

CHALMERS



The Implementation of Coaching in International Project Teams

An Evaluation of the Business Leadership Coaching Training
Programme in Volvo Car Cooperation

*Master of Science Thesis in the Master's Programme
International Project Management*

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CHALMERS UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY
Göteborg, Sweden 2013
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Preface

Empowerment leadership style is gradually recognised as the new leadership style of choice in the current business environment which is more global and dynamic than ever before. The most significance of the empowerment leadership style is that, it encourages all employees to take responsibility and make decisions. Through this approach, the potential of employees can be released and their performance could be increased dramatically. Based on this context, coaching is selected to be the tool of training to complete this task, as it corresponds to the philosophy of the empowerment leadership style. Understanding how this approach can be adopted in project teams is crucial, as projects are major motivators for changes in most organisations. Therefore, through the implementation of empowerment leadership style in project teams, especially in international project teams, will harvest a significant accumulated effect on the organisation as a whole.

The intention of this dissertation is to explore the ideal approach which should be adopted to implement empowerment leadership style within international project teams. The effort has been made to fulfil this intention by conducting an evaluation case study in the Volvo Car Cooperation. The case company is an international automotive company with more than 21,500 employees, and its customers spread in more than 100 countries throughout the world. Volvo Car Cooperation has a matrix organisational structure. Departments and projects are important format of the overall management. In order to perform this research, the dissertation author worked in the case company for three months as an intern student.

Abstract

Background: Implementing empowerment leadership style through coaching approaches has become a critical success factor for the development of international project teams, but the relevant research is limited.

Purpose: To explore the ideal methods to implement empowerment leadership style through coaching approaches within international project teams.

Approach: The dissertation research is conducted through a qualitative case study with the supports of observations. Eight semi-structured interviews were carried out with international team managers of Volvo Car Cooperation who have participated in Business Leadership Coaching Programme. Meanwhile, several coaching events and meetings were observed to facilitate this research and verify the recommendations.

Results: Both the empowerment leadership style and the implementation tool of coaching are suitable for the current situation of Volvo Car Cooperation. Furthermore, additional efforts should be made in the future to combine the ideal models of coaching with the practical daily work, especially for international project managers who are facing the challenge of culture diversity and time constrains.

Conclusions: Empowerment Leadership style is the ideal leadership style for the current situation of Volvo Car Cooperation, and coaching approaches are appropriate to implement it.

Keywords: Project Management, Empowerment Leadership, Coaching, Culture Diversity, Team Development, Intercultural Communication

1 Introduction

The background information of this dissertation will be introduced in this chapter. This introduction includes three major aspects which are theoretical foundation, methodological justification and the target company description. Meanwhile, the scope and limitations of this study will also be discussed. The present chapter is aiming to briefly outline the findings within this field and provide an overview of this dissertation.

1.1 Theoretical rationale for the study

As the business environment becomes more global and dynamic, the “control and command” model of management can no longer fulfil the requirements of current international project teams. In order to better react to the new context, all team members have to be trained to adapt to the international environment, as well as be empowered to optimise their working performance (Randolph, 1995).

The evolving trend of the culture theory can be identified through the review of previous research. Historically, the scholars mainly focus on the inherent differences among cultures. Hofstede (2003, p. 29) identified the “five independent dimensions of national culture differences.” Gesteland (2005) also developed his criteria to differentiate characteristics of various cultures. However, since the importance of international trade is rising dramatically in recent years and people tend to have more opportunities to interact with people from other cultures, new theories about culture have been proposed by scholars. According to Fang (2012), culture has a dynamic nature, and the intrinsic values in different cultures could be quite alike. The reason why cultures appear diverse in surface is because not the same values are being promoted or suppressed in various cultures. In addition, Fang (2012) also pointed that a “new culture” can be created when different cultures “collide” with each other. Individuals’ judgments and behaviours are deeply affected by cultures (Hofstede, 2003).

Coaching has become “one of the most powerful strategic and tactical weapons” (Vries, 2005, p. 62), because it can be used to establish, fine-tune, or rebuild the competencies in a global working environment. Coaching is closely related to culture background in two ways. Firstly, the prerequisite element for coaching is trust (Ladyshevsky, 2010). The process and duration of trust development heavily depend on cultures (Doney et al., 1998). Secondly, the purpose of coaching is to develop shared values, as Ives (2008, p.103) cite Evered and Selman’s (1989) early portrayal of coaching is “to convey a valued colleague from where he or she is to where he or she wants to be”. Value is the most important element of a culture (Hofstede, 2003), and it can be hardly changed over time. Culture is closely connected with the development of trust and shared values. Therefore, the evaluation and understanding on how the outcome of coaching is affected by culture differences is crucial. This study will shed light on the method of developing effective project teams and optimizing the performance of each team member.

Previous research has shown that the effect of coaching can be affected by many factors. According to the research done by Hackman and Wageman (2005), the effect of team coaching can be quite different due to coaching contents and duration. The coaching programme could be very effective if it has a suitable theme and occurs in the right phase of the project. On the contrary, inappropriate coaching could be harmful to the organization rather than helpful. Meanwhile, Ives’s study (2008, p.101) suggested that “While each of the various approaches to coaching has unique strengths and is best suited for particular situations”. However, how the effect of a coaching programme is affected by participants’ background is still remain unexploited. Furthermore, how these different theories are reflected in the team building process and coaching programmes is worth studying.

1.2 Research aim and research question

In this study, the effect of a manager / project manager leadership programme based on the idea “Managers as coaches” will be studied and evaluated. The aim of this evaluation is to determine how the attendants in the programme perceive the idea of coaching leadership and the mind-set that follows with the coaching approach and

the ideas of empowerment. It will also be of interest to understand how culture differences among the participants can influence the acceptance of the coaching programme. By taking culture elements into the consideration, suggestions to improve the efficiency of international project teams will be proposed in this dissertation. Therefore, the research question of this dissertation can be formulated as:

How to adopt the coaching approach to implement empowerment leadership style within international project teams?

1.3 The context of the dissertation company

Volvo Car Cooperation is an international automotive company with more than 21,500 employees, and its customers spread in more than 100 countries throughout the world. The head-courter and the primary production centre are located in Gothenburg, Sweden. Volvo was founded in 1927 by Assar Gabrielsson and Gustaf Larson (Volvo Car Cooperation, 2013a). The guiding principle of all the activities of Volvo is “to remain safety”, and the mission is to “build reliable, robust and safe cars, caring for people.” (Volvo Car Cooperation, 2013a) In 2010, Volvo Cars was sold to Geely which is a Chinese automotive cooperation. Nowadays, with Swedish heritage and Chinese owner, Volvo Car Cooperation has been more global and more diverse than ever before (Volvo Car Cooperation, 2013b). These new energies have boosted Volvo to become increasingly inspirational and competitive.

In this context, the inspirational culture of Volvo Car Cooperation was redefined based on the previous advantages and new challenges (Volvo Car Cooperation, 2013c). Therefore, how to achieve a high performance in an international environment and how to motivate all the employees to engage themselves into their work are the most crucial objectives of Volvo Car Cooperation. Because of these demands, a series of reforming approaches were took place. One of the major responsibilities of the human resource department is to identify and implement suitable leadership styles and training techniques to fulfil those objectives.

