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# CHANGING NATURE OF LEADERSHIP IN TERMS OF AGEING. YOUNG LIONS AND GREY FALCONS

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## Abstract

This paper highlights discussions of leadership from age perspective. Age is an often debated subject but how big a role does age actually play in a work community? The aim of this study is to examine the work of managers in terms of ageing. How they have changed in the course of time. The framework of the study is age management.

Ageing has also influence on leadership. This meaning of ageing and age diversity determines in leadership discourse. This study highlights three different discourses of leadership. This study is based on the interviews of four managers. The selection of interviewees is based on organisational and generational differences. Conclusion of interview analysis suggest that Managers discuss their work from three different framework viewpoints: 1. The Frame of Age and Ageing, 2. The Frame of Responsibility and 3. The Frame of Personality

**Keywords:** leadership, ageing, age management, diverse age groups, generational differences, responsibility

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

This research highlights some of the principal issues and debates relating to age management at workplace. Research in this area has usually concentrated on retirement and age discrimination and examined the issues from an employer's point of view.

The nature of leadership has changed. Managers of different ages perceive the new situation in different ways. Age is an often debated subject but how big a role does age actually play in a work community? Age is only one of the determinants but it offers an interesting angle. Today, questions relating to aging workforce are under intensive research but, from a governance perspective, there are still areas which have not been thoroughly explored. The manager's roles and job descriptions have also changed and become increasingly hectic and fragmented. At the same time, working hours have been extended and requirements and responsibilities in general have increased.

On the other hand, there also exists a group of young enthusiastic leaders devoted to the new work culture.. How differently do the young managers perform their tasks as they grow older, or is there a difference? (How well are they accepted in companies with older workers.)

Today, managers are expected to possess competences which the "military managers" of the old days could not even have dreamed about (Hoffmann, 2009). Earlier, it was enough for a manager to give a job and

decent salary. It was not customary to ask the employees whether they liked their superiors or not. Today, "superiors labour and subordinates grumble".

The aim of this study is to examine the work of managers in terms of ageing. How they have changed in the course of time. The framework of the study is age management (Juuti, 2002)

Ageing has also influence on leadership. This meaning of ageing and age diversity determines in leadership discourse. This study highlights three different discourses of leadership. The research questions are as follows:

- How do managers define age in their job descriptions?
- Does the discourse of the young managers differ from that of the older managers when they define their work?

## 2. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY

The theoretical viewpoint to changing leadership is ageing and age management. The study also examines the framing discourses of change, responsibility and personality. The purpose of this chapter is to set up a theoretical framework for the empirical part of the study.

Age is not an unambiguous phenomenon. First, age can be seen as a "calendar age" which can be verified from a person's official documents. It is often just this calendar age which is the most misleading as persons of similar ages can be very different. Second, when discussing "personal age" we are not really talking about age at all. Personal age is the way in which a person talks about him/herself and his/her life goals. It is a personal perception of oneself, an internal sentiment. Personal age is related to one's own personal objectives and it tells how close to the attainment of these objectives a person is (Vaahtio, 2006). The third viewpoint is offered by "biological age" which can be detected immediately. A person's appearance can be very youthful, or someone may want on purpose to look "older and wiser". The last viewpoint in this study is "social age". This means that despite his/her young age, a person may already have a considerable work history. Social age can be manifested in an autobiography or curriculum vitae. Put together, the abovementioned ages determine a person's labour market age and suitability for the job in question. Age is always determined in relation to something: to the adaptation of a task or situation (Vaahtio, 2006).

Companies, management and society have changed to a such extent that different perspectives are to be taken into account. Age discourse is "fashionable" as the working population is declining and aging. Some of the persons interviewed experienced age discourse as a fashionable way of introducing the latest leadership "isms", although ageism carries quite a negative tone (Vaahtio, 2002).

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***Diverse age groups***

Diversity approach to managing workplace equality has proved an adequate starting point to examine equality in the workplace (Riach, 2009). In her article, Riach (2009) focused on the main forms of diversity and highlighted how diversity questions currently apply to age management and diverse age groups in a workplace. Although age is not always discussed even as a form of diversity, it did not occupy any sort of a role in the diversity debates underway at the turn of the millennium (Stein, Rocco and Goldenetz, 2000). The most studied forms of diversity, or in many cases, direct forms of discrimination, are based on nationality, gender, race, ethnicity or cultural diversity.

The rhetoric of diversity was first introduced to the social discourse in relation to issues concerning age and labor markets. Anticipatory measures to avoid the looming pension bomb were implemented by promoting the working conditions of older persons. At the same time, ageing was determined as a political and economical problem.

Stressing the concept of diversity generates a presumption of the existence of "others". Diversity differs from the norm and different characteristics are usually considered inferior (Riach, 2009). Workplace diversity is a problematic concept in itself because its key principle, "difference", is used as a form of discrimination. When age management (age politics in the workplace) has been supported by the rhetoric of diversity, it has been considered to result in discrimination at workplace (Riach, 2009). Therefore, it would be more fruitful to focus on equality practices instead of diversifying practices. The discourse of diverse age groups leads to the marginalization of the aged persons from the labor market. On the other hand, the approach has been criticized of focusing on the promotion of equality at the expense of non-discriminatory measures with a very low degree of practical level impact (Riach, 2009).

Diversity means diversity in general - different groups in society which have different values, attitudes, cultural practices, beliefs and life experiences (Sintonen, 1999). It is characteristic to the concept of diversity and diversity debate to stress the different groups' right to be different and preserve their own customs and culture and yet remain at an equal status with the mainstream population (Arsenault, 2004). Even the concepts of "governing culture" and "cultural minorities" or "subcultures" talk about the traditional way of seeing minorities and subcultures subordinate. The governing culture is considered homogeneous and the only true form of culture. The governing culture is also better and more acceptable than minority cultures. In this context, diversity should perhaps be defined as pluralism. However, the purpose of this study is not to examine in great depth the concept of diversity and its various forms. Yet, the present study cannot remain completely detached from the debate of diversity; this research on leadership is to be seen as approach to diversity in leadership.

