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Electronic Journal of Business Ethics and Organization Studies EJBO aims to provide an avenue for the presentation and discussion of topics related to ethical issues in business and organizations worldwide. The journal publishes articles of empirical research as well as theoretical and philosophical discussion. Innovative papers and practical applications to enhance the field of business ethics are welcome. The journal aims to provide an international web-based communication medium for all those working in the field of business ethics whether from academic institutions, industry or consulting.

The important aim of the journal is to provide an international medium which is available free of charge for readers. The journal is supported by Business and

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Each paper is reviewed by the Editor in Chief and, if it is judged suitable for publication, it is then sent to at least one referee for blind review. Based on the recommendations, the Editor in Chief decides whether the paper should be accepted as is, revised or rejected.

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As a guide, articles should be between 2000 and 6000 words in length. A title of not more than eight words should be provided. A brief autobiographical note should be supplied including full name, affiliation, e-mail address and full international contact details as well as a short description of previous achievements. Authors must supply an abstract which should be limited to 200 words in total. In addition, maximum six keywords which encapsulate the principal topics of the paper should be included.

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Organizational Storytelling, Ethics and Morality: How Stories Frame Limits of Behavior in Organizations

By: Michael S. Poulton

Abstract

In this article it is argued that codes of conduct may be a starting point in examining the ethics of a business organization, but a deeper understanding of the ethics and morality of a firm may be found in the stories that circulate from employee to employee and, more specifically, from one generation of employees to another. The search for the basis of a firm's stance on how employees should implicitly respond to both external and internal conflicts should begin with determining the "genesis" story of the firm, the primary organizational metaphor that is derived from that narrative, and how both the master narrative and metaphor frame employees' organizational self-perception and their responses and subsequent actions in dealing with internal and external conflict.

Stories are food for the 'epistemic' hunger of our species. This metaphor is, however, obviously incompatible with the notion of 'perfect fulfillment.' Just as we cannot be ever satisfied with a single meal, or even multiples ones, even if they are absolute gourmet delights, but have to keep eating at regular intervals all our lives, so we cannot ever be fulfilled by binges of narrative activity. (Rukmini Bhaya Nair in Narrative Gravity)

This paper will integrate theories of organizational storytelling and its role in forming a firm's morals and ethics, how an organizational "genesis" narrative and subsequent organizational metaphor develop, and then how these two frame the organization's ethic and moral responses to ambiguous situations.

I. Ethics in the business context

Ethics can be approached from a variety of directions: descriptive ethics – non-judgmental explanation of the ethical framework of societies or large institutions in a society; normative ethics – presents a specific view or approach to ethics which aims to set a standard of behavior for a group or society; and applied ethics – an offshoot of normative ethics that tries to develop ethical standards for specific areas of human endeavor like biomedical ethics, scientific ethics, academic ethics and business ethics (Buchholz and Rosenthal, 1998). Business ethics, as used in this text, pertains to human interactions when sourcing, producing and marketing goods and services for profit, and include the relationships between business management and their employees, the firm and its primary stakeholders, the business and its relationships to the community, government and society in general.

In the broadest sense, ethics is a society's ongoing examination and pursuit of actions and practices that best promote the enrichment of peoples' lives – both materially and spiritually. It is a society's quest for defining and understanding what constitutes "the good life" or "the good [that] has rightly been declared to be that at which all things aim" (Aristotle, 350BC), and creating the conditions

necessary for potentially all individuals to achieve it (Buchholz and Rosenthal, p. 2). Ethics is a societal discussion of what ought to be considered for overall human well-being, including the broader concepts of fairness, justice and injustice, what rights and responsibilities are operable under certain situations, and what virtues a society admires and wants to emphasize. Ethics takes an over-view, investigating the state toward which the society should be progressing economically, politically, socially and morally.

As business is a purely social construct, it, too, must be engaged in a society's ethics debate. Economist Milton Friedman is not incorrect in suggesting that the responsibility of business is to produce goods and services people are willing to pay for and, in the process, create wealth for its owners. However, as an integral, legally sanctioned constituent of the society in which it operates, business, like every other member of society, should be a participant in ethics; that is, how business might or might not participate in establishing larger social objectives which promote a fulfilling life. For business not to participate in this discussion and eventual realization of a society's goals is to subject itself to increased regulation and legal constraint. Regulation is merely society's way of saying that it does not approve of the way business is operating or, that by operating the way it, is business is ignoring what the society as set as objectives and goals for itself.

Unlike ethics, morality reflects what we are currently practicing, not ethically investigating and conceptualizing where we should be. In other words, morality more pertains to our everyday experience – our "local world" as Kleinman puts it. "Experience is moral.... because it the medium of engagement in everyday life in which things are at stake and in which ordinary people are deeply engaged as stake-holders who have important things to lose, to gain, and to preserve (Kleinman, 2000, p. 362). In business organizations, people are concerned with their status in the organization, what their work means, job security and the angst the threat of job loss can generate, definitions of their worth, relations with subordinates and superiors, coping with aggression and/

or humiliation, responding pressures to perform, and the subjugation of one's non-working morality to the demands of the organization; and each of these has a moral component. Thus, business "ethics," then, should not be confused with business "morality." Morality is the sum total of a particular society's or organization's current perceived traditions, beliefs, values, attitudes and norms that have been cultivated over time, institutionalized in religious doctrine, laws, regulations and codes of conduct which explicitly or implicitly suggest how an individual should behave in situations as they are encountered daily. Ethics may well include a discussion of moral trends, but, again, morality defines primarily where we are.

The use of formal, codes of conduct and carefully constructed principles of corporate "ethics" which explicitly define corporate morality in its policies regarding specific, concrete situations such as payments to suppliers, contract bidding, conflict of interest, external relations, corporate governance and so on, is widespread among large business organizations today. The larger and more complex the business and the greater the number and types of internal and external stakeholders, the more complex and comprehensive is its code of conduct. In the very complex, litigious, and highly regulated world in which we live, it is no wonder. Codes of conduct are widely used to inform employees and other stakeholders about the firm's recognition of regulatory obligations, to communicate corporate policies that have evolved over time, and/or to iterate the formal relationships between the firm and its employees.

For example, United Technologies' (UTC) Code of Ethics is an extensive statement of its Corporate Principles and Standards of Conduct that addresses the firm's relations with suppliers, customers, employees, shareholders, various communities worldwide, competitor relations, and its employees' responsibilities. Each of these main categories is, in turn, divided into specific topics. Under conduct toward employees, there are sub-topics of adherence to equal opportunity, workplace environment, drug and alcohol abuse at work, the privacy of employees, communications policies (including use of e-mail), training, and compensation and benefits. In total there are thirty-five subsections in the UTC Code of Ethics. Additionally, the company has created a network of Business Practices/Compliance Officers to explain elements of the Code and to advise employees who may have a specific question (United Technologies). Obviously, UTC takes its Code very seriously.

Where UTC's Code attempts to be legally comprehensive, a smaller firm's codes or statement of business ethics may be quite simple and address only broad values that frame the firm's response to moral issues. Specific rules and regulations may be stated more explicitly in corporate charters and human resource publications, but the "ethics" of the firm may be stated less formally. For the mid-sized firm, the code may be a simpler statement of "Immutable Values," such as:

- 1) Always service the customer first – the hierarchy of service, growth, cost and profit.
 - 2) Business designed to make profit.
 - 3) Always have a strategy
 - 4) Strive to be better before bigger
 - 5) Strong work environment exists
 - 6) Ownership and Accountability is pushed down and clearly understood.
 - 7) Always share the improvements.
- (quoted by permission)
and toward customers, its "Service Values" are:
We do what we say. Integrity
What we do, we do well. Quality

We are no more that we say we are. Honesty

We say we are not more that we deliver. Modesty

We abhor mediocrity because we deserve better. Courage
(quoted by permission)

These values, then, form a structure within which ethical issues might be addressed. Given the rather terse way these principles are outlined, we can assume there is a more implicit set of rules or values the firm employees daily. For example, we do not know what the "hierarchy" mentioned in the first line of "Immutable Values" really is. We can assume they mean service is the highest and that profit the lowest, meaning that profit will flow from providing consistently good service to customers, although the next line gives profit some additional emphasis. Likewise, the "courage" to not be mediocre must have some implied meaning for the firm. It is not a connection one would normally make.

Yet, despite carefully or, in some cases, not so professionally crafted codes, we may in fact discover more about a firm's ethical and moral environment by listening to the narratives of employees and management. Where the formal code may address unambiguous moral circumstances, there are always situations which require an interpretation of rules and may rely more on personal ethics than those formally discussed at the corporate policy level (Buchholz and Rosenthal, p 177). How do individuals learn how to respond to those "gray" areas of organizational behavior? What does an employee do if the Code does not address a particular circumstance? Perhaps, as suggested in this paper, the answer lies in the stories about solutions to ethical conundrums or morally bounded situations which have occurred within the organization and which, when taken as a whole, eventually frame the ethical limits of employee responses in the future. In other words, codes of conduct represent what the firm espouses what individuals should do normatively, while stories may transmit to others what individuals in the firm actually did do – successfully or not – at any given period of time. One could argue that stories are merely tales of a response to a particular situation at a particular time in the firm's history, representing the existing morality of the firm "at that time." However, there are some values in a firm which become, over time, truly "immutable" as the stories are told repeatedly. There are moral responses for any business that do not change drastically over time as discussed below.

II. Stories in Organizations

The narrative is a way for us to make sense of our experiences to ourselves and relate those experiences to others. Generally speaking, a narrative is merely the recounting of a series of events in a particular place in which actors (ourselves, included) move through or cause a series of chronological events – a fabula (Bal, 1997). A story is a structured narrative related in a particular way, that is, the sequence of the events may not be perfectly chronological, the recounting may use non-verbal signs, descriptions of place, actors, or reactions may use a variety of tropes, and the voice of the narrator may well be a participant or observer of the fabula or simply a conveyor of the story itself. The purpose of a "good" story is to make the common themes new and fresh by using a range of poetic techniques (Shklovski, 1965; Tomashevsky, 1965). A story is a narrative that conveys a thought, a moral or virtue, a consequence in a way that forces us to look at a common message in a new way, allowing us the opportunity of not being repetitive or mundane conversationalists, that is, "story-tellers tell particular stories in order to illustrate general truths which they expect their recipients to infer; story-

tellers prefer to imply rather than baldly state the general truth they are illustrating" (Nair, 2003).

Oral stories can take many forms – "terse stories" (Boje, p. 115) like "You know the story, don't you?" (implying the listener already knows the story and has full command of the storyline and its meaning), the joke (punch line defined), anecdotes (crystallized, unadorned tales), narratives of great length and told with dramatic zeal (epics, sagas, myths), carefully constructed "stories" with public relations intent, and simple recounting of events. Unlike written texts, an orally recited story can be and probably will be told in myriad ways. In all cases, however, there is a moral/general truth motivating the telling.

Storytelling is a powerful tool in organizational learning as well in that they communicate implicit organizational values (Schein, 1984; Randall and Martin, 2003), "legitimise [sic] types of behavior" or relate events or actions of individuals that exhibit that behavior (Johnson and Scholes, 1999), control the behavior of others in an organization (Wilkins, 1983;) by the use of stories themselves or the words used to tell the tale (Czarniawska-Joerges and Joerges, 1988), play a significant role in organizational change and are basic to the process of organizational socialization (Brown, 1985) and change (Denning, 2001) and are in integral to the storage and retrieval of organizational memory (Walsh and Ungson, 1991). An organization might be even viewed as a "collective storytelling system in which the performance of stories is a key part of members' sense making" (Boje, 1991). But perhaps most importantly, "the power of stories and narrative derives from the story's ability to create a framework that our mind can understand" (Brown, 2005).

Weick suggests that sensemaking in an organizational setting consists of creating a meaningful present through a "combination of a past moment + connection + present moment of experience" and that "frames are past moments of socialization and cues are present moments of experience" (Weick, 1995). To create meaning for ourselves we look to the past for generalized circumstances we have either witnessed or learned about and connect them with present experiential events, and by doing so provide ourselves with some sense of what it all means. As Weick also points out, stories are part of an organization's total "vocabulary" of sensemaking (Weick, p. 111). Stories can be about frames or past socialization events, past connections made, and the cues which were extent at the time the story took place. In fact, the format of a fabula is similar to Weick's formula above. Every story has a beginning+ middle+ end, which is in turn a kind of life dialectic of steady state + disruptive predicament + solution (new steady state). It is not a single event that makes a story, but rather a sequence of connected events. The very "sequence is the source of sense" Weick, p. 128).

In a story from my working life in agribusiness, there was one about a silo that was both storing federally owned grain and privately owned grain for an export silo on the Gulf of Mexico. The manager was asked to ship a trainload of grain to the export silo immediately due to the unexpected arrival of a ship. Not having enough of his own privately owned stock, he shipped federally receipted grain on a Friday, hoping to replace it on Monday. As fate would have it, the federal inspector arrived on Monday to verify the federal stocks, which were unfortunately on their way south. The manager, it was always noted, had five to ten years in Leavenworth to think about his error. The moral of the story to young silo managers was clear and is still clear today – manipulating Federal receipts is dangerous.

The point here is that each event by itself carries no real meaning; but the sequence of events and the ending steady state meant a lot to a new managerial trainee. By hearing the story

and putting ourselves in the role of the main character, we could envision what the consequences of our actions would be should we do the same thing. Thus, it is the stories about those employees who responded morally and were applauded or about those who exceeded the ethical and moral limits of the firm and suffered the consequences which will begin to frame the organizational morality.

At the same time, stories allow us to learn by vicariously living experiences of others through story. Throughout our lives, much of what we learn we do so through stories that they provide a opportunity to "organize lived and listened-to experiences" (Bransford, Brown and Cocking, 2000, p. 108;) in ways that provide new or enhanced understanding and meaning (Prusak, 2005). In fact, it is interesting to consider Vittorio Gallese's theory of embodied simulation and its implications for understanding the power of storytelling, that is, if simulation is "an automatic, unconscious, and pre-reflexive functional mechanism" of the brain that "generates representational content," it could, therefore, "...play a major role in our epistemic approach to the world" (Gallese, 2004). Similar experiments using disgust as the basic emotion have determined that "there is a common mechanism for understanding the emotion in others and feeling the same emotions in ourselves." (Wicker, Keyser, Plailly, Royet, Gallese and Rizzolatti, 2003) Further experimentation may conclude that when individuals listen to stories (which generally includes visual cues by the teller) and "relive" someone else's humiliation embarrassment over an admonishment, fear of losing one's job or respect, joy at attaining success and so on, they may well be simulating those same feelings and responses on a neurological level. This could create as powerful a meaning or be as significant a learning tool as experiencing the events of the story oneself. It is beyond the scope of this paper to delve into the current theory of embodied simulation, but further studies may well suggest that much of the meaning of story may well be in "shared body states" (Gallese, 2004). If this is true on an individual level, it may well add to the understanding of organizational memory as "not just an individual-level phenomenon, but [one that] can apply to a supra-individual collectivity as well through a process of sharing" (Walsh and Ungson, p. 68) with storytelling only one of several methods of sharing and retaining organizational experiences as memory (Walsh and Ungson, p.64).

Stories people tell evolve over time as external conditions and their own sensemaking needs change. After all, it is well known that Charles Perrault's original 17th century Little Red Riding Hood ("Le petit chaperon rouge" -1697) was a precautionary tale for young girls concerning the dangers of getting into bed too quickly with unsavory, but determined, sweet-talking "wolves." In Grimm's "Rotkäppchen" version (in *Kinder- und Hausmärchen*, 1812) it becomes a tale of resurrection with the live grandmother being cut out of the wolf's stomach by the huntsman. Today, it is more a tale of courage, revenge, and the triumph of good (Riding Hood and the since added Woodsman/Huntsman) over evil (the Wolf) and may completely spare children the gory details about slitting open the wolf. In the modern tale the wolf is merely drowned in a well. Some versions have even pacified it further by having the huntsman make the wolf "spit up" grandma, knocking the wolf out, and carrying him off deep into the woods where he will not hurt anyone again. The point here is that stories develop depending on how the morality they were initially meant to convey itself changes. After all, stories are constructs. They are seldom concrete representations of reality. Stories are what individuals interpret as experiential reality as it is filtered through their psyches. As

their realities change, so do stories.

Organizational stories are no different (Weick, p. 128). As one aspect of an organization's overall culture, stories begin and evolve over time as the organization develops through its lifecycle (Schein, p. 13) and as their ecologies change. If stories are a significant aspect of organizational memory in that they create a basis for relating how organizational problems were handled in the past (Boje, p. 106, Walsh and Ungson, p. 61), those stories also must be flexible in order to handle new and perhaps even more destabilizing circumstances. At the same time, organizations will witness the emergence of new stories as individuals comprehend, summarize and create a meaningful wholes out of the bits and pieces of organizational information that come their way (Daft and Wiginton, 1979) and become part of an organization's memory banks. Walsh and Ungson note three functions of organizational memory (1) an "informational role" by which organization collect and retain facts and problem-solving in the past which are then used to expedite future problems, (2) a "control function" to reduce the time necessary to implement a newly arrived at decision, and (3) a "political role" in that information and its control provide a source of power by which the actions of others can be influenced (Walsh and Ungson, p. 73). Storytelling plays an important role in the first of these three uses in that it may well be a primary method for collecting, transmitting and retaining information about past decision-making. But the question still arises, within what context do all of these bits and pieces become framed into a coherent whole so that specific solutions to internally or externally instigated problems can be approached by all members of the organization ethically and morally, using a unified model?

III. Genesis narratives as ethical frames

A metaphor may be used to define an organization in that the metaphor becomes a "experiential gestalt" (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980), but the organization's use of a metaphor to describe itself is something more. The metaphor is derived from the genesis narrative as a way of simplify a complex of events that make up the story. The metaphor and the causal narrative behind it become the basis for how individuals in organizations frame their perception of who they are, what the organization is, and how it responds to conflict or chaos. The genesis narrative is the wellspring for understanding the new cues which employees glean from incidental narratives heard everyday. The genesis narrative is a frame for interpreting cues to add meaning to the purpose of the organization, relations within the organization, and individual location in the organization.

From a social science perspective, Somers and Gibson list four types of narratives: (1) "Ontological narratives" or those which individuals use to define themselves, (2) "Public narratives" or those used by organizations to define themselves and act as frames for ontological narratives, (3) "Conceptual narratives," or those narratives used by social scientist to establish a "vocabulary" by means of which major issues of society can be understood, and (4) meta-narratives or master narratives which are those all encompassing narratives of the environment in which we live such as narratives of social and economic progress and are general perceived as general truths (Somers and Gibson, 1994). Here a meta-narrative can become so powerful that it may shape our theories of history, economics, and social research despite the fact that the narrative may not coincide with the truth. It is our search for "the answer," the great "Why?" of systems and civilizations. For nearly 80 years, the meta-narra-

tive of the battle between capitalism versus communism as the great ideological conflict of the last century shaped our views of politics, history, theories of economics (Marxism and market capitalism) and even good and evil. The idea of a master narrative concept for history, for example, seems to falling out of favor (Fulford, 1999), but the term is still used in many other fields and may be useful here is discussing the genesis story.

In this paper, a "genesis narrative" is the overriding, overarching story of an organization. I am reluctant to use the terms epic or myth – both terms conjure up something magical, ethereal, and god-like. That is, an epic is highly involved, complex narrative of discovery full of chance meetings with exotic, fanciful characters and "myth frequently involves fantastical elements (e.g. man-eating ogres) subject neither to the constraints of logic nor empirical falsifiability" (Pondy, 1983). Despite the desire of some to infuse organizational stories with mythical properties, the reality is that organizations are made up of ordinary people, albeit some with a more circumspect sense of leadership. It is normal for people to use metaphor or simile in narratives about "heroic" acts of past and, occasionally, present leaders, but storytellers are merely reconstructing events that involved the actions of quite regular people. True, storytellers may well exaggerate a founder's or ground breaking hero's "bravery," tenacity, vision, "heroism," honesty or borderline dishonesty in attaining organizational goals by "being victorious" over the "enemy" and "battling" regulators (my apologies to Lakoff for using such metaphors), but certainly they cannot attain the mythical qualities of Achilles, Odysseus, Cuchulainn, or Gilgamesh – even over time. A business boardroom is no pantheon.

In my first firm, we were amazed at the story we were told about how the founders heroically moved tons of wheat in horse-drawn wagons from Ukraine to Europe to "combat" the hunger due to prolonged drought - but we also realized that the reason for the decision was to earn a profit from grain starved European mills. Yet, this master narrative defined our purpose as young, opportunistic traders and eventually, by telling the story over and over, we convinced ourselves that we were made of the same stuff and were supposed to spend our time looking for prospects to accomplish the same feat - and the same profit. We were living an embedded narrative that transcended our realities. For us, the genesis narrative of the firm relieved us from having to ask the question "Why?" Like our genesis story, we saw a world where commodities moved freely due to market forces, not governmental intervention. We could provide commodities where they were lacking by drawing from areas of surplus. We were the force behind the market's relentless march toward equilibrium - and we were awarded a profit for doing so. Our genesis story, moving grain to alleviate a shortage, crystallized into our metaphor – the "flow." It seemed to us that commodities indeed did "flow" like a global river, emanating from a flood of a glut, streaming into areas of least resistance. We learned we were an instrumental part of the flow.

Genesis narratives can become so ingrained in individuals in the organization that the narrative becomes the primary way individuals organize their perceptions about the organizational component of their lives. Much like Schein's organizational culture, the genesis narrative is similar in that it is deeply embedded in they way individuals conceptualize the organization in which they find themselves. In fact, this narrative can be seen as the foundation of an organization's culture; and where the narrative is particularly prevalent in organizational memory, the organization's culture is strong and more easily characterized. People do not consciously conjure up the genesis story (although some try and spend millions doing so), it is simply there because it

is told and retold so many times that individuals “relive” those aspects of the organization’s memory. In reality, it may become one of Boje’s “terse stories” in the form of a single metaphor that is able to conjure up the entire narrative. But more than that, the genesis narrative can become so implicit that it dictates behavior – a kind of “this is what we are, so this is the way we should act” – the moral basis for firm and employee actions. The narrative becomes a template for our responses to both internal and external conflicts, a basis for day-to-day motivation, the organization’s *raison d’être*.

Most young people will recall Steve Jobs’ and Steve Wozniak’s Apple Computer genesis story that began in the Fall of 1976 in the Jobs’ family garage when the two amazingly talented young men (21 and 26 respectively) founded the Apple Computer Co. with the introduction of the first Apple I personal computer. The values their story exemplifies were those of innovation, creativity, experimentation, and a conviction in the belief that personal computers would truly change lives. We also know its downfall in the face of extreme and new leadership. According to Jobs, “What ruined Apple wasn’t growth. What ruined Apple was values. John Sculley ruined Apple and he ruined it by bringing a set of values to the top of Apple which were corrupt and corrupted some of the top people who were there, drove out some of the ones who were not corruptible, and brought in more corrupt ones and paid themselves collectively tens of millions of dollars and cared more about their own glory and wealth than they did about what built Apple in the first place - which was making great computers for people to use” (Jobs, 1995). Interestingly enough, HP was also owes its 1939 origins to a California garage, where Bill Hewlett and Dave Packard built the company’s first product - an audio oscillator.

