

**JYX**



**This is a self-archived version of an original article. This version may differ from the original in pagination and typographic details.**

**Author(s):** Lemmetty, Soila; Collin, Kaija

**Title:** Moment of dialogic leadership in Finnish IT organisation

**Year:** 2020

**Version:** Accepted version (Final draft)

**Copyright:** © Emerald Publishing Limited, 2020

**Rights:** CC BY-NC 4.0

**Rights url:** <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>

**Please cite the original version:**

Lemmetty, S., & Collin, K. (2020). Moment of dialogic leadership in Finnish IT organisation. *Industrial and Commercial Training*, 52(3), 195-207. <https://doi.org/10.1108/ict-01-2020-0007>

# Moment of Dialogic Leadership in Finnish IT-Organisation

## Abstract

**Purpose:** The purpose of this study was to describe the construction of leadership through authentic dialogues at work and leaders' actions as contributors to dialogic leadership.

**Design/methodology/approach:** We collected the data by recording the organization's meetings and discussions and used content analysis of dialogic leadership and typifying of critical moments as analytical methods.

**Findings:** On the basis of our findings, we suggest that dialogic leadership begins with a startup critical moment and progresses through the different positions by manager and employees through democratic interaction. Individual and collective level learning of participants and the formation of new knowledge were used in decision- or conclusion-making. The manager promoted the construction of dialogic leadership in conversation by creating important critical moments, which enabled a dialogue to start or contributed to already ongoing dialogue.

**Originality:** The study propose concrete actions that can be applied in working life. Study provide a new understanding of the leader's activities in promoting dialogue.

*Keywords: Dialogic leadership, dialogue, critical moments, workplace learning, IT organization, qualitative study*

## 1 Introduction

Due to rapid changes and increased competition in contemporary working life, research interest in organisational dialogic interaction and communication has increased in recent decades (Erkkilä, 2012; Schein, 2004; Senge, 1990). An essential reason for this interest is the question of how workplace learning (Billett, 2008) and employee professional development can be enhanced (Sparks, Faragher and Cooper, 2001). Dialogue has been suggested as a means to enhance workplace learning (Viitala, 2004) because contemporary learning is often seen as being based on interactions between practitioners and collectives (e.g. Billett, 2004; Collin 2006). Thus, learning in the workplace can be described as a sociocultural activity (Eteläpelto, Vähäsantanen, Hökkä and Paloniemi, 2013; Bandura, 1977; Fenwick, 2008). In the same vein, leadership is increasingly approached as being constructed within social interactions rather than developed through solely individual activities (Grant and Fairhurst, 2010). Consequently, interest in dialogical practices has also increased in the fields of leadership and organisational studies (Isaacs, 1999, 2001; Yankelovich, 1999, 2001).

Contemporary work is often project-based, denoting non-linear work processes with messy problems that cannot be solved through individual efforts alone (Oddane, 2014; Hargadon and Bechky, 2006). In changing and challenging working life situations, leadership practices and styles have been found to be pivotal for supporting employees' learning (e.g. Zhang and Bartol, 2010). Supportive dialogical leadership practices are especially necessary in interagency work, such as information technology (IT) work (Forsman *et al.*, 2014). Thus, leadership practices

can establish favourable contexts that inspire teams and other work collectives to productively collaborate and create ideas.

In this study, we aim to describe the construction of leadership through authentic dialogues at work and leaders' actions as contributors to dialogic leadership. Previous research has shown that dialogue promotes learning, it needs democratic interaction and, that critical moments are vital for dialogue. Therefore, we aim to reveal the critical moments of interactions in the work community, particularly those initiated by the leader. By examining these critical moments, we can gain insights into how leaders enhance dialogue and, at the same time, construct dialogic leadership. We concentrate on meetings as authentic places for dialogic interaction. The context for this study is IT work, and the participants are software developers.

## 2 Standpoints of the study

### Dialogue and learning at work

Dialogue refers to a flow of meanings (Isaacs, 2001) that requires authentic interaction (Viitala, 2004; Manninen and Viitala 2007). Isaacs (2001) and Bohm (1996) describe dialogue as being rooted in interaction, rather than any specific technique or method. An important prerequisite for successful dialogue and learning, therefore, is interaction democracy (Gustavsen, 1992) and the critical moments that move dialogue forward (Wright and Manning, 2004). Thus, democratic interaction, critical moments and learning identified in this study as the three criteria for dialogue.

