, (2012) made it obvious that to produce committed or engaged leaders, demands that organizations operates with the pillars of total quality management. It was established that the research object has the focus of customers at heart. The analyzed documents produced trails that confirmed the school’s interest in making sure students have good grades as well as preparing them for the future. Teachers as internal
customers can improve their competences to meet with learning patterns; variations that are always visible while working with improvement.

Leaders in the school are constantly and consistently engaged in one or process; working with and and/or improving it (Sörqvist, 2004). For example; the health and welfare team together with teachers, were committed in improving how meetings were conducted, to maintain confidentiality of information, individualizing meetings and allowing parties to prepare for each meeting. Improvement in similar areas contributes to the total improvement of the school’s processes, which are interconnected to form the entire system, with everyone partly or wholly involved.

Committed leaders operate in environments that supports work delegation and empowerment, (Bergman & Klefsjö, 2012; Jacobsen & Thorsvik, 2013; Caldwell et. al 2012) and this contributes to the rate in which the organization improves because processes and activities are studied by workers with different roles, important for aspects within the systematic improvement cycle (Sörqvist. 2004). For this research, the term “leaders” is not limited to the principal, but also to teachers and non-teaching staffs, making “engagement” a concern for all. This means that leader’s roles and their engagement could be found in every area/activity in the school.

5.2. CONSISTENCY IN CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Continuous improvement enables organization connects it activities that are in parts to gradually approach their goals. Tools such as Rother’s (2013) are examples of how goals could be defined and planned. Consistency on the contrary relates to the systematic way of doing same thing over a period. In LBS, the improvement circle provides a consistency of how improvement could be carried out.

5.2.1. CONSISTENCY IN ORGANIZATIONAL LEVEL

Standardization: Rother (2013) presented Toyota KATA as a path or movement, using method that systematically take organizations from a present to a target/vision. The methods of going through hurdles is systematic and organizations that apply KATA does this with a defined standard. The examined documents from LBS, especially the improvement cycle, has been standardized and represents a pattern that identifies hurdles and work towards eliminating them. Apart from this general pattern, classroom leaders as well as the health and welfare team, have their various standardized ways of applying improvement techniques, either daily (in classroom) or periodically. A practical example from data gathered during interview, is how teachers identify students with high rate of absenteeism, invite student and their parents to discuss about the issue and together, find appropriate measure to eradicate or minimize the rate. Although, data collected did not categorically state that LBS uses improvement KATA but it is evident that their work ways are like Rother’s (2013) description on improvement KATA (see fig. 4).

Coaching KATA (Rother 2013) or the likes of it, is also a work culture within LBS. Teachers acting as leaders to colleagues with an aim to inform, share ideas and together develop learning techniques demonstrates how behavioral patterns could be altered through coaching. Data from the observation showed how a teacher coaches colleagues in specific areas of “action research”,
a pattern like the student-adept relationship in coaching KATA, where dialogue and problem solving through personal or group inquiry (Enakeyarhe, 2016) are means for obtaining and transferring knowledge. Yukl (2012) also discussed how leaders through their attributes, can influence and motivate others towards a shared goal. This motivation and collaborative learning between teachers in LBS demonstrates effective leadership in terms of respect, communication skills and consultation between them, as supported by Jago (1982).

**Process and customer focus:** Bergman & Klefsjö’s (2012) definition of customers, places both students and workers in LBS into this category. The organization’s goal as outlined by the laws governing Swedish high schools (Skollagen p 98) is to “…provide a good foundation for professional and continuing studies as well as personal development and active participation in society”, this make students the primary focus group. Evidence from the research revealed that the school is totally committed to meeting student’s expectation. An extract from the document “LBS teachers’ evaluation” while evaluating student’s satisfaction gave the feedback “Good lesson structure” and ”good in listening to conversation and understanding society’s different aspects”. This is evidence of student satisfaction in classroom, which was possible due to leaders’ commitment to individual students’ wellbeing. Data collection that evaluates customer satisfaction does not only serve this purpose, but also a confirmation on what works well in the organization and how it could be maintained and standardized.