The same readers may be less familiar with a private firm like Coca Cola, born in Atlanta, Georgia, on May 8, 1886 when Dr. John Stith Pemberton, a local pharmacist, produced a mildly narcotic, caramel colored syrup, took a sample down the street to Jacobs’ Pharmacy where it was mixed with carbonated water. It seems to have been a hit from the beginning. But what the firm has become truly famous for, merchandising, was begun by the man Pemberton sold out to, Asa Candler, in 1889. Chandler was a dedicated and vigorous marketer and promoter, relentlessly pushing the product from the beginning via advertising, coupons, and offering promotional materials all imprinted with the product’s increasingly recognizable trademark. The symbol we know today was merely Pemberton’s original bookkeeper’s hand written rendition of what he thought would be a great name for the new carbonated drink (Coke website). The symbol has become ubiquitous. It exemplifies what the American market capitalist system has become to many - the ability to sell two cents worth of caramel coloring, sugar and carbonated water for a quarter.

These two genesis stories have provided their firms with a definition of how they see themselves and provide their employees with an organizational gestalt in terms of their brands – Coca Cola and Apple computers – which have become metaphors themselves.

Apple Computer seems to see itself as was an innovator of playful, user friendly technology, as true creators helping others create. “Almost all of them [people working on the Mac] were musicians. A lot of them were poets on the side. They went into computers because it was so compelling. It was fresh and new. It was a new medium of expression for their creative talents. The feelings and the passion that people put into it were completely indistinguishable from a poet or a painter. Many of the people were introspective, inward people who expressed how they felt

about other people or the rest of humanity in general into their work, work that other people would use. People put a lot of love into these products, and a lot of expression of their appreciation came to these things” (Jobs). Thus, Apple’s ethics were clear. Their vision was a world where people would have easy-to-use technology to create whatever they wished. It was only later when this vision of itself transitioned into a technology marketing firm did the company itself change as did the meaning of its genesis story and organizational metaphor for a time. Apple appears to be in the process of revitalizing the older narrative, coming out with new, innovative products like the iPod and iPhoto which support user-friendly consumer creativity.

Coca Cola, on the other hand, has become a metaphor itself for universal brand name marketing and brand recognition. Chandler’s original ethic of having Coca Cola consumed by millions in every state of the Union has expanded to have Coca Cola become a global symbol of American brand marketing. Coca Cola is what its logo as metaphor implies and is a continuation of the firm’s genesis narrative. Like any other story, a genesis story evolves over time. The energies and feats of founders are exaggerated and less savory aspects of their personalities are downplayed, successful problem solving methodologies become inculcated into organizational memory, failed solutions are minimized or forgotten, and new cues and events are “recorded” and relived via each new telling. What remains, however, is the genesis story itself as both master narrative and organizational metaphor. As Schein notes, “Culture is perpetually changing But this ongoing evolutionary process does not change those things that are so thoroughly learned that they come to be a stable element of the group’s life” (Schein, 1984).

Genesis stories can be both positive and negative for an organization’s development. On one hand, again similar to Schein’s concept of organizational culture, they can be useful in training new employees as they begin a process of socialization, coping with disruptive external and internal conflicts, creating a sense of collegiality, or perpetuating and reinforcing the values and norms of the organization (Schein, p. 12). On the other hand, genesis stories that do not evolve over time can become formidable barriers to change and growth as firms become locked in their own stories and cannot envision themselves being anything else or responding the environment in any other way. Witness the litany of firms that have disappeared because of their inability to change their narrative in face of changing business and societal demands. In these cases, the genesis story became a cataclysmic anchor. This, of course, is material for another article.

One must be concerned, of course, when firms create genesis stories disingenuously, sustained or even “re-energized” to reinforce the metaphor and corporate coherence, and where internal marketing communications “recreate” the firm for control or manipulative purposes. However, forcing organizational change by creating a genesis story and metaphor that are not in tune with the embedded culture of an existing firm or are artificially messaging the facts to develop a story about a start up to force uniform, compliant behavior where none exists can only lead to employee confusion and resentment. “Corporate fantasies” (Gabriel, 2000) or official stories are not the same stories told around the lunch table, during after hours social sessions or at those times when employees discuss personal anxieties or question themselves, their actions or those of the corporation. Genesis stories are just that – stories. The more they are told and retold by members of an organization – and not just its management public relations department – the more embedded the ethics and the morality of the firm become.

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Student Perceptions of the Ethics of Professors

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Abstract

Ethical violations are becoming common in the business world. Teaching proper ethical behavior can begin in college. In this study, we surveyed 350 students to determine what affects students' perceptions of the ethics of professors and to determine whether or not taking a course in ethics changes this perception. The most important factor in determining whether or not a professor is ethical is "fairness in grading." Surprisingly, there was no statistically significant difference between students who took a course in ethics and those who did not in their perception of what makes a professor ethical or unethical. There were some differences, however, between males and females in these perceptions. By learning ethical principles at the college-level, there may be an impact on ethical behavior when in the business world.

Key Words

Ethics, business, academia, teaching, college

Introduction

The improvement of ethical standards is of great importance to society. The first place to focus on ethical standards may be in our universities, as there is a high prevalence of ethical violations among college students. From 75-90% of college students admit to cheating on tests and/or plagiarizing information (Center for Academic Integrity, 2000; Pullen, Ortloff, Casey, & Payne, 2000). Formal ethics courses in college are often a student's first exposure to ethical standards (de Russy, 2003).

Although some professors in colleges teach ethics courses, the overall discipline of professors are not perceived as ethical when compared to numerous other professions. In a November 2003 CNN/USA Today/Gallup poll (AFSCME, 2004), Americans were asked to rate the ethical standards and honesty of individuals in various professions. The top professions with "high" or "very high" ethical ratings were: nurses (83%), physicians (68%), veterinarians (68%), pharmacists (67%), dentists (61%), college teachers (59%), engineers (59%), policemen (59%), members of clergy (56%), and psychiatrists (38%). At the bottom of the list were car salesmen (7%), a group that has been at the bottom in every poll since 1977. College professors may rate higher than car salesman, business executives (18%), and lawyers (16%), but it is a bit disheartening to note that they rate well below nurses and other health-care professionals.

In one study surveying professors about ethical attitudes toward students by professors, ethical professors were those who were fair, did not ignore cheating among students, and did not take advantage of their position of power. Female professors differed from male professors and were more likely to believe that it was unethical to lower course demands for those with many work or family demands. Also, those who taught ethics courses were more likely to consider it unethical to accept a student invitation to a party as compared to those who did not teach ethics courses (Birch, Elliot, & Trankel, 1999). In another study, giving lower grades to students who disagreed

with a professor's views and also having a sexual relationship with an undergraduate student were almost unanimously viewed as unethical by professors (Robie & Kidwell, 2003).

Besides the attitudes of college professors, some studies focus on the ethical behaviors of professors from the viewpoint of college students. Keith-Spiegel, Tabachnick, & Allen (1993) found that professors and students had similar perceptions as to which behaviors were ethical and unethical. There were also few differences between men and women. The most endorsed highly unethical behaviors under virtually all circumstances included the following: "Teaching while under the influence of alcohol, cocaine, or some other illegal drug" (93.6%); "Making deliberate or repeated sexual comments, gestures, or physical contact toward a student that are unwanted by the student" (90.7%); "Teaching while under the influence of alcohol" (89.8%); "Teaching that certain races are intellectually inferior" (83.8%); "Including false or misleading information that hurt the student's chances when writing a letter of recommendation for a student" (80.3%); and "Including material on the test that was not covered in the lectures or assigned reading" (72.8%).

In another study, Kuther (2003) studied the ethical behaviors of professors from the viewpoint of college students. She used a 5-point Likert-style scale ranging from: 1 = "Not ethical under any circumstances" to 5 = "Ethical under all circumstances." The behaviors that were viewed as most unethical were: "Teaching while under the influence of cocaine or other illegal drugs" (mean=1.10); "Teaching while under the influence of alcohol" (mean=0.13); "Insulting or ridiculing a student in his or her absence" (mean=1.21); "Telling colleagues confidential disclosures made by a student" (mean=1.29); "Insulting or ridiculing a student in the student's presence" (mean=1.31); "Ignoring strong evidence of cheating" (mean = 1.43); and "Ignoring strong evidence of plagiarism in a written assignment" (mean=1.47).

Students and professors can view behavior differently with regard to ethics. Morgan and Korschgen (2001) com-

pared the opinions of students and professors on 16 items dealing with faculty behavior. Faculty saw the following behaviors as being more unethical than did students: using easy tests to win popularity, accepting rebates from textbook publishers, and using profanity. Students, on the other hand, found a failure to update notes as being more unethical than did faculty. Both students and faculty agreed that ignoring cheating and ridiculing students were highly unethical acts.

In this manuscript we explore what affects students' perceptions of the ethics of their professors. Also, we study whether students who completed a course in ethics have different attitudes with regard to their professor's ethical behavior. We hypothesize that taking an ethics course would affect their perception of their professor's ethical behavior.

Method

Participants and Procedures

This study was conducted at a large urban university with an enrollment of almost 15,700 students; sixty-nine percent are undergraduates. All students were eligible to participate. We received 350 completed self-report questionnaires. A self-administered questionnaire was given to students in the college cafeteria and at other common facilities on campus. Students were approached at different times throughout the day. The response rate was 80.0%. The sample was 62.0% female and 86.9% of respondents were less than 26-years-old. With regard to taking an ethics course, 37.1% ($n=130$) took a course, 54.0% ($n=189$) did not take a course, 7.4% ($n=26$) were not sure, and 1.4% ($n=5$) did not answer the question.

Measures

Close-ended questions: We asked four close-ended questions. Two separate questions consisted of, "Overall, how ethical do you think college professors are?" and "How ethical do you think you are? Response choices ranged from 1 = "extremely ethical" to 5 = "not at all ethical." We also asked, "How important is each of the following factors in determining whether a college professor is ethical or not?" There were 10 different factors consisting of: promptness, accessibility outside of the classroom, honesty in presentation of materials, use of class as a soapbox to present views about outside subjects such as politics, fairness in grading, preparedness for class, making bigoted statements, playing favorites among students, making a sexual advance, and harmless flirting. Response choices ranged from 1 = "very important" to 5 = "not important." We also asked, "Is it important that a professor of ethics is ethical before you listen to what they have to teach?" Response choices ranged from 1 = "definitely" to 5 = "definitely not."

Open-ended questions: We asked two open-ended questions. One question was, "Think of the most ethical professor you ever had, what about this professor made you think s/he was ethical?" The other question was, "Think of the least ethical professor you ever had, what about this professor made you think s/he was unethical?"

Statistical Analyses

We calculated descriptive statistics for the all the close-ended questions. T-tests for independent samples were used to calculate mean differences between the groups of either taken or not having taken an ethics class. We excluded those who were unsure ($n=26$) or omitted this question ($n=5$) from these analyses. We also used t-tests for independent samples

for the gender comparisons. Multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was used to compare mean differences among the question with the 10 different factors of determining whether a college professor is ethical or not before we conducted the univariate independent analyses. The open-ended questions were calculated with frequencies of occurrence per relevant category. All analyses were conducted with SPSS Version 11.5 (SPSS, 2002).

Results

As shown in Table 1, the average value for the student perceptions of the ethical level of their professors was 2.54. Only a bit more than half of the students believed that professors were either extremely ethical or ethical. We used a t-test to determine whether the average rating for those who had taken a course in ethics would be different from those who had not taken a course. There was no statistical difference (t -value = -0.35 , $df = 316$, $p > .05$) between the average ratings of students who had taken a course in ethics ($M=2.52$, $SD=0.73$) and those who had not ($M=2.55$, $SD=0.77$).

As shown in Table 2, students perceived themselves as being more ethical than their professors with an average rating of 2.27. Examining the top two categories of the scale ("extremely ethical" and "ethical") highlights the difference more clearly: 68.9% ($n=241$) for self versus 52.4% ($n=183$) for college professors. We used a t-test to determine whether the average self-rating for those who had taken a course in ethics would be different from those who had not taken a course. There was no statistically significant difference between (t -value = -1.01 , $df = 317$, $p > .05$) the average self-ratings of students who had taken a course in ethics ($M=2.38$, $SD=0.93$) and those who had not ($M=2.46$, $SD=0.72$).

As shown in Table 3, means are used to list the courses in order of importance, from most to least important. Students believed that all the factors would be important in determining whether a professor was ethical or not. The most important factor was "fairness in grading" with a mean of 1.30. In fact, 94.3% considered this factor to be in the two highest categories of "very important" in the determination of whether a professor was ethical or not. The least important factor was "use of class as a soapbox," with a mean of 2.61.

We compared whether having taken a course in ethics would make a difference in these importance ratings. Wilks' lambda MANOVA omnibus test for the model with ethics course use as a predictor was not significant, $F(1, 306) = 0.88$, $p > .05$, and the null hypothesis that the ethics factors did not differ was not rejected. An examination of the univariate ANOVA analyses indicated that there also were no significant differences ($p > .05$) for any of the measures.

We believed that men and women might rate the importance factors in different ways. Specifically, "making a sexual advance" and "harmless flirting" were factors that we clearly believed would have sex differences. Wilks' lambda MANOVA omnibus test for the model with gender as a predictor was significant, $F(1, 333) = 2.72$, $p < .001$, and the null hypothesis that the ethics factors did not differ was rejected. As shown in Table 4, univariate ANOVA analyses indicated 5 significant factors of "preparedness for class," "playing favorites among students," "making a sexual advance," "harmless flirting," and "accessibility outside the classroom." These significant values were maintained even after adjusting for having taken an ethics course. After a Bonferroni correction and setting p-values for

significance at 0.005 (0.05/10), three of the factors (“playing favorites among students,” “making a sexual advance,” and “harmless flirting”) remained significant where women believed that these factors were more important in determining the ethics of a professor than did men.

As shown in Table 5, the average value for importance for a professor of ethics to be ethical before you would listen to what they have to teach was 1.92. More than three quarters of the students endorsed this as either definitely or probably. We used a t-test to determine whether the average rating for those who had taken a course in ethics would be different from those who had not taken a course. There was no statistical difference (t -value = 0.028, df = 311, $p > .05$) between the average ratings of students who had taken a course in ethics ($M=1.91$, $SD=1.12$) and those who had not ($M=1.91$, $SD=1.10$).

With regard to our open-ended question of what makes a professor ethical, being a fair grader was the most important factor in being perceived as ethical ($n=81$, 23.1%). For example, students wrote, “His tests were very fair and so was his grading system,” and “Her exams were directly from her lectures.” Other important factors were not showing favoritism to any students ($n=42$, 12.0%), coming to class on time ($n=36$, 10.3%), presentation of class materials without bias ($n=32$, 9.1%), and caring for students ($n=31$, 8.9%).

Favoritism included comments such as, “open to everybody/no favoritism,” and “Professor ___ because she treated us well and equally.” Coming to class on time included comments such as, “She was always on time.” Presentation of class materials without bias included comments such as, “She taught from everyone’s point of view,” and “When presented with a controversial discussion of race in a racially mixed class, the professor presented facts and opinions in a professional and non-insulting manner, as not to show favor or to insult any students.” Caring for students included comments such as, “My political science teacher two semesters ago, he always took time after class on the phone to help with work and other aspects of life,” “He really listened to each student,” “always has a friendly relationship with her students,” and “He was very understanding.” Other factors that made students believe that a professor they had was ethical included knowing the material well, being organized and following the syllabus, and being available to students.

With regard to our question of what makes a professor least ethical, similarly the converse of being unfair to students was the most important factor in being perceived as one who lacks ethics ($n=48$, 13.7%). For example comments included, “unfair grading,” “She told us at the beginning of class that she does not give As,” and “lies about what will be on test.” Other important factors were: making sexist/bigoted statements ($n=35$, 10.0%), showing favoritism ($n=32$, 9.1%), poor teaching/being unprepared ($n=24$, 6.9%), being consistently late for class ($n=23$, 6.6%), and not relating well to students/bad attitude ($n=21$, 6.0%). Ten students (2.9%) mentioned not following the syllabus as a factor. Factors that did not get many mentions but are still alarming include: “not making a sexual advance” ($n=7$, 2.0%), “using foul language” ($n=7$, 2.0%), “making sexual remarks” ($n=3$, 0.9%), and “having an affair with a student” ($n=1$, 0.2%).

Making sexist/bigoted statements included, “She always bordered on racist statements. She was very covert in how she said them. I hated that because it would be very hard to prove,” and “He was extremely rude and made racist comments.” Showing favoritism included, “He was playing favorites among students even when he gave grades,” and “The professor was unethical because he picked favorites and those out of his favor never

scored as high as those he liked.” Poor teaching/being unprepared included, “My least ethical professor comes unprepared to class, rushes through the material.” and “always repeated that the subject she teaches is not her specialty.” Being consistently late for class included, “He was never on time,” and “always late.” Not relating well to students/bad attitude included, “She was unpleasant and mean towards me and other students.”

Discussion

We found that only a little more than 50% of students believed that professors were either extremely ethical or ethical. Also, students perceived themselves as being more ethical than their professors. One consistent result obtained from both our quantitative and qualitative analyses is that fairness in grading is the critical factor that many students use in determining whether a professor is ethical or unethical.

These results about fairness in grading are similar to the results obtained by Kuther (2003). Kuther found that dishonest grading practices were one of the areas considered unethical by students. These areas included ignoring strong evidence of cheating, allowing for the likeability of a student to influence the way one graded, and ignoring strong evidence of plagiarism in assignments.

Contrary to our hypothesis, having taken an ethics course did not affect students’ perception of their professor’s ethical behavior. One may expect that among students who have not taken a course in ethics, they would consider being a fair grader the major factor in determining whether a professor is ethical or not. This could be due to the influence of self-interest influencing decisions. However, among students with some knowledge of ethics this is quite surprising. They should be able to recognize that fair grading (usually meaning easy grading and/or not using questions on exams that were not discussed in class) indicates very little about the ethics of a professor. Ethical professors may be tough graders and unethical ones may be easy graders. It is just not easy to measure “fairness” when it comes to grades.

Our findings with regard to gender where women considered “making a sexual advance,” and “harmless flirting” as more important ethical issues than men may be because of the gender roles related to those areas. Presumably, women tend to be more concerned about flirting and sexual advances on the part of professors than men since they are more likely than men to be at the receiving end of these behaviors. These results differ from the study of Keith-Spiegel et al. (1993) where they found minimal if any differences between men and women. It is possible that since our study was conducted 10 years after their study, in today’s world women in universities are more comfortable about asserting their rights to be treated fairly without being sexually harassed.

Professors can benefit by considering their ethical obligations and responsibilities. Cahn (1986) attempts to provide ethical guidelines for professors so they will be aware of their professional responsibilities. For instance, professors, just like physicians and attorneys, have an obligation to stay current in their profession. They also must give fair exams, grade them carefully, and return them promptly. The AAUP has a Statement on Professional Ethics on its website (<http://www.aaup.org/statements/Redbook/Rbethics.htm>). The statement includes such principles as a professors “primary responsibility to their subject is to seek and to state the truth as they see it. To this end professors devote their energies to developing and

improving their scholarly competence." In addition, professors should "avoid any exploitation, harassment, or discriminatory treatment of students." They should "respect and defend the free inquiry of associates. In the exchange of criticism and ideas professors show due respect for the opinions of others." Interestingly, with regard to the harassment topic that the AAUP clearly defines as indicative of unethical behavior, the male students did not consider this area as of great concern as compared to the female students. We recommend that universities who need to monitor a professor's behavior with regard to possible harassment issues should consider consulting with predominately female students who are more sensitive to this topic.

Our study has some limitations in that we only assessed students at one college and our results may not be representative of other colleges. Although a small possibility, it also is entirely

possible that the students whom we surveyed did not do well on their ethics courses and may not be representative of students who take ethics courses.

In summary, our study with students has implications for the business world. Students need to learn more about ethics in order to prevent ethical violations from occurring once they enter the workplace. There are numerous analogies between the academic world and business world. A professor who flirts with students is not much different than a corporate employer who tolerates sexual innuendoes. Fairness in grading is not much different from the way a manager treats a worker. By having students learn and understand ethics in college, they will be more prepared to successfully incorporate these principles into the business world.

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Table 1
Beliefs of 349 Students Regarding How Ethical They Perceive Their College Professors

| | Frequency | Percent |
|------------------------|-----------|---------|
| Extremely ethical (1) | 14 | 4.0 |
| Ethical (2) | 169 | 48.4 |
| Somewhat ethical (3) | 134 | 38.4 |
| Slightly ethical (4) | 27 | 7.7 |
| Not at all ethical (5) | 5 | 1.4 |
| Mean | 2.54 | |
| Standard Deviation | 0.76 | |

Table 2
Beliefs of 350 Students Regarding How Ethical They Perceive Themselves

| | Frequency | Percent |
|------------------------|-----------|---------|
| Extremely ethical (1) | 42 | 12.0 |
| Ethical (2) | 199 | 56.9 |
| Somewhat ethical (3) | 85 | 24.3 |
| Slightly ethical (4) | 19 | 5.4 |
| Not at all ethical (5) | 5 | 1.4 |
| Mean | 2.27 | |
| Standard Deviation | 0.80 | |

Table 3
Beliefs of 350 Students Regarding the Importance of Various Factors in Determining Whether a Professor is Ethical

| Factor | Very important (1) % (n) | (2) % (n) | 3 % (n) | 4 % (n) | Not important 5 % (n) | M | SD |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------|------------|------------|-----------|--------------------------|------|------|
| Fairness in grading | 78.0 (273) | 15.7 (55) | 3.7 (13) | 0.9 (3) | 1.1 (4) | 1.30 | 0.60 |
| Honesty in presentation of materials | 72.0 (252) | 20.3 (71) | 6.0 (21) | 0.0 (0) | 1.7 (6) | 1.39 | 0.75 |
| Preparedness | 56.9 (199) | 28.0 (98) | 9.7 (34) | 2.3 (8) | 2.3 (8) | 1.64 | 0.92 |
| Promptness | 40.9 (143) | 33.1 (116) | 15.1 (53) | 4.9 (17) | 6.0 (21) | 2.02 | 1.14 |
| Lack of bigotry | 48.0 (168) | 19.1 (67) | 18.9 (66) | 4.3 (5) | 8.3 (29) | 2.04 | 1.27 |
| Sexual advance | 61.4 (215) | 7.7 (27) | 7.1 (25) | 5.1 (18) | 18.6 (65) | 2.12 | 1.60 |
| Accessibility | 35.1 (123) | 34.0 (119) | 18.9 (66) | 6.6 (23) | 5.4 (19) | 2.13 | 1.13 |
| Playing favorites | 50.6 (177) | 16.6 (58) | 11.1 (39) | 6.3 (22) | 15.1 (53) | 2.19 | 1.49 |
| Harmless flirting | 46.6 (163) | 15.1 (53) | 12.6 (44) | 8.0 (28) | 17.4 (61) | 2.34 | 1.54 |
| Class as soapbox | 24.6 (86) | 22.9 (80) | 28.9 (101) | 10.9 (38) | 11.4 (40) | 2.61 | 1.29 |

Note: Sample sizes may vary slightly due to omissions by participants. Percentages may not total 100% due to the presence of omissions. M=mean and SD=standard deviation.