***Change in organisations***

Organisational change has, in many ways, become a permanent state of affairs (Juuti, Rannikko and Saarikko, 2004). Change and ability to change equal development. To change means to maintain competitiveness and continuous improvement. Job descriptions and assignments change and develop, too. "Change talk" has become a permanent part of organisations' activities. Most organisations have different levels of ongoing processes of change and development. Change has become a self-evident fact justified, for example, by changes in the external operational environment which require organisational changes as well .

***The concept of responsibility***

Leadership must encompass several issues when analysing responsibility or liability. First, the Law is not enough. (This means that organisational awareness and obeying the Law does not increase welfare.) "It is also important to focus on the informal moral principles operative in social life". Second, the logic behind responsible actions is also often discussed. Responsibility is a moral question with egoistic or altruistic motives behind.

In managerial work, this question is not so essential. A motive is based on egoism when an individual seeks to do right because he/she stands to gain something from the outcome. It may be, for example, appreciation, admiration, or any other form of benefit. Altruistic responsibility means that a person is ethically correct because he/she sincerely wants to do the right thing, without giving preference to his/her own interests. Altruistic actions are not only responsible, but also morally responsible actions.

Some theories in the field of research stress consequence instead of reasons (motive). Deontological deeds are good only if they are carried out on the basis of a universal sense of duty or a desire to do the right thing. According to utilitarianism, a deed is good only when it has maximum utility to as many as possible. Organisational deeds are usually utilitarian. Deontology is more interested in "why" an action can be considered as a responsible deed and how individuals understand one's ethical responsibility. Utilitarianism, on the other hand, is interested in "what" can be genuinely achieved with a responsible deed. (Takala and Pallab, 2000)

Moral responsibility can be determined as a personality disposition, where a person can be counted on to fulfill obligations and willingly accept the consequences of his/her behaviour (Takala and Pallab, 2000). On the other hand, the concept of responsibility is associated with the threat of punishment or blame. Responsibility is a duty and if one neglects that duty, the others have the right to punish. Responsibility attribution. Responsibility also means obligation and liability. An individual is always responsible for his/her actions, past and future.

Not every action is based on liability as people do not always act as individuals. At organisational level, there is collective moral responsibility. Sometimes external factors prevent us from following our own moral values, sometimes we just act randomly without thinking about moral legitimacy.

Business ethics is the entity of social understanding and lawful actions in a given organisation. A company is responsible for all its actions. However, a company is a collective entity consisting of multiple conscious and willing individuals who independently strategize, organise and implement its actions (Takala and Pallab, 2000).

### 3. METHODOLOGY USED IN THE STUDY

The research method used here makes part the interpretative paradigm. This study is based on qualitative interviews with a focus on speech and followed by a kind of discourse analysis. The study examines the interviewees' understanding of ageing and changes in working life. (Burrell and Morgan, 1989)

The research objectives make part of the hermeneutic research tradition in which the premises and an exploratory research data is analysed and interpreted to enable to understand the research phenomenon and its essential features.

Hirsijärvi, Remes and Sajavaara (1998) argued critically about the driving forces behind research: is it one of the tried and tested methods with the application of which the researcher is looking into the problem. Or is it that by resolving the research problem the researcher is trying to search for a proper method.) It is therefore necessary to critically examine the research problems so that they will be in balance with the method. This study is not researching speech nor is it an in-depth study of texts. This study, however, applies discourse analysis methods for material analysis. I ended up using the term "framework" to mean texts appeared discourses.

#### ***Social Construction of reality***

The research text is its own social construction which is surrounded by various phenomena giving it meanings (Juuti et. al. 2004). The construction process is not researched with truth finding in mind but to enable the reader to better form his/her own views of the conversations related to leadership characteristic.

In the social sciences, this paradigm, social constructionism, is determined as the dominant idea of how our social reality and the perceptions concerning it have been formed (Gergen, 2001). Linguistic communication is an essential tool through which to describe the surrounding reality. In a socially constructed world, two people cannot only perceive a subject matter and just say it is real, but they need to construct it. It is a liberating idea according to which meanings are not fixed and inevitable. Meanings are the products of historical events, social forces and ideologies.

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The selection of interviewees was based on dimensional sampling (Takala and Uusitalo, 1992). The method is used for a small number of cases to be examined. The risk of distortion is minimised by a careful planning of the participants. Sampling dimensions describe those characteristics by which the cases differ. By choosing different types of people, this study attempts to enable to research different perspectives on age and job description.

The dimensions of this study are constructed variables describing the age of the managers interviewed and nature of the organisations they represent. The variables are addressed as dichotomy, in other words, two distinctly different characteristics were chosen from both dimensions (Anttonen, 2005). A matrix is to be drawn up on the basis of the relevant characteristics. In the matrix, at least one participant is selected for each cell.

The interviewees used colloquial language and did not have a strong dialect. The interview transcripts have been written out carefully but, to improve the readability of the study, filler expressions such as "mmm" and "sort of" have been omitted. Points in brackets (...) mean a break in speech and indicate an interviewee's reflection before a response. In a study researching confidential speech, it is extremely important to guarantee the interviewees' anonymity. Any quotation enabling to identify the interview or the company he/she represents have been obliterated.

The interviews recorded by a Sony IC Dictaphone have been carefully transcribed. The data has been examined for several times with a number of different techniques. First, the aim was to create an overall picture of the interview material. Second, the material was classified. A scientific concept, the hermeneutic circle, describes my chosen way of analyzing the object of the study. In a hermeneutic circle, understanding starts from a certain viewpoint, deepens and returns back to them with an improved awareness of the basis. The material was read and re-read, progressively reviewing the researcher's own assumptions. This allowed better understanding and interpretation of the research material, which, in turn, made conclusions possible.

#### 4. RESEARCH DATA AND INTERVIEWING

This study is based on the interviews of four managers. The selection of interviewees is based on organisational and generational differences. Partly, the selection is based on age so as to obtain both young (about 35 years old managers) and elderly (50 and 60 years of age), closer to retirement age, managers for the interview.

The research topic questions were: 1. Age and company, 2. Experiences related to ageing, 3. Work and change, 4. Job descriptions by different-aged managers.