**Democracy.** Dialogue can be seen as a discussion during which no one takes sides and the goal is to create learning and common understanding by utilising the intelligence of every participant (Isaacs, 2001). The communicative relationship inherent in dialogue means that all participants are involved in the conversation (Burbules, 1993). Democratic dialogue refers to democratic conversation, in which every participant has similar opportunities to affect and act. Further, democratic dialogue is characterised by equality among participants, approval of different experiences and respect for others (Gustavsen, 1992). Democratic dialogue, thus, differs from normal discussions or debates concerning modes of operation, purposes and objectives. Instead, the purpose of democratic dialogue is to create new possibilities and make decisions (Bohm, 1996; Isaacs, 2001). Whereas debates often split participants into opposite camps intent on defending their own opinions, democratic dialogue aims to avoid this kind of polarisation (Cooper *et al.* 2013). Instead, it uses as its points of departure authenticity, active participation and the equality of views. The ultimate aim is not to reach a shared agreement, but to achieve a new and shared understanding (Isaacs, 2001).

**Critical moments of dialogue.** Dialogue usually begins with a conversation or situation of everyday interaction. However, to initiate dialogue, continue dialogue or end dialogue, a decisive act or moment is needed (Isaacs, 2001). Decisive in this context means pivotal and important moments in the discussion, without which dialogue will not take place. These moments and incidents are called critical moments (Wright and Manning, 2004). A critical moment can include, for instance, a question, a suggestion, a humorous comment, a critique, a sentence that awakens emotions or a silent moment (see e.g. Erkkilä, 2012; Hujala and Rissanen 2012; Wright and Manning, 2004). In general, such critical moments are acts in speech that spark a dialogue (Erkkilä, 2012). They are often conversational turning points; for example, they may be interaction situations involving changes in speaker or the presentation of critical opinions. Vital for such critical moments is what happens afterwards (Hujala and Rissanen, 2012). In

particular, critical moments refer to the acts that precede dialogue that take place between individuals (Wright and Manning, 2004).

According to Isaacs (2001), dialogue begins with the exchange of ideas between one or more persons who listen to and think about the presented ideas. Next, a critical moment that opens the possibility for dialogue emerges. If a participant's only aim at this phase is to defend his/her own opinion, then dialogue cannot actualise. If, instead, both participants carefully listen to each other and wait patiently, their interaction can proceed towards a dialogic conversation (Isaacs, 2001). Although critical moments have been recognised as decisive in the research on dialogue, they have not yet been explored as the centre of this research. Instead, the dialogue studies have looked more broadly at critical incidents (see e.g. Crowhurst & Patrics, 2017), which, however, differ from critical moments in that incidents are seen as broader, more complex, and multi-element events (DeLanda, 2016; Youdell, 2011), while critical moment is described as a more limited moment, such as individual speech acts. Therefore, it is important to investigate what kinds of factors make dialogue emerge (Erkkilä, 2012).

***Learning through dialogue.*** Dialogue is an important prerequisite for learning in organisations because it makes it possible to search for new ideas that we cannot find on our own (Manninen and Viitala, 2007). Learning through dialogue is based on the view of learning as social entity (Bandura, 1977). Dialogue also facilitates the creation of new knowledge (Isaacs, 2001) and the sharing of this knowledge in organisations (Vangen and Huxham, 2003). Successful dialogue can, thus, be seen as a prerequisite for workplace learning, including joint investigations and shared ideas (Manninen and Viitala, 2007). Dialogue can also be approached as a learning strategy that takes place when people talk with each other, act equally and trust one another (Gustavsen, 1992; Habermas, 1979). It is crucial that all people who are capable of equal interaction and collaboration and relevant to the conversation at hand should be incorporated into the groups initiating new ideas and thoughts through dialogue (Isaacs, 2001). In this way, new ideas can spread around an organisation's practice (Vangen and Huxham, 2003). For all of these reasons, dialogue has long been seen as a mode of conversation that promotes learning and the emergence of new knowledge in organisations and communities (Gustavsen, 1992).