Table 4
Significant Gender Differences Among 349 Students Regarding the Importance of Various Factors in Determining Whether a Professor is Ethical

| Variable | Male M (SD) (n=132) | Female M (SD) (n=217) | F-statistic | p-value |
|-------------------|------------------------|--------------------------|-------------|---------|
| Preparedness | 1.80 (1.00) | 2.63 (1.21) | 6.67 | .01 |
| Sexual advance | 2.46 (1.63) | 1.54 (0.87) | 9.90 | .002 |
| Harmless flirting | 2.66 (1.50) | 2.13 (1.52) | 9.78 | .002 |
| Accessibility | 2.30 (1.19) | 1.98 (1.04) | 7.03 | .008 |
| Playing favorites | 2.51 (1.47) | 1.98 (1.45) | 10.30 | .001 |

Note: Sample sizes may vary slightly due to omissions by participants. One individual did not report his/her gender.

Table 5
Beliefs of 343 Students Regarding the Importance of a Professor of Ethics Being Ethical

| | Frequency | Percent |
|--------------------|-----------|---------|
| Definitely (1) | 160 | 46.6 |
| Probably (2) | 102 | 29.7 |
| Not sure (3) | 42 | 12.2 |
| Probably not (4) | 28 | 8.2 |
| Definitely not (5) | 11 | 3.2 |
| Mean | 1.92 | |
| Standard Deviation | 1.10 | |

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Public Organizations and Local Rural Development: an Empirical Analysis

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Abstract

This paper describes an empirical approach designed and adopted to analyze and qualify the role of some public agencies devoted to rural development. These public organizations operate as critical agents in managing local public goods within a complex relation system functioning on a rural area. On the bases of the experiences and observations made on a case study in Central Italy, it emerges an analytical framework deriving from the correlation of an objective and subjective perspectives in the evaluation of these organizations' performances. From these correlations, it derives a model to empirically classify these agencies evaluating also their potentials in creating integration, condensation and amalgamation phenomena based on trust, efficiency and effectiveness and their eventual potentials in determining positive impacts for the rural areas in which they operate.

Key Words

Public organizations, rural development, trust, efficiency, local public goods

1. Introduction

The aim of this study is the analysis of the role of some public subjects devoted to support and boost local rural development, as critical components of a complex, continuing evolving, territorial relation system. These Public Organizations for Local Rural Development (POLRDs) are here defined as public entities, often special agencies or services of major public authorities at local, regional, national and European level, having a significant technical nature and producing goods/services, transferable to territorial rural agents, focused on public interests.

This complex relation system, based on a network of various types of human interactions (i.e. social or business relationships), multi-goals and multi-expectations between agents, represents the "context" within which POLRDs operate in vivo. A possible interpretation of properties and functioning of such a system can be provided by some theoretical models described in literature (Bollobàs 1998, Bouchaud and Potters 2000, Mantegna and Stanley 2000, Albert and Barabási 2002, Newman 2003). These models have been developed for the description of phenomena distinctive of other disciplines but they hold interesting analogies (and useful interpretative keys) with the present analysis. These models of networks may outline the description of a network's structure biased on cohesive blocks and groupings and prototypes for the measurement of "cohesion" and "embeddedness" in their links (relations, imitations, synergies, alliances, etc.) derived from graph based concepts.

The analysis of the mechanisms at the base of the creation, development and enforcement of this network (and on the contrary its obstacles and failures) may contribute to understand and interpret the paths through which knowledge can become more productive, transforming Knowledge Centers (SMEs, research centers, local development institutions, innovation supporting agencies, etc.) into Knowledge Networks through the improvement of the interconnections (edges of the system) among these different local nodes (vertices of the system) of expertise. A POLRD is thus one of the possi-

ble agents in the system whose evolution may depend on a wide range of parallel processes: i.e. new vertices (agents) are added to the network or the attachment of new vertices.

Local rural development dynamics (at economic, social and political level) change during the time course making the context in which these public agents operate a rather fluid framework. All the agents involved into the system tend to consequently modify and adapt strategies and behaviours to the changed scenario, thus contributing to produce further modifications to the context. In theory behaviours and performances of these POLRDs should be correspondingly rather fluid: using analogies from complex system theories, one could say that responses from these organizations can highly vary according to their integration strength. At a first level a POLRD may show so weak connections to activate certain rates of occasional and selective "escape" from the system in which the organization operates. The second level is condensation, that is to say a transition from a state in which the organization has low interactions to a state where it forms with other agents an entity characterized by a substantial interaction and cohesion. The third level is amalgamation when links of cooperation, cohesion and exchange that agents establish are greatly enhanced. In this case local development is carried out through a sort of melting pot mechanism in which agents work together showing a relevant coordination and significant magnitude in "mixing" their activities. Different integration strength contributes to the creation of local networks characterized by the presence of "hubs": dominant hubs in the system are those showing a large number of paths in the network, accordingly to a power law, passing through these hubs while other vertices will show only a few edges. This phenomenon results from processes leading to the formation of networks not based on random attachment of new vertices but rather on some type of 'preferential attachment', that is to say that agents may detain a certain preference for example for the more connected vertices or showing certain types of connections (Vazquez 2003). Within these

processes Positive Word of Mouth (PWOM)/Negative Word of Mouth (NWOM) may have a profound effect on relation patterns because PWOM/NWOM may increase/decrease a POLRD's evaluation, influence imitative processes and contribute to a POLRD's success/failure to meet its expected results.

This is theory. It should be explained how a POLRD may contribute to produce *de facto* substantial benefits improving, in a large extent, the wealth levels of a rural area through its activities while intervening in specific aspects of the economic and social life of the territory (employment, innovation, new technologies, environment protection, local products' promotion, quality, business support, training activities, tourism and recreation initiatives, etc.). These organizations intervene (or interfere, as some critics affirm) in a rural area for example:

- + implementing global rural development strategies (also in cooperation with other public authorities)
- + making research and statistical activities about the current status of local economy and society
- + doing local promotion and marketing
- + supporting local tourism
- + investing in infrastructures
- + supporting and expanding employment
- + supporting technological and innovation transfer and scientific partnerships
- + supporting SMEs
- + supporting socio-cultural activities
- + developing territorial labels
- + making training activities
- + promoting distribution and marketing of local products
- + supporting special initiatives for specific groups (young, women, disable persons, etc.).

The aim of this study is not to demonstrate whether the presence of POLRDs in a rural area is a right option or not or whether the markets can or cannot work in support development, but rather to highlight the role and weight of these organizations in determining "quality" and impact of rural development processes in which they are involved helping markets to properly function.

The present study derives from research activities within the project "Development Dynamics and Increases in Competitiveness of Rural Areas" (DICRA) resulting from an agreement between the Research Team on Development and Innovative Processes at the Institute of Chemical Methods (I.M.C.) of the National Research Council of Italy (C.N.R.) and the Municipality of Vitorchiano (a 4000 inhabitants village in the province of Viterbo, about 100 km north of Rome in Central Italy). Project DICRA has been designed to funnel, through the development of constantly updated relation networks, expertise, know how, experiences and capabilities from different agents placed in very different dimensions and showing different nature (individuals, families, communities, firms, public institutions, research centres, etc.) all acting within a given rural area. The rural area selected for the project is characterized by traditional agricultural activities, small scale industries and mining activities being exposed to consistent migration flows from urban centers (Viterbo, 55.000 inhab. distance: 7 km - Rome 4m. inhab. distance: 100 km) with consequent specific residential problems and coexistence of consolidated agricultural vocations with semi-urban issues and needs. The territory is coping with a complex transformation process affecting economic, human and environmental resources with peculiar impacts in environment, employment and administrative management. The coexistence of a theoretical and an operational side in the project is essentially directed to implement and test these models thanks

to continuous adjustment processes in which they could be constantly transformed and potentially improved also to optimize strategies and tools to a) develop realistic collaboration networks; b) strengthen these networks and evaluate their effective impacts and c) evaluate and improve the integration capability of some focal subjects in the system.

2. Conceptual framework

2.1 An objective analytical level

The conceptual framework this study refers to is composed of two analytical levels the first of which directed to the identification of the POLRDs' objective features deriving from their declared activities, organization and scopes. This level can be described identifying four basic questions: a) Why; b) Who; c) What and d) How.

a) Why - The reasons for the presence of POLRDs in a rural area are in the expressions of a government's activist approach to development, promotion of interregional equity, social justice and provide solutions to and correct market failures (when markets do not reflect the full costs and benefits of development) which may create pressures on a rural area (society, economy and environment). Theoretically, this presence is justified on the ground that they should contribute to improve economic, environmental and social efficiency and therefore the welfare of local communities (North 1990, Halkier et al. 1998, Hughes 1998, Danson et al. 2000, Burnside and Dollar 2000, Clower et al. 2004).

Governments support POLRDs' presence because it may generate positive externalities at local level assuming that market efficiency and total welfare can be improved through their interventions thanks to material and non-material "incentives" or "subsidies".

b) Who - Synthetically, a POLRD's anatomy can be drawn through the analysis of its vertical and horizontal structure and organization (offices, departments, working groups, etc.), budget, number of employees, declared missions, scopes and operational fields, tasks (task relations, task decomposition, subtasks) etc. (Hall 1968, Galbraith 1973, Corkill and Lander 1998, Daft 2001, Townley et al. 2003, McNulty and Ferlie 2004). The implementation of activities and the achievement of objectives require a structured and well-defined set of "protocols" to be followed by the identification of the various components of the POLRD's organization outlined on the base of roles, responsibilities, relationships and procedures for each POLRD's component also to standardize and coordinate the work of many individuals (managers and operators).

c) What - The essential core of a POLRD's activity is always linked to the provision of goods and services dealing with "public goods". Literature provides a wide range of studies about this issue (Samuelson 1954, Milleron 1972, Champsaur et al. 1975, Thomson 1999, Bloise et al. 2002, Rege 2004), from which it is possible to identify three interrelated characteristics of "public goods": 1) they generate significant externalities; 2) they are at a considerable degree "non-rival" and "non-excludable" and 3) they create opportunities for the enhancement of welfare through collective actions.

In particular POLRDs are more concerned with "local public goods" which differs from other public goods for their more limited geographical reach of the benefits conveyed. These local public goods are a class of public goods connected to regional and national goods whose production requires a cross-area collective action (that can engage neighbouring territories also

from different administrative regions) for the presence of cross-area problems and cross-area externalities (Reese 1997, Beer and Maude 2002, Beer, Haughton and Maude 2003). Local goods are managed by a POLRD through two macro-actions: the former involves activities focused on business development increasing the number of firms in the area or supporting the development of the existing ones. The latter encompasses capacity building initiatives which in theory should be aimed to create a widespread impact for the territory as a whole, increasing capabilities and the general quality of life standards. In some cases a POLRD is likely to be specifically designed to clearly pursue activities included in one of these macro-groups while in others activities are chaotically mixed within the same POLRD: this confusion may be also deliberately created to increase the "legitimacy" degree of the organization and to better justify, with a wider and not well defined openness towards all the possible intervention levels, its existence on the market of development support.

These activities materialize different forms of incentives/disincentives to stimulate development which may operate as direct subsidies (i.e. financial contributions) or indirect subsidies (consulting, training and other services) whose effectiveness may also vary in the time course. In this way, POLRDs operate their "obtrusive approach", as critics label it, in directing resources, subsidizing certain firms, granting special tax breaks for some and not for others and creating a network of regulatory incentives and disincentives which affect behaviour in the economy. These interventions may create favourable and stimulating conditions but also distortions by failing to correct development failures or by creating them or making them worse. In this case, the result is a POLRD's policy failure which highly differs from a market failure: a policy failure consists of distortions created by an active POLRD intervention (i.e. a subsidy) while a market failure (externality) implies a lack of a POLRD intervention.

We here assume that, given the characteristics of the goods/services provided by these organizations, their interventions acquire the nature of "subsidy" defined as any policy that creates forms of economic/non economic, material/non material transfer through market mechanisms (Bingham and Bowen 1994, Feiock, Dubnick and Mitchell 1993, Goss and Phillips 1977) (table 1).

Table 1 Classification of POLRDs' subsidies

| | |
|--|---|
| Budgetary subsidies | a) direct subsidies - grants or payments or producers b) budgetary effect of tax policies – exemptions, allowances, exclusions, deductions, preferential tax treatment, etc. |
| Public provision of goods and services below cost | Provision of infrastructure and complementary services and government R&D expenditure |
| Capital cost subsidies | Preferential loans, debt forgiveness, etc. |
| Policies creating transfers through the market mechanism | Quality controls, regulations, legislation. |

The key question is how to evaluate whether the policies, at the base of these forms of material or non material subsidies (including the POLRD's presence itself), are actually functioning according to their original scope or have become counterproductive or at what cost and with what effect on local development. The analytical knot is therefore how to distinguish a positive (beneficial) intervention from an ineffective or a negative one comparing actual results within the local context with the original declared goals. Some interpretative keys can derive

from the analysis of the impacts on the context according to economic (i.e. increases in GDP), environmental (i.e. better management of natural resources) and social (i.e. wealth distribution between small and big farmers) parameters. However reforming or removing incentives or a POLRD can become a very complex issue: it is easier to introduce forms of direct or indirect material/non material support than to remove one because it creates fierce opposition from those groups that benefit from them even in case of adverse incentives or ineffective agencies which may have negative impacts on the economy as a whole and on the welfare of a larger part of the society (damage to public goods, negative impacts on global employment, economic losses, etc.).

2.2 A subjective analytical level

Translating local potentials into actual resources implies that these organizations, through their administrative, professional, financial and operational capabilities, materialize the logic connections between, Why, Who and What with a variable impact degree due to How factor. Of course, we have to admit that this impact degree may highly vary according to the problematic intensity scale of the issues the POLRD is designed to cope with and the financial and human resources available.

A POLRD's operational behaviour is linked to its objective structure and to a number of subjective endogenous and exogenous factors. Separating internal and external dynamics of a POLRD is an extremely difficult task because the observable behaviour of a public agency reflects the mechanisms governing the internal interactions between the organization's components and the effect of external "perturbations". The magnitude of these external perturbations cannot be explicitly controlled and the impact of the external modifications on the POLRD's activity cannot be completely removed to gain "pure" insights into the internal dynamics of an organization. The operative dimension of a POLRD is a constant exchange of internal relations linked to visions, interests, approaches, values, expectations, opinions, etc. shared by staff and managers directly reverberating into the organization's operational side. A POLRD has not a "natural" attitude towards rural development. Sometimes, static conditions, opposition to change, resistance to innovations are not simply due to ignorance or indolence of rural communities and individuals: causes and responsibilities of many experiences

of failure or very limited success in rural development programs can be caused also by the incapacity of a POLRD to activate constructive relations, presence of a superiority and too bureaucratic mind or a scarce predisposition to learn from experience. A parallel analysis about for example adaptation times, gratifications, motivations and general job satisfaction, sensibility to problems, sense of responsibility, etc. becomes essential to draw the POLRD's "subjective" profile and to identify eventual

critical points highlighting: a) POLRD's values and priorities; b) characteristics of POLRD's "culture"; c) prevailing mentalities; d) characteristics of decisional and management processes; e) approaches and methods used by the staff and f) the "climate" (perceptions and feelings of management and staff).

This subjective profile makes the implicit goals of the individuals operating within the POLRD more evident and it may denounce their eventual collision with the formal organizational patterns. Formal organizational configurations tend to be static

due to bureaucracy's effects which structure staff and functions to achieve the declared goals. Staff and managers have to cope with living experiences made of concrete problems, adaptive attitudes, compromises, etc. A POLRD will tend to achieve a sort of equilibrium between these two forms and resist to excessive unbalances: nonetheless empirical evidences can show that the presence of a gap is in some extent essential for a POLRD to cope with changed situations and a continuing evolving scenario. Working rigidly to the rules could cripple the POLRD and its mechanisms won't work as expected.

This condition creates a vast web of possible, extremely difficult to analyze, interactions between the POLRD and its users based on a certain degree of uncertainty depending on the characteristics of the context but also by the POLRD's performances, efficiency, responsibility, effectiveness, its degree of "indifference" towards the rural area's needs and its authority. For the aim of this study, this concept of POLRD's "authority" plays a critical role: it can formally result from for example type/types of public goods managed, a collective action, a hierarchical organization, norms and regulations, etc. (Artoni 1993, Cassese 1994, Lanzalaco 1995, Donolo 1997), but, in its substantial form, it depends on trust. A trust-based relation allows a POLRD to support its formal authority with a substantial one (Dasgupta 1988, Seligman 1997, Ganesan and Hess 1997, Nooteboom 2000, Glaeser et al. 2000, Bachmann 2001, Sigmund, Fehr and Nowak 2002, Smallbone and Lyon. 2002).

This trust-based relation network results from a wide variety of behaviours and strategies local agents adopt often reflecting the characteristics of the context where they operate: trust works as a tool to reduce uncertainty and risk margins both at rational and at irrational levels in relational transactions. Reputation is a first source of information useful also to establish the degree according to which similar future options will be made (erosion/consolidation of reputation). For the aim of this study, three types of trust have been identified:

- + personal trust – deriving from direct knowledge of a specific person in the POLRD based on individual reputation and informal norms;
- + collective trust – deriving from direct knowledge of a group of individuals in the POLRD based on staff reputation and shared conventions;
- + institutional trust – deriving from direct/indirect knowledge of the POLRD considered as an anonymous source of information based on definite norms, regulations, roles and procedures.

These forms of trust operate within three interrelated problematic dimensions:

- + a macro-level – the global context composed of political, juridical, legal, economic, social and cultural elements;
- + an intermediate level – groups and associations, trade unions, etc.;
- + a micro-level – personal behaviour and values.

These dimensions and forms of trust contribute contemporaneously and dynamically to determine attitudes and behaviours of the economic and institutional agents, individuals, communities and, above all, their potentials in developing local relation networks on the base of stable information: for instance, in case of inefficient norms and regulations, personal and collective trust can compensate at micro or intermediate level a lack of institutional trust or a syndrome of "institutional mistrust" at macro level.

A rural area could be identified as a "low trust level context" when agents perceive a sense of restriction, obstacles in starting new activities, a limited free and correct competition and

the presence of certain subjects with privileged positions: on the contrary, a "high trust level context" should be considered an opposite environment. In the creation of this environment, POLRDs can play a primary role deriving from: a) previous negative/positive experiences of organization services' users; b) opinion and visions provided by others (PWOM/NWOM); c) institutional reputation and d) managers' and staff reputation.

From marketing research, we learn that NWOM is more influential than positive one and its spread occurs on a faster time scale than the direct contact with a POLRD's good/service. In particular marketing literature identifies some main characteristics of NWOM: it is more informative than positive word of mouth, and thus may have a stronger effect, and it may be contagious and spread independently of exposure to the POLRD's good/service (Herr, Kardes and Kim 1991, Marquis and Filiatrault 2002). If an agent is in contact with a POLRD and the quality of the POLRD's services are equal or higher than the agent's expectations, then the POLRD's interaction "strength" and trust are enhanced by a PWOM which "percolated" successfully through the network and, empirically, by an increase in the size of the service's adoption cluster (Solomon et al. 2000). If the POLRD fails to meet the user's expectations and standards, not only the agent will tend to ignore the POLRD's goods/services but the related information will be passed to the agent's neighbours: a sense of "disappointment" will be at the root of NWOM and disappointment casts a "cloud" of NWOM around it. Increase of resistance and mistrust happens instantly, before any further exposures of new agents to the POLRD's service are considered: if the agent experiences negative relations with a POLRD, its disappointment is immediately cast upon all its non-adopting neighbours because NWOM propagation requires just one conversation with one friend while a contact with a POLRD is an unavoidably slower process.

To be effective, a POLRD has to continually gain trust among its users both through its capability to meet its obligations (the organization does what it publicly affirms to do) and from the idea of "integrity" perceived by the individuals resulting from the procedures' and operational activities' transparency.

3. Methods adopted and results

For the present study, short questionnaires and brief interviews have been adopted and submitted to a rather restricted group of individuals (15 units) composed of POLRDs' members, farmers and entrepreneurs used and not used to have contacts with POLRDs. These questionnaires have been supported by frequent informal talks with the respondents to obtain more independent information about these topics. Of course all this implies a certain degree of subjectivity but in the creation and consolidation of the substantial authority individual and collective prejudices can play a not secondary role compared to the more institutional factors of the issue. Given the very limited dimension of the sample-group of respondents, it has been decided not to adopt a statistical approach to the resulting information but rather to use these data to articulate some pragmatic and empiric-based observations.

Several public agencies and institutions operate, in a way or another, within the selected rural area: in particular five POLRDs affiliated or depending on principal public institutions and funding (Lazio Regional Administration, Chamber of Commerce, EU rural development programmes, etc.) focused major attention.

3.1 POLRDs' classification

These five organizations have been classified identifying and separating their formal features and substantial characteristics.

Formal features encompass inner norms and procedures, organizational structure, budget, mission and goals, declared services, power (weight in terms of political inward and outward influence, public relations). Substantial characteristics derive from the quality of norms and procedures (complexity and transparency), technical skills and competence of staff and managers, methods and practices adopted to select and motivate the staff and personal, collective and institutional trust and reputation perceived by the POLRD's users.

These data outline two corresponding perceived forms of authority: a formal and a substantial authority correlated in the diagram of figure 1. This diagram identifies four categories useful to classify a POLRD.