In this study, age is the key factor. In other words, I decided to address age as a "problem". Without stressing age as a visible phenomenon, age or aging would not necessarily occur in the responses. For example, the interview began, as is often done, with demographic information like: How old are you? Calendar age offers key information for this study but the question is relevant with regard to the interviewee's other responses as well. The interviewee may perhaps determine for him/herself the role of either a "young lion" or a "gray falcon". Assuming that I want the interviewee to continue within this framework, the next question after calendar age is: "please describe the age structure of your workplace". The WORK- hypothesis is that age is an important concept and interesting for the researcher, too.

The following four-field table was designed to help material analysis:

TABLE 1 - THE MANAGER'S CHANGING JOB DESCRIPTION- FOUR DIMENSIONS BASED ON AGE AND CHANGE

Ageing Manager "Bureaucrat"  Stable organisation "As long as nothing new is still to be learned"	Ageing Manager "Team player"  changes in organisation change in job description  "Gray falcons" - Prestige - Charisma
Young Manager (frustration?) "Radical"  Stable organisational structure, rigid and strong resistance to change  "Young lions" - Attack against the resistance to change	Young Manager "Yes-man role"  changes in organisational structure unclear allocation of work stress on efficiency precipitate (hurry) change in job description adaptation

In his study, Oshagbemi (2004) looked for differences between younger and older managers' leadership styles. The table above (Table 1) may also be viewed as characterizing leadership styles. An Australian study shows that management styles can be divided into three categories (Korac-Kakabadse, Korac-Kakabadse and Myers, 1998). "Radicals" include the youngest managers (26-35 years of age). Radicals have been in office only for a short period of time, they like challenges, are committed to their work, critical, transparent and extroverts. "Bureaucrats" were found in the age category between 46-55 years and they often work in large organisations. Bureaucrats have good interpersonal skills, they focus on details, do not like surprises. Bureaucrats hold the reins tightly in their own hands. Team Players were among the oldest managers (56 and over). Team Players are mature, human-oriented, realistic and sometimes conservative. They took challenges and initiatives to completion and had a long-term perspective in managing people and systems. They are not afraid of failure, they are ready to respect their colleagues and even if they do not have

experience of managing change, they dare to face the challenge precisely because they are not afraid of failure. (Korac-Kakabadse, Korac-Kakabadse and Myers, 1998; Oshagbemi, 2004.)

The organisations selected for the purposes of this study were in different organisational stages. Some of the organisations had just implemented an extensive organisational change. One of the organisations was very stable and rigid, but had considered a strategy for change. The selection of the organisations attached attention to this fact, and two of the selected organisations were more flexible, with several extensive changes behind.

## 5. ANALYSIS – CONSTRUCTING A MANAGER'S JOB DESCRIPTION

In this chapter, I will analyze the interview material. First I will examine each interview separately, and then summarize the findings in a table.

*Interview no. 1: Youngish manager in a currently stable organisation (changes have already taken place)*

The first interviewee works for a company which used to be a stable organisation but which has recently undergone extensive changes. As a result, the employees' job descriptions will change.

As of the frames referred to in the interview, I will first examine the age frame. Age-related themes covered the interviewee's own aging, age management and issues related to the management of different age groups.

The interviewee himself does not intend to continue working until the age of 63. Leaving the work life has been studied as a cultural phenomenon in the modern world view (Frantsi, 2009). The meaning of retirement has changed. It is no longer considered as a pension but rather as a long leave which continues until one becomes "genuinely" old. On one hand, the post modern culture defines life after active work as an opposite to surviving the demands of professional life (Frantsi, 2009) and, on the other hand, as an opportunity for freedom enabled by the third age (Karisto, 2002).

As one retires, however, he/she becomes disengaged from work related discourse. According to Frantsi (2009) and modern organisation research, retirement means freedom of work life obligations but it produces the need to find alternative meanings and identities from elsewhere. It is possible that a person's retirement years equal the number of his/her years of employment.

All in all, how to define "old" in an organisation? Most of the interviewees had difficulties in defining the concept. The voicing of age-related attitudes and prejudices were carefully avoided so as not to categorise

persons on the basis of age. For the first interviewee, age was not a particularly important factor and he placed greater emphasis on character and personality.

Research literature speaks of a limited view when people are defined on the basis of age. In organisational speech, public debate and even scientific contexts, age is sometimes given interpretations which only increase and exaggerate the imaginary differences between age groups (Vaahtio, 2006).

In relation to a manager's work description, age was of significance when speaking about the differences between young and old managers. Older managers are often self-educated or "big personalities". Generally speaking, young managers are often better prepared for their new role as they usually have a background of some managerial education, too. However, both age groups benefit an organisation. Young managers possess technological skills whereas older managers have their experience to offer (Oshagbemi, 2004).

During discussion on age frame, the interviewee also referred to the young managers' different way of leadership. Young managers are more relaxed than older managers. A relaxed attitude does not translate as "laissez-faire leadership" where a manager just lets things happen (see for example Bass, 1990). In his study, Schubert (1988) showed that age and time spent on interaction have a significant correlation (Oshagbemi, 2004). Interaction increases with age, reaching its peak at the age of 50 years. After that, verbal interaction slightly decreases. The respect as a leader is to be earned with good and timely decisions and with sound human knowledge.

*L1: "They may be specialists and well-experienced but you have your own (manager's) skills"*

A manager must be bold enough to make decisions among persons with long experience. Power is also related to discussion on age and manager's job description. Power is given different meanings in relation to status and freedom. The young manager is not, however, taking anything away from anyone but rather providing his input to the attainment of a common goal.

