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**Article**

## A dialogue map of leader and leadership development methods: A communication tool

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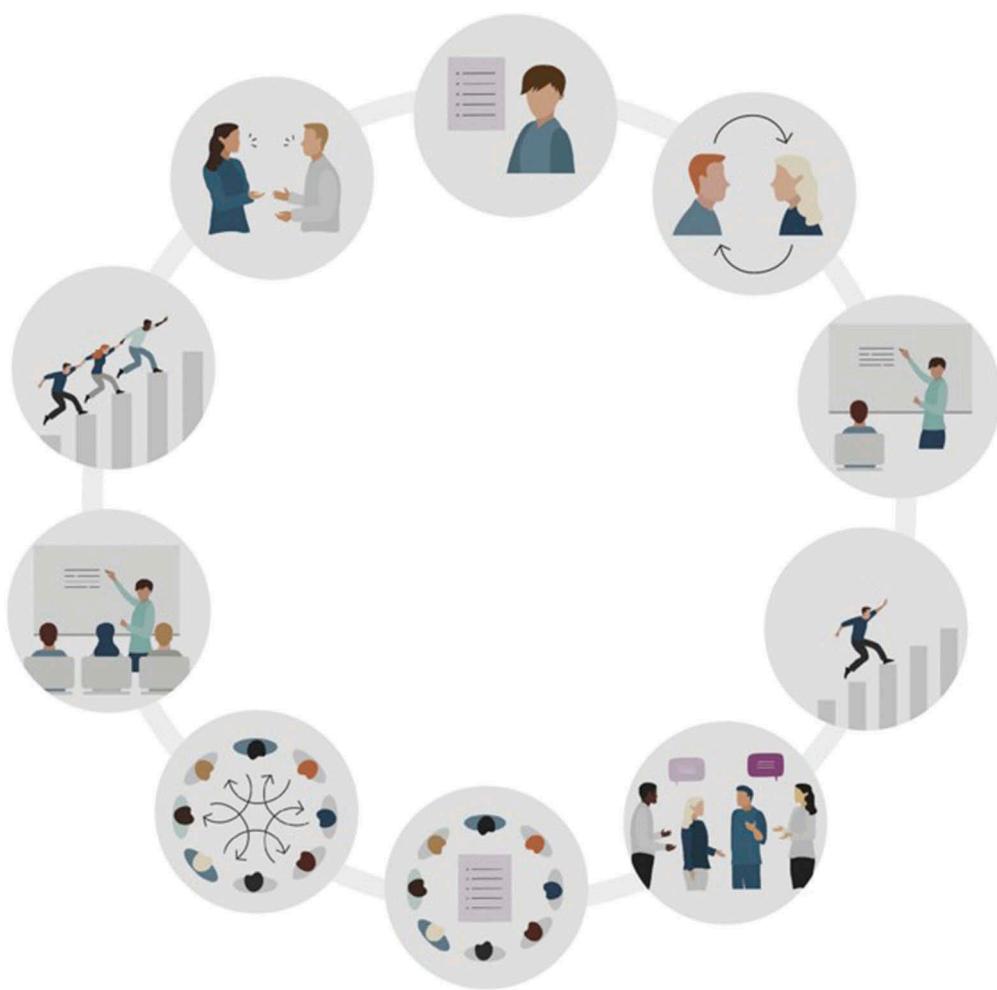
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## MANAGEMENT | RESEARCH ARTICLE

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Cogent Business & Management (2020), 7: 1717051



## MANAGEMENT | RESEARCH ARTICLE

# A dialogue map of leader and leadership development methods: A communication tool

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the end of the article

**Abstract:** The dialogue map is a new pedagogical framework that provides an overview of leader and leadership development methods and is designed to facilitate dialogues about how to promote leadership development. The aim was to create and test a dialogue map. This was accomplished through an iterative process using the literature, experts on leadership development, 45 interviews, 16 questionnaire responses and 6 workshops in three large organizations with managers, professionals and human resources experts. The dialogue map is designed as a table with five categories: developmental relationships, developmental assignments, feedback-intensive processes, education and self-development activities. Each category consists of individual leader development methods and collective leadership development methods. Thirty three methods are presented. The pilot test showed that the dialogue map increased awareness about available methods and enabled more deliberate choices regarding development activities. The dialogue map contributes by providing a systematic overview of collective leadership development, not only individual leadership development. Leadership development



Sofia Kjellström & co authors

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

This article is part of a larger research project on leadership development in companies with the aim to investigate how leadership development can be conducted and used to develop the companies' ability to improve. The researchers, together with the companies, explored different perspectives on what leadership development is and how it can be conducted in a systematic manner. Sofia Kjellström, PhD, is a professor of quality improvement and leadership, project leader, senior researcher with current research interests in leadership development and interventions, change management and co-production of health and welfare. Kristian Stålnæ, PhD, is a specialist in adult development psychology, senior lecturer in construction engineering, with research interests spanning engineering, adult development psychology, leadership development and metatheories. Oskar Törnblom is a PhD candidate and executive advisor with 20+ years of industry experience, with research interest in new forms of organizing, organizational design and leadership development in technology, knowledge- and project-intensive organization.

## PUBLIC INTEREST STATEMENT

The dialogue map works as a "map" and inventory of different methods for individual leader and collective leadership development, which can be used to support dialogues between different individuals or in groups to improve leadership. The first main area is based on what the individual can do to develop as a leader and the second on what groups (teams, units, organizations) can do jointly to develop the ability to exercise collective leadership. The dialogue map can contribute to wider awareness of and dialogues on what methods an individual or group uses and could use. Furthermore, it is a possible framework to enhance the quality of investment decisions in leadership development. Thus, the framework can be useful for organizations in creating more encompassing and successful leadership development.

becomes more democratized because it focuses on activities that can be done in daily work, inside and outside work, at both an individual and collective level.

