Learning to Lead from a Distance

Reflexive Learning during a Pandemic

Karin Högberg[✉]
School of Business, Economics & IT, University West, Trollhättan, Sweden
`Karin.hogberg@hv.se`

Abstract—This paper investigates how seven leaders learn to "do" leadership from a distance during 19 months of the COVID-19 pandemic. By following the leaders' reflexive learning over time, the study sheds light on their assumptions, norms and values and how they questioned these in order to create the "new normal." Drawing on social constructivism, leadership is viewed here as actions being reproduced in everyday situations in communities. Furthermore, the present study used reflexive learning as a theoretical framework. The analysis reveals that the leaders faced many challenges, such as lack of face-to-face communication, and that their learning was a persistent process induced by both internal and external reflexive dialogues. These findings can serve as an inspiration to researchers and managers that seek to understand reflexive learning and leadership during disruptive circumstances and how the context challenges and creates leadership.

1 Introduction

Learning within organizations is argued to be a highly relevant matter for firms to remain competitive and be able to innovate and adapt to changing environments [1]. Leaders as well as employees need to learn to respond to the challenges of today's society and the persistent changes that characterize it. With the outbreak of the worldwide COVID-19 pandemic, work in many organizations was heavily disrupted. A huge number of employees around the globe rapidly moved away from working from the office (WFO) and started to work from home (WFH), often relying on digital technologies and interacting in a virtual environment [2, 3]. Leadership scholars argue that leaders can induce changes, but on the other hand, the context and its challenges and disruptions also create or produce leadership [4]. Hence, the context affects the way leadership establishes itself in an organization [5].

The present study takes the perspective of leadership learning during the COVID-19 pandemic with the transition to WFH in focus. Learning often occurs when the context is disrupted [6], and there is little doubt that the COVID-19 pandemic marks a major

disruption. More specifically, this study focuses on leaders' reflexive practice and learning, which in the present study is defined as a process of self-change in reaction to contextual challenges [7, 8]. The reflexive learning perspective seems appropriate, since it recognizes the need for people to react to, and reflect upon, sudden disruptions and crises, such as the pandemic [9]. Also, it is often an informal form of learning that occurs when people adapt to sudden disruptions [10]. Furthermore, reflection allows individuals to orient themselves differently and change their social context in order to understand how to act towards future, unknown experiences [11].

Leadership involves concrete situated practices, which are often based on human relations with the purpose to influence coworkers to meet organizational goals [12]. Therefore, questions about how leadership is affected by and how leaders adapt to, reflect upon and learn during social distancing and WFH induced by the long-lasting COVID-19 pandemic are relevant to study.

Compared to other crises, such as natural disasters or economic crises, the COVID-19 pandemic has been persistent and involved a high degree of insecurity both on a personal and professional level and left us hanging between the "normal" ways of working and searching for the "new normal" while surviving in the temporary workplace brought by social distancing [3]. Recent research also suggests that there is a lack of empirical illustrations that shed light on how leaders working from home adjust to, respond to, and learn to work and lead remotely [2, 3, 13]. Furthermore, few studies have embraced a longitudinal approach when studying leadership and the changing nature of work during the COVID-19 pandemic [13]. Instead, many studies have provided us with "snapshots" of illustrations from the pandemic [cf. 14, 15; 16]. Hence, the present paper aims to uncover how leaders have adapted and responded to the challenges induced by the COVID-19 pandemic over time and their experiences of learning induced by the pandemic.

In line with this aim, two research questions are asked: (1) *What were the challenges related to leading from a distance during the pandemic?* and (2) *How do the leaders reflexive learning effect their leadership practices over time?* This knowledge is vital given that the COVID-19 pandemic has changed and probably will continue to change how work is (re)defined and carried out, which will impact how leadership is practiced and how interactions between leaders and followers are conducted.

The present paper presents data from a study of a knowledge-based firm in Sweden, with its headquarters in the United States. The firm designs and produces electronic devices for other industries. The focus in this paper is limited to managers in the Swedish organization. In order to investigate how leaders, adapt to, respond to, and learn in and from the changes induced by the COVID-19 pandemic, a qualitative study has been carried out from March 2020 to October 2021. The data illustrate leadership practices from the outbreak of the pandemic to the period when societies are re-opening again. First, the study contributes to our understanding of how leaders' daily work practices, behavior and "doing" leadership has been challenged due to the enforced remote work during the pandemic. Second, the findings add to the literature on leadership and learning related to distance work.