### **Dialogic leadership and leaders as promoters of dialogue and learning**

Dialogic leadership, rather than being the product of an individual agent, is a phenomenon constructed through multiple people's actions (Isaacs, 1999). Leadership can be defined as people's processes, aims and attempts to reach shared goals (Northouse, 2007). Together, all interaction, means of communication, speech and words construct leadership. Therefore, leadership is not dependent on the characteristics of individual people (Fairhurst and Grant, 2010). In the process of constructing leadership, both leader and followers are effected by one another in a relationship that can be described as reciprocal and dialogical (Northouse, 2007). Rather than following an authoritarian approach, dialogic leadership emphasises socially constructed, democratic and conversational leadership (Fairhurst and Grant, 2010). Leadership research is informed by such themes as dialogue and dialogical leadership (e. g. Isaacs, 1999, 2001; Senge, 1990; Yankelovich, 1999, 2001). A foundation of dialogic leadership is that reality is constructed through shared conversations (Syvänen and Tappura, 2014). It has also been noted that dialogic leadership enhances employees' activity and openness (Isaacs, 1999). These, in turn, are central to creative learning processes (Viitala, 2004) as well as a sense of collegiality (Easley, 2008) and motivation (Syvänen and Tappura, 2014). Dialogic leaders help thus to increase organisations' developmental potential (Isaacs, 1999).

The literature identifies four spheres of competence development in leaders' actions: the steering of learning activities, support for learning processes, leading by example and creating an

atmosphere that enhances learning (Manninen and Viitala, 2007). A positive leadership environment increases employees' positive emotions (Ashkanasy and Ashton-James, 2007), which, in turn, increases their creativity and innovativeness (Wenger, 2003; Viitala, 2004). Consequently, it is important for leaders to value and understand the importance of learning-centred leadership practices and to see what is possible to achieve with the help of these kinds of practices (Lakshman, 2008). In addition, leaders should seek to create a favourable and open climate (Schein, 2013) and to understand the nature of human interaction and dialogue (Palmer, 2011). Thus, a dialogic leadership style has positive effects on not only employees' competence development, but also motivation and working climate (Syvänen and Tappura, 2014). Isaacs (1999) has compiled four leadership practices that support the development of conversational quality in organisations. These are: voicing, listening, respecting and suspending. Voicing means that a leader should speak authentically and express how he/she feels. Listening means really listening to others' opinions and views without resistance. Respecting shows that a leader values others' positions and opinions. Finally, suspending refers to a leader's ability to refrain from presumptions, evaluations or solid opinions (Isaacs, 1999).

### **3 Research aim and questions**

In this study, we wanted to explore the manifestations of dialogic leadership. We explore dialogic leadership in one Finnish IT organisation: a large internationally networked organisation operating in the field of software. Thus, the purpose of this study was to examine the construction of dialogic leadership and learning. To accomplish this, we ask the following questions:

1. How is dialogic leadership constructed in team meetings within an IT organisation?
2. How does a leader promote the construction of dialogic leadership?

## **4 Data and analysis**

### **4.1 Data collection**

The data used in this study were collected by recording an IT organisation's meetings and discussions. Altogether, the data included five audio-recorded meetings and discussions (in total, 449.36 minutes of audio recordings and 198 pages of recording transcripts) collected in 2015. The meeting durations varied between 50 and 140 minutes. The number of meeting participants varied between 20 and 25 people, including the team leader. Meetings were regularly scheduled weekly meetings of the one and same software developer team. Thus, the participants and the leader in the meetings were always same in the all of the meetings. The meeting themes covered ongoing projects and future organisational tasks. The purpose and aim of these meetings were to take a "snapshot" of the ongoing projects as well as to share the information between employees and leader and get advice on the ongoing issues. Issues and topics of the meetings were not the focus of this study.

### **4.2 Analysis**

The data were analysed using qualitative analysis methods. The analysis of dialogic leadership comprised two modules: an overview module and a module for answering the research questions. In turn, each of these included two phases: the overview module included the observation of interactions and the finding dialogue episodes, while the answering research questions module included the perceiving dialogical leadership and the analysing the leader's acts phases. These phases of analysis are shown in table 1.

## TABLE 1 HERE: ANALYSIS OF DIALOGIC LEADERSHIP

We first utilised the quantification (Fick, 2009) and content classification to develop a statistical overview of all recorded interactions. During this step, we computed meeting durations, number of statements by leaders and employees, and the distributions of these statements as percentages. We noticed that a total of 3820 statements were made across all team meetings. The majority of these statements were made by employees (62%), and 38% were made by the leader. Over 50% of the statements were made by employees. Interestingly, the meetings that lasted less than one hour included more statements made by the leader (more than 40%), whereas the meetings that lasted less than one hour included fewer statements made by the leader (less than 40%).