**Subjects:** Management Education; Leadership; Human Resource Management

**Keywords:** leader development; leadership development; collective leadership; management; training and development

## 1. Introduction

When human resource (HR) professionals and senior managers work systematically to create systems for leader and leadership development, they should assess current needs in the organization (Dragoni, Tesluk, Russell, & Oh, 2009; McCauley & McCall, 2014; Van Velsor, McCauley, & Ruderman, 2010) and choose and craft opportunities for powerful developmental experiences to take leader and leadership development in the right direction. Researchers and leadership development programme providers suggest that HR professionals and managers do not request what is most needed; for example, they ask for a leader development programme when a leadership approach would better achieve the goals (Denyer & Turnbull James, 2016). In addition, there is a need to enhance communication and dialogue on different leader and leadership development methods (Martin, Kolomitz, & Lam, 2014). This suggests that there is a lack of awareness about and usage of available methods.

This article contributes by addressing the shortage of frameworks and presents different methods for both leader and leadership development. The dialogue map is empirically and theoretically based and not only provides an overview of methods for individual leaders but also what professionals can do as groups to enhance leadership development. The focus on leadership development is a nascent research area that needs further exploration (Day & Dragoni, 2015; Drue & Myers, 2014).

### 1.1. Experiences and methods that create leader and leadership development

A point of departure for this study is that leader and leadership development is created through rich developmental experiences (Dragoni et al., 2009; Van Velsor et al., 2010). Leader development refers to the development of an individual person, whereas leadership development refers to a collective dimension of development that occurs within different groups (Van Velsor et al., 2010). The development can be triggered and formed from a variety of activities in the present role and organization, such as formal education, leader development programmes, coaching, mentoring, teamwork, networking, unstructured on-the-job learning and changes in role and tasks. Many of the experiences are created at the workplace, but learning from encounters in childhood or private life can also shape leaders (McDermott, Kidney, & Flood, 2011). Some experiences and situations that lead to the development of a leader happen by chance or even from negative situations, such as losing the job or being maltreated (Yip & Wilson, 2010). The main interest in the study is those developmental experiences that senior managers, HR professionals and consultants, as well as individuals, can work deliberately to introduce and enhance.

### 1.2. The choice of appropriate experiences and methods

To design effective leader and leadership development and training requires the identification of appropriate methods and approaches (Salas, Tannenbaum, Kraiger, & Smith-Jentsch, 2012), and the focus in research has been on methods and their perceived impact on organizations (Cacioppo, 1998; Cullen & Turnbull, 2005). There is a risk that programmes are based on traditional designs and setups (Turner, Baker, Schroeder, Johnson, & Chung, 2018) even though research shows that using multiple methods facilitates learning, transfer and results (Lacerenza, Marlow, Tannenbaum, & Salas, 2018; Lacerenza, Reyes, Marlow, Joseph, & Salas, 2017). A comprehensive meta-analysis of 335 leadership development and training programmes showed that practice was more effective than other methods on results and equally effective for transferring the content to practice, and programmes that included at least two methods were more effective than programmes using only

one (Lacerenza et al., 2017). The state of the art in leadership development involves helping people learn more fully from their shared work, individually and collectively, rather than taking them away from work. However, to what extent do people know about the potential experiences and methods that can be used to promote leader and leadership development?

Within the field, there is no established way of mapping or structuring different methods, even though attempts have been made to do this by listing and prioritizing methods and learning sources (Allen & Hartman, 2008, 2009; Longenecker & Neubert, 2003; Martin et al., 2014; McDermott et al., 2011). In some studies, leadership development practitioners have rated different methods (Allen & Hartman, 2008; Cullen-Lester, Maupin, & Carter, 2017), and there have been attempts to categorize and map development techniques (Turner et al., 2018; Van Velsor et al., 2010). However, these frameworks are intended and written for researchers and HR professionals with a focus on designing educational programmes, rather than targeting co-workers and managers who are trying to develop as leaders.

One framework of categorizing leader development methods is based on five broad categories: developmental relationships, developmental assignments, feedback processes, formal programmes, and self-development activities (Van Velsor et al., 2010). The categories embrace the common distinction between formal leadership and training programmes and informal learning activities, such as on-the-job training and self-directed learning (Clardy, 2018). The categorization is based on a vast amount of empirical research (>1000 interviews) on the kinds of self-rated experiences that professionals describe as beneficial in the development of themselves as leaders, namely developmental relationships, challenging assignments, adverse situations, formal education and personal experiences (Yip & Wilson, 2010). It is not ethical to deliberatively assign hardships to people, therefore that category does not have an equivalent although it is possible to work with feedback from different challenging situations and use that as a category (Van Velsor et al., 2010). However, this framework lacks leadership development methods, even though they are proposed as an essential element (Van Velsor et al., 2010); and they are not alone. With the exception of the article by Cullen-Lester et al. (2017), there seems to be no other overview of leadership development methods.

The rationale for this study is two-fold. First, there is a lack of scientific articles that provide overviews of experiences and methods that can be used in work life for those who are interested in developing as leaders. There is also a lack of studies on how staff experience different kinds of methods for leader and leadership development. Second, using an interactive project on the needs of and support for leadership development, the authors have identified a more practical need for mapping methods for leader and leadership development. This study is part of a project with an overall design to produce knowledge of practical relevance and to a high scientific standard (Svensson, Ellström, & Brulin, 2007). During the project, it was realized that not all parties were familiar with the existing methods that could be applied, and further that co-workers and managers often expressed the need for additional leader courses, and HR professionals realized that expressed needs were not being met. Thus, a need for a framework mapping different methods was identified that could function as a basis for such dialogues, incorporating individual and collective dimensions of leadership development.