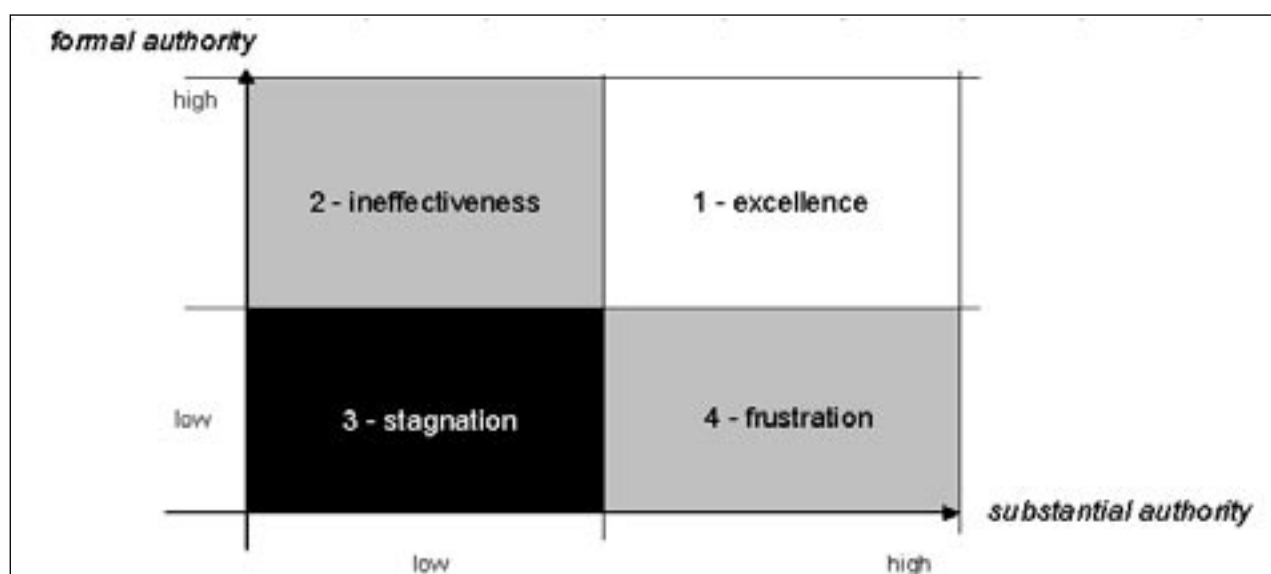


Figure 1 – Formal and substantial authority

Area 1 – High formal and substantial authority: this is a condition of excellence because the POLRD has juridical, technical and financial resources and skills, reputation and capabilities to produce positive impacts.

Area 2 – High formal authority but scarce substantial authority: in this case the POLRD detains financial resources and a solid bureaucratic structure, power and just connections with political entities but it shows weak trust relations with its users contributing to its ineffectiveness (scarce, negative or no impact on the rural territory).

Area 3 – In this case the POLRD has insufficient financial tools, scarce capabilities and skills, a weak structure: it is coping with a confused and chaotic legal framework and users show mistrust towards this POLRD which is ineffective, inefficient, stagnant and immobile. This kind of POLRD is highly auto-referential and it survives just to socially and economically preserve its management and staff status.

Area 4 – these POLRDs detain scarce financial and technical resources but its management and personnel, even if frustrated for the inadequacy of resources, have reputation and gain trust in the local people which acknowledge their skills and capabilities.

In this case-study, all the five POLRDs are included in area 2: their activities are likely to produce limited impact in the area and their initiatives found very "mild" responses and scarce institutional trust (sometimes compensated by personal or collective trust) by the respondents. From the "demand" side:

"It is not clear to me scopes and mission of that agency". "If you haven't the right contacts there, nobody will help you. They support only their friends". "They are scarcely committed to listen to me and understand my real problems. It is quite frustrating and discouraging to cope with that organization; it is better to find support somewhere else". "In theory, that organization makes a lot, but when I went there I realized that in practice, it organizes only training courses". "Too bureaucracy, personnel is too cynic and think to its immediate interests". "I cannot waste my time with them". "Staff and managers are very good people but they cannot do much for me". "Procedures are too complicated, forms are unclear".

From the "supply" side:

"We 'must' carry out certain activities (on paper) because we 'must' spend money otherwise next year funds will be cut". "If you want to enhance the possibility to finance your project, you must use words like "innovation", "local development", "rurality", "technology"

etc. no matter for the real contents. Now these terms are in vogue. Just mention them to satisfy the formal features of the project as our bosses require". "Our organization is composed of public and private partners and we don't welcome interferences".

"We would like to improve our activities but we must be very careful not to hurt parallel well protected private interests: we can do very little".

At this stage, the implementation of this model opens the way to the problem of the "qualification" of this dichotomy between the POLRD's technical needs and local technical needs as expression of local social interests.

3.2 The problem of a POLRD's inefficiency and ineffectiveness

Literature identifies different forms and types of "institutional" inefficiency (Visco Comandini and Volpe 1986, Granaglia 1988):

- inefficiency in allocation – the POLRD suffers inadequacies during the selection of what kind of goods and services must be produced and how to produce them;
- inefficiency in distribution –inadequacies in distributing goods and services;
- dynamic inefficiency – inadequacies in using resources to improve quality and quantity of goods and services;
- inefficiency in organization – inadequacies in the procedures determining the internal organization.

An organization can reverberate one of more of these inefficiencies into the following spheres:

Expenditure – funding the achievement of public interests, a POLRD's inefficiency can hit one or more of the following phases:

- the beneficiaries' selection
- funds appointment

• forms and time of funds' payment.

Coercion – this dimension involves controls and inspections: safety controls, environmental norms, hygienic requirements, etc. Here a POLRD's inefficiency is likely to be remarkably sensitive because it determines those discrepancies between particular and general interests.

These conditions may result from the perverse combined action of two distinctive problematic dimensions: a) inefficiency of procedural regulations and b) management and staff inefficiency.

Inefficiency of point a) depends on the attitude of norms, regulations and procedures to make a POLRD capable to achieve the expected results. A norm can be considered inefficient when, at cost parity, another one may be designed capable to generate better results, in the opinion of the average of the individuals concerned. A confused framework of norms and regulations, which are directed to chaotically regulate rural development through an extensive network of fences in social and economic issues, induces inefficiency in the public organizations committed to apply it.

This survey highlights the shared opinion within these five POLRDs' management that too many heavy detailed norms (at local, regional, national and EU level), duplications and normative conflicts slow down procedures because often these norms are very complicated and must be also interpreted. These complications make difficult to verify the observance of these norms by private subjects and to assure the observance of these procedures by the POLRD itself.

A critical side of the issue is the widespread opinion of the agents about methods and praxes adopted to select POLRDs' managers and staff. The commonly practiced habit in Italy to make these selections often on the base of political affiliation, contributing also to an excessive dilatation in the number of public offices and positions, contributes to populate public offices with individuals without adequate intellectual and technical expertises and skills (adverse selection). This condition may weaken the POLRD: without competent professional human resources, which on the contrary it should in theory have, the organization is often forced to massively and frequently utilize external consultants' support. A too frequent outsourcing of activities can thus become an indicator of a POLRD inefficiency. This scenario is generally shared by the respondents who are convinced that these things are deeply rooted in "these affaires" and "unavoidable", even when not corresponding to truth.

These considerations open the way for the inefficiencies related to point b). The quality of selection criteria, the internal systems of controls and incentives, influence the overall quality of the POLRD, its observance of legal rules and its global efficiency. In several cases, the presence of a sound regulation and procedural framework cannot grant per se the achievement of the organization's results and objectives because POLRD's management and staff elude these regulations and procedures, the personnel seems not adequately committed, devotes its time to non-productive activities and shows scarce technical skills

and capabilities. The "moral hazard" problem, even relevant for the private sector as well, is likely to be more critical for a public subject which cannot "go bankrupt" for its own "incapability".

Common negative symptoms emerging from the survey are POLRDs' staff and management attitude to be more concerned on "jobs" than "functions", with major attention to practical everyday duties and scarce consideration (or no idea) for the tasks and goals of the POLRD in which they operate, or a too frequent use of "conformity controls" within the organizations superficially adopted to verify if a certain action has been planned and implemented in the strict observance of procedural parameters (without considering whether this action has produced or not the expected result). Other negative signs derive from the characteristics of inner incentive schemes: working more or less, bad or well, the personnel cannot see any gratification, modification in retributions or in job careers' opportunities (motivational erosion). On the contrary, it is assumed that incentives are influenced by different types of "protections" and "blessing" (perverse motivations).

Perceived "diseases" in management are likely to be biased in a too firm "security" of the job, the power the position can generate and (not rarely) links with the political sphere. In the worst cases, managers are considered to see their job as a "private property" which can guarantee different forms of power, devoting much time to elaborate a system of personal power rather than efficiently and effectively cope with their tasks and duties. Consequently, the involved organizations seem to be more structured around managers' and staff needs than POLRD's functions and objectives.

To better qualify POLRDs' inefficiency, procedural (impersonal quality) and personnel quality (human quality) are correlated in the model of figure 2.

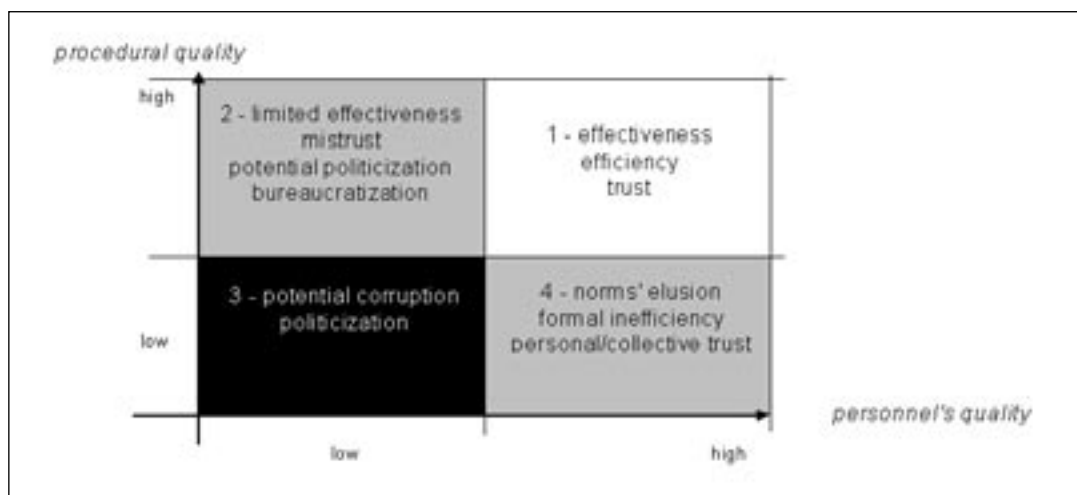


Figure 2 – Procedures' and personnel's efficiency

In the case-study, two POLRDs fall into Sector 1, one into Sector 2, one into Sector 3 and one into Sector 4. Even if no POLRD creates amalgamation phenomena for the territory, POLRDs in Sector 1 may show signs of positive condensations: the others, in a way or another, are charged by the respondents by one or more types of inefficiencies listed above, showing low integration levels and generating among the respondents a sense of mistrust in the organization's efficiency and, in some cases, an idea of partiality of the procedures which regulate the access to service. This sense of mistrust can highly vary creating, in the worst cases (when the organization is seen as "indecipherable", "absolutely not user oriented", "not transparent"), the pre-conditions for a sort of incentive to find privileged contacts with the POLRD to access to service, reduce time or have a "special

treatment": these institutions in fact can decide to make or not to make controls and inspections, rigidly apply or not to apply norms and regulations.

The POLRD in sector 3 poses particular questions because it evokes a commonly perceived sense of "partiality". A POLRD is expected to be neutral holding an adequate degree of autonomy, in particular from politics, when implementing its activities of management, control and intervention (financial support, definition of rules, etc.). This organization is expected to pursue general interests but respondents recognize that it suffers the threat of particular pressures being exposed to the implications of politicization. Being a public entity, this POLRD is seen responsible for economic and non economic costs for the local rural area because it wastes public investment supporting privileged agents selected on the base of political fidelity: non economic costs are focused in the fact that this organization doesn't operate in the public interest with a reduction of its functionality and capability to manage public goods. This is an example of a hub's "preferential attachment" and "adverse condensation" which can contribute to generate favourable conditions for a potential "corruption supply" from the POLRD to which corresponds a growing "corruption demand" from the POLRD's users contributing also to the development of a "low trust context".

4. Concluding comments

The limited dimension of the sample group and the procedures adopted in this survey perhaps do not allow rigorously statistic and scientific conclusions to be extended and generalized. These considerations require further investigations and validations according to more rigorous and orthodox procedures. Having these precautions in mind, this study offered the occasion to reflect about concrete operational expressions of some critical subjects of local rural development, to open a wider debate on the issue and to contribute to redefine strategies above all for a better use of public investments.

A "quantitative" approach to rural development, with a massive presence of poorly coordinated public intervention subjects, duplications and the creation of a cloud of local offices, agencies

and task forces, doesn't grant per se condensation and amalgamation phenomena with the activation of positive impacts for rural areas in economic, environmental and social terms, even when data show a large amount of financed projects, training courses attended, economic activities supported.

Empirical observations confirm that when POLRDs properly work, a more positive environment for the construction and consolidation of trust can be reported: these organizations operate as positive referring points for the definition of business strategies for farmers and other entrepreneurs.

Nonetheless, a more "qualitative" approach can demonstrate that not every POLRD operating on a rural area will provide a positive contribution to economic efficiency and overall local welfare. POLRDs which badly operate or produce poor performances can distort the economy and create forms of material and non-material subsidizing and wasting of public financial resources. A lack of a clearly defined and empirically tested development strategy may cause POLRDs to dissipate scarce public resources on activities which cost more than the benefits these activities should deliver to rural communities. Inefficient POLRDs' interventions may reduce, rather than enhance, the efficiency of local economy and the welfare of local residents also eroding the sense of trust in a rural area and contributing to reduce the sense of respect, shame and honour in individuals and communities.

Intuitively, all these considerations seem to agree with common sense stimulating an agenda for our future research: the efficiency of a POLRD, one of the possible agents of the system and a local public good itself, could be resumed in its capability a) to strengthen these links contributing to enhance the stability of the whole system and b) to increase its number of edges, but we have to cope with our present limits in measuring the strength of interactions and gathering the information useful to describe the network structure and the way such system works.

At the current stage, we can conclude that, in our case-study, local rural development doesn't require new and more sophisticated political and administrative tools but rather substantial improvements in values, procedures and practices governing the operational activities of the existing tools and the management of local public goods.

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A Research on the Ethical Dimension of Banking Crises in the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC)

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Abstract

In an era of sustainable economic development models there is an increased attention on sectoral compatibility, environmental protection, and professional ethics. As in the past, the banking and finance sector is still considered to be the heart of all development models. Financial institutions such as banks provide the necessary funds for all the manufacturing or service organizations in all the sectors. Therefore stability in the finance sector is necessary for the stability in all the other sectors. Analysing the recent bank and business failures it can be seen that the business and professional ethics is one of the most important elements of stability in banking and finance industries. In this respect, the basic objective of this study is to look at the ethical issues among the reasons for the recent bank failures and outline the professional and business ethics that has to be adopted in order to provide stability in the banking and finance sector of TRNC. As the summary It can be asserted that the most serious ethical problems which led to financial crises in TRNC were, connected lending, credits without adequate collaterals, favoritism by the management, inadequate use of funds, dealing in non-financial activities, political interference, lack of accountability, illegal use of funds, lack of transparency, and risky investments with low returns.

1. Introduction

Analysis of the bank and financial institution failures in different parts of the world shows that the ethical issues are among the most important reasons behind these failures. Failure to adopt the banking laws and regulations is among the primary reasons for bank failures. Even the larger banks are deemed to fail by not adopting to the banking regulations (Ayyoup 2002). Some of the common non-ethical behaviours in the banking sector are, bribery, misuse of authority, and exploitation (Hauri 2000; Carse 1999). ICAC (Independent Commission Against Corruption) investigated around 250 banks for corruption between 1997 and 2001 and found out that many top professionals/managers acted as if they are the owners of the banks and the banks' funds (Lai 2001). Another ethical dimension in banking industry is named as the connected lending (Eichengreen & Rose 1988, pp.2; Hoenig, 1999). Connected lending is described as lending to the owners, managers, and the relatives and close business associates. According to the 1992 Basel report as many as 90% of the countries limit the credit level at maximum 60% of the total paid up capital for a single client. In developed countries the maximum amount of credit for a single client is limited at 25% of paid up capital (Goldstein & Turner 1996, pp.21). While some of the connected lending may be done in bad faith, failure for appropriate risk analysis also causes problems in connected lending (Karabulut 2002, pp.55). Lack of transparency, which is shown as a microeconomic reason for bank failures, is also an ethical issue. Lack of transparency, which emanates from lack of regulations, prevents the clients and the shareholders from obtaining adequate information (Coşkun 2001, pp.4). Some of the other ethical issues concerning the banking industry are the political interferences, such as using influence to finance risky public investments (Parasız 2000, pp.227; Öçal & Çolak 1999, pp 284-285). Moral hazard risk is present when one of the parties

has false intentions, gives wrong information, exaggerated and overvalued collaterals, and taking inappropriate risks for gaining personal profit at the banks' expense (Süer 2002, pp.21; Mishkin 1998, pp.35). In this respect, the main aim of this study is to research on the causes of banking crises in the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) with particular emphasis on ethical dimension. With this perspective, first, ethical dimension of the banking industry will be outlined. The study will follow with the findings of the research on the bank failures. The report will intensify on the ethical issues and recommendations will be offered in order to avoid such problems.

2. Concept of ethics in banking

Financial sector in general and banking sector in particular are important instruments of speedy economic growth and development. Other than financing, banks play an important role in restructuring the economy and to bring about a long-term sustainable macroeconomic stability. Banks are critical organizations for stability and development of the economy. Success of the banks, both in short and long term depend on trust and confidence between the all parties (Arrow 1972; Deiss 2001). Ethical values and behaviour play very important role in creating and maintain mutual trust and confidence. Banks should never forget the importance of ethical behaviour while aiming to maximize their profit.

Conceptually, ethics refers to well base standards of right and wrong that prescribe what humans ought to do, usually in terms of rights, obligations, benefits to society, fairness, or specific virtues. Moral and ethics are closely related. In many instances ethics is used as alternative name for moral (TBB 2003a, pp.2). When looked at the banking sector, ethics can be described as the appropriate behaviour to create mutual benefit for the stakeholders such as the clients, depositors, shareholders and the employees. In other words while carrying out the business activities

the bank must aim at the goodness, rightfulness and the lawfulness rather than bad, wrong and unlawfulness (Hong Kong monetary Authority 1999, pp.71). Within these principles, the banks must carry out their responsibilities by implementing an effective and efficient deposit-credit system, to avoid any negative effect to the public, to be environmentally concerned in the public interest, to obtain confidence by safeguarding the clients' interest and to provide overall stability within and around the bank (Awoke 2003, pp.2). After this conceptual introduction, banking ethics can be described as honesty, impartiality, trustworthiness, compatibility to the banking regulations, and transparency (TBB 2003b; Office of the Banking Adjudicator 2003; Longstaff 1993). Short explanations of these are as follows:

- + Honesty: Banks must be honest to their clients, employees, shareholders, competitors and the other organizations that they are in touch (Australasian Institute of Banking & Finance 2003).

- + Impartiality: Banks should not differentiate between the clients, or the clients and the employees or between any of the stakeholders.

- + Trustworthiness: Banks must carry out all their activities timely, precisely, accountably, and accurately, and inform their clients accordingly (Hellenic Bank Association 1977, pp.12)

- + Compatibility to the banking regulations: banks must carry out all their activities in accordance to the banking rules and regulations (Hungarian Banking Association 1999, Ayyoub 2002).

- + Transparency: Banks must give clear and easily understandable information about their products, services, risks and benefits to their clients. (Hellenic Bank Association 1997 pp. 11)

3. Results of the banking crises in TRNC

Banks are established and function under the law 39/2001 which was accepted and published in the official gazette numbered 122 on 23 November 2001. As of 2004, there are 2 state banks, 2 cooperative banks, 15 commercial private banks and 6 foreign branch banks, totaling to 25 banks operating in TRNC (TRNC Central Bank 2005, p. 29). The number of banks prior to the crises was 37. 12 of these banks ceased their operations due to weakening financial positions, bankruptcy, or mergers.

According to the law 39/2001 the minimum paid up capital requirement for banks is \$2,000,000 (Two million American Dollars) (İhtisas Komisyonu 2002, pp.2).

As stated earlier Turkey faced major economic crises at the end of the 1999, in November 2000 and finally in February 2001 which led to substantial devaluation in the Turkish Lira. These crises had magnified negative effects on the TRNC economy, which uses Turkish Lira as official currency. The estimated cost of the banking crises is 200 trillion Turkish Lira. This figure is 50% of the GDP in 1999. Floating exchange rate was adopted after the crises. This led to reduction of consumers' buying capacity at 50%, loss of production and recession. GNP in 1999 with the 1977 prices was at 9,090.8 million TL; the same figure in 2000 was 9037.9 million TL, and 8,545.9 million TL in 2001 (DPÖ 2002, pp.2-3).

As natural consequences of the bank failures the bank accounts were adversely affected. After the crises of 2001 there are negative developments in the saving accounts. Total savings in the January-May period in 2000 had increased by 27.9% at current prices from 172,426,892.0 million TL to 220,469,922.0 million TL. The increase in the same period in 2001 dropped to

12.7% from 292,771,506.0 million TL to 329,882,343.0 million TL. But since the increase in the consumer's price index in the same period increased by 34.53%, this means that there is decrease in the savings in real terms.

There is also a real decrease in the savings in the 12-month period. The increase in the consumer prices in May 2000 – May 2001 were 70.8% while the increase in the savings in the same period was only 49.6%. The share of the current accounts in the total savings in the period January May 2000 was increased to 19.6% from 14.1% the year before. The rate of the interest accounts decreased to 80.4% from 85.9% in the past period. The share of the current accounts in total accounts in 2001 decreased to 23.5% from 29%. The share of the interest accounts increased to 76.5% from 71%.

Total current accounts in twelve-month period May 2000-May 2001 decreased by 15.1% from 504,249.1 thousand dollars to 428,928.8 thousand dollars. Interest currency accounts reduced by 25.2% from 328,879.6 thousand dollars to 246,025.6 thousand dollars. The current currency accounts has slightly increased by 3.9% from 175,369.5 thousand dollars to 182,263.2. Currency transactions are reducing year by year. Reduction in the May 2000-May 2001 period was as high as 48.1% from 3,460.1 thousand dollars to 2,015.3 dollars.

Total banking investment/credits during January-May 2000 period had decreased by current prices at 10.5% to 493,666,251.0 million TL from 551,339,571.0. The investment credit in the same period of 2001 increased by 39.8% from 525,442,898.0 TL to 729,673,065.0 million Turkish Lira.

When the 12-month period, May 2000-May 2001 is taken increase in the investments is at 47.8%. The consumer price increase in the same period is at 70.8%, which means that the growth is negative in real terms. The credits given out in this period intensified to public organizations, international trade, personal and business credits (DPÖ 2001, pp.50-53).

4. Basic causes of bank failures in TRNC and the dimension of ethical issues

Liberalization movements around the world influenced economic policies, which started to take shape in the beginning of the 1980's. Governments who adopted more liberal economic policies prepared the ground for competition by allowing more banks to be established. The liberalization movements had been especially effective in the banking sector. Number of the banks in the beginning of the 1980s was only 12. At the time of the bank crises the number of the banks tripled to 36. Allowing many small cooperatives and the credit and finance firms to deal in the finance industry gave rise to intensive competition. While the actors in the industry had risen the government and the related authorities failed to keep track. The industry lacked appropriate regulations. Lack of regulation and inspection left the banks on their own with their own destiny. This situation increased the fragility of the banks. Holding banks were especially fragile and the crises originated from Turkey led to collapse of these banks.