Another group of (indirect) customers are parents and guardians, who experienced satisfaction through experiences their children had or are having. They also fall within the definition of “customers” (Bergman & Klefsjö, 2012) but their experience cannot be fully ascertained because some students are above the ages of 18, which classifies them as adults. According to response on parent’s satisfaction from how the school operates, “it seems to be a good school/education and that my child is satisfied”; “…thrives well with both teachers and student and the education meets the expectation” while another parent connected the level of satisfaction to the quality of food in the school, saying “it is a little school and the students get good food”. It can further be linked that the partners, in this case the organization responsible for school menu, contributes to student and parent satisfaction by providing quality food to students.

These feedbacks about satisfaction could be connected to how the processes in LBS are optimized. Process optimization according to Sörqvist, 2004; Hirzel et al, 2017) is achieved through continuous improvement. The observation conducted documented how the school principal, while using LBS continuous improvement cycle, explained how processes are embedded in LBS quality dimensions. One of such is the evaluation of teachers and teaching practices from the student’s perspective. The relationship and interconnectivity between individual processes could well be seen from a holistic perspective where focus is placed on processes and students.

**Continuity:** This is an aspect that defines improvement in terms of the execution of activities repeatedly and interconnected. Using tools and technique to systematically improve processes (Lillrank et al., 2001; Kofoed et al., 2002) helps as well in creating a standard or rather a path that can lead to achieving goals. Continuity in this aspect is related to achieving the goals by taking small incremental steps; it means breaking down the whole into parts and gradually examining the pieces. This is in line with Rother’s (2013) perspective on improvement KATA, that improvement could be achieved if an understanding of the present problem and organizations vision is outlined, thereby creating a defined path. LBS have over the years
defined paths for activities and processes, therefore every defined target takes them further to their vision.

A teacher mentioned that “we adjust based on feedback, improving one area at a time”. These identified areas for improvement helps them generate activities that are interconnected to the processes and the whole; which Rother (2013) supported that the improvement areas or targets must be realistic. For LBS, these realistic targets are defined after receiving feedback from students, teachers and parents. As a team, they analyze and present focus areas, meaning that they try to understand the problem area; what and where to improve.

5.2.2. ROLES
The importance of roles in continuous improvement processes was emphasized by Sörqvist (2004) while explaining three different roles.

The performing role: In all data collection method, the existence of distinctive roles was noticed. Although one could conclude that the role of a teacher had been defined by the profession but in terms of continuous improvement, these group of leaders take up different mantles. Classroom leaders could be categorized within the “performing role” due to their knowledge about classroom situations (ibid). This is evident in the document “LBS teachers’ evaluation”; which evaluates student’s satisfaction on teacher’s performance. With the aim of gathering information for purposes of continuously improving student’s perception and satisfaction, this information represents part of the planned systematic processes carried out by the school; a culture developed over the years to tackle the dynamic nature of students learning environment. The information from the “performing group” is further utilized during planning of the academic session; a process like the “P-Planning” in the PDCA cycle (Bergman & Klefsjö, 2012, Ljungberg & Larsson, 2012).

The supporting role: Furthermore, the health and welfare team was primarily identified as the “supporting role” but this could be understood from the perspective of task specifically to promoting health and welfare. Yukl (2012) identified this group of people as those with specific technical skills which the health and welfare team of LBS is not an exemption. With professionals like nurses, doctors and advisers on the team, their interest on continuous improvement could be noticed in LBS “combined plan document” where the idea of equality is constantly a topic for discussion. This confirms Sörqvist’s (2004) discussion about the performing group being involved in improvement and follow-up.

The governing role: Sörqvist (2004) explained the importance of leaders as facilitator for continuous improvement, which means they are to see that resources that assist workers on activities for continuous improvement are available. The “governing role” in LBS demonstrates the responsibility of a leader that evangelizes for change; a transformative leader. This could be seen in how the organization through various documents as well as the systematic improvement cycle, focus on areas that alter student’s learning; plan for as well as followed-up the activities.

Data gathered during observation also revealed how these roles are connected and dependent on each other. The dependency created engaged leaders in the different leadership categories, and stages/task. These roles/leaders could easily be identified within total quality management because of the mix of their processes and how it involves everyone in the organization
It also reflects on their organizational culture of transparency and openness while leaders within these roles apply transformative processes.