### **1.3. Aim**

Thus, the aim of this study was to develop and test a dialogue map for leader and leadership development methods, that is, provide an overview of methods that can be used to navigate leadership challenges and support growth from both an individual leader perspective and collective leadership perspectives. The name dialogue map was used because it is considered as a tool for individual reflection and enhanced communication. Another aim was to provide descriptions of how the different methods in the dialogue map were experienced by staff within the respective organizations. This research contributes to the leader and leadership development literature by renewing and expanding previous ways of categorizing methods for leader development.

## 2. Methods

### 2.1. Design

This study had an interactive design whereby researchers produced knowledge of practical relevance and a high scientific standard, together with professionals (Svensson et al., 2007). Interactive research emphasizes joint learning between the participants and the researchers throughout the research process. The study was part of a research project on leadership development in three large global/national technology-driven and project-intensive organizations operating in the metal cutting, software development and infrastructure industries. Qualitative methods were used in the process of developing a framework for leader and leadership development, and the COREQ 32-item checklist for qualitative studies was used to ensure quality standards (Tong, Sainsbury, & Craig, 2007). The first part of the study resulted in a framework hereafter called the dialogue map, which was then piloted and evaluated.

### 2.2. Data collection

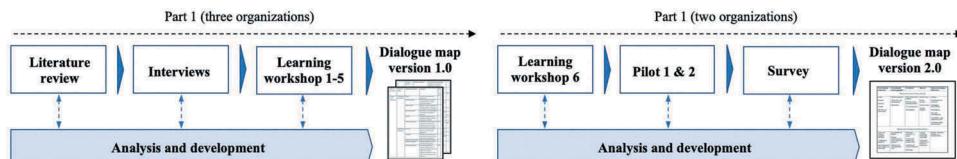
The data were collected through interviews and documented in tables, but also from learning workshops with managers and professionals from the three organizations. The data collection evolved and was adapted in relation to analyses performed along the way and had two main parts. The first part consisted of a process of understanding the current methods (Figure 1). The three organizations participated in three rounds, one at a time, starting with individual interviews, followed by analysis, presentations and discussions at learning workshops with key individuals in the organizations. One learning workshop was conducted at each organization as well as two cross-organization learning workshops. In the second part of the study, which consisted of a learning workshop with and a pilot project in two of the organizations, the dialogue map was developed. This process started in August 2018 and ended in April 2019.

The research team included a professor of leadership as the first author, one senior PhD researcher specializing in engineering and adult development, and a PhD student with extensive consultant experience in organizational and leadership development. The senior researchers had no previous relationship with the organizations. The interviews were conducted by the PhD student with extensive experience from interviews and projects in this type of organization, who previously worked as an external consultant for one of the organizations but had no personal relationship with the interviewees. Both genders were represented in the research team.

In part one, the choice of interviewees was made in cooperation with key individuals with in-depth knowledge of the organizations, who also helped to book the interviews. A purposive sample of participants was created by choosing persons with different roles and at different levels in the organization. Forty-nine people were contacted and 4 abstained for time reasons, which resulted in a sample of 45 participants (16 women and 29 men). The interviews took place at the workplace. Ten interviewees were working in managerial roles (executive, middle management, first line), 11 in professional roles (project/team leaders, technical experts, HR specialists, etc.) and 24 in dual roles (15 in a new leadership role and a professional role, 9 in a new leadership role and a managerial role). Additional executives, senior managers and HR specialists who were not interviewed participated in the workshops.

The informed consent process began by agreeing a contract with all three organizations regulating confidentiality and publishing issues, and key individuals participating in the project over

**Figure 1. The research process in terms of data collection, analysis and results.**



time were informed of the ethical requirements for participation. In part one, the informed consent process for the interviews began by each person receiving an e-mail with information, which was repeated in the face-to-face interviews. Verbal consent was obtained from the participants after the information was given at the interview, together with assurance of confidentiality from the interviewer. In part two, the individuals who received the questionnaire regarding the pilot project were asked to state their name, title and organization in addition to answering questions; thus the questionnaire was not anonymous.

The interviews in part one included semi-structured questions, because they were deemed to provide good opportunities to explore challenges and support for leadership development. The interview guide included questions about leader and leadership development (challenges, own needs, support structures and methods). A pilot interview was arranged to test the interview guide. All interviews were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim. The names of the persons and organizations were coded on the transcripts to ensure confidentiality. The interviews lasted between 37 and 101 minutes (average, 68 minutes). The transcriptions were not fed back to the participants, but those who participated had the opportunity to comment on the preliminary analysis at learning seminars. In two of the organizations, the participants were also asked to fill in a table based on the initial analysis of the interviews in the first organization. The dialogue map shown in Figure 2 was developed in a process whereby two preliminary versions (in organizations 1 and 2) were used as the basis for the interviews in organization 3.

A pilot study tested the usability of the dialogue map by including it in a leadership development course in organization 1 and in annual appraisals and leadership team meetings in organization 2. Data were collected first through conversations with one key individual at each company who in turn collected primary data. The key individual in organization 1 was a senior HR strategist in charge of piloting the dialogue map in an in-house leadership development course; data were collected in terms of verbal feedback during the course with 18 persons. The key individual in organization 2 was a senior manager in charge of piloting the dialogue map in annual appraisals and leadership team meetings; data were collected in terms of verbal feedback during the pilot with 20 persons. The pilot version of the dialogue map looked like Figure 2 but without the ten pictures. Second, a questionnaire with four rating responses (1 = not at all, 4 = to a great extent) and two responses for open-ended questions was sent to 48 participants; 8 persons answered from each organization (33% response rate).