The interviewee linked authority to age. This is an interesting linkage from the perspective of age management. According to the interviewee,

*L2: "It is hardly likely that a young person would have enough experience to have such authority with which to become a manager".*

A young manager must be flexible and give room and responsibility to the more experienced. The time to become "adequately" experienced depends on the field of business: on the IT branch, for example, a person who is considered young by calendar age may be so experienced that even authoritarian leadership becomes acceptable. The interviewee had successfully chosen a more demographic leadership style and had not experienced difficulties in the management of older colleagues:

*"The older colleagues enjoy the same amount of power as before."*

It is said that power is always linked to responsibility. Responsibility is the second frame I took up in the course of the interview. Responsibility is related to the organisation and to the wellbeing of its members. In this interview, the question of responsibility was emphasised in connection with the loss of professional expertise as tacit knowledge (Virtainlahti, 2006) is retiring together with the persons leaving active work life. The transfer of tacit knowledge is not the only problem. It is equally important to consider where and to whom knowledge is to be transferred to. In today's work culture, the trend and desire is not to remain in the employment of the one and same organisation throughout the entire professional career but employees want experiences from elsewhere, too (Yu and Miller 2005). Therefore, why to share or receive something that is specifically related to a particular organisation?

*L3: "Yes, they are sharing it with the others we have here. But nothing remains the same. It may be that the others suddenly decide to leave for somewhere else."*

Another theme I raised up in connection with the responsibility frame was the line between work and leisure. In line with a manager's job description, duties and responsibilities often follow home. The increase of distance work has, for its part, further blurred the line between work and free time. The interviewee, however, felt that he would not have been able to continue in his present position for that long if he had not been able to leave work at the workplace. He stressed that it is the manager's duty to see that, for example, a young employee does not continuously put in extra hours. The amount of work has increased considerably on all levels of the organisation but the organisation does not expect its employees to continue working during their free time. It is to the manager to see to the fulfilment of the most essential duties out of the entire workload. In the current work culture, it is no longer possible to strive for perfection but "good may be the best". At the same time, today's hectic way of working has taken time from discussion. There are enough meetings and they are considered to eat up even too much time whereas there is not enough time for one-to-one discussions. In comparison to today's faceless work environments, work used to be more person-centred.

Discussion on responsibility gains new dimensions when an organisation's members start speaking about change. It is interesting to observe how change is referred to and how change is displayed when examined in relation to the manager's responsibility. From the manager's viewpoint, discussion on change has a positive tone. Change is not considered as a threat but rather a possibility for something better. The most important elements in change are the ability and desire to cooperate. Projects are doomed to fail if the manager is unable to make the organisation's members to work towards a common vision. Although the number of staff is being decreased and the amount of work increases, not all work is to be shouldered by a handful of employees as work methods and ways of working also develop at the same time.

The third frame I brought up is the way of referring to individuals and their uniqueness. In this study, I chose to call this the "good guy" frame. The frame is related to the concept of personal age (Vaahtio, 2006) which

avoids discussion on calendar age and underlines the significance of personality. The focus should be on the person, not on his/her age as age does not make any two persons the same or different.

*L4: "A 20-year-old person is young but it depends on the person and some 30-year-olds may also be young."*

The quotation refers to the fact that people are in the different phases of life and that life does not follow a certain pattern. The younger generation (generation X) has broken out from the traditional Maslow's hierarchy of needs (Yu and Miller, 2005). Personal life fulfilment for the large generations proceeded through education, career, marriage and career advancements towards the top of the pyramid (Yu and Miller, 2005). Nowadays, a person may continue his/her "wild single years" well beyond his/her early forties. Reconstituted families, on the other hand, also change the situation.

#### **Interview no. 2: Human Resources Manager (60 yrs)**

The interviewee works for a traditional field of industry characterised by long employment relationships. The organisation has undergone several extensive projects for change. Employees are used to changing and developing job descriptions.

The interview will first be examined in the light of the age frame. The following themes will be of particular interest: age structure, different age groups in relation to cooperation, and age management.

Age structure has traditionally been a factor drawn upon in company reorganisations. Aged employees are offered safe pension schemes in order to keep the younger employees at work (Taylor and Walker, 1997). According to the neo-liberalist line of thinking, the increased opportunities for part-time work are often beneficial for the aged employees (Arrowsmith and McGoldrick 1997; Wood, Wilkinson and Harcourt, 2008).

*K1: "During my work career, I have been involved in, at least, ten cooperation procedures and it has, throughout the history, been the option number one. The aim has been to meet these business cycles through voluntary exit..."*

*"...it has usually been our way of doing things... to see if there are people wanting to leave voluntarily. It has also its, could we say... negative side when doing like this... as if colleagues were also pushing them out, by thinking that their future will be safe."*

In the light of the organisation's functioning and those staying in the organisation, there is the risk of cutting down resources too fast. These cuts related to organisational changes are often implemented so rapidly that tasks and duties do not disappear in the same proportion. The interviewee, experienced in change management, underlined that changes should be implemented carefully and in the right order. First it should be considered which duties can be cut back or carried out differently. In crisis situations, however, action is

taken rapidly and no-one really knows who is responsible for the remaining duties. The frame of responsibility played a prominent part in the interview, the responsibility of the manager and organisation to ensure that work will be carried out even after the cut-down of resources.

*K2: "And there is not time to restructure these operations in manner that would leave out work tasks in the same proportion. They should go hand in hand, and rather so that we first see which tasks can be reduced or cut off as a whole, to be done differently than before. After having operated so for a while, we can start reducing."*

Age management becomes part of the manager's job description when there is a transfer from the management of issues to the management of people. The nature of work is changing from production work to information work which calls for the abandoning of traditional management styles, too (Yu and Miller, 2005). The interviewees see age management as a means of adapting work and job descriptions better suitable to the aged employees. This leaves other employees outside the sphere of age management. The purpose is not that only one age group would become the target of a certain kind of "management" whereas the rest of the staff remains untouched.

Different age groups become noticeable in organisational changes. If people are used to change, it will be accepted and the process will run smoothly. Young people, on the average, are more accustomed to changing situations (Yu and Miller, 2005). The older generation has a long tradition of doing things in a certain manner. The interviewee's organisation has undertaken efforts to improve readiness for change but with little success. The younger employees accept the fact that things will be done in a new way. To the older employees change must be justified and even then it is not certain that the change will be successful. On the basis of the interviewee's observations, it is, however, the easiest to implement reforms with experienced employees who understand that changes will come and go and that they can be coped with. In his article, Raths (1999) suggested that the presumption whereby aged employees would have inferior technical skills and therefore oppose to change, constitutes a certain form of age crimination.