5.2.3. **Collaboration**

Collaboration cuts across various aspects of organizational operation. Partly, organizations can collaborate with its various internal division, or its partners. In terms of continuous improvement, workers collaborate with each other in setting goals and targets as well as planning to achieving them (Rother, 2013). As evidence, the research object engages in internal collaboration between teachers, students to help in identifying improvement areas. The observation process documented how the presentation conducted by the school (school head, teacher and school nurse) was a collaborative effort in explaining the systematic process of the school, meaning that collaboration could be experienced within same organization.

Shoultz et al, (2006) reported how an uneven collaboration could affect the perception of people, organizations or partners. For success to be recorded, collaboration should be mutual between all parties involved and the vision or goals, that is the outcome of the collaborative effort should be the same or rather positive for all parties (Rother, 2013). For partnership between companies, collaboration is of great importance and a determinant for survival if they rely on each other. Making strategic plans and helping each other in times of difficulties are some of the benefit of collaboration Liker (2009). This research investigated collaboration with partners and their involvement in improving quality, but could not establish an equal relationship between them.

The case of synchronizing continuous improvement was not the case in this research (Sörqvist, 2004) rather seemed like an “order-and-pay” partnership between the research object and the organization/partner. The results documented that partnership and collaboration leads to students’ satisfaction, as evident in the survey result from parents when asked about their child/children’s positive experienced, with comments like “good food” and “when representatives from "Sydney Film School Australia" visited the school”. But this research did not identify Sydney Film School, Australia as one of the partners.
6. CONCLUSION

This chapter presents a summary of the research while examining the research questions and whether these questions were answered.

6.1. RESEARCH QUESTION REVISITED

This purpose of this research is to understand how organizations succeeds in continuous improvement, by exploring leadership engagement in organization and the relationship between organizations and its partners. Despite the many literatures, the results from this research could remind organizations of the importance of the concepts leadership and continuous improvement for quality and customer satisfaction. With evidence from the data collected, LBS demonstrates a culture of consistency in leadership structures and continuous improvement with focus on improving students results.

Even though the answers to the research questions were presented with LBS Creative Senior High School as the object, it also serves as possible solutions/recommendation to others willing to transform their organizations by concentrating on leadership engagement and continuous improvement.

How do organizations tackle continuous improvement?

- LBS Creative Senior High School have over the years developed a standard for structural and systematic process for prioritizing, planning and executing activities continuously (yearly improvement cycle).
- The processes are mostly dependent on each other and aim to meet the needs of students. The processes are managed and maintained by teaching and non-teaching staffs, meaning that roles are assigned to each process.
- The processes are standardized, making it easier for a new employee to adapt to within a short period. Likewise, an outsider could easily understand how the school operates based on the fine line in their processes.
- Data/information that forms the basis for the continuous improvement, is collectively and continuously gathered by everyone, on everyone; teachers, students and parents. The school undergoes improvement in small and manageable stages, through prioritizing the most important areas.
- The teaching and non-teaching staff have structures that help in quickly identifying students in need of assistance, socially, morally, educationally or otherwise, making improvement a constant occurring activity.
- In tackling continuous improvement, teaching and non-teaching staffs are giving the opportunity to learn new competences; those that match present or future needs of the school, as well as competences to improve specific subject areas or those for handling class situation. LBS tackles continuous improvement from a holistic perspective, partly and in situations that are contingent.
What motivate leaders to create purposeful work relationship with workers?

- The organizational culture and value is based on openness, transparency, respect and the focus on providing students with good quality education.
- Teachers learn from each other and work as a team with interconnected functions.
- Teachers enjoy their occupation and extend this courtesy to students in classrooms. Likewise, the relationship goes beyond the walls of the school.
- The principal inspires and delegate task while trusting on the competences of teachers. This leadership characteristic motivates and encourage teachers to focus on individual and collective goals.

Do leaders consider partners in continuous improvement plans?