After this, we located the dialogue episodes according to the three criteria of dialogue: democracy, critical moments and learning (Gustavsen, 1992; Isaacs, 2001; Wright and Manning, 2014). Our intention was to find complete discussion sections with a clear starting and ending moments. Democracy in this case meant that more than two people were included in the discussion. In addition, it had to be possible to interpret that there emerged either individual or collective learning. Our aim was to study the dynamics of the discussions: how the participants constructed the dialogue in relation to previous and upcoming statements. Based on the criteria for a dialogue, we identified a total of 56 dialogue episodes within the data. The number of dialogue episodes does not depend solely on meeting duration. All identified dialogue episodes began with a critical moment, included democratic interaction between the leader and the employees and ended with individual or collective learning.

The construction of dialogic leadership was achieved via dialogue episodes using content analysis (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005). We focused on examining the meanings of the participants' dialogic statements and their speech acts, which were essential for the dialogue to continue. Example of the content analysis of dialogue is presented in table 2. The example is based on the initial phase of one dialogue episode we found from the data.

## TABLE 2 HERE: EXAMPLE OF THE CONTENT ANALYSIS OF DIALOGUE

This phase involved the further analysis of the contents of the dialogue, in which the dynamics of the interaction and the contents were examined statement by statement. Finally, we focused on statements made by the leader and the critical moments that occurred within these statements (Wright and Manning, 2004). The leader's critical moments were analysed through the process of typifying. The purpose of typifying is to construct most common types or marked groups that describe the data as a whole (Mayring, 2004). Thus, the critical moments were categorised into types of critical moments based on the speech acts and what happened during and after each moment. We used previous descriptions of critical moments (see Erkkilä, 2012) as supportive analytical framework in typifying critical moments. Finally, we interpreted these different critical moment types as more profoundly synthesising the leader's acts.

## 5 Findings

In this study, we explored how dialogic leadership is constructed in team meetings and how a leader promotes the construction of dialogic leadership. Below, we will describe dialogues collected from the audio-recorded data.

## 5.1 Construction of dialogic leadership

The construction of dialogic leadership was studied via dialogue episodes identified during the first phase of the study. Dialogue episodes were identified as a base for leadership processes, because according to the theories (see e.g. Ladkin, 2010) leadership can be seen to be constructed on an interaction in which different parties have the opportunity to participate, while management is more strongly connected to the leader's independent action. Based on the dialogue episodes, dialogic interactions with the team leader formed at the beginning of the dialogue, turning points of the dialogue, presentations of different views, participant understandings, participant summaries and the end of the dialogue. These steps represented critical moments of dialogue and constructed opportunities for democratic interaction and learning. An example episode is shown in table 3.

TABLE 3 HERE: DIALOGUE EPISODE

***Critical moments initiating and promoting the construction of dialogic leadership.*** We observed that the dialogic episodes always began with some kind of *start-up critical moment* (see table 3). These critical moments involved statements that prompted the discussion to become dialogic. Critical moments usually appeared in the form of a question or another kind of speech act. After these start-up critical moments, other dialogue participants expressed their views on the subject, turning the interaction into a democratic dialogue.

Critical moments were also observed within the democratic interactions of ongoing dialogue. These moments were necessary for the construction of dialogic leadership because they contributed to dialogues that had already begun. In this case, the critical moments were pivotal speech acts within the participants' statements, through which the participants' expressed their own views and contributed turning points to the ongoing dialogue. Examples of a *democratic interaction* and a *conducive critical moment* are shown in table 3.

***Learning and decisions as the results of the leadership.*** Based on the data, we found that, as the results of critical moments and democratic interactions, participants summarised and expressed new understandings based on the ongoing dialogue. These summaries and new understandings revealed that the participants had learned something new either individually or collectively because of the ongoing dialogue's formation of new knowledge (see table 3). Learning was found through an examination of the participants' statements and the previous dialogue. Individual learning occurred in the dialogue when participants asked questions to which one or more other participants responded. The original questioners then expressed their new understanding, illustrating that they had learned something. Collective learning occurred in the episodes when participants expressed their views and/or summarised all of the views expressed so far. In this case, collective learning was seen as being constructed view by view.

New knowledge, formed through learning, usually led directly to conclusion or a decision in the dialogue. Such decisions could be made either by the leader or by an employee. In one situation, the leader concluded the dialogue by saying: "*All right then, we will do it in that way, so the xxx will be made the same way as before, and the other will be tested using the new formula*". In this case, it is clear from the statement that the decision is based on the previous dialogue, since the leader refers to the views expressed by other dialogue participants. However, the dialogue episodes did not always end in decision-making. In some cases, the dialogues

simply ended with conclusions based on learning gleaned through the dialogue. These conclusions were made by the leader, as is shown at the end of table 3.