### 2.3. Analysis

The data analysis process in part one followed an interlinked iterative three-step procedure of data reduction, display and conclusion (Miles, 1994). After reading the interviews from the first organization, the first author realized that it would be of value to create a framework of different methods in addition to presenting how individuals make sense of them. The data analyses were then reduced to interpreting instances of the methods being used, and these were displayed at a learning workshop according to an existing table of Methods of Leader Development (McCauley, Kanaga, & Lafferty, 2010, p. 45). The first learning workshop confirmed that individuals asked for a broad range of suggestions regarding methods for leader development, whereas the professionals and managers believed that mainly HR professionals deliver programmes, which meant that both categories felt the need for a broad framework of different methods.

In the second organization, all interviewees were sent a revised table, and the interviewer asked whether they had any experience of the methods and what they knew about the methods. The organization has Swedish- and English-speaking employees, so the table was created in both languages. When all interviews were analysed, a new learning seminar took place with the organizations. The same procedure was repeated in the third organization. The overview was also sent for review and feedback by key individuals in the organizations throughout the process. Two or three of the researchers participated in all the learning workshops.

**Figure 2. The dialogue map of leader and leadership development methods.**

Methods of Leader Development				
Developmental relationships	Developmental assignments	Feedback	Education	Self-development
Managers	Temporary assignments	Seeking feedback from colleagues	Internal courses and programs	Reading
Colleagues	Expanded work responsibilities	Reflection on performance	External courses and programs	Lectures or seminars
Mentors	Job moves	Performance appraisals		Scheduled self-reflection
Coaches		360-degree feedback		Recovery
Networks				Setting developmental goals
				Leadership roles outside organization

Methods of leadership development				
Developmental relationships	Developmental assignments	Feedback	Education	Self-developments
Trust and relationship building	New assignments to the group	Reflection together as a group	Formal education together as a group	Collective sharing of new knowledge and learning, e.g. lunch seminars
Group coaching	Problem identification and problem solving as a group	Feedback to the group from group members	Going to courses and conferences together	
Networking with other groups and stakeholders	Temporal and cross-sectional teams	Feedback from external stakeholders Debriefing		

Through the iterative process of collecting data in the three organizations, amendments were made to how the data were displayed. For example, the original category of formal programmes, inspired by Conger (1992), included four types of leadership developmental programmes: knowledge-based programmes, skills training, feedback-intensive programmes, and personal growth programmes (McCauley et al., 2010). In their table, McCauley et al. (2010) changed knowledge-based programmes to university programmes. In the process of interviewing and iterating the results to the organizations, it became clear that it was not possible to have these subcategories, because many programmes

included skills, feedback and personal development, although the proportions varied among programmes. Therefore, the display was changed and refined to internal, external and university courses. In addition, some categories were excluded because they used concepts that were not familiar to the participants. In this part, categories were moved, rephrased and removed from the original framework. In addition, a few minor changes were made by moving the method “leadership activities outside work” from developmental assignments to self-activities and adding a method called “reflection and daily feedback” to the feedback category. The categories that were excluded (communities of practice, job rotation, action-learning projects, assessment centres, professional conferences and trade shows) were methods that the participants in part one did not use or know about.

A major innovation in the leadership development section was the inclusion of activities that the participants were doing as a group to develop leadership practices. The items in this category were created from data from the participants in the first interview and then adapted in each round, with inspiration from the literature on collective leadership (Cullen-Lester et al., 2017). In the initial versions of the table, there were no subcategories in the collective leadership development section.

The dialogue map was developed in a process whereby it was decided to try to create and sort methods. This involved a week-long conversation with an invited expert on leadership development, Cynthia McCauley. In this phase more methods were added. The work was also discussed with key stakeholders in the organizations at a learning workshop, and the authors decided to undertake a pilot test of the usability. To sum up, the dialogue map was created in an iterative process using the literature (Cullen-Lester et al., 2017), experts on leadership development, and empirical examples from the organizations. In the interpretative process, the main author was responsible for the data reduction and development of the overview of the methods, but all authors read the interviews and reviewed the structure and content. How the interviewees made sense of the different methods is described in the Results section, where one quote in each category is provided; the organizations are coded by letters (AA, BB, CC) and the participants by numbers (101-). The questionnaire was analysed with descriptive statistics, and the open-ended responses with content analysis (coded AA1-8, BB1-8).

### 3. Results

The dialogue map is designed as a table with individual leader development methods ( $n = 20$ ) and collective leadership development methods ( $n = 13$ ) (Figure 2). A unique feature is that it describes what a person can do to develop as an individual but also how to develop as a group. All methods are sorted in five categories: developmental relationships, developmental assignments, feedback-intensive processes, formal programmes and self-development activities. Definitions and short descriptions of each method are provided in Table 1. The main part of the results describes the participants’ experiences of the methods. Usability is presented in the concluding paragraph.

#### 3.1. Developmental relationships

Developmental relationships span from naturally occurring interactions to purposefully designed interventions to develop one of the individuals in an asymmetric relationship (e.g. mentor, manager as coach), or two or more individuals in a symmetric relationship (e.g. networks, peer-learning partner). People repeatedly talked about the need to “bounce ideas off someone” (BB117) and reflecting on current practices and having someone to challenge them.

##### 3.1.1. Individual developmental relationship methods

3.1.1.1. Managers. The relationship with managers is a source for learning and development. The “manager as a coach” was an established concept, although the interviewees stated that the performance varied among managers. Because managers did not have solutions to all challenges, particularly those within the area of the interviewees’ expertise, open-ended questions were seen as a valuable method to support employee’s abilities to solve problems.