- The partnership between the school and the interviewed partner revealed no information of partners involvement in continuous improvement.
- Evidence from the observation, document analysis and interview showed no direct relationship with the processes and its relation to partners.
- The improvement cycle which is the school’s major standard for improvement had no process or activity that could be connected to partners. However, data from the survey conducted with parents connects activities of partners to student’s satisfaction.

Therefore, it could be said that plans for continuous improvement with partners is not an aspect that needed to be included in the school’s improvement circle. This is due to the kind of partnership maintained, as such, this research question could not be answered in this case study.
7. DISCUSSION

This chapter presents discussion of the entirety of the research from the researcher’s perspective, results, methods and generalization of findings.

Understanding the concepts of leadership and continuous improvement is an aspect relevant for all types of organizations, both those specialized on products or delivering services. This thesis introduced challenges faced by organizations, for example challenges due to societal demands or employment mismatch (Altman et. al. 2004; matching skills and labour market need”, 2014). As such, a dive into understanding how organizations through its leaders can work on continuous improvement, took the research to LBS Creative Senior High School. After numerous investigations carried out through series of data collection techniques and the researcher’s observation, it was confirmed that the school based on these evidence, has demonstrated that continuous improvement is integrated in all work processes and is the responsibility of both leaders and workers to maintain the culture.

This integration is supported by the role of the leaders and their commitment in ensuring consistency in activities at improving the results and satisfaction of students. Also, individual professional competence serves as a guide in structuring who does what, meaning that specific improvement plans are handled by workers with specific professional competences or experiences. An example could be drawn from how the health and welfare team collaborate with teachers to assist students with specific needs.

Apart from students being the focus group, the organizational culture allows for teachers to equip themselves with recent information/methods/techniques to improve teaching and classroom situation. They engage themselves and learn from each other by inquiry and participating in different forums (Toivonen, 2015; Enakeyarhe, 2016). The school principal provides opportunity for everyone to develop their individual skill necessary to serve the general purpose of continuous improvement, which of course is addressed from a holistic perspective; that is from top to bottom (Toivonen, 2015).

Organizational culture in respect to openness and transparency has been one of the foundations for building relationships (Uhl-Bien 2006). Results showed that leadership perspective that considers openness, transparency, relationship building and the likes, is a culture practiced by everyone within the school, between students-teachers, teacher-teacher and principal-teacher-student (ibid). The barrier for hierarchal communication does not exist in LBS. This invisible boundary has made relationship building within teams easier and acceptable as a norm.

The product of relational leadership perspective as a norm was narrated by respondents during interview. Respondents associated this culture to that which relates to transformational process motivated by the principal, empowering them to take initiatives in transforming the school (Hirzel et al., 2017). Meaning that the principal is committed in and utilizes transformational leadership perspectives as a mechanism for transformation (Jacobsen & Thorsvik, 2013). This fact was also confirmed by SIQ during the assessment, which the transformational leadership perspective from the principal is a driving force for open climate for discussion (ibid). The line between private and/or workplace relationship is determined by the characteristics of the persons in question, meaning that some people might be more open with information while some find it difficult. This where a transformative leader defines work-relationship either by
creating examples or altering the organizational culture by presenting, working and living by codes and conducts that fosters relationship building.

The analyzed document connects to how transparent and consistent the school operates. Anyone could easily study the documents and connect the dots between each stage in the improvement circle and the flow of work processes follows a red line. For this reason, it’s important that organizations work on how its processes and activities are documented. It helps in creating knowledge within and gives workers the advantage of studying other aspects of the organization for purposes of backing-up sick colleagues or taking a new role within the organization.

Parents confirmed their satisfaction from the established collaboration with partners, meaning that the quality provided by the school is contributed by their partners. Although the partnership could not be seen in the school’s continuous improvement or rather during data collected from interview, but the partner plays a great role in student’s satisfaction.

7.1. GENERALIZING RESEARCH OUTCOME

Irrespective of the type of organization (private or public), the work methods demonstrated by LBS could also be applicable to other organizations. Aspects of customer satisfaction is central to all types of organizations and as such, the idea of consistency out to be supported by the values and work ways like that of LBS.