**Summary.** As shown previously, dialogic leadership seems to be constructed through democratic interactions between employees and leaders. It is initiated by start-up and conducive critical moments, and it supports organisational learning and collective decision-making. Sometimes, dialogue ends in a decision, but a decision can also be conducive critical moment that simply leads the dialogue in new directions. Leader alone cannot construct the leadership on his own; instead, either the leader or any other employee can promote the construction of dialogic leadership by creating critical moments that spark dialogue. The construction of dialogic leadership is shown in figure 1.

FIGURE I here: Construction of dialogic leadership in team meetings of IT team

## 5.2 Leader as a promoter of dialogic leadership

We were also interested in how leaders promote the construction of dialogic leadership. It is essential, that dialogue participants (employees and leaders) engage in speech acts that initiate start-up or conducive critical moments. In this case, we wanted to study in more detail the critical moments made by the leader.

***Start-up critical moments made by the leader.*** There were 56 start-up critical moments in the dialogue episodes, 28 of which were made by the leader. We identified five different types of leader-initiated start-up critical moments question, information, detection, proposal, mistrust and order.

***Question.*** This is the most common type of start-up critical moment actualised as a speech act. It involves a question to which other participants respond by expressing their own answers. Leader-initiated questions typically start new topics or add to the ongoing discussion. Questions became critical moments when they were seen as necessary for the emergence of the subsequent dialogue.

***Detection.*** Detection was the second most common type of leader-initiated start-up critical moment. Detections comprised all of the speech acts in which the leader briefly noted something (e.g. “*It is the same problem again*”) but did not reflect on his own opinion or decision. Detections typically manifested in situations in which the discussion had already started but was changed into a dialogue by the leader’s detection.

***Information.*** Information-type leader-initiated start-up speech members included speech acts of the leader that were typically long, included a lot of general information and prompted dialogue. Usually, information moments included announcements from senior management. The imparted information comprised necessary information, not the leader’s own opinions.

***Proposal.*** This type of critical moment manifested only three times in the dialogue episodes. However, proposals were seen as a separate type of critical moment because these kinds of speech acts could not be included in any of the other types. The leader used proposals when he wanted to suggest or recommend something to the employees. Post-proposal discussions were typically seen as democratic and usually produced learning and decision-making, indicating a leader-initiated dialogue episode. Usually, the leader used proposals when suggesting solutions or decisions following a debate.

*Order.* There was only one order-type critical moment in all of the dialogue episodes, but it was very different type of act than the other categories of acts. Specifically, the observe order was a speech act in which the leader ordered one of the employees to tell everyone the status of an ongoing project.

***Conducive critical moments initiated by the leader.*** The observed dialogue episodes contained 61 conducive critical moments, which were categorised into nine different types. Of these types, three mirrored types of start-up critical moments: question, detection and proposal. Other kinds of conducive moments included grant, additional view, repeat, mistrust, decision and learning.

*Question.* Question-type conducive critical moments were usually clarifying questions or questions that pertained to the current topic of discussion. Question-type conducive moments were important to the continuance of the dialogue, since these types of moments shifted the dialogue in different directions. After a clarifying question, other participants continued to express their views.

*Detection.* Detection-type conducive critical moments were similar to detection-type start-up critical moments, except that they manifested within the ongoing dialogue. They injected new life into dialogues that were about to fizzle away. These moments included short statements made by the leader.

*Proposal.* Proposal-type conducive critical moments were very similar to the start-up moments. Proposals occurred when the leader first listened the views of the other participants and then offered a proposal based on all of the expressed views. However, these moments did not conclude the dialogue; rather, they helped it continue by prompting others to contribute their own proposals or expressed their views on the proposal made by the leader.

*Learning.* Learning-type critical moments occurred when the leader expressed that he had learned something from the dialogue. These kinds of moments were possible to locate by observing the preceding dialogue and looking for cases in which the leader had previously expressed uncertainty.

*Additional view.* Additional view-type critical moments were easy to recognize because they involved the leader bringing something new to the dialogue. Additional views involved speech acts initiated by the leader when he wanted to fix others' conceptions of something or when he gave examples of the issue at hand. These additional views prompted other participants to share their supplementary views, thus fostering ongoing dialogue.

*Mistrust.* Mistrust-type critical moments were observed four times in the dialogue episodes. These critical moments included such words as “*maybe*” or “*possibly*”, which expressed uncertainty and evidenced the speaker's uncertainty or doubt regarding the matter at hand.