The paper is structured as follows: an overview of related research on distance work, WFH and distance leadership is presented. Thereafter, the method used in this study is described. This is followed by the main findings of the study, and a discussion that

involves the theoretical contributions, practical implications, and the limitations and proposals for future research, followed by conclusions.

2 Theoretical framework

2.1 Reflexive learning and practice

Reflexive learning emphasizes the learning that can take place when individuals experience rapid changes, crisis, risks and uncertainties [17]. Reflexive learning, hence, emphasizes the way individuals examine their experiences and take lessons from them [10, 18]. Research with interest in reflexive learning, thus, put its emphasis on "how" rather than learning "about" or "what" [10, 19]. Recent research emphasizes that reflexivity should be viewed as a dialogical and relational activity, rather than a cognitive process [19]. Therefore, it is not merely an internal dialogue, but a negotiation between individuals. Reflexivity can therefore be viewed as a "conversation with the situation" [20, p. 23] that involves a dialogue with one's own mind as well as others'. Research suggests that increased ambiguities and persistent changes entail a more reflective approach to learning that can make individuals make judgments based on experience [19].

Making an experience significant involves a structured thinking process with "the purpose of understanding the connection between what one has done (primary experience) and the consequences of it" [21]. As such, reflexive learning is often unintentional, or informal—that is, it is not planned or formal with explicit learning goals and outcomes [19]. Informal learning is not limited to a certain location or context, nor is it structured in any way. As such, it is linked to the process of developing situation-specific skills, especially in the workplace setting [22]. Hence reflexive learning is closely related to experience-based learning [23, p. 36]. The author of [23] argues that individuals live through a flood of experiences, not all of which are interpreted as meaningful. In [23], it is argued that learning requires an open mindset and a capacity to reflect all perspectives, as well as the capacity to control one's actions, and an understanding of the effects of one's actions [19]. The change in behavior happens when individuals, or learners, "think about, reflect on, and engage with their social worlds in new ways" [19, p. 27].

In [24, p. 280], it is discussed that "a central feature of organizational learning is interpretation of experiences." This idea of learning can be found in [25], which explains ideas regarding "single-loop" and "double-loop learning," where single-loop learning illustrates how organizations deal with problems and the need for a changed behavior by implementing new rules. Furthermore, [25] argues that single-loop learning at work neglects that practices and that behaviors are not just a result of specific individuals' behaviors, but also of their principles, mindsets and interactions with co-workers. Recent research emphasizes that this calls for a process that presumes dialogue characterized by an "openness on the part of the participants where the experience comes into our awareness" [26, p. 133].

Numerous researchers are inspired by Dewey's idea of "reflected thought." To mention some, [27] discuss the "reflective practitioner" and [28] use the term

"reflexivity" to discuss learning. In [26], it is argued that reflection offered a powerful way of understanding experience and moved away from a techno-rational attitudes to the creation of knowledge and the process of learning. Hence, in [26], the concept of the reflective practitioner moved away from viewing reflective practices as something that happens in retrospect. Instead, [26, 29] argued that individuals are able to reflect "on our feet by having conversations with the situation" (29, p. 242). In [32], learning in crisis is discussed as a way of rethinking the emergent nature of learning and the ways it is established in organizations especially during disruptive times; it is argued that it is relevant to move beyond separating learning into a process occurring before, during, or after crisis. This perspective, hence, views learning in crisis as the *"ongoing practicing in the midst of everyday action"* [32, p. 7]. Also [19] is critical towards management learning research, as the author argues that it focuses too much on learning content rather than the learning process; she therefore stresses that learners should go beyond just discovering and understanding their assumptions—they should question their assumptions, but also the beliefs and values on which they, in turn, are routinely scaffolded. Reflexivity has also been studied from a leadership perspective. In [30], it is discussed that situations and conditions change and can make the individual think a little deeper about different things, from the meaning of life to what is worth doing and how the individual can handle people in their environment.