1.4 Research scope and limitations

The scope of this study will be controlled within the case company, so all the hypotheses and research outcomes are only related to the case company. The study will evaluate how the effect of a coaching programme is associated with culture backgrounds of its participants. Therefore, the cultures involved in this study will be limited within the culture backgrounds of the participants. This limitation is due to the possible duration of the temporary employment, and the reasonable workload for a master's dissertation.

The focus of this dissertation is on the effect of coaching programme on the development of international managers / leaders / project teams. Therefore, coaching programme participants, especially managers with project management experiences were interviewed. The interviews are formed by 21 pre-determined open-ended questions which are based on previous theories. In the end, eight interviews were carried out by the dissertation author with coaching program participants to collect the primary data of this study.

The participants of the Business Leadership Coaching Programme are predetermined before the initiation of this study. Therefore, it reflects more consideration of the company interest and demand rather than academic needs. This fact can possibly bring two limitations: Firstly, according to the theory of Fang (2012), the value of people may change during their interactions with people from other cultures, so the participants may not be the best represents of their cultures. Secondly, the personalities of the participants may also limit the accuracy of this study, due to the involvement of personal factors.

1.5 Research methodology

Data related to the theoretical background of this study was obtained through reviewing previous theories regarding project team formation, international cooperation, leadership styles and coaching. During the literature review, effort was

made to compare the conditions and results of different theories in order to find the most suitable theoretical foundation for the current case study. Moreover, data and results from previous studies were used as a secondary data to verify the hypothesis and predictions made in the dissertation.

Data related to the practical part of this master dissertation was obtained primarily through interviews with the accessible participants of the coaching programme which was organized by Volvo Car Cooperation. Research observations were also adopted in this study to provide supplement data and information. This approach facilitated the interviews and also gave a broader picture of this study (Bryman and Bell, 2011). Official documentations and accessible data related to this coaching programme in the case company were used as references.

1.6 The structure of the dissertation

The following chapters of the dissertation are organised based on the research sequence. The chapter two reviews theories of project management, culture, leadership styles and the tool of coaching both separately and integrally. The chapter three introduces and verifies the rationale of the research methodology selection. The chapter four reports the research process and evaluates the results. The chapter five summarizes the conclusion and recommendation of this dissertation research based on the data evaluation from previous chapter. All the appendix and bibliography will be provided in the end of the dissertation.

2. Literature Review

In this chapter, the previous research regarding the implementation of coaching in international project teams will be reviewed, and the theoretical framework of this dissertation will be introduced. This chapter will serve as a theoretical foundation for this research, which is aiming to evaluate the effects of a coaching programme in Volvo Car Cooperation. The historical background and the context theories for this evaluation will be introduced in prior sections of this chapter. The associated issues, especially the potential opportunities and challenges, will be elaborated after introducing the theoretical framework of the dissertation.

2.1 The concept of project management

In this section, a brief history and the theoretical development of project, project management and project teams will be introduced. As they form the core theme of this dissertation, the purpose of this introduction is to provide the readers with a better understanding of the field of project management. Meanwhile, this prelude also intends to give the readers a context for the upcoming theories and related discussions.

2.1.1 The concept of project

A project is defined as "a unique, transient endeavour undertaken to achieve planned objectives" by the Association for Project Management (2012, p 241). By this definition, the history of projects can be traced back to thousands of years ago. However, modern industrial projects which hatched the field of project management were started since 1940th (Söderlund and Lenfle, 2011). After decades of evolving, theories and techniques of project management have become fairly matured (Thiry, 2010). Organising in projects has been widely accepted in the management of industrial works. For instance, within industrials like construction and information technology, organising in projects is the primary choice for professional companies (Sandhu and Gunasekaran, 2004).

Projects are different from business-as-usual activities in many aspects (Kini, 2012). Firstly, projects have the characteristic of uniqueness (Maylor, 2010). Even though two projects may look alike, they actually work differently due to their specific conditions. Secondly, projects have specific objectives which determine the lifespan of projects (APM, 2012). A project will be closed either because the predetermined objectives have been reached, or because the objectives have been proved impossible to reach within a valid time (Maylor, 2010). Thirdly, projects have the intrinsic nature of generating novelty and changes (Biedenbach and Söderholm, 2008; Pellegrinelli, 1997). Since all projects are unique, innovative working methods have to be introduced to deal with new situations. Therefore, changes will be brought unavoidably, during the interaction between the organisation and new working methods (Boddy, 2002). Due to this reason, projects are widely used as an agency to implement changes.

2.1.2 The concept of project management

Project management was perceived as a profession after the establishment of the earliest project management organisation during 1970th. It is defined as "the application of processes, methods knowledge, skills and experience to achieve the project objectives" (APM, 2012, p.12). After relentless research of numerous scholars and project management practitioners, project management has become a well-developed field (Thiry, 2010). The standardised procedure of project management has been confirmed and documented in the Body of Knowledge (BOK). Meanwhile, accompanied with the development of project management, the concepts of programme management and portfolio management have been created due to the increasing complexity and scale of modern projects (Maylor et al., 2006). Although they are originated from project management, Portfolio, Programme and Project Management (P3M) have many different aspects (Rajegopal et al., 2007). A common relationship structure of portfolio, programme and project is provided in Figure 2-1.

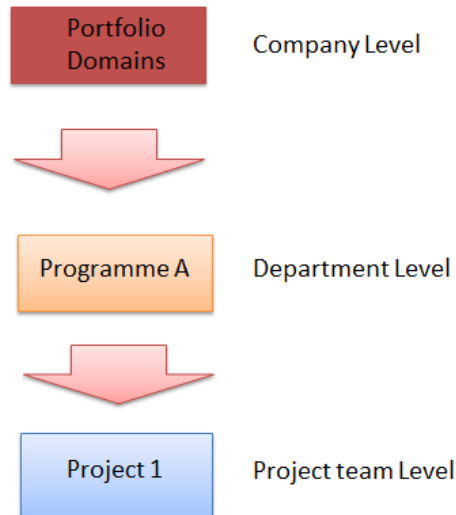


Figure 2-1: A basic structure of project based organization (Adopted from Rajegopal et al., 2007)

Comparing with portfolio management and programme management, project management shows more concern for processes and details (APM, 2012). A major function of initiating and managing portfolios and programmes is to transfer visions into achievable objectives, based on the organisational strategy (Office of Government Commerce, 2011). However, the purpose of project management is to achieve predetermined objectives within the time and cost limitations. Besides, the degree of ambiguity and uncertainty between P3M are also different as displayed in figure 2-2. While managing a project, the objectives have been determined, but the procedures to achieve them are uncertain. Therefore, project management generally has a low ambiguity and high uncertainty. In addition, P3M are evaluated through different criteria. Time, Cost and Quality are three key parameters to evaluate the success of project management. However, portfolio management and programme management need to be evaluated through their coordination with the organisational strategy. In this dissertation, the focus will be put on project management.