*Decision.* Decision-type critical moments manifested throughout the progression of the dialogues, typically at the end of the dialogue episodes. Usually, the leader made a decision or drew a conclusion at the end of the dialogue. Sometimes, however, this decision prompted further dialogue. In this case, the employees focused their decisions on the leader or wanted to bring something new to the fore.

*Grant.* Grant-type critical moments occurred in only two dialogues. To identify these moments, we needed to see not only the leader's statement of consent, but also previous statements that made it possible to categorise the consent as a grant. Such grants manifested when employees expressed differing options, and the leader granted his approval to one of these views.

*Repeat.* During the dialogue, the leader occasionally repeated views that either the employees or the leader had already expressed. After these moments, the dialogue continued. These kinds of critical moments also occurred in only two dialogue episodes. The repeat-type critical moments prompted the dialogue to begin again.

*Action categories.* We identified 11 critical moments that we grouped into five action categories based on their contents and aims. These categories represent the leader's actions to promote dialogic leadership. Citations of these critical moments, their types and their action categories are shown in table 4.

TABLE 4 HERE: Types of critical moments and the leader's action categories.

The analysis of the critical moments revealed similarities among the different moments. We categorised these critical moments into the upper-level categories by combining the moments that had similar aims or contents. Ultimately, we identified five categories that demonstrate the leader's actions. Based on these categories, we can say that the leader promoted the construction of dialogic leadership by appreciating the views of employees, drawing conclusions on the basis of the dialogue between the employees and the leader, bringing up his own expertise, and incorporating his own learning through honest opinions.

## 6 Discussion

In this study, we found that dialogic leadership is realized in the everyday interaction situations of the work community, where the leader's speech acts are critical to the formation of dialogue. From the leader's statements, we identified that, the most common types of critical moments were question-, proposal- and information-type moments, as Erkkilä (2012) has previously identified. The other critical moment types (i.e., order, additional view, decision and learning) have not been found in previous studies. Hujala and Rissanen (2012) identified found humorous utterances and critical comments as critical moments; however, we found no evidence of such moments in our data. Our findings show that leaders promote the construction of dialogic leadership by appreciating employees' views, drawing conclusions on the basis of the dialogue between the employees and the leader, bringing up their own expertise, speaking openly, and incorporating their own learning. Our results seem to support the findings of Isaacs (1999) with regard to the practices of dialogic leadership (i.e. voicing, listening and responding).

It can be stated that this study confirms the principles of dialogical leadership and the emergence of dialogue described in previous studies (see e.g. Isaacs, 1999), in addition to which, the research provides a clearer overall picture of the moments of dialogical leadership in the daily life of the work community. The findings of the study are significant as they draw attention to everyday, conversational leadership that is often unconscious. Examination of authentic interaction situations and analysis of individual speech acts in this study revealed that leadership is constructed episodically in work team meetings. This observation produces a theoretical implication by reinforcing previous understanding of leadership in the community as a constructive whole (see e.g. Ladkin, 2010). In addition, it shows that in leadership research, it would be important to focus the examination on the everyday and ordinary situations of work communities.

This study has implications also for transferability in comparable contexts and proposes concrete actions. It is likely that dialogical leadership could emerge in work communities and organizations where employees are consulted and their views are valued. Thus, the realization of dialogical leadership can also depend on culture. In democratic Western countries, dialogue is presumably more present in the workplaces than in those countries where leaders activity is still seen as a very hierarchical. In Finland, which is the context of this study, dialogical leadership may be intertwined with organizational culture. In the future, there will also be a need for more understanding of how to construct dialogical leadership in different countries, industries and different workplaces.

Human resource development has generally focused on organising formal training sessions and courses. However, it is also essential to integrate development into organisations' everyday work (Hytönen, 2002). Organisation studies have suggested that formal training alone offers insufficient benefits from workplace learning point of view (Bunch, 2007). As a practical implication, this current study confirms that support for on-the-job learning should be extended to everyday work situations, increasing opportunities for employees and the manager to participate in discussions. Leadership and workplace learning are clearly manifested in organisations' everyday work when leaders' interaction practices increase the practices' meaningfulness. Our study sheds light on the construction of dialogic leadership and learning in the through authentic dialogues at work and reveals new ideas about good leadership practices. It seems that leaders and human resource managers should be interested in employees' opinions and views but at the same time understand their professional development across various kinds of work practices and interactions (Billett, 2014). The findings of this study can also help leaders themselves to focus on their own interactions and the importance of discussions for community-wide learning and decision-making. We suggest that organizations should provide resources for the involvement of different employees, in particular in the case of novice workers.