2.2 Leading from a distance—a short introduction

The saying that there are as many definitions of leadership as there are authors, is by now a well-worn saying, although this is obviously an important insight into leadership research. The field of leadership research is enormous and interdisciplinary, and within the scope of the present study, it is obviously impossible to do it justice [41]. Recent research points out that the COVID-19 pandemic has been challenging for leadership as a research field since "incongruities between leadership theories and the observed dynamics and outcomes of leadership in practice have been difficult to ignore" [32, p. 942]. Noticeably, the COVID-19 pandemic has created a new attention on leadership and what it implies and what leading involves when trying to understand and respond to the unknown [33].

Leadership scholars have long argued that leadership theories must respond to the changes in the nature of work, but also the effects of these changes [2, 34]. Leadership is, in the present study, seen as a socially constructed product that is constantly being reproduced in social contexts such as the workplace [35]. The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in various leadership and organization studies with many theoretical perspectives and methodological approaches. A large stream of research has used experimental methods to answer hypotheses about how leaders have adapted to the forced remote work induced by the pandemic [36, 37]. Another stream has used quantitative methods to investigate leadership approaches and behaviors [38, 39].

Research on remote leadership has emerged in many research fields. As argued by recent research [33], these theoretical concepts cannot be directly translated to the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, partly due to the element of long-lasting crisis and enforced remote work. Recent calls for research argue that it is mainly since the

pandemic is an exceptional situation that may result in unique consequences. WFH happened suddenly and resulted in the disruption of present work practices. Furthermore, recent research suggests that the new ways of working probably will continue when the crisis is over [2, 3]. This will have consequences for how organizations operate, as well as the relationship and interaction between leaders and employees and how we define leadership [42].

3 Methodology

3.1 Methodological approach

This study adopted a qualitative approach, with an interpretive perspective that emphasizes individuals' roles as social actors in a context [43]. By applying this approach, the study appreciates that reality or individuals' lifeworld's are subjective and mentally constructed [44]. Since it considers both social factors and the natural context, it can be helpful when trying to uncover individual experiences in an organizational context [44]. Furthermore, a narrative approach was chosen due to the focus on people's lifeworlds and the stories they tell about their experiences [45]. In narrative research, the story forms a whole and the respondents have explicitly chosen these events to tell because they are relevant to them [46]. Most important to the present study is that the narratives have happened in a specific context throughout the COVID-19 pandemic and can be viewed as the "medium with which human being make sense of their complex environment" [47, p. 5]. This approach supports the aim of this research, which is to understand how leaders learned to "do" leadership when WFH during the pandemic.

3.2 Data collection

The empirical data were collected by semi-structured interviews with seven managers (four women and three men) in leadership positions from March 2020 to October 2021. In total, 21 interviews were conducted that were recorded and transcribed. Follow-up interviews were made on three occasions with all respondents, approximately four months apart. The respondents were selected for the present study because of their positions as managers with responsibility over departments and teams within the organizations. Hence, these leaders did not just remember, but reflected on, their challenges as leaders and also reflected on how they had learned from experiences during the pandemic.

By taking the approach of following the pandemic from the outbreak to the "end"— that is, the period in time when social distancing restrictions were relaxed—the study followed the leaders' experiences from the critical parts of the pandemic. The interviews were conducted on Zoom due to COVID-19 restrictions and the respondents were all situated at home. A semi-structured interview method was chosen, led by an interviewer but with emphasis on allowing the interviewees to tell their narratives. The interviews were focused on the leaders' experiences, challenges, learning processes and thoughts on leading during a persistent crisis induced by the COVID-19 pandemic. More specifically, focus was on the shift from physical presence to virtual presence,

including communication, social connection and collaboration practices, technical challenges, and opportunities, as well as work. The purpose was to create insight from the narratives of the respondents' real experiences of leadership and learning over time. The interviews followed a soft laddering interview technique by including follow-up questions that built on the interviewees' answers [48]. Similarly, the interview themes used in the follow-up interviews were related to the topics brought up in the first interview.

