

Systems of leadership development: how to transcend linear conceptualizations

Workshop proposal

The focus of this workshop is to employ a more systematic approach to leadership development and design a maturity model that is supported by validated and practical applicable theories, methods and practices to fit the organization's needs and resources.

Maturity models have been developed to assess the competency, capability, and level of sophistication in a specific domain, such as knowledge management, innovation management, or IT architecture (De Bruin et al. 2005). The main objective for maturity models is to evaluate and improve the organizations' practices by creating an improvement roadmap. Maturity models are used to evaluate weaknesses and strengths and form the basis for comparisons (De Bruin et al. 2005; Pereira and Serrano 2020). An essential feature of these models is to provide a pathway to increased performance within a domain and plan for which improvements to make and when. Maturity models are becoming increasingly popular; however, they are not without critique. Unfortunately, research has shown that most models are descriptive; only 6% of the maturity models in business settings provide guidance on how to improve the level of competency, which limits their usability to increase performance (Santos-Neto and Costa 2019). Many models are very linear.

In this workshop we connect fields of knowledge: leadership development, system thinking, and critical approaches to leadership to expand the definition of leadership development systems. This literature is quite distinct without much cross-referencing, thus, the integration of literature from different knowledge domains is an important contribution of the endeavor.

Leadership development system

A leader development system has been defined as all practices of an organization that contribute to producing effective leaders (McCauley, Kanaga, and Lafferty 2010). Whereas leader development refers to the development of an individual person to engage effectively in leadership roles and processes, leadership development refers to the collective development of a group or groups to engage in leadership (Day et al. 2021). There is an evident shift from seeing leadership as a solitary accomplishment, to including also social aspects, such as power relations. Leadership development practice from a relational and social perspective relates to the process of 'becoming' (Crevani, Lindgren, and Packendorff 2010; McCauley and Palus 2021), and is highly contextualized. However, learning approaches that are integrated in everyday work practices tend to be used less, and the various activities and events that take place in an ordinary workday are unfortunately often not made visible or organised as learning and development activities.

An LDS serves broader organizational needs that are linked to the organization's performance management, succession management systems, and strategic change initiatives. A mature system of leadership development integrates development initiatives customized to the needs of different leader segments, the intentional use of multiple methods of leader and leadership development methods, and an organizational climate

for development (McCauley, Kanaga, and Lafferty 2010). In a previous *Leadership* journal article (Kjellström, Stålné, and Törnblom 2020) found that a more complex way of understanding leadership development involved seeing leadership as something that must align with business strategies, which can also be seen as a significant mark of maturity of an LDS. The system is crafted, refined, and enhanced over time, and when mature, it is multifaceted and serves long-term as well as short-lived emergent needs and challenges.

Research on Leadership Development Maturity models

There are very few examples of leadership development maturity models. We have found a validated measure of organizational leadership development process (Van der Westhuizen and Hewit 2020) and non-peer reviewed and consultancy-based models. There tends to be a strong focus on individual leader development, and educational programmes for managers, alongside the findings showing that leadership development is commonly outsourced (Avby et al., forthcoming).

Workshop format

In the workshop, we process the aim to portray how organizations can organize and design a more integrated and systematic approach to leadership development. We present a brief introduction based upon data from a literature review of leadership development reviews (Schmidt et al in manuscript), comparative case studies in 8 organizations (Avby et al. forthcoming) and interviews in 12 organizations, and a series of workshop on best practice leadership development with leadership development professionals (Fabish et al.). We present our current understanding of key elements on how they can be ordered in relation to complexity and “maturity”. The workshop participants will work in smaller groups with handout material in relation to knowledge about system thinking and critical leadership development studies (e.g. Uhl-Bien 2021; Edwards and Bolden 2023). The participants will explore and gain knowledge on how maturity models can be enhanced by the critical complexity theories and how a LDS can be designed and improved in different organizational contexts.

The presenters

The workshop is presented by the research group: Sofia Kjellström, Anna Fabisch, Manuela Schmidt, Gunilla Avby, Ingela Bergmo-Prvulovic, Annika Engström.

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We have officially invited Professor Richard Bolden to be part of the workshop to provide expertise in critical leadership development research.

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