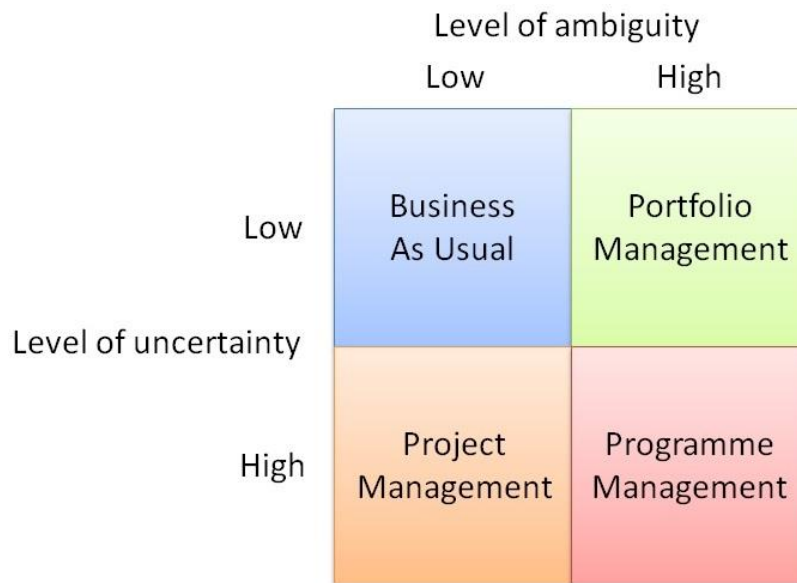


Figure 2-2: The degree of ambiguity and uncertainty of P3M (Adopted from Thiry, 2002)

2.1.3 The concept of project team

According to the Association for Project Management, teamwork is “a group of people working in collaboration or by cooperation towards a common goal” (APM, 2012, p.76). Both a group and a team are formed by a collection of people, but it has to meet higher criteria to be considered as a team. The primary distinction between teams and groups is the level of cooperation. Teams should have a higher performance and are expected to add value to individual works, which means the team deliverables should be greater than the sum of individual deliverables (Lee, 2009). In figure 2-3 (Boddy, 2002), a team performance curve is presented, which identifies a differentiation between teams and working groups. The secondary distinction between a group and a team is regarding their objectives. Sharing a common goal is an indispensable characteristic for a team, and it determines the degree of interdependence of a team (Lee, 2009).

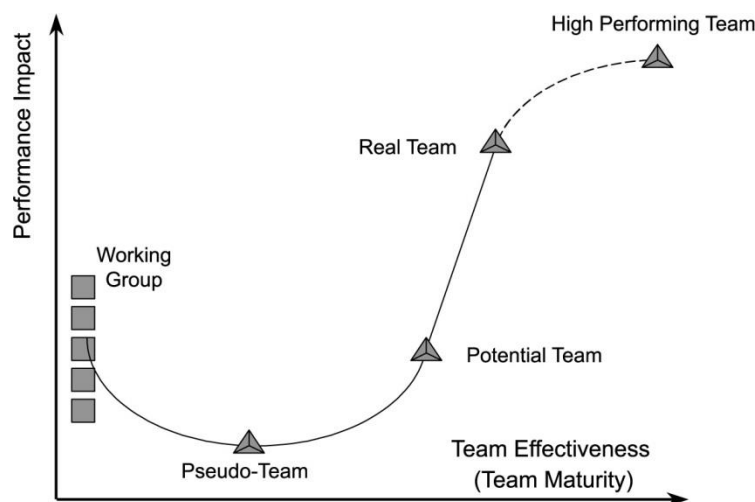


Figure 2-3: Team Performance Curve (Boddy, 2002)

Teams are developed upon groups, and this development demands for time and effort. According to Tuckman' model, team development may experiences five different stages, which are characterized by the unique behaviours from team members (Rickards and Moger, 2000; Bonebright, 2010). In the forming stage, team members tend to over-independent to other members and their designated leaders. Few arguments will take place in this stage as members are testing each other. The second stage, which is referred as storming stage, is represented by conflicts and fights. Team members have disputes among themselves and plenty of quarrels will happen. If the team can survive the storming stage, the shared values and common goals are expected to be developed. In the norming stage, team members are gradually calming down to cooperate, and the performance and productivity of the team reach its peak by the performing stage. The last stage of teams is the adjourning stage. In this stage, team member are more sensitive and vulnerable, as the team is about to break-up, and changes are coming.

Beside the characteristics shared with general teams, project teams have their special features which make them harder to manage. According to Boddy (2002), temporary assignment, diverse membership, physical separation and political agendas are four distinctive characteristics of project teams. Due to these inherent difficulties, there are higher expectations for project managers. For instance, one of the most direct challenges faced by all project team managers is to coordinate the lifecycle of their

projects with the lifecycle of their project teams (Ricciardi, 2009). A schematic diagram of these two lifecycles is displayed in figure 2-4. It can be seen from the figure, in order to maximize the performance of the project team, project managers have to synchronise these two lifecycles.

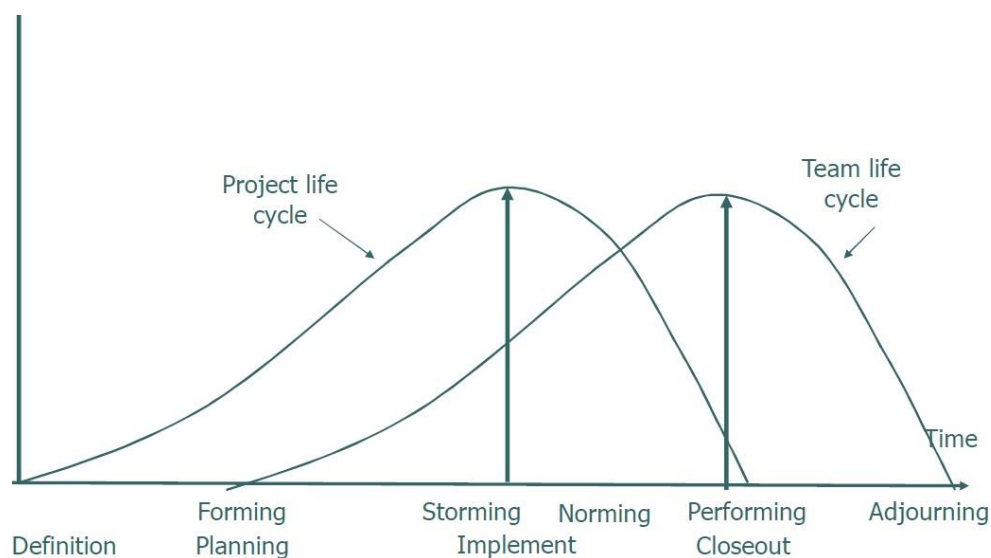


Figure 2-4: Mismatch of the Life Cycles (Adopted from Ricciardi, 2009)

2.2 The evolving theories of culture

In an international project team, it is important for the team members, especially for the team manager, to understand cultures and be able to benefit from the effects brought by culture differentiation (Millhous, 1999). Culture can be considered as a general term for all distinct features of a social group from the perspective of value and norm (Chang, 2003). According to Hofstede (2003, p.9), "the essence of culture is the collective programming of the mind". He is the most influential figure in the field of cultural research (Hoppe, 2004). Before Hofstede, no systematic framework has been built and no empirical research has been carried out in the field (Hoppe, 2004). Until now, almost three decades has passed since the publication of the first version of the book *Culture's Consequences*. The theories and frameworks of cultural research have been greatly developed by both scholars and practitioners in various fields. For instance, the project GLOBE was carried out by House *et al.*, in 2004 to re-examine characteristics and patterns between different cultures (Venaik and Brewer, 2010). Scholars like Gesteland and Fang have also proposed different perspectives to understand cultures.