3.3 Analysis

The analysis started with the data collection and was, hence, a continuing process that continued through the follow-up interviews. That is, after the interviews, the data were re-analyzed. During the process, a timeline was made in order to be able to follow the leaders' experiences and behavior during the pandemic. The timeline enabled the researcher to reflect on the data, and it helped to coordinate the follow-up interviews, as it helped the researcher to reorient the material when conducting the follow-up interviews. When the interviews were finally conducted in October 2021, the first step of the analysis was to code the data [49]. This first step of coding resulted in one category. The first step in the analytical process was to read the transcripts repeatedly and create an understanding of the respondents' narratives. The transcribed data were coded with initial codes of recurrent themes such as "control," "lack of trust," "insecurity," "changed work" and "actions." Furthermore, the leaders' reflexive dialogues with themselves and others were identified [26]. Thereafter, the analysis continued with an iterative process of re-reading the themes and refining codes [50, 51]. The final analytical phase was guided by a set of concepts from leadership theory, such as "doing leadership" [30], as well as learning *in* crisis [32], and reflexive learning [19]. By coding the respondents' narratives related to their experiences during the pandemic, both cycles of acting as well as learning from experiences and reflexive dialogues could be identified. Furthermore, the longitudinal data, including the follow-up interviews, gave insights concerning how the respondents' reflexive dialogues and practices occurred over time and how they reframed their leadership role.

4 Findings

4.1 A disrupted "normal"

The transition from WFO to WFH moved fast, in line with social lockdowns and social distancing within Swedish society and the rest of the world. Although the leaders described that they had used digital technologies such as Zoom or Teams before, it did not belong to their ordinary work situation. One of the leaders, Anna, says: "Of course, I have used it, some of our consultants have been participating in meetings over the phone but I have felt that they never really got a part of the meeting. There was always something wrong with the connection and they were really the third wheel." The leaders describe that they were "fumbling in the dark" and felt very insecure in their role as leaders over the 18 months of social distancing.

The interviews from the first six months of the pandemic illustrate a need to create a sense of "normal," that is, trying to create a sense of coherence within the teams. Interestingly, some leaders express that the new way of working has shed light on routines and interactions formerly taken for granted, or as Sam says, "how we just do things without thinking about it." By disrupting the normal order, the pandemic has made the leaders reflect on why for example they manage meetings in a certain way. Lars explains:

"Usually, the engineers are not invited to meetings with the management group, so before the meeting I get a debriefing and I bring it to the management group upstairs, and then they get critical and ask a bunch of questions. Then I take it back to the engineers and so forth. But I have restructured that, so now, every person in charge of a project can join the meeting. I had the first meeting last month, and got fantastic good feedback from the management team. They thought it was great to see some new people and hear about new angles and such […] The meetings with the management group can be pretty tough, so I am there, kind of as a mediator that translates when they get stuck in different assumptions and lack of knowledge, you know. I just keep thinking, why haven't we worked like this before? […] I believe that it's the technology that has made it possible, it would have been much more of a big thing for an engineer to walk into a meeting room before because that is not how we usually do it."

The quote above shed light on assumptions and norms related to daily work practices and how WFH created new ways of working that were supported by digital technologies.

4.2   "Doing" leadership from a distance

During the 19 months of the study, the leaders have repeatedly reflected upon the challenge of not communicating face to face. They miss the opportunity of having informal conversations in the corridor and being able to "read" their co-workers. This disruption has created a need to learn new ways of approaching and interacting with their co-workers. Maria says:

"I have changed the way I approach my employees. In the beginning [of the pandemic] I called my team members every day and asked them how they were and I really encouraged them to be honest. … I never use Teams for these kinds of talks, I want to hear their voice properly and have a normal conversation. But it's also so awkward, right, having your boss call every day? If we were at the office, I would only have called if it was something serious. So … I gave it a lot of thought, and after the summer I have made new routines and call them on certain days to see that they are okay."

One of the most obvious differences between working at the office and working from home was the absence of the office space and the embodiment of structure and leadership. The narrative above illustrates the leadership challenges related to the lack of a physical workspace where individuals interact and where the leadership is embodied. The lack of interaction in a physical workplace created the need for new

routines and ways of communicating that clearly overstepped the "normal" ways of interacting, which caused the leaders to reflect upon their behavior and how the employees would interpret it.

The empirical data illustrate that the question of control has been one of the things the leaders have been reflecting on. Here, the leaders have different ways of managing the distance. One of the leaders, Anna, says: "I think it has been really hard not to see my team members. I mean I hear things about some of them and not all of them have adjusted well to working from home. I have this man in my team; he has been kind of hard to get hold of. I have heard that he is renovating a lot… and training for a triathlon… but I don't know, it's just rumors."