The interviewee valued different-aged employees. He referred to personal age when speaking about the organisation's employees. From this study's point of view, the interviewee approaches age through both the age and the "good guy" frame. These two frames are not conflicting. They are clearly distinguishable but not exclusive. The interviewee is of the opinion that it is usual to have different-aged employees provided that cooperation works well:

*K3: "One can say that if the spirit for cooperation is good then the different generations, in a way, complement each other."*

Different-aged employees take care of one another and function as a family. If there are problems with the atmosphere at work, certain issues tend to aggravate and, for example, the aged employees may feel that the young do not value their expertise.

Authority cannot be gained through education or age – it must be earned (Hoffmann, 2009). However, certain management experience is prerequisite to be able to sense one's way around a work community, to be able to make people act in a certain manner. If the atmosphere at work is good and the teams function well, it is perhaps possible to obtain good results even with a little less management experience.

Management is first and foremost about the management of diverse people. Different kinds of employees and ways of working must be taken into account and, at the same time, it is necessary to maintain equality. Employees have different kinds of needs, expertise and skills, and the manager should be able to consider all these factors in order to keep the employees interested and motivated (Riach, 2009). For the interviewee, the most challenging situations are those when he sees that there are persons who are clearly more skilled than others and he would like to give them extra duties because they get things done. The organisation should, however, be equally burdened and the distribution of duties fair.

*K4: "How do you avoid that they are not, like, given too heavy workloads then? When you know that if you give the task to that person, he is sure to do it, he will do it well... but he already has a huge load of other things to do."*

The given quotation describes well today's challenging management situations, which cannot be resolved by militarist management methods (Oshagbemi, 2004). Coping with work, work fatigue, ageing and work ability are today's themes. Managers have many possibilities to maintain employees' ability to work. Managerial work is more about coaching than about management. The manager draws up a training programme, which the coachee is able to carry out and after that excel in the final competition. The manager must be resilient and believe that even the less capable employees can be trained and coached to improve their performance close to that of the top players. Unequal distribution of duties will inevitably burden the work community as some employees are allowed to put in too little whereas others are over burdened.

There is a distinct difference between a manager and specialist. For some persons sporadic, irregular and continuously changing work does not provide any feelings of success. Such persons are likely better suited for the role of specialist. Leadership is not self-evident. A specialist is an expert in his/her own field and able to manage technical issues but the management of people is not easy for him/her (Vaahtio, 2006). Some persons would much rather work as a specialist than a manager and some choose to blame work pressure in order to avoid managerial duties.

Earlier, the manager's job description was much more authoritarian and the decision of power concentrated in few hands. There was not need to justify one's doings whereas nowadays management is mainly management through dialogue. Today, there is a call for a more discussing, motivating and argumentative management style. The management of people has clearly overtaken the management of issues in importance. The employees are specialists in their own tasks and the manager is not expected to monitor the actual carrying out of the work duties. The manager does not necessarily even have understanding of the way the duties are carried out. This introduces another kind of a problem. The role of leadership is strong but it is most important to get things done.

*K5: "I do value more such persons who have good leadership skills but also at the same time systematic on the management side. That's because you won't be able to cope with leadership only if you skip the hard issues, then you have a chaos there fairly soon and won't be able to just talk your way out from there."*

Flexibility, equality and ability to manage different kind of persons are generally considered the most important characteristics of a good manager (Gagnon and Cornelius, 2000). It possible to attain the set goal in a number of ways, there is no one right way. When discussing the "good guy" frame, the interviewee underlines that an organisation (not a large one at least) cannot be managed by the manager spelling out the organisation's objective and ways to achieve them. The members of the organisation must be given certain freedom and degrees of freedom to figure out the ways with which to work towards the common goal. The interviewee finds target setting of utmost importance. The members of the organisation must understand the direction in which the organisation is heading and what is expected of them.

The interviewee's comment on the need for different kinds of managers falls within the personality or "good guy" frame. The interviewee emphasised that when a good and well-liked manager retires it would be unwise to look for a similar kind of replacement. He/she would always be compared with his/her predecessor.

*K6: "One must look for a different kind, who would bring vibrations with him and something new. The same player cannot be used for defence and forward either."*

The discussion clearly showed that different kinds of managers are needed at different times. There will be new ways of action and new openings and visions. Some managers are good for change and some for continuity. An article in a Finnish daily economic newspaper, *Talouselämä*, backs the interviewee's opinions by stating that it might be good, for example, if the chief executive officer were changed after each five years in line with the company's needs and situations (Kristiina Illi, *Talouselämä* 31/09). Too long management careers may constitute an obstacle for a company's reform and, thus, for its success.

**Interview no. 3: Young CEO**

In reference to the age frame, the interviewee spoke about cooperation between different-aged employees which has mainly functioned well. The organisation's staff are mainly aged because the company's employment relationships have typically been long. The employees have strong professional and entrepreneurial expertise. Ageing plays a role in sick leaves and in efforts to implement new ideas. Resistance to change is occasionally strong, not least because of strong entrepreneurial expertise.

Age management is often understood as taking into account the restrictions introduced by age (Ilmarinen etc.). In this material, however, undefined and partly unconscious age management measures were targeted towards the young employees. As regards the young, the company must, for example, take personal factors into consideration in a greater extent than in relation to the older employees. Personal issues disturb working. The older employees come to work punctually and produce consistent quality. The quality of the younger employees' work varies depending on whether they have "a good or a bad day". This is a significant finding and supports the proposition that age management does not concern only the aged but rather that, when possible, emphasis should be placed on the management of different-aged and different kinds of employees (Niemiec, 2000). Vaahtio (2006) has defined this as ageless management where the focus is on the recognition of each and everyone's special skills. Age does not make people the same.

As regards the age frame, the organisation is facing a problem with the transfer of tacit knowledge. There are no means or places where to transfer tacit knowledge to nor is there any particular interest for sharing among the skilled employees. The manager finds it difficult to define whether it is a question of the employees' lack of respect towards their own expertise or towards the novice.