The reasons for the emergence of these new theories can be classified into two categories. Firstly, more understanding regarding cultures have been acquired through research and experiments (Williamson, 2002). Secondly, the social environment, based on which cultures are developed, has experienced dramatic changes (Fang, 2012). In the following sections, the dissertation author will try to depict the evolvement of the culture theories by reviewing previous studies.

2.2.1 Traditional culture theories under the static context

Cultures were considered as the “mental programming that is stable over time” by Hofstede (2003, p.2). He compared cultures to onions which have many different layers. In figure 2-5, this model is illustrated. Hofstede believed that the stability of different elements of culture is unequal. The feature a culture presents may change over time, but the value of a culture will be hard to penetrate and it will remain extremely stable. In this context, the formation of cultures could be attributed to historical factors, and countries or regions are frequently selected as the study unites of cultural research. Scholars with this philosophy might be fully aware of the differences between cultures. They tried to abstract frameworks from various characteristics of diverse cultures, and some of them have developed systematic criteria which can be used to depict all cultures.

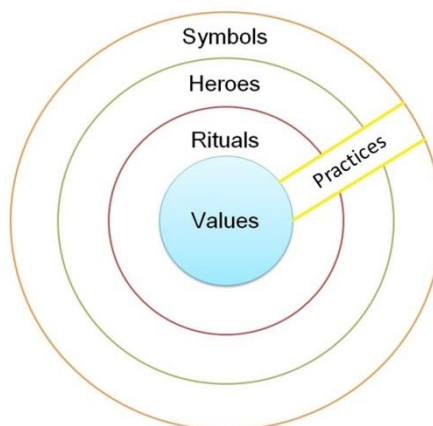


Figure 2-5: Hofstede's onion model of culture (Adopted from Hofstede, 2003)

Hofstede's dimensional model is widely considered as the most influential theory in the cultural research (Hoppe, 2004). This model is frequently used not only by anthropologists, sociologists, but also by psychologists and managers in international organisations (Venaik and Brewer, 2010). The model originally includes four dimensions, but Hofstede added one more dimension after his study on Asian cultures (Fang, 2003). He believed all cultures can be analysed through five dimensions, which are power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism-collectivism, masculinity and long-term orientation. A brief description and example countries of these five dimensions are given in the table 2-1.

Power Distance	The difference of the authority between members with less power and members with more power in an organisation.
Uncertainty Avoidance	The tolerance of uncertainty of an society
Individualism	The degree to which individuals are integrated into groups
Masculinity	The importance of gender issue in a society
Long-term orientation	Originally, it was called "Confucian dynamism", it is a time parameter of a society

Table 2-1: Hofstede's five dimensions (Adopted from Hofstede, 2003)

Although Hofstede's conceptualization of culture is the most cited source in cultural research, there are vast criticisms from various aspects (Baskerville, 2003). For instance, the practicality of the dimensional model is challenged as it does not have a significant meaning when it is used to analyse an individual or an organisation (Williamson, 2002). The research target of the model is challenged, as nations are political unites and geographical unites. However, neither political nor geographical boundary is appropriate to be used to separate cultures (Chang, 2003). The scale of the model is challenged, due to its bi-polar characteristic within its dimensions (Fang, 2003).

The majority of the scholars fail to provide practical solutions for the problems they have identified, but there were still substitute models proposed. For instance, Gesteland suggested a new model to perceive cultures, and the criteria in this model also became more flexible. Culture dimensions described by Gesteland are given below in figure 2-6.

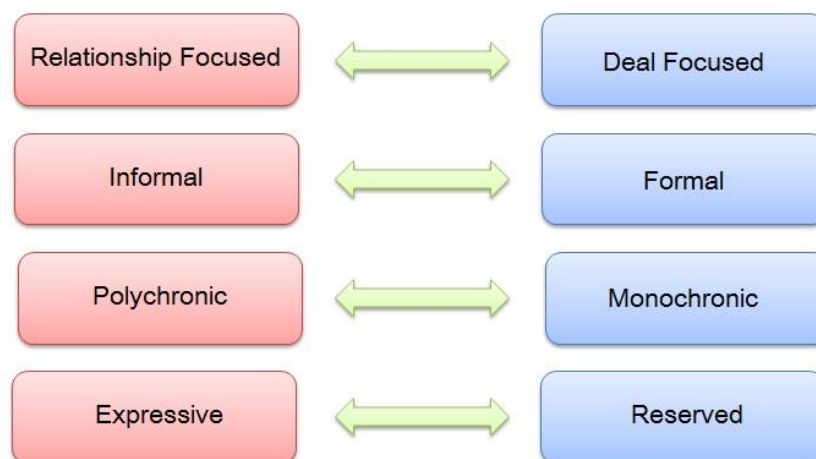


Figure 2-6: Gesteland's Culture dimensions (Adopted from Gesteland, 2005)

2.2.2 Culture theories under the globalization background

A major assumption shared by plenty of culture models is that, cultures are stable over time. In the words of Hofstede, “differences between national cultures at the end of the last century were already recognizable in the years 1900, 1800, and 1700, if not earlier. There is no reason they should not remain recognizable until at least 2100” (Hofstede, 2007, p.416). However, due to the widespread use of internet and the accelerated pace of globalization, the credibility of Hofstede's prediction is highly doubtful (Leidner, 2010).

The trend of culture changing can already be seen from all over the world (Gesteland, 2005). The drivers of changing could be both direct and indirect factors. In one hand, the indirect factors of culture changing have been fully awarded by people since colonial period (Leidner, 2010). A culture can be altered through changing the behaviour of people who share this culture. For instance, in China, people have been urged to act in a more deal-focused and punctual way by the globalized working and business environments (Gesteland, 2005). Great culture transfers have already been seen and recognized after the adoption of opening up policy by the Chinese government (Fang, 2012). On the other hand, a perfect example for the direct culture changing factors is the exportation of mass-media products. This exportation can and have already changed many cultures from their cores values (McMahan and Chesebro, 2003).

Nowadays, judging by a historical time scale, the pace of culture changing is accelerating in a stunning speed (Pearce, 2011). Under this background, Fang (2012) proposed to use the perspective of Yin Yang, which is an ancient Chinese philosophy, to analyse cultures in a more dynamic perspective. Yin Yang is a dialect world view (Li, 2008) with three tenets of duality, which are “holistic duality, dynamic duality and dialectical duality”. According to the perspective of Yin Yang, everything in the world is formed by two opposite elements. They are dynamic in nature, and they can be combined in any formation (Fang, 2012). Although the combination can exhibit numerous features, the two core elements will not change. Most importantly, according to the philosophy of Yin Yang, the two interdependent and interchangeable opposite elements do not have a clear separation (Li, 2008). According to the Taoist Master, greatest sound has almost no sound, and the greatest form has no shape. For another instance, there is no clear separation between “light” and “dark”, and if one of them does not exist, the another word will be meaningless. All of these philosophies are illustrated within the symbol of Yin-Yang, which is displayed on figure 2-7.



Figure 2-7: The symbol of Yin-Yang (Fang, 2012)

From the perspective of Yin Yang, all cultures have same potentials (Fang, 2012). No matter from which dimension they are evaluated, all cultures contain the very same two opposite elements. However, the combination of these two opposite elements will never be the same, as it is situational and context dependent. From a historical perspective, it is true that there were few great changes took place in plenty of cultures. Yet, it is because the contexts of most nations did not experience major changes. For those nations which went through a series of major events within a short period of time, lots of fluctuations of their cultures can be identified. For

instance, the culture of China has experienced various changes during the 20th century. It can be observed, not always the same set of elements is promoted or suppressed in different time periods.