The quotes shed light on the leaders' own assumptions and values and the new ways of working from a distance have created reflections about how one should act in order to be a leader in the new, digital workplace.

4.3   Towards a new normal

The data illustrate that the leaders had a large emphasis on keeping up their production and delivering results during the first year of the pandemic. However, when vaccinations became available, the focus started to move towards the future and how to work after the pandemic. All leaders are convinced that there is "no going back" and that "things will never be the same." Hence, they have reflected on how the new way of working should be managed. Interestingly, the managers have had different approaches to communicating about this with their co-workers. Anna says: "I sent out a survey and asked our co-workers how they want to work from now on. It seems as if the majority want a hybrid organization, but they don't want it to be flexible, but to have certain days to be at the office because they don't want to go to the office if there's nobody else there." John had a different approach. He explains:

> "I said to my team that we have to be honest with each other now, I ask you, how do you want to work? I said, I want to work from home, I don't have to be at the office three times per week, for me it's fine to meet for a lunch on Fridays twice a month. And then they started to nod and like yeah, that's how we want it too. We just cannot assume what people want, we have to be frank and have an honest dialogue. I don't want them to say what they think I want to hear. I believe that there is a reason for why I have two ears and one mouth and now it's a lot about listening, rather than talking."

The quotes above illustrate that norms, assumptions and values have been questioned due to the transition from WFO to WFH, and many of the leaders have taken it as their duty, or part of their role as leaders, to understand and communicate how work should be organized in the future. Obviously, this heavy disruption in how we work has created both challenges and opportunity and a necessity to question and reframe how people want to work.

5   Discussion

The main aim of the present study was to uncover how leaders have adapted and responded to the challenges induced by the COVID-19 pandemic over time and their experiences of learning induced by the pandemic. As leadership is viewed as a socially constructed practice, which is constantly being reproduced in everyday situations in organizations [35], the study focuses on reflexive learning among leaders. The study illustrates that the disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic created several challenges for the leaders and, hence, contributes to leadership research concerning leading from a distance [3]. None of the leaders' narratives illustrates that they had any formal training or education in order to lead from a distance. Instead, they experience informal learning and learning from experience [21, 22], as they were thrown into an unknown area. Learning often happens when the context is disrupted [23], which is also illustrated in the narratives. The disruption shed light on norms and values that were questioned by many of the leaders. Much of the leaders' learning process was guided by questions such as "why do we do this?" and "what happens next?" Hence, the leaders experienced a learning process that was persistent throughout the pandemic, and they constantly faced new challenges.

One of the main challenges for the leaders was the lack of embodied leadership [33]—they needed to reframe their leadership role and how they "did" leadership [26], due to the lack of a common workplace, face-to face communication and body language. In practice, this meant that the leaders had to reflect upon, adapt and learn how to lead from a distance as traditional leadership methods were not sufficient when all employees started to work from home [40]. The result of the present study contributes by empirically illustrating that leading from home during a persistent crisis is not just about managing people as leaders used to do before the pandemic [31, 37]. Evidently, leading from a distance required a change in leadership through learning new ways of working, and the present study illustrates that this learning process is a reflexive dialogue both within leaders, as well as between leaders and employees [19]. Hence, the result of the study illustrates that traditional management and leadership perspectives do not fully cover or are not flexible enough to meet the disruptions caused by the pandemic [31, 33].

Furthermore, by focusing on *how* the leaders learn [11] rather than *what* [28, 29, 30] they learned to adapt to leading from a distance, the present study makes a theoretical contribution to the field of leadership learning and reflexive learning [30]. The empirical data illustrate that the leaders focused both on what to learn such as communicating in a virtual environment, but also on how to learn to cope, since there were no answers to many of their questions such as "what will happen next?" due to the high insecurity induced by the pandemic. Hence, the leaders' learning occurred when trying to navigate the unknown; their learning did not occur in retrospective, but during the disruption [26], or *in* crisis [32]. Also, the study illustrates that leaders' internal and external reflexive dialogues and negotiations with others [11, 12] were focused on coping, and how to move forward and lead in a post-pandemic world, since the reflections concerned that there is no way back to what we formerly thought was normal.