## **7 Conclusion**

In this study, we conclude that dialogues require democratic interaction (Gustavsen, 1992) and critical moments that start and promote the dialogue (Erkkilä, 2012; Hujala and Rissanen 2008; Wright and Manning 2004). Findings of this study show that construction process of dialogic leadership begins with the start-up critical moment, which advance a set of views, and conducive critical moments, which form democratic interaction. During the construction process, the dialogue creates new knowledge from the participants' individual and collective learning. This seems to be fairly in line with what we already know about the benefits of the dialogue for learning (Isaacs, 2001). Further, dialogue in the work community creates collective decision-making based on learning and new knowledge, though decisions are not usually seen as the ultimate aim of a dialogue (Bohm, 1996; Isaacs, 2001).

## References

- Ashkanasy, N.M. & Ashton-James, C.E. (2007). "Positive emotion in organizations: A multi-level framework", In D. Nelson & C.L. Cooper (Ed.), *Positive Organizational Behavior*, Sage, London, pp. 55–73.
- Bandura, A. (1977). *Social learning theory*, Englewood Cliffs, NJ, Prentice-Hall, Inc.
- Billett, S. (2008), "Emerging perspectives on workplace learning", In S. Billett, C. Harteis & A. Eteläpelto (Ed.), *Emerging perspectives of workplace learning*, Sense Publishers, Rotterdam, pp. 1–18
- Billett, S. (2014), "Mimesis: Learning through everyday activities and interactions at work", *Human Resource Review*, Vol. 13, No. 4, pp. 462–482.
- Billett, S. (2004), "Workplace participatory practices. Conceptualising workplaces as learning environments", *Journal of Workplace Learning*, Vol. 16, No. 6, pp. 312–322.
- Bohm, D. (1996), *On dialogue*, Routledge, London.
- Bunch, K. J. (2007), "Training failure as a consequence of organizational culture", *Human Resource Development Review*, Vol. 6, No. 2, pp. 142–163.
- Burbules, N.C. (1993), *Dialogue in teaching. Theory and practice*, Teachers College Press New York, NY.
- Collin, K. (2006), "Connecting Work and Learning - Design Engineers' Learning at Work", *Journal of Workplace Learning* Vol. 18, No. 7/8, pp. 403-413.
- Crowhurst, M. & Patrick, R. (2018), "Critical incident sparks critical incident sparks critical incident: an 'aresolutionist' method", *Reflective Practice*, Vol. 19, No 3, pp. 389-398, DOI:10.1080/14623943.2018.1479689
- DeLanda, M. (2016), *Assemblage theory*, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press.
- Easley, J. (2008), "Moral school building leadership", *Journal of Educational Administration*, Vol. 46, No. 1, pp. 25–38.
- Erkkilä, P. (2012), *Hetki lyö. Dialogi ja sen syntyminen johtoryhmien kokoustyöskentelyssä. [Strike by the Moment. Dialogue and how it evolves in Top Management Team Meetings]* Akateeminen väitöskirja [Academic dissertation], University of Vaasa, Vaasa
- Eteläpelto, A., Vähäsantanen, K., Hökkä, P. & Paloniemi, S., (2013), "What is agency? Conceptualizing professional agency at work", *Educational Research Review*, Vol. 10, pp. 45–65.
- Fairhurst, G.T. & Grant, D. (2010) "The social construction of leadership: A sailing guide", *Management Communication Quarterly*, Vol. 24, No. 2, pp. 171–210.
- Fenwick, T. (2008) "Understanding relations of individual–collective learning in work: A review of research", *Management Learning*, Vol. 39, No. 3, pp. 227–243.