The banking crises in TRNC started when the Yurtbank was taken over by the authorities and the clients of the Nicosia branch queued up to draw back their deposits. The fear of further banking crises was quickly expands. Weak banks quickly run into trouble after the immense demand for withdrawals. Holding banks such as the Hür bank, Kıbrıs Finansbank, Everestbank, and Cyprus Credit Banks, and later the Cyprus Industry Bank, and Peyak failed to continue their operations (Bektaş

2003).

Causes of the bank failures, which had a cost of \$200,000,000, will be looked into in the following part of the study.

4.1 Basic Causes of the Bank Failures in TRNC

Banking crises in TRNC was largely influenced from the outside developments. Therefore the reasons of failures will be investigated under two headings, namely the external and internal influences.

a) External Reasons

As explained earlier TRNC is using Turkish Lira as official currency and therefore any positive or negative development in the Turkish economy has direct influence on the TRNC economy. Weak Turkish economy, devaluation, high inflation and high interest rates had direct effects on TRNC economy.

b) Internal Causes

Following are the basic internal causes for bank failures:

Legal regulations

When looked at the bank failures in the developing countries similar trends take place. As these countries try to liberalize their economies they allow more competition in the market. However failing to make necessary regulations and keep track of the developments lead to problems.

In TRNC, while the governments encouraged liberalization in the finance industry, they failed to introduce appropriate regulations that would facilitate the finance companies to institutionalise.

It is clear from the accounts of the failed banks that these banks had inadequate paid up capital ratios, had accumulated bad debt, and were mismanagement. Ratio of the credits to the capital played a critical role in failure. Capital adequacy control alone could be a critical tool controlling the banks health. Laws prior to the crises included no ratio requirements.

Auditing and Observation

Auditing and observation mechanism is a necessary activity in order to detect the problems and remedy them before the crises actually take place. However the lack of adequate personnel and lack of any implementation power had failed the authorities to carry out these activities before the crises. Lack of inspection relaxes the industry and breaking the rules becomes a habitual incident. Banks neglect the regulations and take unnecessary high risk.

In TRNC, the Central Bank and the Ministry of the Economy and Finance carry out Auditing and observation of the banks. There are also both internal and external auditors. However there were no standard auditing mechanisms. Auditors also lacked power. Hence the auditors had not been able to obtain the necessary information to perform appropriate inspections. Management with bad intention could easily hide information. The system lacked appropriate observation, inspection and auditing.

Internal auditors were biased in favour of the banks and the external auditors lacked appropriate power to make proper investigation in the TRNC Banking sector. Lack of observation and inspection inevitably led to bank failures (Şafaklı 2003a, pp.217-232)

Holding Banks

Holding banks have different structural set up than the other commercial banks. Such banks are just one of the strategic business units of the holdings and other organizations take place in different sectors under the same umbrella. The bank is usually used for the finance of the holding companies. Taking high risks did such financing usually.

Most of the banks newly established in TRNC after 1980s are holding banks. Law capital requirement and flexible and inadequate banking law encouraged many holdings to start their own banks. Large margin between the deposit accounts and the credit accounts was another influence on entering banking activities.

Law capital requirements were one of the most important influences on the businessman to start their own banks. By establishing their own bank, instead of borrowing at very high credit interests they would be able to collect deposits at lower interest and use it for their business purposes. In the long run however mismanagement of the accumulated funds which had been invested in non-productive fields weakened the banks position.

Another important reason for the bank failures were the lack of liquidity of the banks. The holding banks failed to keep enough liquid money since they rather used these in their business ventures. Once the rush had started these banks failed to meet the demand of the clients.

The Central Bank

Role of the central bank, and the money issuing issues had been discussed at many occasions. Without going into these issues, the study will look into the role of the Central Bank as the last resort for crises.

Central banks may sometimes print money and supply the banks in crises to save them. The Central Bank of TRNC has no money printing capacity and also lacked any funds to make available for the banks in crises. Hence the Central Bank had failed to make necessary interference to avoid systemic failures.

Credit Risk and Management

Investigations show that the failed banks lacked professionalism in assessing the credit applications. They neglected to take into consideration the active/passive ratios, liquidity ratios, capacity, character and cash flows of the applicants. They gave credit with high risk without taking appropriate collaterals (Akgüç 2000, pp.15). Banks also failed to follow up the destiny of these credits. The credits usually ended up in low-return investments. As it will be explained in the ethical dimensions of the bank failures the owners and managers of the banks were given credit above the limits identified by the banking law.

- Banks had no effective internal auditing mechanism
- Banks entered speculative activities with the board of directors permission
- Failed banks gave very high real interest rate. For example failed Everest Bank gave 25% interest rate for foreign currencies while the Cooperative Central Bank gave only 18%.
- Cooperative banks performed just like the commercial banks while they had no obligations that the banks had.

Capital Adequacy

Unlike the other intuitions, capital is a safety factor for the banks. In general about 70% of the actives of the banks comprise the credits (Rose 2002, pp.115). Paid up capital plays as the safety valve against the credit risk. According to the BIS (Bank for International Settlements) criteria the ratio of the

bank capital to the rest of the risk assets should be at least 8% (Şafaklı 2003a, pp. 217-232). Capital adequacy ratios are most important instruments in determining the health of any bank. It was explained before that there was no effective inspection and auditing of the banks prior to the crises. The legal capital requirement for a bank prior to the crises was only 50 billion Turkish Lira. Low capital requirements led to inflation in the banks. Figure 1 shows the increase of the banks from 13 to 37 in just three years time while figure 2 shows the ratio of the equity capital to the GNP.

counts to the Central Bank.

- Misleading information on the deposits in respect of the safety fund.
- Ignoring the directives of the Ministry of Finance.
- Giving Credits to the owners and the board members or their business entities in excess of the defined limits in the banking law. Most of these credits were invested in wrong areas with high risk and such situation had been a primary reason for bank failures. Connected credit ratios of the failed banks Hürbank, Everest Bank, Finance Bank and the Yurtbank ranged from 58.8% to 92.3% (Cyprus today 2000).
- Banks accepted unaccounted deposits.

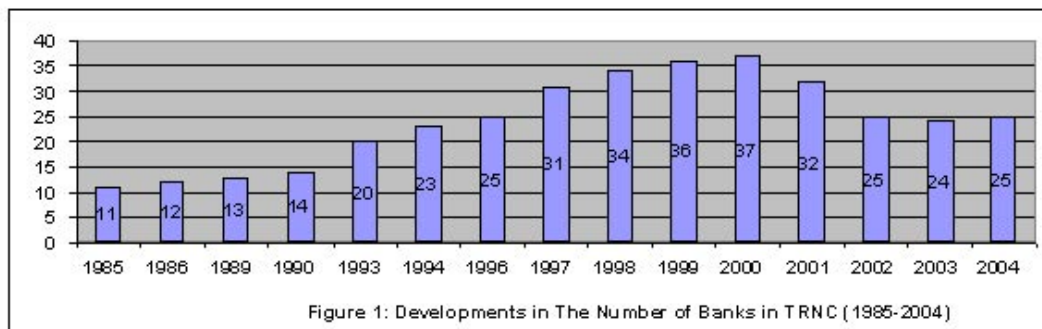


Figure 1: Developments in The Number of Banks in TRNC (1985-2004)

Source: (Şafaklı 2003b; TRNC Central Bank 2004, p. 25; Banks Association of Northern Cyprus (Unpublished Data))

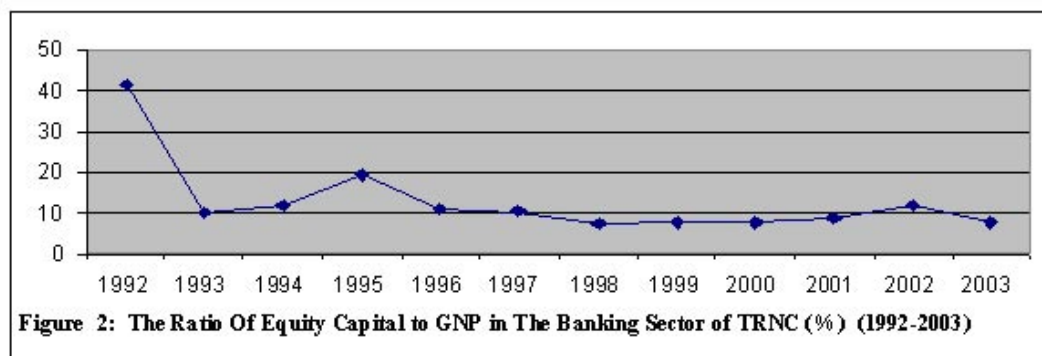


Figure 2: The Ratio Of Equity Capital to GNP in The Banking Sector of TRNC (%) (1992-2003)

Source: (Şahinkaya 2002, p. 275; SPO 2002, p. 177; <http://www.ildktomb.trnc.net/veriler/veriall.html>; SPO 2004, pp. 6-7; TRNC Central Bank 2004, pp. 23-24).

Findings of a survey carried out in 18 different countries including TRNC, South Cyprus and Turkey proved that TRNC was number one in the list for the number of banks per capita (Şafaklı 2003b).

After the bank crises in 2001 minimum capital requirement for banks to operate was raised from 50 billion Turkish Lira to 2 million American Dollars. This figure is still low relative to the international norms. For example minimum capital requirement in the EU countries is 5 million Euros, and the requirements in the South Cyprus is 3 million Cyprus pounds (Bıçak & Menteşoğlu 1998, pp.539; Düzgün 1999, pp.239-240).

4.2 Ethical Dimension of the Bank Failures in TRNC

Looking into the basic reasons of bank failures in TRNC, it is found out that almost all the ethical principles were broken prior to the crises. Among the ethical issues the ones that contributed most to the bank failures were the operations against the law and regulations and political interference.

Working against the regulations

Following are the findings of the Central Bank that the failed banks conducted against the regulations.

- Not confirming to the legal levels of liquidity, and deposition of appropriate rate of deposits to the central bank.
- Presentation of misleading and intentionally wrong ac-

Political Interference

One of the most important factors in the banking sector is the political influence on the system. Authorities that are responsible for inspection and regulations are responsible towards the political authority. The reason for bank inflation prior to the crises is due to the fact that the decision-making authority for giving permissions for new banks was the Ministry and the Board of Ministry. Decisions were made according to the political interest and not the economy.

Prior to the crises the banking sector was under the influence of the Ministry of Finance and board of the Ministers. Politicians act according to their political interest but not according to the economic and public needs. This attitude created problems in the long run. Political authority who lacks the basic knowledge and expertise on banking is another shortcoming and important effect on the crises.

Bank deposits at the Central Bank was used inappropriately by the political authorities and were not available for the Central Bank to be used as an instrument to resolve the crises. Insufficiency of the Central Bank to avoid the crises had contributed to the bank failures.

Apart from the above factors most bank managers had hidden information or gave false information to the auditors. Internal auditors acted non-professionally and didn't carry out effective auditing. Favorism towards the board members and the owners, accepting unaccounted deposits and discrimination among clients are some of the other ethical misconducts in the banking sector that was frequently witnessed prior to the crises.

5. Research method and main findings

In order to confirm the critical factors effective on the banking crises in the TRNC put forward in the descriptive analysis above, a research has been carried out in July 2005. For this research, 275 depositors of liquidated banks in different regions of TRNC were chosen randomly and they were interviewed face to face. The main findings of the research expressed in per-

centages are as follows:

5.1 Demographic Results

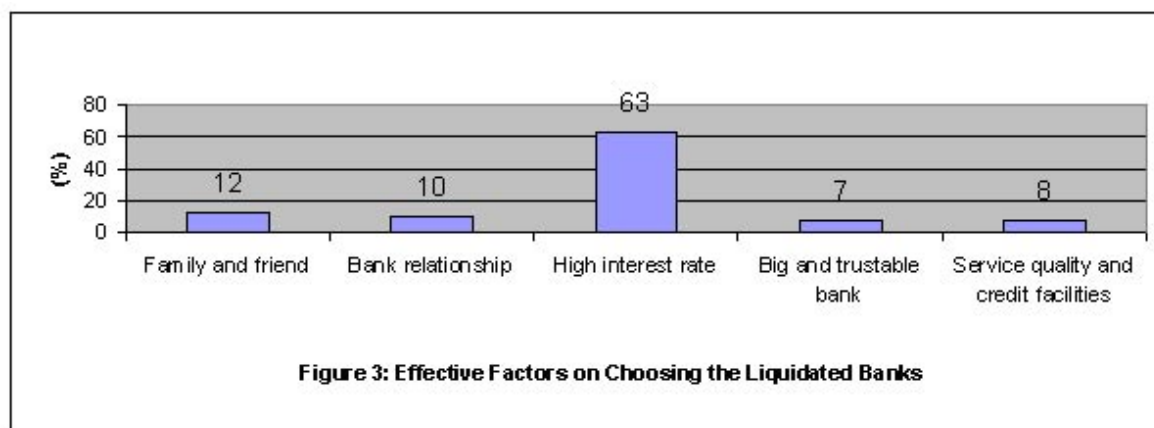
Demographic profile of depositors as shown in Table 1 is summarized as follows:

- Majority of depositors (66%) are male.
- When looked at the age distribution of depositors, it is seen that 70% of them are 34 and above.
- According to marital status, 66% of depositors are married.
- Educational status of depositors shows that they carry high intellectual capacity. Such that 78% of them have the educational level of high school or above while 41% of them possess university and postgraduate degree.

| Factor | Category | Percent (%) |
|----------------|---------------|-------------|
| Sex | Male | 66 |
| | Female | 34 |
| Age | 18-25 | 12 |
| | 26-33 | 18 |
| | 34 and above | 70 |
| Marital Status | Single | 27 |
| | Married | 66 |
| | Widow | 7 |
| Education | Primary | 10 |
| | Secondary | 12 |
| | High school | 37 |
| | University | 30 |
| | Post graduate | 11 |

5.2 The Reason of Choosing Liquidated Banks and Responsible Authorities

- When interviewed with depositors, majority of them (63%) stated that basic motive driving them to deposit in liquidated banks was high interest rates (Figure 3).



- According to depositors' evaluation, fraud of bank owners represents the basic responsibility and/or guilty for the bankruptcy of liquidated banks (Figure 4).

5.3 Asymmetric Information and Ethical Behavior

In addition to the results of the research above, other per-

ceptions of depositors related to specially asymmetric information and ethical behavior are specified in Table 2 by using Likert type scale. Factors affecting the occurrence of the banking crises in TRNC have been inquired with a scale as follows: 1- I definitely disagree, 2- I disagree 3- I hesitate 4- I agree 5- I definitely agree. Two methods that are, percentage and arithmetic mean have been applied for the analysis of the findings obtained by the scale. For arithmetic mean calculation, the scale values have been used as (I definitely disagree=-2, I disagree=-1, I hesitate=0, I agree=+1, I definitely agree=+2). Findings obtained within this framework as shown in Table 2 have been summarized as follows:

- Depositors of liquidated banks did not have enough information about the financial position and riskiness of banks.
- The liquidated banks did not implement ethical principle of transparency.
- Depositors were not well informed about the deposit insurance system in TRNC.
- Liquidated banks illegally and unethically used the deposits for their own interest. Parallel to this, research also shows that owners of liquidated banks did not obey the ethical values (transparency, honesty) and unethical behavior of banks played important role in the occurrence of banking crises. Therefore, Board of Directors and top managers played an important role in the bankruptcy of liquidated banks
- Because of the asymmetric information and lack of professionalism, depositors did not feel the need of financial and other type of data about the liquidated banks.
- Naturally, as stated in the relevant theory, banks run accelerated the bankruptcy of banks.
- Research findings also show that TRNC Central Bank was not independent. Therefore, government intervention intended to finance specially budget deficit negatively influenced the banking crises and bankruptcy of liquidated banks.

6. Conclusion and recommendations

As a conclusion it could be stated that the ethical misconduct played an important role in bank failures in TRNC. The owners, the board of directors, top executives and the internal auditors

had been involved in unethical conduct prior to the bank failures. Furthermore, government intervention to Central Bank's independence proved to be both unethical and detrimental to the liquidity of banking sector. Moreover, high degree of asymmetric information and lack of transparency in the banking

sector of TRNC are other realities stated contrary to ethical behaviour. Risks were immensely increased since almost all the banks gave connected credits to the owners and the privileged board of directors. Most of such credits failed to be paid back. Allowing new banks to be established with as low as 50 billion TL capital was another critical mistake that contributed for the bank crises.

After the economic crises and the bank failures, the political

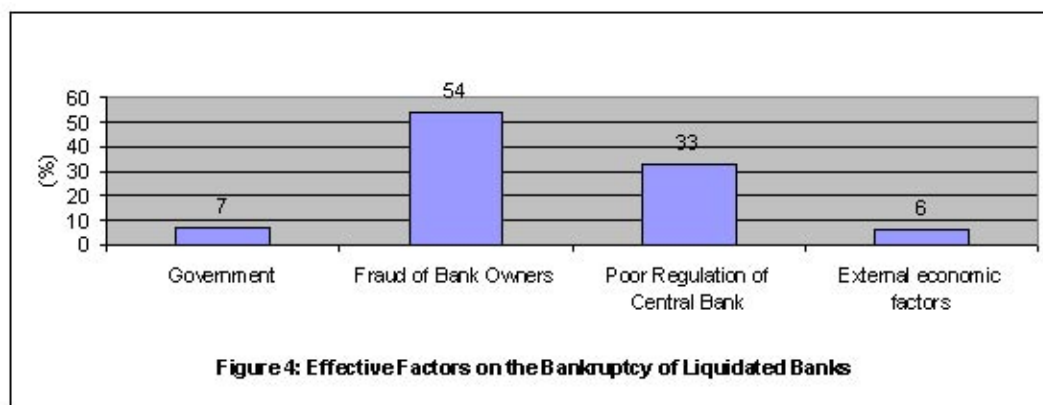
influence has been reduced on the sector. Permissions for new banks and branches are now left for the Central Bank. The Central Bank has also been removed from political influence. There are still a lot has to be done to build up ethical principles in the banking sector. In this respect, the following recommendations can be made:

• Holding Banks should be constantly under focus in order avoid connected lending.

• The Central Bank should publish a guide on ethical conduct and distribute these to the banks.

• Among the many criteria good personality, honesty and professionalism should be some of the values required for top executives, board membership and managers.

• Internal auditing should be carried out independently and



impartially.

• Training should be provided by the Central Bank to improve awareness on ethical issues.

• A transparent system must be created whereby the unethical behaviour of any bank is publicly known.

Table 2: Perception of Depositors Related to Banking Crises in TRNC

| | 1 (%) | 2 (%) | 3 (%) | 4 (%) | 5 (%) | Arithmetic Mean |
|--|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-----------------|
| Depositors were well informed about the financial performance and riskiness of liquidated banks | 34 | 44 | 9 | 9 | 4 | -0,96 |
| Liquidated banks were transparent | 28 | 41 | 19 | 11 | 1 | -0.84 |
| Depositors were well informed about the deposit insurance system | 22 | 41 | 21 | 13 | 29 | -0.14 |
| Owners of liquidated banks obeyed the ethical values (transparency, honesty) | 44 | 32 | 14 | 6 | 4 | -1.06 |
| Liquidated banks illegally used the deposits for their own interest | 5 | 15 | 21 | 30 | 29 | +0.63 |
| Depositors did not want to learn the financial position of liquidated banks | 7 | 18 | 13 | 44 | 18 | +0.48 |
| Board of Directors and top managers played an important role in the bankruptcy of liquidated banks | 6 | 12 | 15 | 40 | 27 | +0.70 |
| Banks run accelerated the bankruptcy of banks | 5 | 17 | 18 | 46 | 14 | 0.47 |
| Dependent position of TRNC Central Bank negatively influenced the banking crises | 6 | 14 | 25 | 40 | 15 | 0.44 |
| Unethical behavior of banks played important role in the occurrence of banking crises | 5 | 13 | 22 | 43 | 17 | 0.54 |

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Eri-ikäisyys ja ikäjohtaminen – Diskursiivinen tutkimus

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to examine different age groups and age management in organizations. Age management is obviously an important issue in business organizations and in society as a whole, as it is seen as one solution to the problem of an aging workforce. Age management is defined in this paper based on the theory of diversity management, which regards age as one aspect of diversity. In this paper I explore what kinds of meanings people in the case organizations attach to age and how they define age management in organizations. My research method is discourse analysis, in which the focus is on speech. The main outcome of the study is that people construct "the old" and "the young" as two distinct groups in their organizational discourses. The identity of a "young" and an "old" worker are similarly constructed. Two specific types of discourses were derived from the empirical data related to age management, namely: efficiency discourse and community discourse.

Keywords

Different age groups, age management, discourse analysis, identity, diversity management

1. Johdanto

Millä perustein määrittelemme jonkin vanhaksi tai nuoreksi työyhteisössä? Jokaisella on oma käsityksensä vanhasta ja nuoresta ja tämä käsitys on riippuvainen usein omasta iästä. Muodostamme käsityksemme kielen ja sen käytön perusteella. Ympäristö ja sen puhetapa muokkaavat käsityksiä ja mielikuvia "ikäisyydelle". Kielellä on näin merkittävä rooli sosiaalisen todellisuuden tuottajana. (Lämsä, 2002.)

"Ikääntyvä" on vakiintunut yhteiskunnallisessa ja ikäjohtamiseen liittyvässä kirjallisuudessa koskemaan yli 45-vuotiaita henkilöitä. Termiä ikääntynyt on käytetty laajalti julkisessa keskustelussa ja lainsäädännössäkin kuvaamaan yli 55-vuotiaita työelämässä. Ikämäärittely pohjautuu ikääntyvien työllistymisedellytysten parantamista selvittäneen komitean (Ikääntyvät työelämässä 1996) määrittelyyn (Ilmarinen, Lähteenmäki ja Huuhtanen, 2003). Komitean määrittely perustuu ikää ja työkykyä koskeviin tutkimustuloksiin, joiden mukaan ensimmäiset oireet työn kuormittavuudesta tulevat esiin keskimäärin 45 vuoden iässä (Paloniemi, 2004). Toisaalta, esimerkiksi vanhuustutkimuksen eli gerontologian näkökulmasta termit "ikääntyvä" ja "ikääntynyt" sopivat varsin huonosti kuvaamaan vasta keski-ikäistä väestön osaa.

Seuraavien vuosikymmenien aikana realisoituvaa demografista muutosta teollistuneissa maissa haastaa yhteiskuntatalouden. Keski-ikä kohoaa, ja eläkeläisten määrä kasvaa. Ikärakenteen vinoumaan ovat vaikuttaneet suuret sotien jälkeiset ikäluokat ja alhainen syntyvyys 1970-luvulla. Työelämään suurin vaikutus on suurten ikäluokkien siirtyminen yli 50 vuoden ikään, sillä he ovat noin 30 prosenttia koko työvoimasta. Organisaatioille ikääntyminen merkitsee uhkaa siinä mielessä, että ikärakenteen vinouman vuoksi suuri määrä tietoa ja strategista osaamista siirtyy pienen ajan kuluessa eläkkeelle. Huoltosuhteet muuttuvat siten, että kansantuotteen kasvu ja hyvinvoinnin taloudellisten edellytysten turvaaminen jäävät yhä harvempien vastuulle. Kärjistyessään työvoimapula asettaa siirtolaispolitiikalle uudet tavoitteet.