Yin Yang perspective considers culture collide as opportunities to improve old cultures and generate new cultures (Fang, 2012). In most previous cultural research, culture clashes or even culture interactions are rarely perceived to be positive, and the widely use of the word “culture shock” is just an example of this situation (Chang, 2011). However, Yin Yang perspective provides a promising future for culture interactions. Fang (2012) believed that during the interaction between people from different cultures, the cultures they possess will go through a natural selection. After the process of the selection, certain cultural elements will be promoted or depressed. Therefore, more advanced cultures, which are more suitable for the environments, may be remained or generated through culture interactions (Gesteland, 2005).

2.3 The evolving of Leadership styles

Along with the evolvement of industrial technology and organisational structures, the leadership styles applied by managers also experienced dramatic changes since the beginning of 20th century (Maqbool et al., 2011). In this section, articles regarding different leadership styles will be reviewed. The autocratic leadership style, the empowerment leadership style and the Laissez-faire leadership style will be introduced and discussed in the increasing order of the flexibility and autonomy of each leadership styles. Meanwhile, the differences of procedures and methodologies recommended by various leadership styles, which are directed by diverse management philosophies, will also be discussed in this section. Through this part of the review, the developing tendency of leadership styles will be presented to readers. Furthermore, in this section, the dissertation author also intends to specify the reason why the empowerment leadership style is currently the most suitable leadership style for the majority of organisations.

2.3.1 Scientific management theory and autocratic leadership style

Taylor's scientific management theory, which was developed in 1911, is one of the earliest industrial management theories (Maqbool et al., 2011). In the scientific management theory, the employees are treated as building blocks (Zuffo, 2011). They have neither judgemental abilities nor authorisations of decision making. The importance of human factors is deprioritized. Employees need to adapt the production process, techniques and equipment for the purpose of rapid production (Maqboolet et al., 2011). Based on the scientific management theory, only the top managers are responsible to make plans, orders and decisions. The only function of employees is to follow orders and finish the work which cannot be done by machines. Through the implementation of scientific management, standardized products with an acceptable quality can be rapidly produced. Besides, all the managerial problems can also be handled scientifically (Taneja et al., 2011). However, employees are given utterly no chance to develop themselves. Their judgment making ability is neglected as well as their intellectual contributions to the tasks. Employees lack the sense of taking responsibility in general. Therefore, due to its dehumanisation, before long its publication, the scientific management theory was severely criticized by sociologists (Maqbool et al., 2011).

The autocratic leadership style shares several common aspects with Taylor's scientific management approach. The typical behaviours of autocratic managers include giving orders, asserting themselves and tracing responsible persons when incident occurs (SAK, 2008). The autocratic leadership style is a task oriented leadership style. It is considered effective when the task complexity is low and the time pressure is high (Bhatti et al., 2012). Managers who adopt autocratic leadership style tend to use "carrot and stick" as motivators to motivate their subordinates and they may reinforce their management through setting rules and disciplines. However, the autocratic leadership style faces the exact dilemma which is faced by the scientific management theory. As the employees cannot be fully motivated under this leadership style, the individual performance of the employees is rather low, and they can hardly develop themselves through the work they are doing (Maqbool et al., 2011). Meanwhile, with the increasing complexity of the tasks, the performance of

the organisation will suffer from sharp reduction, and the managers will be overwhelmed by information from subordinates.

2.3.2 The empowerment leadership style

In modern industrial world, three elements need to be taken into the consideration by managers: the intense development of international markets, the escalating revolution of manufacturing technology and the severely complicated logistic relationships (Randolph, 1995). In this context, the traditional autocratic leadership style can no longer suit the need of managers, as the expected standards of employees cannot be achieved through the traditional “command and control” leadership style. Therefore, it is critical for managers to exploit both behavioural and intellectual potentials of their employees (Maqbool et al., 2011). The empowerment leadership style is flourished based on this demand, and its sole purpose is to maximize the performance of employees.

The empowerment leadership style includes a set of values and implementing methodologies which are deviate from those of autocratic leadership style (Nauman et al., 2010). For instance, the goal of empowerment is to involve all employees into the business by authorizing them the power of influencing important decision making processes. It encourages managers to provide more information and power to employees. In addition, empowerment leadership style also motivates employees to take possible responsibilities. Through implementing these basic guidelines, empowerment leadership style will realise its potential of optimising the performance of employees (Randolph, 1995).

The theoretical explanation of the success of empowerment leadership style can be explained by Maslow’s hierarchy of human needs which is exhibited in figure 2-8. From this pyramidal model, it can be identified that the external needs form the base of human needs and the internal needs constitute the top. Since in the modern society people are less threatened by material shortage, fulfilling the internal needs becomes the most effective method of motivation (Whitmore, 2009). As taking responsibilities

and being able to make decisions are effective methods to provide employees with the sense of self-esteem or even self-actualisation, the empowerment leadership style can be considered as a favourable leadership style in the current business environment.

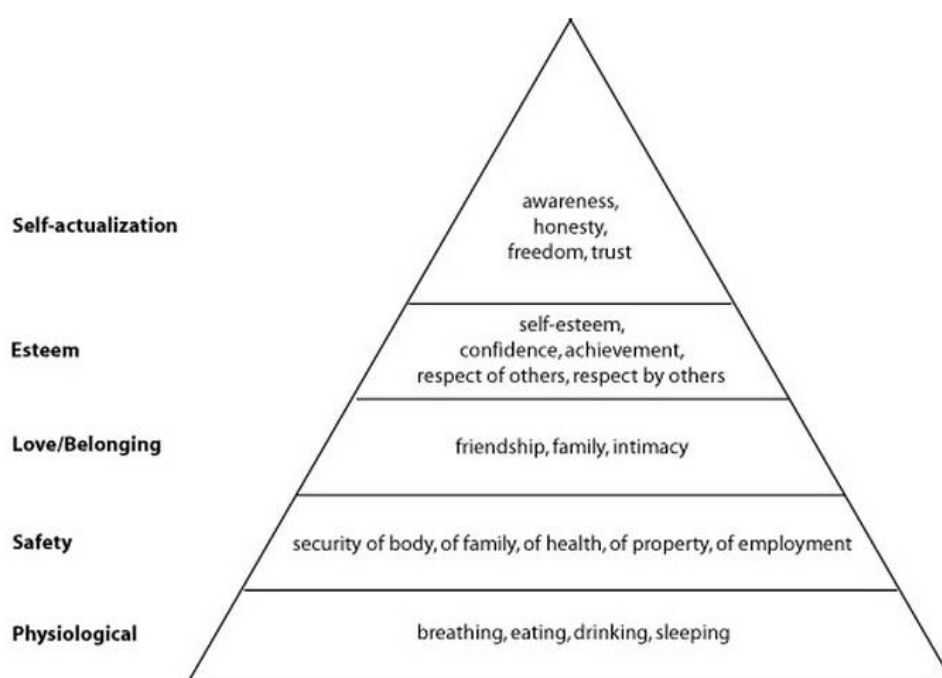


Figure 2-8: Maslow's hierarchy of human needs (Adopted from Whitmore, 2009)

It is not easy to implement empowerment leadership style because traditional organizations need to adjust their culture to suit this new leadership style (Bhatti et al., 2012). The most critical prerequisite of adopting empowerment leadership style is a trust and non-blaming environment (Tuuli et al., 2012). Firstly, only with the trust of managers in such an environment, employees can obtain sufficient information to make judgements. Secondly, in such an environment, the judgements made by the employees will be more valuable for managers, as those ideas are generated from genuine information and with good intentions. Thirdly, employees will be more willing to take responsibilities and to make decisions, as they are not in a vulnerable position and they are unnecessary to worry too much about their self-protection.