- Fick, U. (2009), *An introduction to qualitative research* (4th ed.), Sage, London.
- Forsman, P., Collin, K. & Eteläpelto, A. (2014), “The practice of professional agency and the emergence of collaborative creativity in developmental staff meetings”, In C. Harteis, A. Rausch & J. Seifried (Ed.), *Discourses on professional learning: On the boundary between learning and working*, Springer, Dordrecht, pp. 45–74.
- Gustavsen, B. (1992), *Dialogue and development*, Arbetslivscentrum, Stockholm.
- Habermas, J. (1979), *Communication and the Evolution of Society*, Beacon Press, Boston.
- Hargadon, A. B., & Bechky, B. A. (2006) “When collections of creatives become creative collectives: A field study of problem solving at work”, *Organization Science*, Vol. 17, No. 4, pp. 484–500.
- Hsieh, H.-F., & Shannon, S.E. (2005), “Three approaches to qualitative content analysis”, *Qualitative Health Research*, Vol. 15, No. 9, pp. 1277–1288.
- Hujala, A. & Rissanen, S. (2012), “Discursive construction of polyphony in healthcare management”, *Journal of health Organization and Management*, Vol. 26 No. 1, pp. 118 – 136.
- Hytönen, T. (2002), *Exploring the practice of human resource development as a field of professional expertise*, Jyväskylä studies in education, psychology and social research, University of Jyväskylä, Jyväskylä.
- Isaacs, W. (1999), “Dialogic leadership”, *The Systems Thinker*, Vol. 10, No. 1, pp. 1–5.
- Isaacs, W. (2001), *Dialogue and the art of thinking together: A pioneering approach to communicating in business and in life*, Doubleday, New York, NY.
- Ladkin, D. (2010), *Rethinking leadership: A new look at old leadership questions*, Cheltenham: Elgar, 2010
- Lakshman, C. (2008), *Knowledge leadership. Tools for executive leaders*, SAGE, London
- Manninen, R-L. & Viitala, R. (2007), *Competence management and Human resource Development. A theoretical framework for understanding the practices of modern Finnish Organisations*, *Haaga-Helia Research 1/2007*, Haga-Helia University of Applied Sciences, Helsinki.
- Mayring, P. (2004). “Qualitative content analysis”, In U. Flick, E.Y. Kardorff, & I. Steinke (Ed.), *A companion to qualitative research*, SAGE: London, pp. 266–326.
- Northouse, P.G. (2007), *Leadership theory and practice*, Sage Publications, California, USA
- Oddane, T. (2014) “The collective creativity of academics’ and practitioners’ innovation projects”, *International Journal of Managing Projects in Business*, Vol. 8, No. 1, pp. 33–57.
- Palmer, P. J. (2011). *Healing the heart of democracy: The courage to create a politics worthy of the human spirit*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

- Sawyer, K. (2011), *Explaining creativity. The science of human innovations*, University press, Oxford.
- Schein, E. H. (2004), *Organizational culture and leadership*, Jossey-Bass, San Francisco, CA.
- Schein, E.H. (2013), *Humble Inquiry. The gentle art of asking instead of telling*, Berrett-Koehler Publishers, San Francisco, CA.
- Senge P (1990), “The leader’s new work: Building the learning organization”, *Sloan Management Review*, Vol. 32, No. 1, pp. 7–23.
- Sparks, K., Faragher, B. & Cooper, C.L. (2001), “Well-being and occupational health in the 21st century workplace”, *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology*, Vol. 4, No. 74, pp. 489–509.
- Syvänen, S. & Tappura, S. (2014), “Dialogic leadership of creativity: Resource for innovations, sustainable working life, and performance”, paper presented at the Nordic Working life conference (NWLC), 11 – 13 June, Gothenburg, Sweden, available at: <http://www.uta.fi/yky/en/contact/personnel/sirpasyvanen/index/Dialogic%20leadership%20of%20creativity.pdf> (accessed 10.6.2018).
- Vangen, S. & Huxham, C. (2003), “Enacting leadership for collaborative advantage: Dilemmas of ideology and pragmatism in the activities of partnership managers”, *British Journal of Management*, Vol. 14, pp. 61–76
- Viitala, R. (2004) “Towards knowledge leadership”, *Leadership & Organization Development Journal*, Vol. 25, No. 6, pp. 528 – 544.
- Wenger, E. (2003), “Communities of practice and social learning systems”, In D. Nicolini, S. Gherardi & D. Yanow (Ed.), *Knowing in organizations. A practice-based approach*, Sharpe Corp, New York, NY, pp. 77–99.
- Wright, C. R. & Manning, M. R. (2004), “Resourceful sensemaking in an administrative group”, *Journal of Management Studies*, Vol. 41, No. 4, pp. 623–643.
- Yankelovich, D. (2001), *The magic of dialogue transforming conflict into cooperation*, Simon & Schuster, New York, NY.
- Youdell, D. (2011). *School trouble: Identity, power and politics in education*. Abingdon: Routledge.
- Zang, X. and Bartol, K. M. (2010), “Linking empowering leadership and employee creativity: The influence of psychological empowerment, intrinsic motivation, and creative process engagement”, *Academy of Management Journal*, Vol. 53, No. 1, pp. 107–128.