(Ilmarinen ym., 2003; Griffiths, 1999.)

Väestön ikääntyminen ja ikäjohtamisen tarpeellisuus on tiedostettu yhteiskunnallisessa keskustelussa ja organisaatioiden johtamisessa. Kansallinen ikäohjelma, joka toteutettiin vuosina 1998–2002, on esimerkki ponnisteluista eläköityvän yhteiskunnan ongelmien hallitsemiseksi (Ikäohjelman monet kasvot, 2002). Ikäohjelma tähtäsi erityisesti ikääntyvien työkykyä edistävään toimintaan, työllisyyden parantamiseen ja ikämyönteistä asenneilmastoa palvelevan tiedon lisäämiseen. Ikäohjelman puitteissa käynnistettiin myös laajamittaista tutkimustoimintaa ja yrityksille suunnattuja hankkeita. Yritykset ovat tiedostaneet uudenlaisen tilanteen, jossa inhimillisestä resurssista kilpaillaan. Tullevaisuudessa työvoiman kysyntä ylittää tarjonnan ja asettaa myös organisaatioille uudenlaisia paineita. Tästä syystä organisaatiot ovat käynnistäneet ikäjohtamisen hankkeita, joissa ne pohtivat omia ikäasenteitaan sekä pyrkivät edistämään omien työntekijöidensä työkykyä, työllistävyyttä ja organisaation tuloksellisuutta.

Ikäjohtaminen on vaikeasti määriteltävä käsite, jolle ei tunnu vielä löytyneen täysin vakiintunutta sisältöä. Näkökulman mukaan ikäjohtaminen viittaa organisaatioiden johtamiseen tai ihmisten elämän tarkasteluun (Juuti, 2002). Käsitteeseen sisältyy yhteiskunnallinen, organisatorinen ja yksilötason ulottuvuus. Yhteiskunnallisesta näkökulmasta ikäjohtaminen on ensisijaisesti kansantalouden kestävyuden turvaamista. Ikäjohtamista tarkastellaan siis yhteiskunnallisena ilmiönä, demografisena muutoksena. EU käyttää käsitettä "age management" tarkoittamaan keinoja, joilla hallitaan EU-alueen väestön ikääntyminen ja sen mukanaan tuomat ongelmat. Yksilön kannalta ikäjohtamisessa korostuvat työn merkitys, arvo ja luonne. Organisaation ikäjohtamisen ja laajemmin henkilöstöjohtamisen käytänteillä vaikutetaan esimerkiksi yksilön mahdollisuuksiin edetä urallaan. Tässä tutkimuksessa ikäjohtamisen ymmärretään olevan osa organisaation toimintaa, eri-ikäisten johtamista siten, että jokaisen työntekijän ominaisuudet tulisivat hyödynnettyä parhaalla mahdollisella tavalla,

ja niin, että jokainen toimija tuntisi itsensä tarpeelliseksi organisaatiossa. Useinhan käsite rajataan tarkoitamaan ainoastaan "ikäntyneisiin" kohdistuvia toimenpiteitä.

Myös muunkinlainen erilaisuus vaikuttaa johtamiseen, sillä työyhteisössä on erilaisia työntekijöitä, joiden erilaisuus tulisi hyväksyä ja hyödyntää. Parhaimmillaan erilaisuus, myös erikäisyys, on työyhteisön voimavara.

Tässä artikkelissa tarkastellaan ikäjohtamisen ilmentymistä ja merkityksiä organisaation sisällä. Sosiaalista todellisuutta pyritään ymmärtämään haastattelemalla sen jäseniä. Laadulliseen tutkimukseen liittyvä merkityksen käsite on tutkimuksessa keskeisellä sijalla. Tässä tutkimuksessa halutaan ymmärtää niitä merkityksiä, joita haastateltavat antavat ikääntymiselle, erikäisyydelle ja ikäjohtamiselle. Muotoilen tutkimuskysymykseni seuraavasti:

Millaisia merkityksiä eri-ikäisyydelle ja ikäjohtamiselle annetaan organisaatiossa?

Millaisia identiteettejä haastateltaville rakentuu eri-ikäisyysdiskurssissa?

Tutkimusmenetelmänä diskurssianalyysi on monimerkityksinen, eikä sen soveltamisessa ole yhtä oikeaa tapaa. Phillips ja Hardy (2002) korostavat kirjavuutta diskurssianalyysiin käytettävissä tiedon keruun tavoissa samoin kuin itse analyysin kirjoa. Tutkimusmenetelmänä diskurssianalyysi kuitenkin auttaa ymmärtämään ikäjohtamista ja ikääntymisilmiötä koko laajuudessaan sekä näiden kahden välistä yhteyttä.

Aineisto on diskurssianalyttisessä tutkimuksessa keskeinen osa tutkimusta, mutta aineistoa tulee tarkastella juuri siinä kontekstissa, jossa se on tuotettu. Tutkimusaineistona käytetyt haastattelut tarjoavat "sisäpiiriläisten tulkintoja organisaatiokontekstista" (Phillips & Hardy, 2002). Haastateltavien puhe antoi kuitenkin viitteitä myös laajemmista organisaatiokontekstin ulkopuolisista yhteiskunnallisista olosuhteista, yhteiskunnallisista diskurssista. Tarkoituksena ei ole tehdä mikroanalyysejä yksittäisistä teksteistä, sillä ne eivät olisi tuottaneet sitä sosiaalista todellisuutta, jota tässä tutkimuksessa halutaan ymmärtää. Tutkittava todellisuus rakentui tekstikokonaisuuksista eli diskurssista, jotka konstituivat sosiaalista todellisuutta (Phillips & Hardy, 2002).

Tässä tutkimuksessa kiinnostus kohdistuu yksilön aikeiden tai toiminnan selittämisen sijaan siihen, millainen identiteetti rakennetaan keskustelun kuluessa nuorelle ja ikääntyneelle. Tutkimuksen lopussa hahmotellaan näkemystä siitä, minkälaisen kehysten pohjalta yrityksissä jäsenetään ikääntymistä, erikäisyyttä ja myös ikäjohtamista.

2. Ikäjohtamisen teoreettinen tarkastelu

Ikäjohtaminen on itsessään kiinnostava tutkimuskohde. Ikäjohtamista on tutkittu eri tieteenaloilla, mm. terveystieteissä ja yhteiskuntatieteissä (ks. esim. Walker, 1999). Johtamistutkimuksessa ikäjohtamista on lähestytty henkilöstöresurssien johtamisen näkökulmasta tutkimuksissa, joissa keskitytään väestön ikääntymisen mukanaan tuomiin muutoksiin esimerkiksi työvoiman suunnittelussa, rekrytoinnissa, valinnassa, koulutuksessa, palkitsemisessa, suoriutumisen arvioinnissa, urakehityksessä, eläkkeelle siirtymisessä, työterveydessä ja turvallisuudessa sekä tasa-arvoisuudessa (Patrickson & Hartmann, 1995).

Ikäjohtaminen on henkilöstöjohtamista, jossa otetaan huomioon työpaikan eri-ikäiset ihmiset ja heidän erilaiset tarpeensa. Ikäjohtaminen on johtamista, jossa panostetaan henkilöstön ylläpitoon ja varmistetaan näin yrityksen menestys,

mikä on tärkeää, kun henkilöstöresurssin merkitys yhä kasvaa tulevaisuudessa. Ikäjohtaminen on esimiestyön näkökulmasta tapa johtaa ihmisiä (leadership). Tässä tutkimuksessa ei käsitellä ikäjohtamisen käytänteitä ja menettelytapoja. Jos tutkimuksen kohteena olisivat nämä asiat, puhuttaisiin erityisesti ikääntyvien toimintakyvystä ja työkyvystä (Kirjonen, 1994; Ilmarinen, 1999).

Tässä tutkimuksessa ikäjohtamista lähestytään erilaisuuden johtamisen (diversity management) näkökulmasta. Ikä on yksi erilaisuuden muoto. Erilaisuus syntyy ominaisuuksista, kuten iästä, sukupuolesta, etnisestä tai kulttuuritaustasta, fyysisestä toimintakyvystä tai seksuaalisesta suuntautumisesta. Erilaisuuden johtaminen korostaa sellaisia ikäjohtamisessakin keskeisiä arvoja kuin suvaitsevaisuus ja erilaisuuden hyväksyminen. Erilaisuuden johtaminen tässä yhteydessä tarkoittaa johtajan kykyä saada erilaiset ihmiset toimimaan yhteistyössä (Työssä jaksamisen tutkimus- ja toimenpideohjelma, seurantaraportti, 2002). Ikäjohtaminen määrittyy silloin johtamistyöksi, jossa vaaditaan sekä yksilön että ryhmän työskentelytavan ja ajatusten ymmärtämistä ja hyödyntämistä siten, että kokonaisuus saadaan nivottua yhteen innovatiiviseksi toiminnaksi.

Tutkimusaiheen yhteiskunnallisen ulottuvuuden vuoksi tutkimukseen liittyy myös vastuukysymyksiä. Tässä artikkelissa keskitytään yrityksen vastuuseen ihmisistä ikääntyvässä yhteiskunnassa ja erityisesti sen vastuuseen omasta henkilöstöstä. Sosiaalinen vastuu ikääntyvässä yhteiskunnassa tarkoittaa yrityksissä sitä, että yritys pitää huolen henkilöstöstään parhaalla mahdollisella tavalla, kuitenkin oman menestyksensä ja toimeentulon sallimissa rajoissa (Teollisuus ja työnantajat 2001). Sosiaalinen vastuullisuus yrityksen sisällä merkitsee sitä, että yritys kantaa huolta henkilöstön hyvinvoinnista ja osaamisen ylläpidosta. Tästä tutkimuksesta rajataan pois kuitenkin yrityksen ulkoiset sosiaalisen vastuun elementit, joiksi määritellään esimerkiksi tuoteturvallisuus ja kuluttajansuoja, hyvät toimintatavat ja yhteistyö lähiyhteisöjen kanssa sekä yleishyödyllisten toimintojen tukeminen (Teollisuus ja työnantajat, 2001). Yrityksen vastuu henkilöstöstä ilmenee ikäjohtamisessa siten, että yritys ottaa huomioon yksilön erilaiset elämänvaiheet, arvostaa erilaisuutta (eri-ikäisyyttä) ja tarjoaa vaihtelevan työn, jossa on mahdollisuus kehittyä monipuolisesti. Johtamisen haasteena tulee painottumaan yhä enemmän moniarvoisen työyhteisön johtaminen, erilaisten arvomaailmojen hallinta ja niiden yhteensovittaminen sekä erilaisuuden hyväksynnän edistäminen yhteisössä (Laitinen, 1994).

Työntekijöiden suhde ja käsitykset omasta ja muiden ikääntymisestä ovat jääneet ikäjohtamisen tutkimuksessa vähemmälle huomiolle (Paloniemi, 2004). Ikään ja ikääntymiseen liittyviä merkityksiä työelämässä on aiemmin lähestytty kyllä asennetutkimuksen näkökulmasta, mutta ne liittyvät työnantajien tai yhteiskuntakulttuurin ikäkielteisiin asenteisiin (esim. Vaahtio, 2002). Ikäkielteisyys voi ilmetä esimerkiksi ikääntyneiden heikentyneenä asemana työmarkkinoilla. Ikäkäsityksiin kohdistuneet tutkimukset on lisäksi yleisimmin toteutettu survey-tyyppisinä tutkimuksina, mutta laadullisten tutkimusten osuus on kasvanut (Baumann, Lyng & Lahn, 1997, ks. Paloniemi, 2004).

Ikäkäsitykset saattavat vaikuttaa taustalla ja vahvistaa erikäisiin liitettäviä stereotyyppisiä käsityksiä. Esimerkiksi osaamisen kehittämisen liittyvät asennetutkimukset osoittavat, että käsityksiin iän ja oppimisen välisestä suhteesta liittyy edelleen ennakkoluuloja ja tietämättömyyttä (Paloniemi, 2004). Toisaalta taas koetaan, että eri-ikäisten osaamisessa on eroja. Ikääntyneiden osaamisen vahvuuksina pidetään hiljaista tietoa (kokemusperäinen osaaminen) ja käytännön osaamista, kun

taas nuorten vahvoiksi osaamisen alueiksi luetaan tekninen ja tiedollinen osaaminen (Paloniemi, 2004). Silloin oletetaan yksinkertaistaen, että ikääntyneiden ja nuorten osaamisessa on eroja (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995). Asenteet vaikuttavat esimerkiksi siihen oletukseemme, että vanhimmalla ikäluokalla työn merkitys on sitoutunut protestanttiseen työetiikkaan, kun taas nuorinta ikäluokkaa sanotaan viihtyvyyttä ja joustavuutta hakevaksi sukupolveksi (Ilmarinen ym., 2003). Protestanttisen työetiikan mukaan ihmisen on omalla kovalla työllään ansaittava toimeentulo (Robbins, 1998).

On kuitenkin totta, että työelämässä saattaa syntyä konflikteja, jos nuoremmilla ja vanhemmilla on hyvin erilaiset arvostukset ja suhde työn tekemistä kohtaan. Työntekijöillä voi olla esimerkiksi ristiriitaisia töhön liittyviä toimintatapoja, eikä ikääntynyt osaa hyväksyä nuoren kelloon sitomatonta työskentelytyyliä. Esimiehen näkökulmasta arvot vaikuttavat esimerkiksi siihen, mitä työntekijältä voi kohtuudella odottaa, mikä on tasapuolista tai oikeudenmukaista kohtelua, mitä henkilökohtaisesti työllä tulee saavuttaa ja minkä tähden työtä ylipäätään tehdään (Ilmarinen ym., 2003).

Yksilön arvojen merkitystä työyhteisössä on tutkinut mm. Puohiniemi (2002), joka on määritellyt myös ikään liittyviä arvoja. Nuorten osalta hän puhuu "individualistisesta hedonismista". Tällaiselle ihmiselle mielihyvä on valintoja ohjaava arvo. Individualistisille hedonisteille on tyyppillistä yksilön vapauden arvostus ja tehokkuusajattelu; he myös suhtautuvat kollektiiviseen vastuuseen kielteisesti. Ihmisen ikääntyessä tämän arvot kehittyvät universaaliin, kollektiiviseen ja turvallisuutta arvostavaan suuntaan. Eletyn elämän, elämäntilanteen, ja suhteen itseen ja muihin – perusteella yksilön toimintaa ohjaavat arvot ovat erilaisia (Puohiniemi, 2002). Tutkimusten mukaan erikäisten välillä siis on arvoeroja.

Ikääntymistutkimuksen vahva teoreettinen pohja on peräisin sosiaaligerontologisesta tutkimuksesta. Sosiaalisen vanhenemisen tutkimus eli sosiaaligerontologia tarkastelee muutoksia ikääntyvän ihmisen ja hänen ympäristönsä välisessä suhteessa. Käsite sosiaalinen vanheneminen kuvaa ikääntymisilmiön moninaisuutta makrotasolla ja mikrotasolla. Sosiaalisessa vanhenemisessa on kyse myös siitä, että yhteiskunta vanhentaa kansalaisiaan.

3. Ikääntyminen ja ikäjohtaminen diskursiivisesti tarkasteltuna

3.1 Todellisuuden sosiaalinen rakentuminen

Konstruktivisen todellisuuskäsityksen mukaan kieli ja puhe rakentavat sosiaalista todellisuutta. Mitään valmista totuutta ei ole olemassa, vaan se muokkautuu puheessa. (Lämsä, 2002.) Kieli ja puhe edellyttävät ihmisten välistä kanssakäymistä, ja siksi keskeisellä sijalla todellisuuden ymmärtämisessä on vuorovaikutus. Tässä tutkimuksessa tapa, jolla kieltä käytetään, muodostaa jonkin ymmärryksen myös "ikäntymisestä" ja "ikäjohtamisesta", kun niistä puhutaan eri tavoin. Käsitteen sisältöä ei määritä jokin kielen ulkopuolinen objekti, vaan muut käsitteet, kaikki ne määreet ja määritelmät, joita termille annetaan. Konstruktivisuus liittyy kielen jäsentämiseen sosiaalisesti jaettuina merkityksinä. Merkitykset kehittyvät suhteessa toisiinsa ja perustuvat keskinäiseen erottumiseen (Jokinen, Juhila ja Suoninen, 1993). Esimerkiksi "nuoria" ei ole ilman "ikäntyneitä". Ajatus konstruktivisuudesta sisältää tässä tutkimuksessa idean siitä, miten esimerkiksi "ikäntynyt konkari" tai "kokematon nuori" tuotetaan puheessa ja miten niihin liittyviä itsemäärittelyjä ja keskinäisiä eroja herätetään henkiin.

Diskurssi ymmärretään tässä tutkimuksessa tavaksi esittää inhimillinen todellisuus jonkinlaiseksi. Asian tilojen merkitykset tuotetaan näissä diskursseissa. Lämsä (2002) korostaa, että diskursiivinen tutkimus ei konstruktivistisessä mielessä etsi totuutta, vaan tutkii sitä, miten sosiaalinen todellisuus tuotetaan puheessa. Diskurssissa tilanteet, ilmiöt, ihmisten identiteetit ja ihmisten väliset suhteet määrittyvät todellisiksi ja sen hetkiseksi todellisuudeksi. Tavan ajatella ja puhua tai kirjoittaa ei oleteta heijastavan mitään yksilön sisäistä tai pysyvää todellisuutta, vaan sanallinen ilmaisumme muokkaa ja rakentaa sosiaalista todellisuutta. (Lämsä, 2002.) Ikääntymisenkin saa erilaisia merkityksiä puheessa, jos eri yhteyksissä puhutaan ikääntyvästä työntekijästä kustannuseränä tai hiljaista tietoa omaavana organisaation tuntijana. Diskurssit rajaavat toisia merkityksiä ja näkökulmia pois. (Lämsä, 2002; Fairclough, 1998; Phillips ja Hardy, 2002.)

Diskurssianalyyssissä, kuten muissa laadullisissa tutkimusmenetelmissä, ollaan kiinnostuneita sosiaalisesta todellisuudesta sellaisena, millaisena se kulloinkin ilmenee, ja tulkitaan tätä sosiaalista todellisuutta. Diskurssianalyyttisessä tutkimuksessa ollaan lisäksi kiinnostuneita siitä, miten sosiaalinen todellisuus on tuotettu (Phillips & Hardy, 2002). Todellisuuden ymmärretään olevan sosiaalisesti konstruoitu, eli se on rakentunut merkitystulkintoista ja tulkintasäännöistä, joiden nojalla ihmiset orientoituvat arkielämässään (Alasuutari, 1994).

3.2 Samaistuminen omaan ikäryhmään

Tässä tutkimuksessa lähdetään siitä, että identiteetti määrittyy kollektiivisesti ja että siihen vaikuttavat sekä yksilön omat käsitykset että laajempi yhteiskunnallinen keskustelu. Yksilön omaksumaan rooliin vaikuttavat myös organisatoriset tekijät, kuten työyhteisön asenteet eri-ikäisyyttä kohtaan. Ikäryhmään identifioitumalla yksilö paikantaa itsensä suhteessa muihin ryhmiin, joiksi tässä määritän organisaation muut ryhmät.

Ikääntyneet ja nuoret tuotetaan diskurssissa ryhminä, ja ryhmään identifioituminen heijastuu erotettavina puhetapoina eli diskursseina. Tässä puhutun diskurssin maailmana on keskustelijoille yhteinen tilanne, joka ympäröi käytävää dialogia. Identiteetti ei ole pelkästään subjektiivinen tai psykologinen ilmiö, vaan identiteetti rakentuu vuorovaikutuksessa kielellisesti, siis diskursiivisesti. Kyse on merkitysten järjestelmästä, joka on yksilöiden käytettävissä, mutta jossa merkitykset perustuvat kollektiiviseen sopimukseen, kollektiivisesti sovittuun merkityskonventioniin (Sintonen, 1999).

Identiteetit kehittyvät ja muokkaantuvat ihmisten välisessä vuorovaikutuksessa. Identiteetin käsite ei tässä tutkimuksessa tarkoita minän pysyvää ydintä. Identiteetit ovat yhä pirstoutuneempia, eivätkä ole yksittäisiä, vaan muodostuvat erilaisista diskursseista, käytänteistä ja positioista (Hall, 1999). Identiteetit rakentuvat diskurssien sisällä, ja niitä tulee tarkastella kontekstissa, erityisten diskursiivisten käytänteiden sisällä. Kyse ei ole siitä, kuka minä olen, vaan ennemminkin siitä, mikä minusta voi tulla ja kuinka minut on esitetty. Kaikki vaikuttaa siihen miten esitämme itsemme. Tässä tutkimuksessa organisaatio on se sosiaalinen yhteisö, jonka vuorovaikutustilanteessa identiteetit määrittyvät.

Identiteetti rakentuu ja sitä pidetään yllä sosiaalisessa vuorovaikutuksessa. Identiteetti on käsitys itsestä suhteessa muihin. Identiteetin avulla yksilö määrittelee erot ja yhtäläisyydet suhteessa toisiin ihmisiin. Verbaalistamme ja määrittelemme kielen avulla oman identiteettimme myös ajatuksissamme (Lämsä, 2002). Koska identiteetti liittyy kielenkäyttöön, on siitä seurauksena, että ihmisen identiteetti muodostuu tilanteen mukaan erilaiseksi. Onkin hyvin tavallista, että määrittelemme varsinkin

uusissa tilanteissa identiteettiämme uudelleen. Tässä tutkimuksessa oletetaan, että kielenkäyttö määrittää myös "ikäntyneen työntekijän" identiteettiä ja "nuoren työntekijän" identiteettiä organisaatioissa, sen toimijoiden välisessä vuorovaikutuksessa. Yksilö määrittelee itsensä suhteessa muun ikäisiin.

Merkitykset eivät siis rakenna todellisuutta pala palalta itenäisesti, vaan ne määrittyvät suhteessa toisiinsa. Tällaisesta "interdiskurssiivisuudesta" kyse, kun esimerkiksi ikääntymiskurssissa ikään liitetään tiettyjä ominaisuuksia ja niitä suhteutetaan muun ikäisiin. Voidaan pohtia, millaisia merkityssysteemejä on identifioitavissa työntekijän työyhteisöä, omaa työtään ja itseään koskevilla kuvauksilla. "Minän" merkitys rakentuu joustavasti sosiaalisissa käytännöissä ja tiettyssä kontekstissa. Diskurssianalyyssissä tarkastelun kohteena ei siis ole yksilö, vaan yksilön kielenkäyttö tiettyssä tilanteessa ja ne merkitykset, joita yksilö puheessaan tuottaa. (Jokinen, Juhila & Suoninen, 1993.)