The metal and machinery field is already experiencing a shortage of skilled labour. The question is not so much about the number of available employees but about the quality of the young labour force. Skill levels have decreased in the metropolitan area whereas the young living in the rural areas can still possess good hand skills. In addition, work ethic has totally collapsed. It is to the manager to find and assess the young candidates who would best serve the company's interests.

*N1: "About improving the level of vocational skills that there is. The level is that of a second-year vocational student's and they show up in the morning approximately at the time they are supposed to and leave when they are supposed to. And that's already fairly good. I mean that there is ... not really ... it is necessary to practice quite a bit the basics of actually going to work before we can start speaking about the accumulation of expertise."*

Responsibility: In his position, the interviewee values freedom and challenges. The manager has a possibility to shape his own job description. The objectives are given but he has the freedom to choose the means with

which to attain them. Due to the current business cycle, the duties of the young manager have changed but not increased. Earlier there was a lot of work and the manager had to find ways of getting everything done. He experienced the situation as a positive problem. Now the situation has changed and the decisive factor is to find means for the company to survive the bad economic times which has considerably increased work stress. Responsibility weighs heavy.

In relation to the responsibility frame, discussion touched also on the ways of working. Working should be fun and offer feelings of success. In a managerial position, they are often dependent on the person him/herself and must be found among one's own work. Fatigue and haste dominate today's dialogue on work. It is also trendy to be gloomy and satisfaction with work, enthusiasm and success are considered as American style fussing (Vahtio, 2006).

*N2: "The whole ... management... this kind of working then ... when things go well, that is as a whole, that there are these positive problems, then it is well ... really almost anyone, it doesn't matter you know, there isn't ... then you don't see if there is a good or a bad manager, or whether ... but when you have to do unpleasant things, then then ... it is so much more difficult than being the nice boss who is everyone's friend."*

This comment links the study to the current economic situation. It is, therefore, necessary to consider what kind of manager characteristics the situation calls for. The interviewee stated that:

*N3: "During good times almost anyone can be a manager when there is enough market demand. Maybe during the good times a too strong, rigid and authoritarian manager makes work force to leave for another company with greater freedom to carry out their work. In a difficult economic situation it is acceptable for the management to enforce harsher measures."*

In this case also, "a good guy" refers to a suitable person. During economic upturns, with a lot of work, it is easier for a specialist to run a company. Leadership and crisis management skills have a much more prominent role during the less prosperous times. The manager's performance is put under critical scrutiny when the company's results start to weaken. There are discussions whether all things have been correctly done or not. The top management must possess skills for both strategic and operational management, only one of the two is not enough. Although, at the moment, the emphasis is on the crisis management skills, there is a need to consider the company's future and measures in the long run. The economic situation has broadened the manager's job description from the management of issues also to the management of emotions. When faced with a lay-off, everything suddenly becomes very personal: "Why just me?" Emotions are an inevitable part of the picture and the manager needs a whole set of new skills. A responsible manager cannot ignore the importance of human relations but it is equally inevitable that occasionally he/she is unable to avoid unpleasant issues either.

The young manager stresses that during his short management career he has already learned how to present ideas to different people and in different situations. Human knowledge develops fast provided that one remains open and capable of change. The manager works in his own personal manner depending on the situation. The interviewee is a young radical leader with a good eye for team play (Korac-Kakabadse yms. 1998; Oshagbemi, 2004).

*N4: "... just that, that the whole management, that there is ... everyone probably has a personal way how to manage or get things done, but it necessary to slightly adapt within that personal way then .. that for different occasions, different situations, different things ... the style with which you do it."*

According to Vahtio (2006), the development of a person who has become manager at an early age may still be incomplete and become disturbed if he/she is made to shoulder the pressures of management. Subordinates are often older and, based on age, it is quite likely that a young manager is faced with problems related to authority, especially if the extreme ends of the pole are an inexperienced person contra specialist. The interviewee comment on the issue:

*N5: "... it is quite common to put on table ... the card that I've been doing these things before you were even born."*

If the manager is qualified and decisive enough for his role such situations can be surpassed. As there is not authority based on age, the manager must cope with his own personality and skills. However, a manager's position in itself is of such nature that it is likely to generate disagreement and critique among subordinates. A manager cannot be "common" but, depending on the individual, the position entails status and distance (Vahtio, 2006).

***Interview no. 4: Ageing manager in a currently stable organisation (changes have already taken place)***

The interviewee stayed mainly within the "good guy" framework. People are not precisely categorised by age but persons who have stayed long in the employment of the same organisation are often categorised based on the fixed perception of their earlier conduct. In such organisation, it is very difficult to change one's image or role. Therefore, long employment relationships have also their drawbacks. It has not been easy for the manager either to change his style or to begin in the new manner within the same organisation as subordinates expect him to carry out the same manoeuvres as before.

*A1: "Critique is easily quite strong, that if you don't do well in the job, the guys will tell you that you are no good. For that reason a jump to a new position or role maybe even more difficult in this kind of organisation than in an organisation where you can change your work station or*

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*colleagues ... you might be able to look for a new role for yourself and even fail for a little, but in this business the guys have known you for such a long time, that the finding of a new role is somewhat difficult, at least in a change situation it makes these people a bit less flexible...*

The interviewee also spoke about the age frame. In the manager's role, it is important to know your counterparts. The manager tries to modify his way of speaking in a manner that will best reach the audience.

A2: *"Of course when I am speaking as a superior, then maybe to consider also the fact, that how the others will interpret, what kind of beliefs it creates. Some may be offended by an issue that you yourself take as self-evident ... It must be that, but on the other hand one shouldn't either start, in a management situation, to be too careful, or then the whole message will become blurred. That in a way to find such ways of communication that don't have too much emotions in them and that the interpretation of emotions is not possible."*

With regard to management, the interviewee tries to keep emotions out of communication. However, it is important for a manager to be able to understand and interpret emotions in order to shape his/her message correctly. Leadership is usually about personality, style and context but leadership is also filled with emotion (Fineman, 2003). Managerial communication balances between the recognition, management and neutrality of emotions. The interviewee has chosen a style he considers "suitable for his age". Generations are different and research has shown that different-aged persons appreciate different kinds of management (Arsenault, 2004; Yu and Miller, 2005; Niemiec 2000).