During the ongoing crisis, the leaders reflected on the fact that there was no way back. Hence, the study also makes a theoretical contribution by shedding light on how the leaders' way towards the new normal has been negotiated between themselves and their coworkers, in a reflexive dialogue [32, 33]. Many leaders also reflected upon their own characteristics, such as need for control and lack of trust. These characteristics were evidently challenged when the leaders were forced to work from home and, therefore, from a distance, which challenged their norms, values and assumptions [9]. Hence, they learned both about themselves and through their virtual and distanced interaction with others, which also shed light on how the context and its challenges and disruptions produce leadership [4]. Hence, the longitudinal nature (that is, following the development of the pandemic) of the study contributes to our understanding of leading from a distance through a process of self-change in reaction to contextual challenges [7, 8] and leadership as a reflexive practice that is affected by processual learning [29].

6 Conclusions

The present study builds on data from seven leaders in a knowledge-based organization that was collected over 19 months and, hence, covers the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic and the re-opening of societies. The study analyzes their reflexive learning process and how they learned to lead from a distance. The transformation of WFO to WFH created many challenges but also induced internal and external reflexive dialogues that questioned existing assumptions, values and norms. Through the theoretical framework of leadership and reflexive learning, the present study has generated a new understanding of leadership learning, based on social constructivism, and the view that leadership is a reflexive practice and, hence, provides theoretical contributions on how leaders learn during disruptive times. Results from the study can provide a practical understanding of how the "doing" of leadership can be developed by both internal and external dialogue in order to navigate the unknown. This understanding is vital due to the disruptions and changes the pandemic has induced. The study does have limitations. It is based on few interviews with respondents within one organization. To broaden and deepen our understanding of leadership learning, future studies can contribute by studying other contexts as well as using a mixed method approach.

7 Acknowledgments

8   References

[1] Crouse, P., Doyle, W. and Young, J. D. (2011). Workplace learning strategies, barriers, facilitators and outcomes: A qualitative study among human resource management practitioners. *Human Resource Development International*, *14*(1), 39–55. https://doi.org/10.1080/13678868.2011.542897

[2] Orth, D., and Schuldis, P. M. (2021). Organizational learning and unlearning capabilities for resilience during COVID-19. *The Learning Organization*. https://doi.org/10.1108/TLO-07-2020-0130

[3] Stoker, Janka I., Harry Garretsen, and Joris Lammers. (2021). Leading and working from home in times of COVID-19: On the perceived changes in leadership behaviors. *Journal of Leadership & Organizational Studies*. https://doi.org/10.1177/15480518211007452

[4] Denis, J. L., Langley, A. and Rouleau, L. (2010). The practice of leadership in the messy world of organizations. *Leadership*, *6*(1), 67frtghy88. https://doi.org/10.1177/1742715009354233

[5] Currie, G., Lockett, A. and Suhomlinova, O. (2009). Leadership and institutional change in the public sector: The case of secondary schools in England. *The Leadership Quarterly*, *20*(5), 664–679. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2009.06.001

[6] Rochelle, J. (1992). Reflections on Dewey and technology for situated learning. In *Annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, San Francisco, CA*.

[7] Hibbert, Paul, and Cunliffe, Ann (2015). Responsible management: Engaging moral reflexive practice through threshold concepts. *Journal of Business Ethics*, *127*, 177–188. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-013-1993-7

[8] Hibbert, Paul, Callagher, Lisa, Siedlok, Frank, Windhal, Charlotta, and Kim, Hee-Sun (2019). (Engaging or avoiding) responsibility through reflexive practices. *Journal of Management Inquiry*, *28*, 187–203. https://doi.org/10.1177/1056492617718089

[9] Boud, D., and Middleton, H. (2003). Learning from others at work: Communities of practice and informal learning. *Journal of Workplace Learning*. https://doi.org/10.1108/13665620310483895

[10] Cunliffe, A. L. (2002). Reflexive dialogical practice in management learning. *Management Learning*, *33*(1), 35–61. https://doi.org/10.1177/1350507602331002