For example, all organizations can benefit from having transparency and openness; their processes and work ways ought to be standardized. It should be easier for a third party to understand how the organization operates by studying documents that visualize their processes. The issue of specific method for continuous improvement plans should not be a hindrance to whether the organization and its leaders are effective. All that matters are how workers understand the goals and vision; and constantly strive for its achievement.

7.2. METHOD DISCUSSION

Data collection was done using four different methods (interview, observation, document and survey) on three different groups of respondents (Leaders in school, parents/guardians and partners) which according to Yin (2009) provides rich information during case study research. Managing these data might tend to be difficult sometimes and thus demands proper planning to ensure that the data collected are valuable. For this research, using three of the four methods could have produced similar results, but a higher level of confirmation on the results was achieved using all four.

It could have been interesting to gather information from students as well using survey, to provide a deeper understanding of the role teachers have in classrooms. This information could be had been triangulated with the information in the document “LBS teachers’ evaluation”, which might have reveal how students perceive leadership.

Also, quantitative approach would have strengthened the results if the response frequency from the survey with parents had been higher. For example, the level of quality the parents experienced from leaders in the school and the partners would have statistically measured the level of the school’s work on continuous improvement.
More so, interviewing parents would have provided avenue for open discussion and capturing more information, which the survey could not have provided.

Moreover, the research classified parents as “leaders at home” but the data collected did not reflect their leadership position or how their leadership skills could be correlated with that of the school. What was revealed was mostly the level of satisfaction parents experienced either through their children or directly from the school authority.

The researchers background as well as the type of data collection utilized, could reflect on the outcome if the research is conducted by another researcher. For example, the researchers formal background in informatics reflected on how communication was negotiated, structured and utilized during the data collection process. For same results to be achieved by other researchers, such characteristics need to be possessed.

Also, data collected through observations will be hard to replicate. To arrive at same or similar results, the research-site to be examined by other research must have gained recognition by SIQ, providing the opportunity for the school to conduct a seminar for audience interested in knowing how they operate. Also, the motivation from SIQ should be like that of LBS.

Another aspect to consider is the language utilized for data collection (Swedish) before being translated to English. The originality of information might have been lost during conversion (some words were translated to phrases because of the difficulty in finding the exact words that could produce the same meaning) and this might affect its reliability.

### 7.3. Further Research

The partnership examined in this research could not ascertain the level at which LBS considers partners in continuous improvement because the partnership is that of an order-pay partnership. It will be interesting to understand the collaboration between partners that have closer relationship and same group of customers; to understand if goals focused on satisfying shared customers, set up individually by both organizations could be structured as continuous improvement plans despite the separate vision and goals of the different organizations.

An alternative could be to position customers in a progressive curve, where the quality experienced from the previous organization could be used by customers in choosing which organization to settle for within this progression. An example could be drawn from partnership between two departments in a local municipality, where the quality experienced by students during their junior high school year, could be a factor that affects their choice whether to choose a senior high school within the local municipality, or elsewhere.

Another example could be seen from the combined effort of local municipality and their partners to ensuring constant satisfaction of citizens, which if derived, could be among the factors that determines if a citizen remain in the municipality or to move to another. These two examples present alternatives where partners might need to work together or synchronize their continuous improvement plans. If yes, it will be interesting to know how these plans are aligned to increase quality.


Läroplan, examensmål och gymnasiem gemensamma ämnem för gymnasieskola 2011


Informationsbrev

Hej,


Förutom att vara en student, arbetar jag som utvecklare i utbildningsverksamhet och har kännedom och förståelse av skolans uppdrag för barn och elevers lärande. I arbetet är ledarskap en viktig faktor för skolans utveckling. LBS Kreativa Gymnasiet Halmstad är ett utmärkt forskningsobjekt eftersom att skolan vann SIQ’s Kvalitetsmärkelsen ”Bättre skolan 2017" för sitt tydliga systematiska kvalitetsarbete.

Syftet med studien är att förstå hur organisationer lyckas med systematisk kvalitetsarbete genom att utforska ledarens engagemang i organisationen och dess relation med närmaste partners. Uttryckt på engelska "to understand how organizations succeeds in continuous development by exploring leadership engagement in organization and the relationship between organizations and its partners”

Eftersom organisationen är en utbildningsverksamhet, kommer utforskningen ta hänsyn till ledarskap på skol- och klass nivåer samt vårdnadshavare som ledare.