In order to implement the empowerment leadership style, further issues need to be addressed by the organisation. Primarily, the judgemental abilities of the employees

are expected to reach a high level (Randolph 1995). If employees will not be punished by their mistakes, the managers and organisations have to take steps to equip their employees with advanced judgemental abilities. Even though empowerment is a promising leadership style, the organisation will suffer severe consequences if no damage control procedure is taken (Tuuli et al., 2012). Secondly, employees have to be trained to influence their colleagues and to take responsibilities. Traditionally, most people are trained to follow orders from superiors and have neither experience nor motivation to take responsibilities (Maqbool et al., 2011). Some employees grow up in an environment of following orders. They feel comfortable to receive orders from their parents, teachers or managers. Therefore, it is important to undo their obedience habits (Bhatti et al., 2012). Tertiary, the structure of the organisation has to be suitable to the on-going situation. The ideal organisational structure for the implementation of the empowerment leadership style is changing with the progress (Randolph, 1995). At the beginning phase, the organisation needs a more complex structure to provide people with more information and skills. After a period of time, the structure should be greatly simplified, as employees have become comfortable with new culture and more flexibility will be necessary.

2.3.3 The Laissez-faire leadership style

Laissez-faire leadership style is widely considered as a passive leadership style. Managers with this leadership style will only make limited effort or take inadequate responsibility to their work as a manager (Deluga, 1990). Employees under Laissez-faire leadership style enjoy the maximum freedom compared with employees under other leadership styles. The early research of the Laissez-faire leadership style was initiated by Kurt Lewin in 1939. For most leadership style researchers, it is an incompetent and ineffective leadership style as it was considered to be associated with role conflict and role ambiguity in workplace. However, scholars like Goodnight (2004) perceive Laissez-faire leadership style as a promising leadership style for the future, and he considers the Laissez-faire leadership style is the next phase of the empowerment leadership style. According to Goodnight's study (2004, p.822), "Once each employee has proven their decision-making acumen is fully

empowered to make independent decisions within an agreed boundary, the leader becomes a Laissez-faire leader.”

Even though the Laissez-faire leadership style may become the natural choice for the future, it is not an ideal leadership style for most of the organisations in current situation (Bass et al., 1990). Firstly, most organisations are still operating under the autocratic leadership style, it is impossible to adopt the Laissez-faire leadership style before the employees are fully empowered (Bhatti et al., 2012). Since it requests a long process for adaptation, it cannot be achieved through an order or a decision. Therefore, the Laissez-faire leadership style which demands a high level of empowerment is impossible to be achieved within a short time. Secondly, the implementation of Laissez-faire leadership style has the potential of causing conflict (Deluga, 1990). While the manager of an organization is no longer making decisions for common issues, this power will be taken over by more influential employees. Since no employees should enjoy this power legitimately, there will be a great chance of conflict. Thirdly, the Laissez-faire leadership style has a strong tendency to reduce the efficiency of the organisation (Hughes et al., 2012). If managers cannot react to their responsibility proactively and positively, the overall pace of the organisation will be reduced. Meanwhile, the Laissez-faire managers will also set a negative example to their employees (Deluga, 1990). Due to these insurmountable challenges, the Laissez-faire leadership style is not an advisable choice for most organisations.

2.4 Coaching as a tool of training

From the Concise Oxford Dictionary, to coach means to "tutor, train, give hints to, prime with facts". It is originally a word widely used in sport fields (Whitmore, 2009). The early use of coaching in business world can be traced back to 1937. In Gorby's article, he described the situation that senior employees coach new comers regarding profit increasing and waste reduction methods (Grant and Cavanagh, 2004). However, it is not until recently that the philosophy and techniques of coaching are fully recognised by management researchers and practitioners as an effective tool to enhance the performance of employees (Whitmore, 2009). It is widely accepted that

the traditional autocratic leadership style can no longer fulfil the need of current business requirements, managers need a new training methodology to lead their staffs to work in a more self-oriented condition (Baron and Morin, 2010). According to the philosophy of coaching, all people have great potentials and strong learning abilities which can be enlightened by coaches (Whitmore, 2009). Therefore, coaching is an ideal tool for managers who are aiming at facilitating their employees to unlock potentials and to optimise performance (Ladyshevsky, 2010).

Employees' performance can benefit from the implementation of coaching for three reasons. Firstly, employees will be given more opportunities to perform in a full capacity status (Whitmore, 2009). Traditionally, an employee can hardly be assigned with a task which is more challenge than previous tasks he or she has done. However, with the implementation of coaching, managers are no longer assigning tasks to their staffs. Instead, the employees are encouraged to take responsibilities voluntarily (Baron and Morin, 2010). This transformation offers employees the chance of taking responsibilities on more challenging tasks to better perform their abilities. Secondly, employees are provided with a promising route to develop their aptitudes (Kombarakaran et al., 2008). While employees are working on their tasks, managers will support them by improving the awareness and the sense of responsibility of employees. Since the tasks are chosen by themselves, employees will automatically acquire necessary skills to facilitate themselves from fulfilling their responsibilities as soon as they notice the situation (Ives, 2008). Thirdly, an individual's estimation on his or her capability has a direct impact on his or her performance (Whitmore, 2009). From the perspective of coaching, everyone has undeveloped potentials. Therefore, it is highly possible to increase the performance of employees by increasing their self-recognition through coaching.

The nature of good coaching is to build awareness and responsibility for coachee. On one hand, awareness is the product of concentration and clarity. According to Whitmore (2009, p.34), "Increased awareness gives greater clarity of perception than normal, as does a magnifying glass". It is the beacon of success, as awareness helps people to fully realise the situation about the environment and themselves. The

increased awareness means the improvement of various capabilities which includes the ability to be sensitive to the environments, the ability to gather useful information, and the ability to make accurate judgement regarding both events and interpersonal relationships. On the other hand, responsibility is a self-generated emotion which has a direct link with actions, commitment and performance (Whitmore, 2009).

Responsibility has to be generated through intrinsic factors, it cannot be forced. Once the sense of responsibility has been developed among employees, they will be driven by themselves to learn new skills and solves problems (Ives, 2008). Therefore, through developing awareness and responsibility for employees, coaching as a training tool can ultimately elevate their performance in a positive way (Baron and Morin, 2010).

Coaching is a complex tool which requires considerable efforts from both coaches and coachee (Latham, 2007). For coaches, they have to master the skills of asking appropriate questions and active listening, by which they are able to facilitate the coachee to learn. For coachee, they need to understand the situation and develop methods by themselves to solve their problems. Standardized procedures provide coaches with a guideline to coach which helps them to implement their skills into suitable occasions (Whitmore, 2009). The GROW Model displayed in figure 2-9 is an example of the coaching processes, and the abbreviation GROW stands for Goal, Reality, Options and Wrap up. Through the application of this model, the coaches will be able to support coachee to transfer visionary goals into concrete action plans. With more employees are coached by their superiors, the accumulation of individual achievement will ultimately generate a desirable impact to the organisation as a whole, and become a major driving force for the organisational culture optimisation.