3.1.1.2. Colleagues. Learning occurs through colleagues, but few have heard about the method “peer-learning partners”, which involves reciprocal learning activities among two colleagues in

**Table 1. Description of methods of leader and leadership development**

<b>Category of methods</b>	<b>Type of development</b>	<b>Subcategories of methods</b>	<b>Description</b>
Developmental relationships	Individual leader development	Managers Colleagues	Manager as coach is an approach for facilitating employees' learning and development to improve performance Learning from colleagues can include peer learning, which is a reciprocal learning activity among two or more colleagues in equal roles
		Mentors Coaches	A mentor is an experienced and trusted advisor Coaches use different coaching techniques to support individual development
		Networks	Leadership networking consists of exchanging information, building and strengthening relationships
	Collective leadership development	Trust and relationship building Group coaching Networking with other groups and stakeholders	Activities performed as a group that build trust and relationships, contributing to psychological safety The group gets coaching on development, performance, etc. as a group Networking and deliberate work with other groups and stakeholders
Developmental assignments	Individual leader development	Temporary assignments Expanded work responsibilities Job moves	Temporary assignments consist of time-limited tasks or projects New tasks, assignments or projects Job moves occur when a person changes jobs between or within organizations

(Continued)

Category of methods	Type of development	Subcategories of methods	Description
Collective leadership development	New assignment to the group	The group acquires new work tasks or projects	
	Problem identification and problem solving as a group	Collaborative problem setting and solving as a group	
	Temporal and cross-sectional teams	Teams with participants from separate parts of the organization working together in cross-organizational teams	
Feedback processes	Seeking feedback from colleagues	Engage with colleagues to get feedback, e.g. after speeches, meetings, projects, etc.	
	Reflection on performance	Reflect on personal performance where the individual with help from others attempts to increase awareness of personal experiences and ability to learn from them	
	Performance appraisals	In annual performance appraisals, managers provide feedback on performance to individuals	
	360-degree feedback	360-degree feedback is a process of feedback from an employee's subordinates, colleagues, and supervisor(s)	
Collective leadership development	Reflection together as a group	Collective reflection enables structured learning processes, for instance by analysing different events in terms of what happened, why it happened, and how it can be done better in the future	
	Feedback to the group from group members	Feedback on how the group works as a group	
	Feedback from external stakeholders	Structures for collecting feedback and wider perspectives from external stakeholders	
	Debriefing	A process that takes place to create learning about a particular piece of work that has been finished	

(Continued)

<b>Table 1. (Continued)</b>		
<b>Category of methods</b>	<b>Type of development</b>	<b>Subcategories of methods</b>
		<b>Description</b>
Education	Individual leader development	Internal courses and programmes In-house courses and programmes created by the organizations and mainly conducted by in-house resources
	External courses and programmes	Courses and programs provided by universities, external consultant firms, etc.
Collective leadership development	Formal education together as a group	Groups participate in education at the same time
	Going to courses and conferences together	Groups participate in courses, programmes and conferences together
Self-development	Individual leader development	Reading Lectures and seminars Scheduled self-reflection Recovery
		Reading written material in different formats that potentially supports development Learning and developing by listening and discussing leadership issues Regular booked time for personal reflection daily, weekly, etc. To regain health or strength through processes of unwinding from sources that drain energy
	Setting developmental goals	Setting goals on what and how leadership can be improved
	Development of own leadership philosophy	Reflection on own ambitions and goals as a leader
	Leadership roles outside work	Activities outside the workplace that create leader experiences
Collective sharing of new knowledge	Collective leadership development	Sharing knowledge through, e.g. lunch seminars

equal roles. Nevertheless, examples were provided of two managers sharing rooms, and projects with two project leaders were described as developmental and beneficial when handling complex matters. Peer learning was also described as happening in the leadership team and in daily work when working with competent colleagues. This could be interpreted as peer learning occurring more in ordinary work than in planned leader development activities.

**3.1.1.3. Mentors.** The interviewees expressed that an individual could have a mentor but also be a mentor. Mentors provided the opportunity to bounce ideas off better leaders within the organization. Some individuals in the study emphasized the importance of perceiving the mentor as an experienced role model. Mentors are said to be at a distance and provide outside perspectives, and preferably are at least from another department. Mentors were mainly used for top leaders and were assigned on an as-needed basis, just as external coaches are.

**3.1.1.4. Coaches.** The coaches were usually external consultants or internal HR professionals. The value of coaching was expressed as, for example, improving performance or handling challenges. The interviewees expressed that coaches asked questions so that individuals were encouraged to find their own solutions to problems and expand their perspectives. They also articulated that a good coach created a relationship that is supportive and challenging.

**3.1.1.5. Networks.** The most common forms of personal networks mentioned were manager networks, often created by attending formal leader programmes together. Other examples of networks were groups of women or groups sharing a professional role (e.g. technicians). The interviewees explained that networking for particular groups took place in formal education, seminars or meetings, but networking also occurred in informal settings, such as at lunch. Professionals expressed a potential lack of networks across levels in the organization, and it is a challenge to continue networking when formal arrangements end.

### **3.1.2. Collective developmental relationship methods**

**3.1.2.1. Trust and relationship building.** Interviewees provided examples of trust-building activities within leadership teams, departments or across departments. The team-building activities that were commonly proposed ranged from informal socializing (after work, bowling, celebratory dinners), one-day events (kick offs, organizational days) to facilitated group activities (working with personality tests, feedback activities). Leadership development here involves the collective ability to build such relationships and a culture of trust so that the individuals are encouraged to make their knowledge resources available for the common good.

**3.1.2.2. Group coaching.** A coaching attitude was also described as characteristic of the culture in management teams and was thus conceptualized as something broader than a formal demand on the manager of the management team; rather something that members of a management team could practise together.