Dijutervy kommer att genomföras med rektorn/ledningen samt med skolans närmaste parter/leverantörer. Intervjun kommer att ta ca 1 timme.

En annan grupp är elevhållotematt som består av t. ex. specialpedagog, kurator, mm kommer att intervjuas. En gruppendrivinen kommer att genomföras med teamet vilket tar max två timmar.


Jag är tacksam för att ni ställer upp i undersökningen. Jag återkommer under kommande veckorna för diskussion och bokningen av tider för intervjun.

Med vänliga hälsningar

Omafune Matthew Enakeyarhe
Intervjuguide

Till dig som ska bli intervjuad

Inom ramen för en magisterutbildning i kvalitets- och ledarskapsutveckling på Mittuniversitetet, utför jag ett examensarbete. I studien har jag valt att fokusera på frågan om engagerat ledarskap för ständig förbättringsarbete. Ständiga förbättringar handlar om att kontinuerligt försöka förbättra kvaliteten i verksamheten. Jag är intresserad av hur er resa med ständiga förbättringar har varit utifrån ett ledarskapsperspektiv.


Studien kommer att redovisas under maj 2018 och därefter finnas tillgänglig i form av en rapport till er.

Tack för din medverkan!

Omafume Matthew Enekeyarhe
Frågor om ditt yrke
Berätta lite om dig och din roll som ledare

- Vad är attraktivt för dig i rollen som ledare i ditt yrke?
- Vad motiverar dig att vara en ledare?
- Vad uppskattar du mest om ditt ledarskap?
- Hur se organisationens ledarskapskultur ut?

Förståelse för Ledarskap som koncept
Jag vill förstå ditt perspektiv om vad du anser känneteckna ett bra ledarskap genom att beskriva en positiv händelse du har upplevt.

- Vad uppskattar du mest i din berättelse?
- Vad är ledarskap utifrån din berättelse; vad innebär det och vilka typer av egenskaper finns i berättelsen?

Dina åsikter om ständiga förbättringar
Ständiga förbättringar hanteras på olika sätt för att organisationer ska uppfylla sina mål. Beskriv lite om organisationens arbete med ständiga förbättringar

- Vad är positivt, utifrån ditt ledarskapsperspektiv, med att organisationen ständigt utvecklas?
- Vilka områden har organisationen satsat på för att få detta positiva resultat i processen för ständiga förbättringar?

Roller för ständiga förbättringar
- Berätta om din roll som ledare i arbetet med ständiga förbättringar
- Vad gjorde dig engagerad och positiv i arbetet med ständiga förbättringar på din arbetsplats?
- Vad är positivt med att samarbeta med andra, både internt och externt, då man vill uppnå ett gemensamt mål?
Till vårdnadshavare med barn på LBS Kreativa Gymnasiet, Halmstad.


Med godkännande från rektorn, genomför jag ett examensarbete, med LBS Kreativa Gymnasiet, Halmstad som forskningssubjekt. Eftersom att du har barn som går på LBS undrar jag om du har möjlighet att delta i en undersökning där målet är att fånga upp föräldrars perspektiv i skolans utvecklingsarbete.

Studien kommer att fokusera på frågan om engagerat ledarskap för ständigt förbättringsarbete, där vårdnadshavare/föräldrar också betraktas som ledare i den bemärkelse att ni direkt eller indirekt är kopplade till skolans förbättringsarbete.

Ständiga förbättringar handlar om att kontinuerligt försöka förbättra kvaliteten på LBS kreativa Gymnasiet och enligt Svenska Institution för Kvalitet (SIQ), har LBS kreativa Gymnasiet fått utmärkelsen "Bättre Skola 2017" utifrån sitt systematiska kvalitetsarbete. Jag är intresserad av ert deltagande av skolan stråvan för kvalitet, genom att fånga de positiva upplevelser ni har haft med skolan under dessa åren, som ledde till utmärkelsen "Bättre Skola 2017".


https://goo.gl/DdTQ95

Du kan även svara på frågorna i pappersversionen av enkäten som finns på nästa sida.