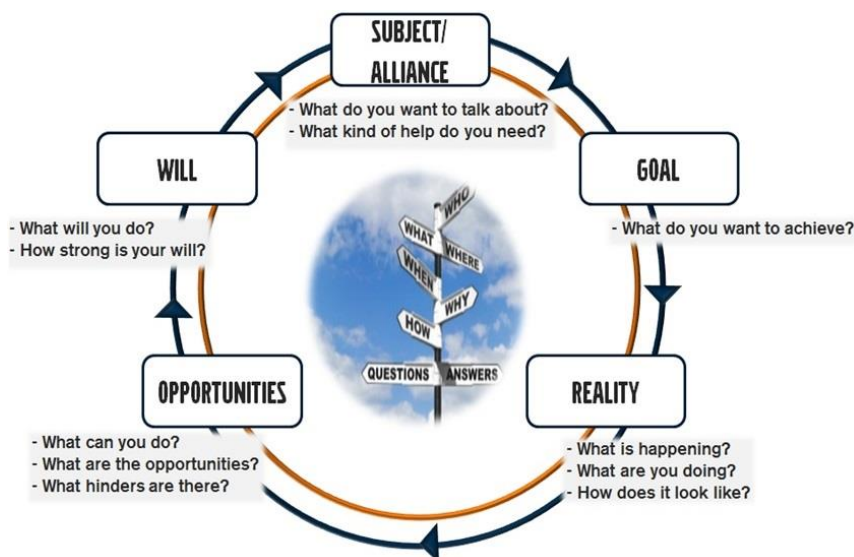


Figure 2-9: The GROW Model (Adopted from Whitmore, 2009)

Although coaching is an effective tool to enhance the performance and stimulate the potentials of employees, there are still issues need to be addressed. Firstly, the procedure of coaching is time consuming (Haan, 2008). Secondly, the adoption of coaching demands diverse abilities from managers which are hard to be obtained (Whitmore, 2009). Thirdly, as most of the philosophy of coaching is contradict to the traditional management philosophy, abandoning old habits is a critical prerequisite for the implementation of coaching (Bhatti et al., 2012). Without mitigating the influence of these issues, the effectiveness of coaching will be severely diminished.

2.5 The theoretical framework

The theoretical framework of this research is to implement empowerment leadership style into an international project group through the training tool of coaching. Since all core elements of this research can be perceived as independent and mature subjects, the framework operates as a hub to connect them together. Meanwhile, this framework also serves the purpose of putting achieved data into a logical sequence. This section begins with an overview of the research. The dissertation author will present an explanation on how the core elements are chosen and arranged to suit the purpose of this research. The connections between each core element are elaborated in section 2.6 and 2.7. The visualised theoretical structure of this research is

displayed in the figure 2-10, and the relationship between each core element can be identified from it.

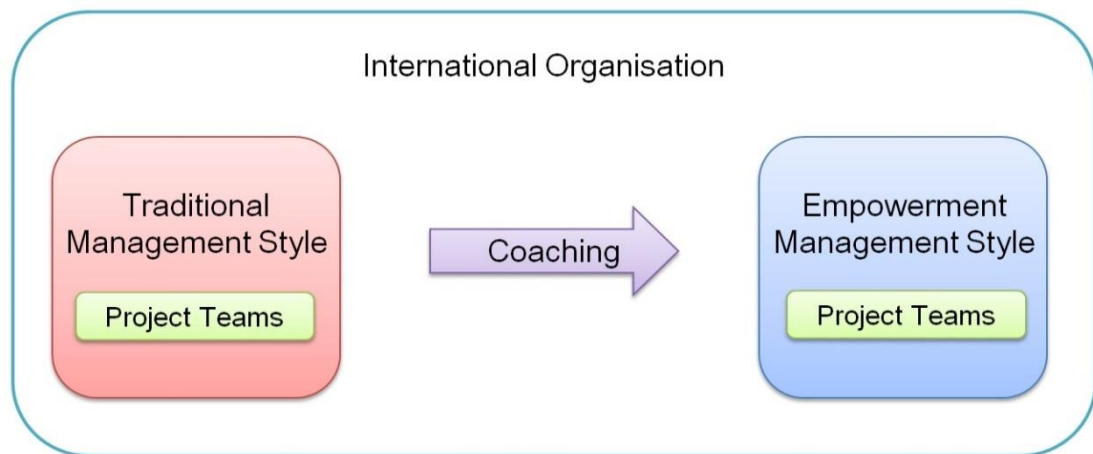


Figure 2-10: The theoretical framework of this dissertation

Because of the irresistible trend of internationalisation and the elevated requirements in the business world, implementing empowerment and coordinating relationships in international organisations has already become a crucial factor for the survival of major corporations. In most cases, departments and projects might be the two basic components of an organisation (Maylor, 2010). Therefore, implementing empowerment successfully in departments and project teams will harvest a significant accumulated effect on the organisation as a whole (Tuuli et al., 2012). Coaching is selected as the tool of training to implement empowerment leadership style, because their philosophies are corresponding with each other (Whitmore, 2009). More importantly, the challenges faced by the empowerment leadership style can be mitigated through the adoption of coaching as the training tool for employees. In order to find a more suitable approach to implement coaching in project teams, the efforts made in both permanent departments and temporary project teams are evaluated in this research. The dissertation author has made the attempt to identify the similarities and differences through the comparison of the feedbacks from line managers and project managers. The intention of this comparison is to optimise the approach of coaching implementation in international project teams. In the following sections, previous research regarding the implementation of coaching in international organisations will be reviewed, and the potential pros and cons will be outlined as an input for the evaluation in this research.

2.6 Coaching in an international project team

In this section, the rationality of implementing empowerment leadership style in international project teams through coaching approaches will be clarified. The discussion will start with the general characteristics of the empowerment leadership style and coaching. Within this discussion, the international perspective is included. However, since only limited efforts have been made by previous scholars to identify the differences between permanent departments and temporary project teams, regarding the implementing of empowerment leadership style through coaching, detailed comparison will be further elaborated in subsequent chapters.

The three major possible side effects of the empowerment leadership style had been identified and explained in section 2.3. Through the adoption of coaching as the training tool, they can be possibly mitigated to a great extent. Firstly, one of the most crucial purposes of coaching is to improve the awareness and judgemental abilities of project team members (Whitmore, 2009). Therefore, both the severity and possibility of the potential damage caused by the implementation of empowerment leadership style can be minimized. Secondly, with coaching as the training tool, team members are encouraged to take responsibilities voluntarily (Baron and Morin, 2010). Besides, team members will rarely receive mandatory orders. When facing a challenge, team members will be coached and encouraged by their project managers to come up with their own solutions (Ives, 2008). Consequently, after adopting coaching approaches, team members will be cultivated to be more autonomic and creative. Thirdly, due to the changing role of project managers as coaches, their function is no longer solely about control, and the strict hierarchies within the project teams will be also less important (Whitmore, 2009). In such an environment, team members are encouraged to find the person they need to overcome the challenges they are facing, the structure within the project team will become more flexible.