Tässä tutkimuksessa olisi ollut mahdollista identiteetin sijaan puhua ikäidentifikaatiosta eli omaa vanhenemista koskevista käsityksistä (Ruoppila, 1994). Ikäidentifikaatio kuvaa myös yksilön minäkäsitystä, käsitystä itsestä vanhenevana ihmisenä. Toisaalta mahdollinen käsite olisi ollut sukupolvi-etoisuus tai samaistuminen tiettyyn sukupolveen. Esimerkiksi suuret ikäluokat muodostavat tämän näkemyksen mukaan paitsi yhden ikäkohortin myös yhden tietoisien sukupolven (Kautto, Koskinen, Karisto, Kiander & Riihelä, 2004).

4. Tutkimusaineisto

Tämän tutkimuksen aineistona on "Ikä- ja työkykyjohtaminen, ikääntymisen haasteet yhteiskunnassa" -hankkeessa tehdyt teemahaastattelut keväällä 2003. Projekti kerää lisäksi yli 2500 vastaajan aineiston lomakekyselyllä. Haastattelut toimivat samalla tilannekartoituksena ja esihaastatteluina kohdeorganisaatioissa myöhemmin tehtäville laajemmille kyselyille. Tässä artikkelissa on analysoitu yhteensä 20 haastattelua viidestä eri organisaatiosta. Kaupan alalta mukana on kaksi organisaatiota, teollisuuden alalta kaksi yritystä sekä yksi julkisorganisaatio. Haastateltavana oli jokaisesta organisaatiosta neljä eri-ikäistä henkilöä. Yrityskohtaisesti haastateltavana oli kaksi työntekijää, yksi esimies ja yksi henkilöstöalan ammattilainen. Projektin haastatteluissa mukailtiin kansallisen ikäohjelman yhteydessä vuosina 1998–2002 käyttöön otettuja käsitteitä "nuori" (alle 35-vuotias), "ikäntyvä" (45–54-vuotias) ja "ikäntynyt" (yli 55-vuotias). Tässä tutkimuksessa jaetaan tutkimukseen osallistuneet kahteen ryhmään, nuoriin ja ikääntyneisiin.

Haastattelun teemat olivat haastateltavien tiedossa: 1) työn arvo ja merkitys, 2) työstä selviytymisen edellytykset, 3) työn sisältö, 4) työssä oppiminen ja 5) esimiestyö ja työyhteisö. Teemoittelu mahdollisti strukturoitua kyselyä paremmin kysymysten muokkauksen ja uudelleen järjestelyn sopivaksi sekä työntekijälle, henkilöstöammattilaiselle että esimiesasemassa olevalle. Kysymykset oli muotoiltu siten, ettei niissä suoraan kysytty ikäjohtamista. Näin tehtiin osin siksi, että ikäjohtamiselle ei yleensä ole organisaatioissa selkeää sisältöä, varsinkaan työntekijöille. Teemahaastattelumenetelmällä haluttiin korostaa haastateltavien kokemuksia, käsityksiä ja heidän määritelmäänsä vallitsevasta tilanteesta. Tässä tutkimuksessa haluttiin tutkia juuri niitä diskursseja, jotka ovat vaikuttaneet haastateltavan todellisuuden rakentumiseen. Teemahaastatteluaineisto soveltuu analysoitavaksi myös diskurssianalyttisin menetelmin; onhan kyseessä aineisto, joka sisältää runsaasti puhetta, hyvin erilaisia kuvauksia ja selityksiä (Hirsijärvi &

Hurme, 2000; Jokinen, Juhila & Suoninen, 1993).

Tutkimuksessa on käytetty apuna laadulliseen tutkimukseen soveltuvaa tietokoneohjelmaa QSR Nivoa. Ohjelman avulla suoritettiin sisällönanalyysi vaiheittain siten, että ensin aineisto tyypiteltiin läpikäymällä tekstiä ja etsimällä tiettyjä teemoja. Ohjelma-avusteinen analyysi oli yksi aineiston lukutapa. Aineistoa pystyttiin sen jälkeen lukemaan tyypiteltynä, mutta myös "raakatekstinä", jota voitiin lukea toisesta näkökulmasta. Varsinaisessa analyysissä etsittiin erilaisten teemojen välisiä yhteyksiä. Teemat määrittyivät yleisyyden mukaan. Aineisto koodattiin haastateltavien anonymiteetin säilyttämiseksi. Koodi T1n esimerkiksi tarkoittaa nuorta työntekijää, ja H1i tarkoittaa ikääntyntä henkilöstöjohtajaa.

Haastattelu on vuorovaikutustilanne, jossa haastateltava esittää itsensä tietynlaiseksi haastattelijalle. Havainto on sinänsä mielenkiintoinen, sillä myös identiteetti muodostuu vuorovaikutustilanteen mukaisesti. Haastateltava ymmärsi tutkimuskysymysten perusteella, että haastattelija halusi haastateltavan puhuvan oman viiteryhmänsä (nuori tai ikääntynyt) näkökulmasta. Tämä on otettava huomioon arvioitaessa tutkimustulosten yleistettävyyttä. Aineistosta tarkasteltiin seuraavia kysymyksiä: mitä sanottiin, miten sanottiin, mitkä olivat jännitteitä ja mikä oli haastateltavien rooli. Aineistosta tarkasteltiin siitä näkökulmasta, minkälaisia merkityksiä ikään liittyville teemoille, kuten "eri-ikäisyys", "ikäntyminen" ja "ikäjohtaminen", annetaan organisaatioissa.

Haastatteluaineiston käytössä on huomioitava haastattelu-lausuntojen suhde tosiasialliseen käyttäytymiseen, joka ei ole suoraviivainen suhde, vaan haastateltavien lausunnot ovat tutkittavaan aiheeseen liittyvää tulkintaa. Aineisto on määrätyn puhetilanteen tulosta, jossa on läsnä kaksi osapuolta (Hoikkala, 1989). Haastateltavat ymmärretään tulkitsevinä toimijoina, ja haastattelut puheena, jossa tulkinat dokumentoituvat. Haastatteluiden ei tällä analyysitavalla väitetä välittävän tutkimuksen keinoin "nuorten" tai "ikäntyneiden" näkökulmia. Tutkimus ei myöskään pyri puhumaan ikäryhmien puolesta ja niiden aseman parantamiseksi.

5. Eri-ikäisyyden ja ikäjohtamisen rakentuminen haastatteluaineistossa

5.1 Nuoren ja ikääntyneen identiteetin määrittäminen puheessa

Tutkimuksessa tarkastellaan yksilön identiteettiä eri-ikäisyyteen liittyvässä puhunnassa, esimerkiksi sitä, millaisia merkityksiä yksilö antaa omalle iälleen ja miten hän suhteuttaa itsensä muun ikäisiin. Sekä nuoret että ikääntyneet liittyvät viiteryhmänsä samoja ominaisuuksia. Tekstistä oli erotettavissa yksilön identifioituminen tiettyyn viiteryhmään, ja siitä oli määritettävissä tietyt ryhmään liittyvät ominaisuudet.

Ikääntyneiden ja nuorten ryhmät tuotetaan erilaisissa puheakteissa, jotka ovat sidoksissa yksilöllisiin puhujiin ja konteksteihin. Tällöin puhutun diskurssin maailma on keskustelijoille yhteinen, ja se ympäröi käytävää dialogia. Haastattelutekstissä eri-ikäisyyttä jäsennetään antamalla merkityksiä nuorelle ja ikääntyneelle. Yksilö samaistuu puheessaan omaan viiteryhmänsä ja tekee puheessa eron itsestään (esim. nuorena) suhteessa organisaation "muihin" (esim. ikääntyneisiin).

Nuoriin työntekijöihin liitettiin puheessa sellaisia sanoja kuin joustavuus, vapaus ja itsekkyys (taulukko 1). Nuorten koetaan sitoutuvan ensisijaisesti oman uran kehittämiseen, kun taas ikääntyneet olisivat sitoutuneempia organisaatioon. Nuoret kokevat silti työyhteisön merkityksen suureksi työssä jaksamisen kannalta. Itse työn on oltava vähintään "mukavaa hommaa, jotta

siihen jaksaa sitoutua". Sitoutumisen mittaaminen on kyseenalaista ja hankalaa, mutta sitoutumisessa näyttäisi kuitenkin olevan eroja nuorten ja ikääntyneiden välillä. Yrityksen kannalta olisi kuitenkin tärkeää ymmärtää miten, miksi ja mihin yksilö työyhteisössä sitoutuu.

(T5n) nuori

"...Työ joustaa ja just se, että mä ilmoitin, että mä pidän seitsemän viikkoa kesälomaa ja se olisi sitten vaan silleen, että selvä... että jos hommat on siinä mallissa, et voit pitää, niin pidä vaan."

(T5n)

"...mutta kyllä niin kuin just se, että meillä ei ole edes kellokorin kanssa niin tarkkaa, että tulenko mä yhdeltätoista vai puolilta päivin, jos se homma niin kuin etenee, niin sä saat tehdä niitä niin joustavasti kuin sä... niin kauan tietysti kun se homma etenee, että se on tietysti se lähtökohta... Että nyt oon vienyt lasta sitten hoitoon ja hakenut, etten mä ole kuukauteen pariin tehnyt kuin viittä kuutta tuntia töissä. Ei siinä mitään muuta kuin, että ilmoitin, että nyt teen näin. Hommat on hoidossa, että jos alkaa tulee tiukkaa, niin sitten mä tulen lauantaisin tekemään lopputunnit. Mun mielestä se on vähän se tapa, miten se voi toimii, että jos työnantaja odottaa, että mä olen jossain Kiinassa niin seitsemän päivää viikossa 16 tuntia, niin kyllä pitää sitten joskus toistakinpäin joustaa..."

Voidaankin pohtia sitä, ovatko nuorten ja ikääntyneiden perusravot muuttuneet vai onko kyse pelkästään näkemyksistä tai erilaisista työtavoista. Sanotaan esimerkiksi, että "nuoret uhraavat itseään vähemmän työlle". Todellisuudessa nuoret saattavat tehdä pitkiä päiviä, osin työpaikan ulkopuolellakin. Edellisessä esimerkissä joustavuus on puheessa nuorelle tärkeää, mutta jousto on molemminpuolista.

Puhetavoissa nuoret ja ikääntyneet piirtyvät määrätynlaisina tulkittuina ryhminä. Puhujat tulkitsijoina siis tuottavat, konstituovat, kohteen (Hoikkala, 1989). Jos nuoruus esimerkiksi määritetään individualismiksi, ovat siihen sijoitetut ihmiset luonnollisesti vapautta ja yksilöllisyyttä arvostavia individualisteja. Ikäryhmä relativoituu haastateltavan puheessaan tuotamaksi ja konstituomaksi kulttuuriseksi, tulkituksi puhettavaksi.

Greller ja Simpson (1999) liittävät ikääntyneisiin sellaisia positiivisia ominaisuuksia kuin tunnollisuus, lojaalisuus työnantajaa kohtaan, hyvä työmoraali ja hyvä työtehtävän osaaminen. Edellisiin voidaan lisätä vielä voimakas normisidonnaisuus. Ikääntyneet kokevat ylpeyttä yrityksestä, jonka puolesta he ovat tehneet työtä. Tämänkin tutkimusaineiston haastateltavat toivat esiin eroja nuorten ja ikääntyneiden työmoraalissa.

(H5i) ikääntynyt

"... Sanotaan niin, että mulla on varmaan jo äidinmaidossa tullut tietty kunnioitus työtä kohtaan. Aina niikun asennoitunut siihen, että pärjätäkseen on töitä tehtävä. Tietenkin se on niin luonnollinen asia ollut aina, että jos aatellaan mitä se merkitsee. On väärin sanoa, että se on välttämätön paha mutta kyllä se sellasen henkisen toimeentulon välttämättömyys on. Kuitenkin voi varmasti hyvin laskea, että 10 tuntia / arkipäivä joka päivä lomien lukuun ottamatta pitäisi täyttää jollakin muulla kuin työllä niin en mä tiedä, että kuinka se juurikaan onnistuisi."

Yllä olevasta sitaatti kertoo, että vanhempien työntekijöiden arvojen taustalla on protestanttinen työetiikka. Siinä mielessä edellinen teksti vahvistaa iän roolia työmoraalia määrittävänä tekijänä. Nuoret sen sijaan määrittyvät tässä haastatteluaineis-

tossa itsenäisiksi ja individualisteiksi. Alla olevista sitaateista on tulkittavissa, että haastateltavat kokevat, ettei työ itsessään ole nykynuorille niin tärkeää, vaan he pitävät muita elämänalueita tärkeämpinä. Työ antaa toisaalta tärkeän sisällön elämälle, mutta työ ei ole koko elämä.

(T8ii) ikääntynyt

"tuota.. niille ei oo ehkä työ niin tärkeä kuin meille vanhemmille, ehkä ne on sen verran viisaita, että ne osaa niinku muutaki elämää ehkä enemmän ellää sitten..."

(H3ii) ikääntynyt

"...Ehkä nuoremmille ikäryhmillä on nyt jo se, minkä huomaan, että kun se muu elämä ja niin sanottu oma elämä, niin se on nyt jo arvokkaampaa, mitä se on ollut meillä, niin ei niin kun mitä tahansa enää tehdä työnantajan puolesta ja näin, mikä ei tarkoita sitä etteikö sitä työtä tehtäis, mutta se, että mielettömästi ylityit tai näin. Niin siinä ihmiset on jollakin lailla itsekkäämpiä, terveen itsekkäitä enemmän kuin aikaisemmin..."

Työn merkityksen pohtiminen on oleellista tässä tutkimuskontekstissa, sillä ryhmät (nuoret/ikäntyneet) määrittyvät juuri työn kautta. Eri-ikäisyyttä tarkastellaan työyhteisössä ja työn kautta. Työ merkitsee yksilölle ainakin toimeentuloa, omaa kehittymistä ja sosiaalista kanssakäymistä. Erilaisten roolien tai identiteettien määrittymistä kuvatakseni olen koonnut seuraavan taulukkoon (taulukko 1) tyypillisimpiä ikäryhmään liitettäviä ominaisuuksia. Haastateltavien puheesta oli erotettavissa yleistäviä oletuksia omaan ja toiseen ikäryhmään liitettäviä ominaisuuksia, joiden totuudenmukaisuutta on vaikea perustella.

Nuoren työntekijän ominaisuuksia

- innokas
- hätäille
- tuo uusia toimintatapoja
- tekninen osaaminen
- monipuolinen koulutus
- sitoutuu omaan urakehitykseen
- työn pitää joustaa
- "urakkatyöläinen"
- kokemattomuus
- haastava työ motivaation lähde
- arvostaa itsenäisyyttä ja vapautta
- individualisti

Ikääntyneen työntekijän ominaisuuksia

- hidas
- kärsivällinen
- visionääri kokonaisuukien hallinta
- korkea ammatillinen osaaminen
- tunnollinen ja lojaali työnantajaa kohtaan
- sitoutunut organisaatioon
- työntekijä joustaa
- normisidonnainen
- kokenus
- kaipaava arvostusta motivaation lähteeksi
- taustalla protestanttinen työmoraali

Taulukko 1. Miten eri-ikäisyyttä määritetään organisaatiossa ja millaisia ikään liitettäviä ominaisuuksia on identifioitavissa työntekijöiden kuvauksissa.

5.2 Tehokkuuspuhe

Monessa tapauksessa eri-ikäisyyttä tarkastellaan yrityksessä tehokkuusnäkökulmasta, ja henkilöstö nähdään resurssina. Haastateltujen puheesta kävi toisinaan ilmi, ettei ikä ole työyhteisössä merkittävä tekijä. Silloin he puhuvat yhteisöllisyydestä siinä mielessä, ettei ikää ole syytä edes korostaa ja luokitella työntekijöitä ikään liittyvien tekijöiden avulla. Analyysiä havainnollistaa taulukko (taulukko 2 s. 22), josta käy ilmi, millaisia ilmauksia kyseisissä diskursseissa (tehokkuus ja yhteisöllisyys) esiintyi.

Henkilöstöön on sitoutunut yrityksen pääomaa ja potentiaalia samoin kuin muihinkin tuotannon tekijöihin. Siinä mielessä haastateltavat tarkastelevat henkilöstöäkin integroidusti taloudellisen tehokkuuden näkökulmasta. Henkilöstöä pidetään strategisesti tärkeänä resurssina, "osaajina", eli kuvaukset ihmisistä ovat hyvin normatiivisia. Työuraa taas tarkastellaan tässä diskursseissa resurssien optimaalisen käytön kannalta. Te-

hokkuuspuheessa esiintyvät henkilöstövoimavarojen johtamisen teorioista tutut henkilöstön valinta, arviointi, kehittäminen, motivointi ja palkitseminen (ks. esim. Legge, 1995). Tavoitteena on resurssien toimiminen tehokkaasti organisaation tavoitteiden saavuttamiseksi. Silloin myös henkilöstölle asetettavat vaatimukset johdetaan liiketoimintastrategiasta.

Haastateltavat puhuivat usein tehokkuusviitekehuksesta käsin. Puheesta käy ilmi, että taloudellisuus ja tehokkuus ovat hyvän liiketoiminnan edellytyksiä. Yrityksen pitää huolehtia sidosryhmistään, mutta myös oman toiminnan kannattavuudesta. Silloin kun vastuu ja tehokkuus eivät ole ristiriidassa, ei ongelmia synny. Toisinaan tehokkuusperusteiden kyseenalaistaminen on perusteltua. Toisinaan organisaation tehokkuus nähdään ristiriitaisena yksilön tavoitteiden kanssa eikä niiden olemassaoloa rinnakkain pidetä mahdollisena.

(H3ii) ikääntynyt

"Että tää, tästä lähtee, tästä markkina-arvon säilyttämisestä, niin sehän on tämmöinen yksilölähtöinen... et sitten joskus saattaa jopa tulla ongelmia sikäli, että esimieshän miettii niin kuin niitten ihmisten käyttökelpoisuutta vähän niin kuin tässä ja nyt ja sitten nää nuoret ihmiset ajattelee taas seuraavaa mahdollista tehtävää ja sit esimies saattaa tyrmätä tämmöisiä koulutushaaveita, jotka sanotaan nyt jotain MBA-tutkintoja tai jotain muuta tämmöisiä, koska ei niistä ole niin kun hänelle mitään, eikä sen hetkiseen työhön."

Aina tavoitteiden välillä ei ole ristiriitaa, ja yksilön arvostus työyhteisössä ja työsuoritusten tehokkuus nähdään toistensa edellytyksinä. Silloin on alettu entistä painokkaammin ajatella inhimillistä kyvykkyyttä ja sitoutumista yrityksen kilpailutekijöinä (Peltonen, 2001). "Voimavaran" ja "strategian" esiintyminen puhunnassa ei ole yllättävää, sillä usein myös henkilöstöön liittyvät toimet pyritään määrittelemään strategisiksi, koska sen oletetaan edistävän henkilöstötoiminnon asemaa yrityksessä

Aineistosta käy ilmi, että eri-ikäinen ja heterogeeninen henkilöstö nähdään yrityksen voimavarana. Eri-ikäisillä on erilaisia vahvuuksia, ja osaamisalueita ja erilaiset ihmiset täydentävät toisiaan. Nuoriin liitetään sellaisia vahvuuksia kuin innokkuus työn tekemistä kohtaan, oppimishalu, hyvä koulutus, tekninen osaaminen ja ennakkoluulottomuus (taulukko 1). Ikääntyneet sen sijaan tuovat työyhteisöön kokemusta, ammattitaitoa, ns. hiljaista tietoa sekä työyhteisön ja yrityskulttuurin tuntemusta (taulukko 1). Työyhteisö toimii tehokkaammin, kun ikääntyneiden työntekijöiden kokemus ohjaa valintoja: he ymmärtävät asioiden välisiä yhteyksiä, sitä mihin mikäkin asia liittyy, kun taas nuoret kyseenalaistavat asioita: miksi jokin asia tehdään tietyllä tavalla. Nuoret myös sanovat herkemmin oman mielipiteensä pelkäämättä auktoriteettia. Puheessa rakennetaan positiivisessa mielessä eroa ryhmien välille ja puhutaan mielellään "työperheestä", jossa tarvitaan eri-ikäisiä työntekijöitä. Yhteistyöllä tulos on parempi kuin kenelläkään yksin.

(H2n) nuori

"no mun mielestä se on hirveen hyvä asia, että työryhmässä on eri ikäisiä ihmisiä, koska tota vanhemmilla ihmisillä on semmosta kokemuksen tuomaa näkemystä ja sitten niinku kypsyyttä ihmisenä ja sitten taas heijän omiin elämäntilanteisiin liittyviä asioita ja sitten taas nuoremmilla on uudempaa ihan kirjatietoa tuoda koulusta ja he kattoo niinku uusien raikkain silmin, ett ja kyseenalaistaa, miksi tää asia tehdään näin, että eiks sitä vois tehdä näin. Että tavallaan taas heillä omat elämäntilanteet ja kiinnostuksen aiheet ja se on hyvä kombinaatio, että tavallaan kumpikin kuuluu ryhmädynamiikkaan, että se on niinku parempi silloin kun on eri ikäisiä ihmisiä. Että on meillä kokemusta siitäkin, että esimerkiksi on kaikki ollu hyvin nuoria niin se ei välttämättä oo ollu kauheen onnistunut se työryhmä, että siellä on ollu vähän semmosta lastentarhameininkiä tai vastaavasti jos työryhmä on kovin ikääntynyt niin siinä alkaa

ainakin työnantajan näkökulmasta sitten olla riskejä siinä vaiheessa, kun he alkavat eläköitymään eli kerralla lähtee koko porukka pois..."

Toisaalta taas tehokkuuspuhe äärimmäisillään tuo yksilön esiin mekaanisena resurssina, jota pitää "huoltaa" säännöllisesti. Puhe työkyvystä tulee esiin resurssinäkökulmasta tällä tavoin. Yritys järjestää kuntoutusta ikääntyville ja teettää kuntotestejä. Työkyky on keskeinen tekijä ikääntyvän työhyvinvoinnissa. Työkykyyn liittyy sosiaalinen, fyysinen ja psyykinen työkyky. Kaikkiin alueisiin yrityksen toimenpiteillä ei ole mahdollista vaikuttaa. Diskurssissa tuotetaan todellisuutta, jossa myös ikäjohtaminen (rajattuna tarkoitamaan työkykyjohtamista) voidaan "kouluttaa" tehokkaasti organisaatioon. Organisaatio on sitä parempi työyhteisö, mitä enemmän sillä on erilaisia henkilöstön hyvinvointiin tähtääviä hankkeita.