Enkäten består av tre frågeområden och tar cirka 30 minuter att besvara. Dina svar kommer att behandlas konfidentiellt och unidentifieras vid redovisning av studien.

Studien kommer att redovisas under Maj 2018 och därefter finnas tillgänglig i form av en rapport.

Tack för din medverkan!

Omafume Matthew Enakeyarhe
Fråga 1
Vad uppskattar du mest med att ditt/dina barn går på just LBS Kreativa Gymnasiet?
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________

Fråga 2
Beskriv kort, en av ditt/dina barns positiva upplevelser på skolan.

• Vad var det? ________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________

• Vilka är skolans styrkor i denna upplevelse?
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________

• Vem eller vilka var involverade?

• Vilka positiva insatser gjorde dem?
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________

• Vilka nytta fick du som vårdnadshavare?
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
Frågor 3

Beskriv om ett scenario där du tillsammans med LBS Kreativa Gymnasiet har varit involverad i ditt barns och/eller skolans utveckling i stort sätt?

- Vad var positivt i samarbetet mellan skolan, dig och ditt barn?

_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
APPENDIX D — INTERVIEW GUIDE AND QUESTION FOR PARTNERS

Intervjuguide

Till leverantör som ska bli intervjuad

Jag heter Omafume Enakeyarhe och studerar magisterprogrammetet ”Kvalitets – och Ledarskapsutveckling” på Mittuniversitet. Utbildningen har pågått under två år och nu, våren 2018 är det dags att skriva examensarbete

Med godkännande från rektorn, genomför jag ett examensarbete, med LBS Kreativa Gymnasiet, Halmstad som forskningsobjekt.

Syftet med studien är att förstå huruvida organisationer lyckas med systematik kvalitetsarbete genom att utforska ledarskaps engagemang i organisationen och dess relation med närmaste partner. Uttryckt på engelska ”to understand how organizations succeeds in continuous development by exploring leadership engagement in organization and the relationship between organizations and its partners”

Ständig förbättring handlar om att kontinuerligt försöka förbättra kvaliteten på LBS kreativt Gymnasiet och enligt Svenska Institution för Kvalitet (SIQ), har LBS kreativt Gymnasiet berömt med priset ”Bättre Skola 2017” utifrån sitt systematiska kvalitetsarbete, ett resultat från ständiga förbättringar. Jag är intresserad av ert direkta eller indirekta deltagande i skolans strävan för kvalitet, genom att fånga upp den positiva upplevelse ni har haft i samarbeten med skolan under dessa åren.

Jag önskar om ni kan vara tillgänglig för en intervju som tar max 30 minuter att genomföra. Ett separat mejl med frågorna kommer att skickas till er när ni bekräfta att ni har mottagit denna.


Studien kommer att redovisas under maj 2018 och därefter finnas tillgänglig i form av en rapport.

Tack för din medverkan!

Omafume Matthew Enakeyarhe
Tel: 0763477307
Frågor om samarbete
Berättar om en händelse där samarbetet mellan er och LBS Kreativa Gymnasiet nådde högsta grad

- Vad är det?
- Vad är det som är positive?
- Vad var framgångsfaktorer som ledde till den positivt samarbetet?

Att lära från varandra
Jag vill förstå ditt perspektiv om ömsesidig lärande mellan er och LBS Kreativa Gymnasiet. Självklart har du upplev olika samarbete med andra leverantörer/organisationer. Berätta något som har hänt där ni lärde av varandra.

- Vad uppskattar du mest i din berättelse?
- Vilka faktorer ledde till ömsesidigt lärande utifrån din berättelse;
- Vem var involverade i lärandet och hur är dem involverade?

Att utveckla med varandra
Utifrån din erfarenhet, berätta en gång när du känner dig mest involverad (direkt eller indirekt) i utvecklingen av LBS Kreativa Gymnasiet?

- Vad var det?
- Hur var du/ ni involverade?
- Vad är positivt om ert deltagande i utvecklingen?