Even more than age, the interviewee emphasised attitude towards life and capacity to work which, in addition to calendar age, depend on a number of factors.

As of his future challenges, the interviewee pointed out the securing of good and capable staff. Earlier, both the work and staff characteristic to his line of business had been such that the probability of finding good employees was always there. In the future, it will be increasingly important to select from among the young such persons who will be able to meet the demands of the branch.

During the interview, the manager gave some serious thought to the amendments that time had introduced to his work. As a manager, he found himself probably more experienced and realistic, but hopefully still creative, enthusiastic and positive, too. Ageing is perhaps often seen as synonymous to a certain decrease in enthusiasm and creativity. With age, the "age limit for ageing" has also increased. Today's people live longer and even a 77-year-old person is not necessarily really old. The interviewee found age a very individual phenomenon depending on personal history and state of health. It is typical that as one grows older, the aged begin to seem extremely old and the young still younger (Frantsi, 2009).

Interaction plays an important role in managerial work but it is only a part of the whole picture.

A3: *“Of course one is able to take in a few of those chaotic or different kinds of days ... for a certain amount of time, but at times it however feels that it would be good that if some kind of a rhythm could still be found from behind it all. Instead of it being only some kind of continuous interaction ... running around here and there, and I mean that it really takes some thinking on the main function and structure, and also that it is not enough to be only social , it won't keep the work community vital.”*

The interviewee underlined, for several times, the specific characteristics of his organisation. It is possible that corresponding closed organisations would not be easy to find from business life. As regards ageing, the manager considered the excessive categorisation of people on the basis of age as a threat. In an organisation with long employment relationships this means, for example, that there are more information and opinions about the personal characteristics of the aged employees. This may easily lead to somewhat unfair management where some employees are assigned more demanding duties than others. The interviewee would like his organisation to have courage to abandon these established roles.

A4: *“That, is one relying too much on what one knows about that person, that ... should one be a bit more daring or different at times...”*

*“But it easily happens that one maybe even a bit too much puts people in different categories already beforehand, based on, the kind of idea one has of those people.”*

Responsibility plays a role in the manager's work. His job description carries responsibilities and this is reflected in the interview as well. With technology, the manager's responsibility and related duties have gained new forms. Today's ways of working, including distance work and e-mail, have strengthened the manager's ties to work.

A5: *“Well yes it (work) follows one quite a bit, but it must be here this ... e-mail and mobile phones and computers and the rest that make sure that it is quite difficult to leave all behind. This is the final nuisance this that even e-mail comes to the mobile phone.”*

The previous interviews have proven that managers must also be different.

A6: *“I haven't considered it very fruitful, and on the other hand this, this living by comparing with someone else, it may be too easy then somehow, too...”*

This may be based on the idea that each manager offers the organisation with something personal, new and creative (Oshagbemi, 2004). Nothing will change if a manager imitates his/her predecessor in all matters. Situations within companies do not stay the same, the organisation changes and develops. Managers need to change as well.

The reform of job descriptions and duties as part of the organisation's change offered an interesting interview theme. Managerial job descriptions had also been adapted and reformed. Some managerial posts were turned into specialist positions. Can an ageing manager's job description be adapted towards a specialist's position in a satisfying manner? The organisation will benefit from the situation if, at the same time, the organisation is capable of making the best use of the older managers' experience based expertise and the younger managers' technological strengths (Oshagbemi, 2004). In limited companies, and significant listed companies, too, the CEO often moves on and becomes the chairman of the board maintaining thus an influential position but with less work.

*A7: "People can't understand that there are these purely specialist duties, but rather everyone wants somehow to be part of the highway of power ... and if everyone's not included, then someone may feel that he/she has been somehow overtaken or something else."*

The interviewee examined the significance of leadership from various angles. He places great importance on the direction of communication. According to his own perception, he speaks as "a person to a person" but the employees interpret the message as part his managerial position. The interviewee is aware of this and finds it of significance to his duties as a manager.

Question: "What have you learned about management?"

*A8: "Maybe more the fact, that things one says or does affect many people, and that even if oneself feels somehow ... That in the end the sayings and doings carry quite a bit more importance when coming from a certain position ..."*

Leadership is often described as a personal characteristic or style or, alternatively, by defining the components of leadership (Fineman, 2003). Leadership, however, includes of a whole set of emotions and power, too.

With regard to the changed job description, the interviewee finds it the most challenging to distance himself from operational work. It has been difficult to establish his new role when his duties no longer make part of the daily rhythm.

*A9: "As one is used to more action, then maybe it has been necessary to try to reign oneself."*

It is, however, inevitable, that a manager's job description changes as he/she advances on the corporate ladder. As his most important duties, the interviewee defined to facilitate cooperation and promote common values (Fineman, 2003). In the interview, management translates as responsibility, giving up the specialist position was a voluntary choice. Managerial work made it necessary to put single-issue expertise aside and focus on leadership.

## 6. CONCLUSIONS

The previous chapter analyzed the interviews conducted in the organisations. These narratives has been re-read in the following summary and, at the same time, opened way for alternative ways of examination. In this study, the managers' job descriptions were examined and opened through a textual construction. The review is carried out through the texts produced by the organisation's members while describing their own job descriptions during the interview.

TABLE 2 - THE STUDY APPEARED FRAMES

Manager's job description / The changing characteristics of leadership What kind of Frames?	The Frame of Age	The Frame of Responsibility	The Frame of Personality The "Good Guy" Framework
Theme	What one has learned about leadership? While the time passed by...	From the management of issues towards a coaching role	Everyone has his/her own place, situation and time
Extracts	various age, different age groups  age structure  age management  authority  leadership style  restructuring situation  resistance to change  age added prestige, authority  separation from work discourse  differences in work ethic  cooperation	Tacit knowledge transfer, to whom?  separation of work and leisure  new forms of employment  good may be the best  power and responsibility  impartiality  responsibility in change situation  the availability of labor  freedom vs. responsibility  financial responsibility  emotion management  meaning of status in communication  concern about the future	personality  nature and style  prestige of diversity  supervisor or an expert? charisma  biography organisational stage  The right person in the right place at the right time  human knowledge

Managers discuss their work from three different framework viewpoints: 1. The Frame of Age and Ageing, 2. The Frame of Responsibility and 3. The Frame of Personality

The following table (Table 2) depicts these frames. The three frameworks have been chosen for in-depth examination in this research. A greater number of frames would have been possible but this research was limited to these three. The interviewees moved between the three frames in their answers and sometimes they spoke through two different frameworks. Although moving between the frames, they were, however, clearly distinguishable. The fourth frame is offered by "change" and how the interviewees discussed change in their speech.