[11] Callahan, Jamie, and Elliott, Carole (2020). Fantasy spaces and emotional derailment: Reflections on failure in academic activism. *Organization*, *27*, 506–514. https://doi.org/10.1177/1350508419831925

[12] Alvesson, M. and Sandberg, J. (2013). Has management studies lost its way? Ideas for more imaginative and innovative research. *Journal of Management Studies*, *50*(1), 128–152. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-6486.2012.01070.x

[13] Bauwens, R., Batistič, S., Kilroy, S. and Nijs, S. (2021). New kids on the block? A bibliometric analysis of emerging COVID-19—Trends in leadership research. *Journal of Leadership & Organizational Studies*, 1548051821997406. https://doi.org/10.1177/1548051821997406

[14] Dwivedi, Y. K., Hughes, D. L., Coombs, C., Constantiou, I., Duan, Y., Edwards, J. S., Gupta, B., Lal, B., Misra, S., Prashant, P. and Raman, R. (2020). Impact of COVID-19 pandemic on information management research and practice: Transforming education, work and life. *International Journal of Information Management*, *55*, 102211. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijinfomgt.2020.102211

[15] Dirani, K. M., Abadi, M., Alizadeh, A., Barhate, B., Garza, R. C., Gunasekara, N., ... and Majzun, Z. (2020). Leadership competencies and the essential role of human resource development in times of crisis: A response to Covid-19 pandemic. *Human Resource Development International*, *23*(4), 380–394. https://doi.org/10.1080/13678868.2020.1780078

[16] Lal, B., Dwivedi, Y. K. and Haag, M. (2021). Working from home during Covid-19: Doing and managing technology-enabled social interaction with colleagues at a distance. *Information Systems Frontiers*, 1–18. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10796-021-10182-0

[17] Dyke, M. (2006). The role of the "Other" in knowledge formation, reflection and action in late modernity. *International Journal of Lifelong Education*, *25*(2), 105–123. https://doi.org/10.1080/02601370500510728

[18] Gbenga, A. E. (2016). Reflexive learning. *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Online Education*, 947–950.

[19] Cunliffe, A. L. (2009). Reflexivity, learning and reflexive practice. *The SAGE Handbook in Management Learning, Education and Development*, 405–418. https://doi.org/10.4135/9780857021038.n21

[20] Bamberger, J. and Schön, D. A. (1983). Learning as reflective conversation with materials: Notes from work in progress. *Art Education*, *36*(2), 68–73. https://doi.org/10.2307/3192667

[21] Hoel, L. and Barland, B. (2021). A lesson to learn? A study of how various ranks and police leaders understand and relate to experience-based learning. *Policing and Society*, *31*(4), 402–417. https://doi.org/10.1080/10439463.2020.1748626

[22] Marsick, V. J. and Watkins, K. (2015). Informal and incidental learning in the workplace (Routledge Revivals). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315715926

[23] Dewey, J. (2005). Democracy and education. Stilwell, KS: Digireads.com Publishing. (Original work published 1944).

[24] Holmqvist, M. (2009). Complicating the organization: A new prescription for the learning organization? *Management Learning*, *40*(3), 275–287. https://doi.org/10.1177/1350507609104340

[25] Argyris, C. (1976). Leadership, learning, and changing the status quo. *Organizational Dynamics*, *4*(3), 29–43. https://doi.org/10.1016/0090-2616(76)90034-6

[26] Bjørkelo, Brita (2018). Leading and managing interaction under risk in the police: What may be some of the underlying conditions for learning from experience? In *Interaction: 'Samhandling' Under Risk*. Cappelen Damm Akademisk/NOASP.

[27] Argyris, C. and Schön, D. (1992). Theory in practice: Increasing professional effectiveness (2nd ed.). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

[28] Bourdieu, P. and Waquant, L. (1992). An invitation to reflexive sociology. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

[29] Schon, D. (1983). The reflective practitioner: How professionals think in action. New York, NY: Basic Books.