**3.1.2.3. Networking with other groups and stakeholders.** Within organizations, cooperation between different units or departments can be a challenge, the lack of which is known as “silo thinking”, which is acknowledged among the professionals. Constructive examples provided by the interviewees were “knowledge sharing workshops” on innovation in cross-functionals teams. They also mentioned how to connect with other groups and stakeholders, for instance by creating conceptual maps through interviews and surveys to stakeholders to understand how they are dependent on the delivery of products and services. When networking is done as a group, it is a strategic decision that the group should have meetings with other groups. In practice, this means that individuals meet, but the aim is for the groups to have collaboration and exchange.

### **3.2. Developmental assignments**

The essence of developmental assignments is to use new and challenging tasks deliberately and intentionally to create development for individuals. Using assignments intentionally for development

requires finding the right tasks, roles and moves for each person and conceptualizing the assignment as a means for leader development. The organizations provided plenty of opportunities for developmental assignments, but this was rarely expressed explicitly as creating leader development. One reason for this was stated as follows: "it requires a bit more vulnerability to ask for help in house and take care of what's available in everyday life" (CC105).

### 3.2.1. *Individual developmental assignment methods*

3.2.1.1. *Temporary assignments.* The interviewees described several time-limited tasks and assignments, but few were described as having the intention of creating developmental leader experiences.

3.2.1.2. *Expanded work responsibilities.* New tasks, assignments or projects were an essential factor in creating new opportunities for development at work. Most people in the organizations described expanded work responsibilities as a natural occurrence of work with changed or new work tasks. Not all of this was done to increase leadership competence, but examples were provided of managers who supported development of employees by assigning them to new roles in addition to their existing role.

3.2.1.3. *Job moves.* The interviewees described that if the organization does not offer sufficiently attractive working conditions, people choose to move to new opportunities. Job moves could be to another organization but also upwards or horizontally in the organization. The interviewees expressed there were plenty of opportunities to take a next step within the organizations.

### 3.2.2. *Collective developmental assignment methods*

3.2.2.1. *New assignments to the group.* New assignments to the group imply that existing approaches and strategies are insufficient, and they may involve complex tasks that require a multitude of perspectives and different groups to cooperate outside the formal hierarchical structure or outside the organization. This could include technical or social innovation projects.

3.2.2.2. *Problem identification and problem solving as a group.* This category overlaps somewhat with the previous one, and the developmental process involves collaborative problem setting where problem-solving strategies need to be addressed and adjusted as shared understanding and identification of the problem develop. The group may develop its social capital and collective leadership through collaborative problem-setting and problem-solving skills. Here, the group commits to reflection on their own actions and learns to reconstruct their actions accordingly.

3.2.2.3. *Temporary cross-sectional teams.* The teams were initiated by senior management, according to the interviewees. These kinds of groups existed in the organizations but had a focus on products and problem solving rather than being intentionally created to promote leadership development. Collective action-learning projects could be an example of an intentional method but were not applied in the organizations.

## 3.3. *Feedback*

Feedback on different aspects of leader performance is important for development. Feedback is described as essential and sought after but also something that is lacking from time to time. "Sometimes we are a bit careful about giving constructive feedback; unfortunately, we use feedback more when something goes wrong" (BB117).

### 3.3.1. *Individual feedback methods*

3.3.1.1. *Seeking feedback from colleagues.* The participants gave several examples of how they want to give and receive feedback from each other. Sometimes feedback was given by personal friends or allies, but they also provided examples of feedback as part of leadership training programmes.

3.3.1.2. *Reflection on performance.* Compared with annual performance appraisals, reflection on performance was described as something that should be done daily, weekly or at regular intervals during projects.

**3.3.1.3. Performance appraisals.** Performance appraisals were done at least once a year, but professionals expressed mixed messages regarding their value. Some raised critique that these did not promote further development; they were more an update of current performance and future plans. Others stated that they were developmental, particular if they had direction with the ambition and desire to create a plan. Some wanted performance appraisals on a weekly or half yearly basis. The performance appraisals also included planning for the future.

**3.3.1.4. 360-degree feedback.** 360-degree feedback was common in educational interventions for formal managers and leaders but also as an annual assessment for some managers. It was seen as a valuable method to get feedback from one's own manager(s), subordinates and colleagues. Self-evaluation was often part of the 360-degree feedback process, which provided a valuable opportunity to reflect on oneself and one's relationships, according to the interviewees. Some individuals in non-formal managerial roles expressed a desire for annual 360-degree feedback assessments.

### **3.3.2. Collective feedback methods**

**3.3.2.1. Reflection together as a group.** Interviewees described collective reflection as an integral part of the ways of working but also mentioned challenges in dissemination of reports and learning from other projects in the organization. This category also encompassed time and space to process and reflect on ideas in groups with the goal of enhancing creativity and innovation. Two of the organizations experimented with “free thinking (Fri)days” and seminars. Other topics mentioned included generating ideas, taking decisions on what ideas to put into action, and then getting time to prepare a project based on these ideas.

**3.3.2.2. Feedback to the group from group members.** Feedback may take place within the group between the participants on how the group works as a group. This may be done by means of formal evaluations as well as more informal feedback sessions

**3.3.2.3. Feedback from external stakeholders.** A group also need feedback from external stakeholders, and in order to get that structures and processes needs to be created in order to collect that.

**3.3.2.4. Debriefings.** During a debrief team members reflect and discuss a recent experience in order to find out what went well and identify opportunities for improvement. The aim with debriefs is to help teams learn from their experiences and build a common understanding. Some teams used elements of debriefing.

## **3.4. Education**

Education is a common form of leader development. It includes different kinds of leader intervention and training, which everyone has experienced. “We have many courses, for different things” (AA103).