#### ***Age framework - how is age discerned in the manager's job description discourse***

Age framework - management from the perspective of different-aged people and aging.

The age frame examined the role of age and aging in the manager's job. Attention was paid to the effects of aging workforce on managerial work and also on the ways the manager's own aging has affected the job description.

Diverse age groups have been highlighted because it is interesting to report on how the young managers cope with older workers and, secondly, how leadership has changed while the person in charge has aged.

People continue to remain at work longer than ever. Technology changes all the time and young people are usually equipped with better technological capabilities and, therefore, young people have possibilities a more rapid career progression. The synergy between managers and different age groups will become more and more important (Oshagbemi, 2004).

#### ***Responsibility framework - how is responsibility discerned in leadership***

The character of leadership has transformed into a coach's role.

From the viewpoint of the responsibility framework, leadership is burdened with responsibilities and obligations. This study examined the role of responsibility in leadership. Most interview texts focused on the relationship between authority and responsibility, transfer of tacit knowledge, and concern for the future financial liability. The leadership role has moved more and more from the management of issues towards the role of a coach. Employees are the best experts in their duties. The manager acts in his/her own individual way depending on the situation. In their answers, the managers highlighted the concern for others, and their ability to cope, and also how to burden the organisation equally. Burdening should be understood as appreciating each and every member of the organisation, without making them feel irreplaceable. Recession is an issue often referred to in the discussion when the managers have to deal with "unpleasant" things, such as dismissals and layoffs. Heavy responsibility attached to this "negative" leadership role was taken up in

comments on how to survive the recession and be able to concentrate more on the so-called "Positive issues", such as delivery schedules. The post-recession period constituted a fundamental feature in the discourse. How to manage in the future, when after the layoffs, retirements and difficult times in general, the company should cope with less staff which is perhaps not so skilled or motivated to invest in work.

***"The Good Guy" framework - the role of personality and the nature of managerial work***

The manager's job description has changed so that each person is to have his/her own place not affected by age or education but because every task requires specific personality and knowledge of the human nature. The best employee is also into leadership positions - regardless of gender or age - appropriate person. Similarly, as concerns work performance, "good may be the best". The pursuit of perfection in the current work culture may perhaps be even unnecessary. Several things must be managed simultaneously; there might not be enough time to go into every detail. There is no one unique type of manager that could be said to be the "best" but a manager requires different characteristics in different seasons. For some, a new manager symbolises a new beginning; for others, a new manager is a threat. The latter group of employees is perhaps more skeptical and believes that new ways of working will not succeed.

Max Weber already spoke of the importance of charisma in leadership. Charisma is the personal ability or personal property which the manager has. Charisma is not the same as personality, but it is something which occurs only in interaction with others (Hoffmann, 2009). Generally, authority is also referred to in the context of charisma. Charisma combines rhetorical skills with an emotional communication and a personal leadership style.

Different age groups are a natural phenomenon in any company. Different people support each other. Various types of managers are also needed in different situations and different stages of organisation. During the upswing rapid decisions are needed, and an innovative manager is capable of taking a risk. A manager facing organisational crisis requires different characteristics in order to manage the hard times.

***Exploitation of research results and social significance***

The results of this study are linked to its context. The generalization of qualitative research results is more limited than that of quantitative research. This study was not designed to seek generalizations, but to find what is significant to this phenomenon. Individual cases can serve as examples of incidents which occur frequently when examining the phenomenon more generally (Hirsijärvi, Remes and Sajavaara, 1998). After several re-readings, it became evident that the interviews manifested certain recurrent phenomena, which could be successfully compared to other studies and research results, and enabled to relate them in the theory of this study.

This study is useful for the target companies in their leadership development activities. After the interviews, the interviewees said that it had been fruitful to consider the various age related themes in order to identify their own problem areas.

Although the used dimensional sampling method takes into account the representativeness of the sample population, it cannot completely rule out the risk of sampling distortion.

Varto (1991) argued that qualitative research can not be generalized "to the corresponding populations" because there are none. In this investigation, **generalizations** are also made in relation to context. Individual data is not entirely tied to the cases from which it was obtained. This research is of such nature that not even a large sample size, or even extremely careful selection of participants, would ensure the reliability of the investigation, if the reliability of survey estimates to the population norm. Reliability must be assessed by various gauges/indicators (Varto, 1992). The interviewees' reports are not generalized to apply to all elderly or all young managers. This study examines the managers as representatives of their type and therefore it is possible to understand their opinions only against a particular background. Representativeness of a sample is therefore not a meaningful way to assess statistical representativeness, but rather theoretical representativeness (Takala and Uusitalo 1992).

With regard to the assessment of **Reliability**, it is very important to describe how I chose to utilize the interview material (Julkunen, 2003). Interpretation is always a subjective process, even if science emphasises objectivity (of the investigation). However, I do not consider my interpretation of the interviewees' speech completely objective. I feel certain empathy with the interviewees but, at the same time, I remain an analytical reader and writer. Researchers in the fields of society, culture and organisation cannot completely distance their own experiences and their own voice from the interpretation of qualitative data (Julkunen, 2003). This study is a dialogue between the interviewees, texts and interpretations; a re-writing of them (Julkunen, 2003). This kind of research does not allow for repetition. Another researcher with his/her own voice and history would not be able to produce an identical study. To quote Julkunen: "when I think what is important (in this research process), interesting or influential, I will do it based on this non-reproducible, life lived so far" (Julkunen, 2003).

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