[30] Alvesson, M., Hardy, C. and Harley, B. (2008). Reflecting on reflexivity: Reflexive textual practices in organization and management theory. *Journal of Management Studies*, *45*(3), 480–501. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-6486.2007.00765.x

[31] Antonacopoulou, E. P. and Sheaffer, Z. (2014). Learning in crisis: Rethinking the relationship between organizational learning and crisis management. *Journal of Management Inquiry*, *23*(1), 5–21. https://doi.org/10.1177/1056492612472730

[32] Ruben, B. D. and Gigliotti, R. A. (2021). Explaining incongruities between leadership theory and practice: Integrating theories of resonance, communication and systems. *Leadership & Organization Development Journal*. https://doi.org/10.1108/LODJ-02-2021-0072

[33] Antonacopoulou, E. P. and Georgiadou, A. (2021). Leading through social distancing: The future of work, corporations and leadership from home. *Gender, Work & Organization*, *28*(2), 749–767. https://doi.org/10.1111/gwao.12533

[34] Hooijberg, R., Hunt, J. G. J. and Dodge, G. E. (1997). Leadership complexity and development of the leaderplex model. *Journal of Management*, *23*(3), 375–408. https://doi.org/10.1177/014920639702300305

[35] Fairhurst, G. T. and Grant, D. (2010). The social construction of leadership: A sailing guide. *Management Communication Quarterly*, *24*(2), 171–210. https://doi.org/10.1177/0893318909359697

[36] Lombardi, S., e Cunha, M. P. and Giustiniano, L. (2021). Improvising resilience: The unfolding of resilient leadership in COVID-19 times. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, *95*, 102904. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijhm.2021.102904

[37] Francisco, C. D. and Nuqui, A. V. (2020). Emergence of a situational leadership during COVID-19 pandemic called new normal leadership. *Online Submission*, *4*(10), 15–19.

[38] Chen, J. K. and Sriphon, T. (2021). Perspective on COVID-19 pandemic factors impacting organizational leadership. *Sustainability*, *13*(6), 3230. https://doi.org/10.3390/su13063230

[39] Torre, T. and Sarti, D. (2020). The "Way" toward e-leadership: Some evidence from the field. *Frontiers in Psychology*, *11*, 2753. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2020.554253

[40] Contreras, F., Baykal, E. and Abid, G. (2020). E-leadership and teleworking in times of COVID-19 and beyond: What we know and where do we go. *Frontiers in Psychology*, *11*, 3484. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2020.590271

[41] Bell, B. S., McAlpine, K. L., and Hill, N. S. (2019). Leading from a distance: Advancements in virtual leadership research. In R.N. Landers (Ed.), *The Cambridge Handbook of Technology and Employee Behavior*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108649636.016

[42] Barker, R. (1997). How can we train leaders if we don't know what leadership is? *Human Relations*, *50*(4), 343–362. https://doi.org/10.1177/001872679705000402

[43] Saunders, M., Lewis, P. and Thornhill, A. (2009). *Research Methods for Business Students*. Pearson Education.

[44] Klein, H. K. and Myers, M. D. (1999). A set of principles for conducting and evaluating interpretive field studies in information systems. *MIS Quarterly*, 67–93. https://doi.org/10.2307/249410

[45] Pinnegar, S. and Daynes, J. G. (2007). Locating narrative inquiry historically. *Handbook of Narrative Inquiry: Mapping a Methodology*, 3–34. https://doi.org/10.4135/9781452226552.n1

[46] Czarniawska, B. (1997). Narrating the organization: Dramas of institutional identity. University of Chicago Press.

[47] Augenstein, K. and Palzkill, A. (2016). The dilemma of incumbents in sustainability transitions: A narrative approach. *Administrative Sciences*, *6*(1), 1. https://doi.org/10.3390/admsci6010001

[48] Schultze, U. and Avital, M. (2011). Designing interviews to generate rich data for information systems research. *Information and Organization*, *21*(1), 1–16. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.infoandorg.2010.11.001

[49] Miles, M. B. and Huberman, A. M. (1994). Qualitative data analysis: An expanded sourcebook. Sage.

[50] Cole, M. and Avison, D. (2007). The potential of hermeneutics in information systems research. *European Journal of Information Systems*, *16*(6), 820–833. https://doi.org/10.1057/palgrave.ejis.3000725

[51] Creswell, J. W. and Poth, C. N. (2016). Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches. Sage publications.

9 Author

Karin Högberg is an assistant professor at School of Business, Economics & IT, University West, Trollhättan, Sweden, Gustava Melins gata 2, 461 32.