### **3.4.1. Individual education methods**

**3.4.1.1. Internal courses and programmes.** Large organizations hold a range of in-house courses and training on a regular basis for specific roles and levels in the organization. Everyone was familiar with this kind of course as central to leader development, but they emphasized the need for these types of courses for individuals in non-managerial roles.

**3.4.1.2. External courses and programmes.** External courses are used on demand primarily for individuals with special needs and provided by external suppliers. Many described that they were aware of these kinds of opportunities when the course topic was not available in house. One of the organizations paid for advanced courses that included travel to other countries for top leaders.

### 3.4.2. Collective education methods

3.4.2.1. *Education together as a group.* Participation in education requires that all or many persons in a group, not only the formal manager, participate in education. The value of this method was in learning to apply tools and methods together as a group, according to the interviewees. These kinds of collective activities were seen as essential when an organization wants everyone in the group to contribute to leadership development.

3.4.2.2. *Going to courses and conferences together.* Attending external events together has the value of shared experiences, and because the group all receive the same content, it is easier to work together when they are back at work compared with when leaders attend courses on their own.

## 3.5. Self-development

Self-development activities are initiated by individuals on slack time, but organizations can also provide a wide range of opportunities for self-development activities. “Reading, my boss shares books, but it is up to you” (BB111). Four new methods for leader development have been added in this section.

### 3.5.1. Individual self-development activities

3.5.1.1. *Reading.* Reading was described primarily as an individual initiative, but some managers were proactive and suggested reading. People primarily referred to books but also to social media and online forums. In one organization, the professionals mentioned specific books; in another, one person mentioned the lack of a library of leadership books.

3.5.1.2. *Lectures or seminars.* Speakers gave talks on the subject of leadership and were either invited or were part of a conference programme. Invited guests from other organizations, academia or consultants occasionally provided inspiration and in-depth knowledge.

3.5.1.3. *Scheduled self-reflection.* A few persons gave examples of how they used self-reflection as a tool for becoming better leaders. For example, they set reminders on their computer or scheduled a few minutes every week for reflection.

3.5.1.4. *Recovery.* The recovery category was inserted in the pilot; it raised interest and people were eager to talk about it. The issue of handling stress and finding a balance between work tasks, life and private life was essential.

3.5.1.5. *Setting developmental goals.* Creating direction by creating development goals was seen as a means to improving working life and building leader capability. People expressed how they created these on their own but also in conversation with bosses who had these as demands. Another example is to create an own leadership philosophy, which can be seen as a self-activity because it requires reflection on leadership values and how you want to act as a leader. One of the leaders in one of the organizations described a process of creating her own leadership philosophy. She had also spread her ideas throughout the organization, and it was included in leadership training programmes. This can be seen as a self-activity because it requires reflection on leadership values and how you want to act as a leader.

3.5.1.6. *Leadership roles outside work.* The interviewees mentioned situations in leisure time that provided growth opportunities, such as being a sports coach, having animals, and family challenges such as parenting.

### 3.5.2. Collective self-development activities

3.5.2.1. *Collective sharing of new knowledge and learning.* Self-activities may involve collective sharing of new knowledge and learning, for example, internal lunch seminars where staff members share their expertise, or inviting guest speakers.

### **3.6. Use of the dialogue map**

The dialogue map was integrated in a leader course and in annual performance appraisals in two of the organizations. The main result is that the dialogue map was seen as a valuable framework to foster development from many perspectives for both individuals and teams. “It forced me to think of all aspects of my leadership and how I could utilize my possibilities” (BB2). It was regarded as being slightly easier to use at an individual level rather than at team level, which was not unexpected because collective development was a novel concept for most of the participants. “I like the focus on teams and the group to be developed” (BB4). It seems particularly useful in annual performance appraisals, although a few individuals were reported being overwhelmed by the many approaches. Participants also suggested that the dialogue map needs to be framed and introduced because they were not familiar with all methods. “I need an introduction to the dialogue map to get an even greater understanding” (AA2).

## **4. Discussion**

The contribution of this study consists of the development of a dialogue map with five refined categories of leader and leadership development methods (developmental relationships, developmental assignments, feedback processes, education and self-development). The results build on a research tradition of using experiences at work (McCauley et al., 2010; Yip & Wilson, 2010) but refine and extend current models and frameworks. The study underpins the assumption that leader and leadership development are based on creating vivid experiences at the workplace and that there is no one-size-fits-all approach to workplace learning and development (Manuti, Pastore, Scardigno, Giacoppi, & Morciano, 2015). The power of the results is that they provide an overview of the variety of methods that individuals and organizations can use to create situations and conditions that trigger learning and development. A main contribution of the dialogue map is the potentially increased awareness about the methods that are available and what a person can do individually as well as collectively to integrate them in daily work. The pilot using the dialogue map suggests that the dialogue map was perceived as an effective way of broadening awareness of the possibilities for leader and leadership development. This could further the design of effective leader and leadership development systems in the future. For this publication, we have added pictures to the dialogue map, which we believe will improve its use as a communication tool.

### **4.1. Methodological considerations**

A methodological strength of the study was the large sample of individuals in different positions and roles in three large organizations. The size of the organizations was also a benefit, because interviewees had personal experience of many of the methods. Furthermore, the iterative process and the feedback from participants in the pilot enriched the quality of the results. Nevertheless, future studies need to address transferability and examine if the framework is of value for smaller organizations and in other types of industries and cultures, and if there are additional methods that can be added in these contexts. Some categories were removed because the concepts were unknown in the Swedish context; this might suggest that additional adaptations could be needed in other cultures.

A methodological shortcoming was that the framework evolved over time through the research process; even more details of each method could have been provided if they had been known from the beginning. Compared with previous work on leader methods (Drath et al., 2008), subcategories have been added and refined in the present study (McCauley et al., 2010), providing examples within each; the category of leadership development has been added, which is a strength because it acknowledges the latest trends in the field. To further strengthen its usability, the dialogue map should be tested in other contexts.