(H5i) Ikääntynyt

"Meillä ikääntyvien huomioiminen lähtee jo tästä rekrytointisuunnitelmasta ja näistä toiminta-suunnitelmista eli ikäjohtaminen on otettu huomioon ja toteutettu niitä koulutustoimenpiteitä ja käytännön kentällä yritetty koulutettua tietoa käyttäen. Rekrytointisuunnitelma lähtee pääsääntöisesti ikääntyvistä. Osa-aikaeläkkeitä harrastetaan sen pohjalta, että saatais henkilöstö viihtymään pidempään. Me on tehty semmonen strategia tonne henkilöstöpuolelle, että me annetaan kaikille ihmisille mahdollisuus käydä kuntotestauksessa. Pystytään selvittämään ihmisen fyysinen kunto ja se lähtee vanhimmasta päästä liikkeelle"

Keso (1999) korostaa tutkimuksessaan, että strategia on yksi nykypäivän liiketaloudelliseen ajattelun viitekehäksiä, joka vaikuttaa siihen, että strategiasanastoa ja strategisia ajattelumalleja sovelletaan useiden ilmiöiden käsitteellistämiseen. Strategisen ajattelun mukaisesti yrityksen kilpailukyky säilyy strategisten resurssien kehittämisen ansiosta (Keso, 1999). Myös työntekijöiden ikärakenne vaikuttaa organisaation nykyiseen ja tulevaan suorituskyykyyn ja on näin osallisena arvioitaessa liiketoimintastrategian toteuttamiskelpoisuutta. Työvoimaresursseja arvioitaessa siihen vaikuttavat työmarkkinatilanne, nykyisen henkilöstön taidot ja arvot, yrityksen taloudellinen tilanne sekä asenneilmasto eli toiminta- ja johtamiskulttuuri (Ilmarinen ym., 2003).

Viime aikoina on lisääntynyt ikästrategiakeskustelu, jossa yritykset varautuvat niukkeneviin henkilöstöresursseihin kehittämällä työnantajakuvaansa ikämyönteisemmäksi. Yritys määrittelee oman ikästrategian, jonka osatekijöitä ovat mm. psykologisen sopimuksen pitäminen, oikeudenmukainen palkitseminen ja oikean ikäasenteen juurruttaminen organisaatioon (Ilmarinen ym., 2003). Yrityksen maine on strateginen kysymys, joka heijastuu siihen, että yritykset pohtivat, miten yritys säilyisi markkinoilla haluttuna työpaikkana. Teema oli tärkeä, kuten ote palvelualan henkilöstöammattilaisen haastattelusta kertoo:

(H2n) nuori

"kyllä siitä (työvoimapula tulevaisuudessa) on paljon keskusteltu ja se asia kyllä on otettu huomioon henkilöstöstrategiassa ja mun mielestä se osoittaa sitä, että me hoidetaan meidän asioita ihan yhtä hyvin ja vielä paremmin kun tähän asti, että pysytään houkuttelavana työnantajana"

(H2n) nuori

"... Että siinä kohassa, kun tulee kilpailua, sanoisin, että näillä leveysasteilla mä en usko ihan valtaisaan työvoimapulaan, mutta sanoisin näin, että kilpailu osaavista ja hyvistä työntekijöistä ainakin tulee kiristymään ihan tossa, on jo melkein alkanutkin, että tota niin tota siinä kohdassa ratkaisee, millainen kuva ihmisellä on mistäkin firmasta"

Henkilöstö mielletään monella alalla yrityksen suurimmaksi

pääomaksi. Esimerkiksi kehittämisen pääpaino tuntuu olevan siinä, miten yksilö saadaan toimimaan tehokkaimmin. Vähemmälle huomiolle on jäänyt se, miten organisaatio ottaisi parhaiten huomioon muuttuvan työvoimansa tarpeet ja voimavarat (Kirjonen, 1994). Yrityksen on pidettävä yllä nykyisen henkilöstön osaamista ja yrityksen kilpailukykyä, jotta sosiaalinen pääoma säilyy markkinakelpoisena.

5.3 Yhteisöllisyyspuhe

Eri-ikäisyyttä ei kuitenkaan aina tarkastella tehokkuusnäkökulmasta. Vaikka tehokkuus, strategia ja voimavarat ovat yleisiä tapoja puhua organisaatiokontekstissa, näkyy puheessa myös inhimillinen, ihmislähtöinen vuorovaikutusnäkökulma eri-ikäisyyteen. Eri-ikäisyys on "normaali" ilmiö organisaatiossa, kuten se on muuallakin elämässä. Aineistossa puhuttiinkin mm. työperheestä, jossa tulee olla sopivassa määrin nuoria ja vanhoja. Ikä ei ole mikään itseisarvo, jonka mukaan ihmisiä tulisi luokitella puheessa tai organisaation toiminnassa. Työtavoissa saatetaan olla eroja, mutta niitä ei korostettu negatiivisesti, vaan erojen nähtiin täydentävän toisiaan. Jokainen hoitaa oman osuutensa; se on ryhmadynamiikkaa. Puhe vastuusta ja vuorovaikutuksen merkityksestä liitettiin tähän yhteisöllisyyteen. Eri-ikäisyydessä on myös positiivinen oppimisnäkökulma, kun molemmat ryhmät oppivat toisiltaan.

(T1i) ikääntynyt

"...Meillähän on hyvin eri-ikäistä porukkaa meillä, tässä meidän tiimissä. Ja se on meidän yksi sellainen vahvuus, elikkä meillä X:llä ja minulla on paljon sellaista tietoa, mikä pitäisi saada siirtymään. Ja jos siellä ei ole nuorempia tulossa, niin niitä asioitahan ei saada siirtymään. Ei ne paperitakaan tai tiedostotakaan siirry."

"...Se on voima niin kuin ulospäin. Kun ikääntyy itse ja ei enää sanotaanko sitä sellaista katu-uskottavuutta ehkä ole...mitä näillä nuoremmilla siihen tulee ja vetää siihen exel-taulukon ja toteaa tyyliin: "että noinko". Siitä tulee sellaista lisävoimaa tähän koko hommaan."

R: Miten eri-ikäisyys vaikuttaa työyhteisössä, onko siinä jokin erityispiirteitä: hankaluuksia tai muita etuja, mainitsitkin jo joitakin?

"En minä nyt oikeastaan mitään hankaluuksia ole tavannut. En nyt oikein tiedä mitä hankaluuksia siellä voisi olla. Siis sehän on selvää, että kun tulee uusi ihminen tekemään töitä, niin siihen kuluu aikaa kun sitä tietoa siirretään. Mutta ei se minusta vaikeus ole. Se pitää vaan nähdä voimavarana. Samoin kun se että meillä on tyttöjä ja poikia, vaikka ei meillä tällä hetkellä olekaan kun yksi tyttö, on ollut aiemmin enemmänkin tyttöjä. Mutta tuota, kyllä minun mielestäni, nyt kun puhutaan että erilaisuus on voimavara, niin kyllä se ikäjakauma on yksi asia erilaisuudessa, mikä on voimavara."

R: Onko tullut mitään konflikteja (erilaisia työtapoja) kun ihmiset ovat niin erilaisia?

"... On siinä ollut vähän erikielisyttä. Ja tuota eri työtapoja. Tuntuu, että meillä ainakin kaikki näkevät sen erilaisuuden...hyväksyvät sen.. ja toteavat, että jos me kaikki oltaisiin samanlaisia, samoilla tiedoilla varustettuja meidän tuotos olisi sama kun yhden tuotos. Mutta koska me olemme kaikki erilaisia, meidän tuotos on paljon enemmän kun kenenkään yksin"

Haastateltavat puhuvat vuorovaikutuksesta ja ihmisten johtamisesta korostaen yksilöiden välisten suhteiden merkitystä. Tämän suhteen tulee perustua luottamukseen, oikeudenmukaisuuteen ja sitoutumiseen (taulukko 2). Henkilöstön ja yrityksen menestys nähdään yhteisenä tavoitteena. Tärkeänä elementtinä mainittiin yksilön mahdollisuus osallistua ja vaikuttaa omaa toimenkuvaansa koskevaan päätöksentekoon. Tämä edellyttää, että vuorovaikutus ja yhteistyö eri-ikäisten välillä toimivat

hyvin. Työyhteisössä on hyvä olla tietty määrä erilaisia ja tietty määrä samanlaisia ihmisiä.

Toisinaan haastateltavat puhuivat ikäjohtamisesta pelkästään ikääntyneisiin liittyvinä toimenpiteinä. Tässä mielessä johtamisen kohdistuminen ikääntyneisiin erityisryhmään lisäisi entisestään ihmisten luokittelua eriarvoisiin ryhmiin. Haastateltavat eivät halunneet korostaa ikää tai ikääntymistä eivätkä myöskään ikäjohtamista työyhteisössä. Hyväksyttävien tapa puhua eri-ikäisyydestä ja johtamisesta oli liittää se erilaisuuden johtamisen tematiikkaan. Eri-ikäisyys tulkittiin mieluiten erilaisuutena.

(H1ii) ikääntynyt

"Se on ehkä yleinen toteamus, että me emme ole mitään tällaista ikäjohtamista, sillä nimellä otettu käyttöön, koska ikäjohtamisen... jos kapeasti ajattelee, niin helposti luulee, että se tarkoittaa että vanhoille tulee jotakin erityiskohtelua. Ja on selvä, että kaikenikäisiä joudutaan yksilöllisesti johtamaan, oli se sitten henkilöt minkälaisia, minkä ikäisiä tahansa. Ja tietysti ikä haluaa tuoda oman näkökulman ja kyllähän se on noteerattu ja on tiettyjä toimenpiteitä... ihan tällaisia kun kuntoutus-juttuja, jotka saattaisivat loppukädessä kohdistua juuri sinne, mutta sinänsä johtamisen periaatteet ovat, ja henkilöstöperiaatteet ovat yksilöä kunnioittavat ja yksilöllisyyttä toivon mukaan huomioivia. Mutta erikseen, että olisi jotain konsernitason politiikkaa eri-ikäisten johtamisesta sitä ei ole."

Ikääntymisen fyysisiä vaikutuksia ei muutenkaan liitetty tässä diskurssissa merkittävästi ikäjohtamiseen tai eri-ikäisyyteen. Syynä tähän ovat esimerkiksi toimiala ja haastateltavien työnkuva, joka on sellainen, ettei fyysinen heikkeneminen merkittävästi vaikuta työn tekoon. Monessa asiassa ikä koetaan merkityksettömäksi. Enemmän merkitystä työelämässä jaksamisen kannalta on esimerkiksi luonteenpiirteillä, työilmapiirillä ja omilla asenteilla ikääntymistä kohtaan.

(H3ii) ikääntynyt

Mut ikääntynyt on leimaava, ei sille voi mitään. Ja tota monet ikääntyneet, kun mustakin on hirveen vaikea ajatella itseäni ikääntyneenä, niin ne on hirveen herkkiä sille kuitenkin, ettei mua nyt vaan niin kun pyritä, ettei kukaan nyt ainakaan rupee miettii, että hei toi pitäis nyt lähteä jo pois tai jotain, että näin. Et jos ihan oikeesti halutaan, että ihmiset on pitempään työelämässä, niin kaikkinaisen leimaaminen täytyisi kyllä saada pois. Mutta tota... Musta toi ikäjohtaminen on jo vähän neutraalimpi sana sikäli että, varsinkin jos se niin kun käsitetään niin, että se on eri-ikäisten johtaminen, niin kuin eri-ikäiset ihmiset eri elämänvaiheissa tartteekin erilaista kohtelua, niin se on sitten jo hyvä. Mutta mikä on tää ryhmä, jos on sitten viiskymppiset ja tota....

(H2n) nuori

"...että ikääntyneet ihmiset eivät odota sen kummempaa, että ne vaan toivoo, että niinku semmoinen vuorovaikutus ja hyvä johtaminen toimii, niin ei he odota mitään erityiskohtelua tai mitään kuntoutuskursseja tai mitään tällamoisissa kursseja heille vaan he toivoo, että heitä kohdellaan samalla lailla kuin muitakin..."

Haastateltavat puhuivat siten, että eri-ikäisten työyhteisöstä oli vaikeaa löytää huonoja puolia. Erikielisyttä oli havaittu, mutta ei sen suurempaa. Työyhteisö vaatii toimiakseen erilaisia ja eri-ikäisiä työntekijöitä. Eräs haastateltava huomautti, että "se on huonosti johdettu, jos löytyy huonoja puolia".

Seuraava taulukko (taulukko 2.) havainnollistaa tutkimuskysymyksiä ja esittää aineistosta tulkitut vastaukset näihin kysymyksiin. Taulukon ensimmäisessä sarakkeessa on nimetty aineistosta esiin nostetut diskurssit. Seuraavassa sarakkeessa ovat ne diskurssia kuvaavat teemat, jotka esiintyivät haastateltavien puheessa. Kolmas sarake on tulkintaa tässä tutkimuksessa esiintyneiden diskurssien intentiosta tai haastateltavien puheen tavoitteesta.

| Miten eri ikäisyydestä ja ikäjohtamisesta puhutaan? | Aineistossa esiintyviä teemoja | Tavoite/intentio |
|---|--|---|
| Tehokkuusdiskurssi | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - henkilöstö voimavarana - henkilöstö strategisena resurssina - ikästrategia - tavoitteiden asettaminen - motivointi - oppiminen - kouluttaminen - hiljainen tieto - työkyky - inhimillinen pääoma - urasuunnittelu ja rekrytointi | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - yrityksen maine houkuttelevana työnantajana - eläkkeelle siirtymisen pitkittäminen - hiljaisen tiedon siirtäminen - vähemmistä resursseista irti sama tuottavuus - yrityksen elinkelpoisuuden säilyttäminen - eri-ikäisyyden ja erilaisuuden hyödyntäminen henkilöstön voimavarana |
| Yhteisöllisyysdiskurssi | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - tasa-arvoinen kohtelu - eri-arvoistavan luokittelun poistaminen - työperhe (yhteisöllisyys) - vastuu henkilöstöstä - kestävyys/jatkuvuus - rehellisyys ja oikeudenmukaisuus - sitoutuminen - turvallisuus - vuorovaikutus - hyvinvointi ja työtyytyväisyys - huolenpito - erilaisuuden arvostaminen ja kunnioitus - sosiaalinen vastuu | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - erilaisuuden johtaminen - työilmapiirin ja asenneilmaston vaikutus jaksamiseen - hyvä johtaminen - yrityksen, yksilön ja yhteiskunnan tarpeiden ja resurssien yhteensovittaminen (yhteiskuntavastuu) - kehittymisen tukeminen yksilön viitekehuksesta käsin - eri ikäisten välisen vuorovaikutuksen edistäminen - arvojen ja asenteiden yhteensovittaminen - työelämän inhimillisyys - erilaisuuden hyväksyminen, suvaitsevaisuus |

Taulukko 2. "Tehokkuudesta yhteisöllisyyteen". Aineistossa esiintyvien teemojen pohjalta nimetyt diskurssit, sekä diskurssien tavoite.

6. Lopuksi

Tässä tutkimuksessa käsiteltiin erilaisia tapoja puhua ikäjohtamisesta. Tutkimuksen menetelmänä on käytetty diskurssianalyysia. Diskurssianalyysi tarjosi kyselytutkimuksia täydentävän näkökulman ikäjohtamisen tutkimukseen, ja auttaa kohdeyrityksiä kehittämään toimintaansa ikämyönteiseen suuntaan. Tutkimus tarjosi näkökulman työntekijöiden asenteisiin, siihen miten työntekijät suhtautuvat omaan ikäänymiseensä ja miten he puhuvat eri-ikäisyydestä. Yleisesti molemmilla ikäryhmillä oli hyvin positiivinen suhtautuminen eri-ikäisyyteen.

Tämä tutkimus käsittelee niitä merkityksiä, joita ikäjohtamiselle diskurssissa annetaan. Kohdeyrityksissä ei ole toteutettu merkittäviä ikäjohtamishankkeita, eikä niissä ole määritetty ikäjohtamiselle selkeää sisältöä tai merkitystä. Empiirinen tutkimus valaisi käsitteen monimerkitysisyyttä, tulkinnanvaraisuutta ja osin myös sen käytön ongelmia. Analysoidusta aineistosta olisi ollut mahdollista nostaa muitakin, suppeampia diskurssieja esiin. Tutkimus osoittaa, kuinka puhe ikäjohtamisesta kulkee välillä kiinteästi strategisessa ja tehokkuusdiskurssissa ja kuinka välillä ajaututaan kokonaan ikään kuin ulos ikäjohtamisen diskurssista tarkastelemaan johtamista ja henkilöstötoimintaa iän suhteen neutraalista perspektiivistä.

Haastateltavat puhuivat mielellään työkykyhankkeista, kun tarkoituksena oli puhua ikäjohtamisesta. Ikäjohtamisesta puhuttaessa on riskinä, että se ymmärretään vain ikäänymiseisiin kohdistuviksi toimenpiteiksi, jolloin on mahdollista puhua yritysten käynnistämistä konkreettisista työkykyhankkeista. Ikäjohtamisen diskurssi kilpaileekin muiden diskurssien ja totuusväitteiden kanssa siitä, miten organisaation ongelmia, ratkaisuja ja tilanteita määritellään.

Haastateltavat puhuivat usein erikseen johtamisesta ja työkyvyn ylläpitämisestä, joka ymmärretään käytännön henkilöstötoiminnaksi. Ikäjohtaminen käsitetään siis enemmän henkilöstöhallinnoksi kuin johtamistavaksi. Esimerkiksi työkyvyn haastateltavat käsittävät tehokkuusdiskurssissa

siten, että yksilön täytyy pitää yllä työkykyä kuntoilemalla ja että fyysinen työkuunto on kaiken edellytys, jotta ikäänymyneet säilyttävät tehokkuutensa. Tehokkuus ja työkyky liittyivät siis selkeästi toisiinsa.

Voidaan kuitenkin väittää, että "ikäjohtaminen" ei ole looginen malli paremmasta johtamisesta, vaan paremminkin melko hajanainen joukko uusia ja vanhoja käsityksiä ihmisistä ja organisaatioista. Tämä näkökulma korostaa ikäjohtamisen ja henkilöstövoimavarojen johtamisen, sekä sosiaalisen vastuun diskurssien taipumusta perustua joihinkin yleisempiin organisaatiota tai johtamista koskeviin oletuksiin.

Ikäjohtamisen tutkimus, kuten henkilöstöjohtamisen tutkimuskin, on nykyisin lähentynyt positivistista tieteen ihannetta, kun strategiatutkimus on vaikuttanut tutkijoiden työtapoihin. Myös henkilöstötoimen on ollut pakko perustella toimintaansa strategisuuden kautta. Tämä tutkimus osoittaa osaltaan, että ikäjohtamisen uudet tarkastelutavat (diskurssianalyysi ja käsitteelliset tutkimukset) ovat tarpeen tuomaan esiin perinteisten tarkastelutavojen tuottamien aiempien tulosten kanssa keskusteltavia, erilaisia selityksiä tutkittavalle ilmiölle.

Identiteettiä ei tässä tutkimuksessa pidetä yksilön kiinteänä ja pysyvänä käsityksenä itsestään, vaan katsotaan, että identiteetti vaihtelee diskurssin mukaan ja näkyy erilaisina vivahteina puheessa. Välillä ikäänymynyt määrittäytyy haastateltavien puheessa hitaaksi ja turhautuneeksi. Toisinaan taas ikäänymynyt rakentuu puheessa taitavaksi kokonaisuusien ja tilanteiden hallitsijaksi, joka osaa pitää narut taitavasti käsissään ja osaa erottaa olennaisen. Samassa tekstissäkin yksilölle voidaan luoda monta ristiriitaista identiteettiä. Sen vuoksi ei liene todellisen olemuksen tavoitettavaa määritelmää "nuorista" tai "ikäänymyneistä", vaan ne ovat erilaisten diskurssien tuottamia sosiaalisia konstruktioita.

Miksi nuoren ja ikäänymyneen roolit erottuvat puheessa? Millaisia seurauksia niiden repertuaarien käytöllä on? Asiaan on varmasti vaikuttanut voimakkaasti haastattelukonteksti, sillä haastattelukysymyksillä on pyritty ohjaamaan haastateltavia

siihen, että he haastattelussa erottaisivat nuoret ikääntyneistä. Toisaalta identiteettien määrittäminen on tapa asemoida itseä työyhteisöön, ja tavoitteena saattaa olla oman aseman parantaminen suhteessa muihin ryhmiin. Siinä mielessä on ymmärrettävää, että epäkohtia ja eroja ryhmien välisessä kohtelussa korostetaan.

Haastatteluissa kävi ilmi, että haastateltavien mukaan henkilöstö koostuu tulevaisuudessa eri osaamistaustaisista, eri-ikäisistä ja eri kulttuureista tulevista ihmisistä. Ryhmät elävät lisäksi hyvinkin erilaisissa elämäntilanteissa, jolloin arvojen ja asenteiden hajanaisuus lisääntyy entisestään. Toisinaan toimivan yhteistyön esteenä saattavat kuitenkin olla vallitseva johtamiskulttuuri tai henkilöstöstrategiset peruslinjaukset.

Työntekijöiden asenteiden roolin näkyväksi tekemisellä on merkitystä myös ikäjohtamisen tutkimukselle. Esimerkiksi roolin tai identiteettien tutkimuksen avulla voidaan saada selville viiteryhmään – tässä tapauksessa ikääntyviin ja nuoriin - liitettäviä ominaisuuksia suhteessa muihin ryhmiin. Stereotyyppisten asenteiden näkyväksi tekeminen auttaa muuttamaan asenteita iän suhteen positiivisempaan suuntaan. Voidaan esimerkiksi pohtia sitä, ovatko ikääntyneet tosiaan sitoutuneita protestanttiseen työetiikkaan tai että arvostavatko nuoret

etenkin vapautta ja itsenäisyyttä. Asenteiden vaikutus heijastuu myös työntekijän odotuksiin. Esimerkiksi työssä jatkamisen suhteen tai siihen sitoutumisen suhteen voidaan pohtia vallitsevien asenteiden vaikutuksia työntekijöiden oletuksiin siitä, miten työnantajat suhtautuvat ikääntyviin: suhtautuvatko he ikääntymiseen negatiivisesti vai arvostavatko he ikääntyvien kokemusta.

Ikääntymistä voidaan tarkastella myös esimiehen näkökulmasta. Usein puhutaan esimiehen kielteisistä ikäasenteista ikäjohtamisen onnistumisen esteenä. Esimiehen asenteisiin vaikuttanee myös se, mihin ikäryhmään esimies itse kuuluu ja miten hän itse kokee oman ikääntymisensä: kokeeko hän ikääntymisen työkykyä heikentävänä tekijänä vai voimavarana.

Voisi olla hedelmällistä tutkia eri ryhmien identiteetin kehittyä ajallisesti ja sitä, mitä seurauksia identiteetin muutoksella on ollut ihmisten työhön ja toimintaan organisaatioissa.. Esimerkiksi ikäihmisten arvostus on muuttunut. Ennen ikää arvostettiin, mutta jo pitkään tärkeämpänä arvostuksen mittarina on länsimaisessa yhteiskunnassa pidetty koulutusta. Hedelmällistä on myös tarkastella samassa tutkimuksessa iän ja koulutuksen vaikutusta arvostukseen.

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