### **4.2. Leader development methods**

The methods in the leader development section were well known among the participants. This can be explained by the fact that they include methods that are often used for leader development. Previous research has established that developmental relationships and challenging assignments are the

richest sources for leadership development according to leaders themselves across cultures, roles and genders (Yip & Wilson, 2010). The importance of developmental relationships is reinforced by people expressing the need to have others to provide support and challenges in their daily work, ranging from bouncing ideas in conversations to structured arrangements with coaches or managers as coaches. Consequently, there are many informal and formal relationships in organizations that could be deliberately utilized for development. Coaching is increasingly used in organizations, but the availability of developmental opportunities can be increased by integrating the concept of managers as coaches or supporting informal networks within the organization (Hezlett & McCauley, 2018).

Professionals expressed that the three organizations provided plenty of opportunities for workplace learning through existing responsibilities and challenges inherent in the jobs. Nevertheless, they were not seen as opportunities for leader or leadership development, which could be interpreted as there being unused potential for on-the-job challenging experiences and using these as intentional opportunities for leader developmental assignments. First, as a deliberate method, the dialogue map needs to be framed, presented and communicated within the organization. The type of on-the-job training chosen needs to be matched to the type of organization (Versloot, Jong, & Thijssen, 2001). Communication encompasses official strategies, staff meetings, intranet sites, but also informal conversations where people share mistakes and lessons learned and express how people can develop (Van Velsor et al., 2010-). Second, the employees of the three organizations are assigned new tasks and roles that improve their skills, but this is not expressed as leader development. Thus, it is important to explicitly talk about the elements that improve leaders and leadership.

The power of feedback lies in the potential to create learning and achievement (Atwater, Brett, & Charles, 2007; Drue & Wellman, 2009). The results indicate that professionals value feedback and that many worked hard to integrate feedback and reflection in work. An additional feedback method was added called “reflection and feedback in daily work”, because participants provided examples of how feedback processes were integrated during the working day, for example, ending meetings with a “checking out”, or scheduling time for reflection individually or in groups. The emphasis on daily feedback is consistent with research on feedback culture, whereby individuals continuously receive, request, and use formal and informal feedback to improve their job performance (London & Smither, 2002). One interpretation is that these practices further support and enhance organizational 360-degree feedback processes for formal leaders in yearly reviews or in training programmes. Working in a feedback culture could also facilitate the annual performance appraisal, which is a well-established concept in Swedish organizations, but the participants expressed that the leader could better address leader development issues.

Participants described plenty of experiences of different types of courses, training and education and courses provided by HR from external consultants, which is consistent with a previous study showing that leadership courses are fundamental to leader development. The self-development activities mentioned by participants were primarily reading and reflecting on books. In the pilot the category of recover was very much appreciated.

#### **4.3. Leadership development methods**

The category of leadership development methods is the most innovative result of this study, and it was created in an iterative process using the literature (Cullen-Lester et al., 2017), experts on leadership development, and empirical examples from the organizations. This category was experienced as new and raised interest in the participating organizations when piloting the dialogue map (Kjellström, Stålnæ, & Törnblom, 2019). This is in contrast to the view that a collective approach to leadership where leadership is co-constructed by those involved in an undertaking is often denigrated (Raelin, 2018). Research has shown that interventions introducing collective approaches to leadership demonstrated enhanced staff engagement, staff satisfaction, and team performance (De Brún, O'Donovan, & McAuliffe, 2019).

In an organizational context that is complex and uncertain, there is a need to use the perspectives of all partners involved and organizational design with a focus on collaboration and collective practices. Many referred to trust-building activities, from informal socializing to more structured events, to work with trust and feedback. This is in line with research that stresses that trust and psychological safety within teams and groups is fundamental for performance (Edmondson & Lei, 2014; Lacerenza et al., 2018). When working with collective leadership development, it is natural that the main body of development needs to take place at the very setting where the group is. For collective leadership development, shared norms and values need to be formed, such as openness and transparency in working relationships; mutuality of power and participation, open sharing of mistakes and valuing differences (Raelin, 2017). A challenge identified within the organizations was that they did some of these collective activities but they were not framed as leader or leadership development methods. This is in line with previous comments that there is potential to use these for development, but they need to be deliberately communicated as such (Raelin, 2017).

#### **4.4. Implications**

There are several implications for managers, HR professionals, consultants and those involved in development initiatives. Within each category, there are methods that require more resources and official structures but also methods that are more easily accessible for persons to initiate on their own. The things that can be initiated by individuals are more a matter of changing the mindset and the conversations, rather than needing time and money. This means that leaders can reflect on each category and ask what kind of relationships, assignments, feedback, courses and self-activities are possible to pursue in the current situation. A main value of the dialogue map seems to be increased awareness about the methods that are available and what can be done individually and collectively. It would also be powerful to have these kinds of conversations and dialogues with colleagues, the manager or a coach. This implies a kind of decentralization and expansion of awareness about leader and leadership development, when and if it becomes the task and responsibility of many. At an organizational level, leadership development systems are created by HR professionals to integrate all aspects that influence how an organization produces effective leaders (McCauley et al., 2010). The methods used in a system need to match the work environment (Grossman & Salas, 2011). Thus, the framework can be an important tool for managers, HR professionals and consultants to create more encompassing and successful systems. Lastly, a main implication of this study is that the overview can help a wide range of individuals in organizations to have fruitful conversations about how leader and leadership development can be promoted.

Future research is needed on how the methods can be combined to catalyse development, which methods and combinations are most effective for what kind of development, and how to evaluate this effectiveness. The research on collective leadership development is nascent, implying the need for future studies on additional methods.

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