The international context could be both a challenge and an opportunity for a project team, and it is validated for both the implementation of empowerment leadership style, as well as the tool of coaching (Nauman et al., 2010). For instance, trust is a fundamental element which cannot be easily obtained within a project team which

shares different time-zone, geographical location or even cultures. The differentiations concerning these aspects make the communication less effective than that within a team which formed by members with an identical background (Millhous, 1999). More importantly, these differences may increase the defensiveness among members. It is an issue to be addressed for both the implementation of empowerment leadership style and coaching training approach (Ladyshevsky, 2010; Randolph, 1995).

Although it could be a challenging task, the international atmosphere within a project team can make the implementation of empowerment leadership style and coaching approach become more rewarding (Ives, 2008; Nauman et al., 2010). By increasing awareness and responsibility of team members through coaching approaches, international teams have the potential of being more creative and courageous than teams formed by members with an identical background (Fang, 2012). Furthermore, empowerment leadership style and coaching approach encourage members to take responsibilities voluntarily and to solve challenges in their own way (Ives, 2008). Therefore, the international atmosphere can provide team members with wider perspectives and greater insights to analyse their situations and to overcome challenges. More importantly, this integration cannot be achieved without the interaction between cultures, as it is an irreplaceable process for team members to adopt positive characteristics from other cultures and abstain bad routines within their own cultures (Fang, 2012; Gesteland, 2005).

According to previous research, the adoption of coaching in permanent departments and temporary project teams share lots of identical aspects. For example, both of them require high competence from managers (Whitmore, 2009). In addition, trust, emotional intelligence and communication skills are crucial success factors (Hackman and Wageman, 2005). The most decisive difference between applying coaching in permanent departments and temporary project teams is regarding the time limitations (Haan, 2008). Team development needs sufficient time to go through various phases, and coaching is a tool which intends to provide long-term influences (Bonebright, 2010; Whitmore, 2009). It means that, facilitating team development

through the implementation of coaching could be time consuming. This issue is not so challenging for permanent departments, as they are less task-oriented and facing less urgent matters. On the contrary, for project teams, especially for international project teams, the time issues has hindered the widely adoption of coaching as their team development tool (Ladyshevsky, 2010). From this aspect, limited previous research has been done regarding the coaching implementation in project teams. Therefore, regarding this issue, the result achieved in this research will be introduced in detail in chapter four and five.

2.7 Potential opportunities and threats

In this final section of the theoretical framework, the potential opportunities and threats of the implementation of coaching in international project teams will be introduced. Factors identified in previous research are outlined in the table 2-2, and they will be further elaborated in the following paragraphs. Since these potential opportunities and threats can take place in both initiation phase and operation phase of the international project team development, they are going to be introduced based on this sequence.

	Initiation phase	Operation phase
Opportunities	Enhance understanding	Greatly optimise the performance
	Facilitate group development	Reduce the burden of managers
Threats	Credibility of coaching	Inappropriate shifting of power
	Difficult to find suitable coaches	The outcome is not fully predictable due to its interactive nature

Table 2-2: Opportunities and threats of coaching implementation

2.7.1 The opportunities of coaching

Coaching is an interactive process which demands considerable information exchange (Baron and Morin, 2010). Through the techniques of active listening, SBR (Situation - Behaviour – Response) model and GROW (Goal Reality Options Wrap-up) model, project team leaders can achieve a comprehensive understanding regarding both their current situation and working progress of the project team (Whitmore, 2009). From the perspective of team members, they will obtain more guidance and supports after the implementation of coaching, as their responsibilities

are determined through negotiation instead of assignment. Meanwhile, coaching can also facilitate the development of international project groups by showing the rational and skilful way of giving feedbacks (Ladyshevsky, 2010). Time could be a major pressure for the development of international project teams, and being overcritical to other team members hinders the progress of a project team from reaching its performance phase (Haan, 2008). With more comprehension between each other and the ability of giving constructive feedbacks, project managers and team members have a better chance to enhance their objectiveness and awareness. Consequently, the adoption of coaching approaches have the great potential to provide an ideal method to shorten the group development time during the international team development (Whitmore, 2009).

The most extraordinary function of coaching is to optimise the performance of employees. Once the coaching atmosphere is developed, people will take responsibilities voluntarily (Baron and Morin, 2010). They will acquire necessary skills and solutions for their problems automatically, and their sense of self-actualisation will become a strong motivator. Meanwhile, as the upgraded awareness achieved through applying coaching techniques, it is possible for employees to perform well if they want to (Ives, 2008). All of these effects can directly reduce the burden of managers, as they are no longer forced to make decisions for their employees. They are also set free from unnecessary details of their projects. Managers will no longer need to deal with detailed technical issues and overwhelming information, since the effectiveness of coaching is not determined by the professional abilities of coaches (Whitmore, 2009). Therefore, their energy can be put into more rewarding aspects to further improve the effectiveness of the project team.

2.7.2 The challenges of coaching

Coaching is a fairly new tool with the focus on long-term rewarding (Bonebright, 2010; Whitmore, 2009). Since its outcome is not so obvious within a short term, some employees may have suspicious regarding its effectiveness (Kombarakaran et al., 2008). Furthermore, even the tool of coaching is believed to be able to enhance

the performance of the project team, it cannot be adopted without a suitable coach. The challenge of hiring a suitable coach is rooted in two aspects which are the competence aspect and the ethical aspect. In the competence aspect, coaches who are able to facilitate the adoption of coaching within an international project team have to be fully competent in the knowledge of psychology, business and diverse cultures (Kombarakaran et al., 2008; Whitmore, 2009). Coaches with any insufficiency within these three fields will have difficulties to complete their tasks successfully. Therefore, on one hand, introducing coaching approaches can hardly be done by in house coaches because of the high requirements. On the other hand, it is also hard to hire external coaches to fulfil this intention since the implementation of coaching in an international project team may involve sensitive business information (Vries, 2005).

From the traditional perspective, the authority of project managers will be undermined with the implementation of coaching approaches. Additional information will be shared and increasing number of decisions will be made by team members without the permission of project managers (Whitmore, 2009). Therefore, it is crucial for the project managers to insist on appropriate coaching behaviours. Even in urgent situations, if the project managers try to retreat back to autocratic approaches, the coaching environment can be jeopardized and will be very hard to rebuild (Haan, 2008). Furthermore, another challenge for coaching adoption is determined by its interactive nature. Due to the diversification of individuals, there is no methodology which is both accurate and pervasive (Whitmore, 2009). The outcome of coaching implementation will very much depend on the appropriate questioning and channelling skills of coaches. Therefore, project teams which choose to implement the tool of coaching have to take the risk of failure at the same time.

3. Methodology

In order to answer the research question, it is important to obtain sufficient data and analysis data in a suitable way. This chapter introduces the selected research methodology and explain why it is the most appropriate to answer the research question. Meanwhile, research strategies, methods and data obtaining procedures are considered, the rationale of methodology selection and the selection process are discussed in this chapter. In order to ensure the reliability and ethicality issues of this research, considerations regarding these aspects are also presented to verify the selected methodology as well as this dissertation research in general.

3.1 Research strategy

According to Bryman and Bell (2011), three major research strategies are widely used in business research projects which are quantitative research, qualitative research and mixed methods research. Quantitative research is an objectivism research strategy which focuses on numerical numbers and their analysis (Heath and Tynan, 2010). This research strategy is mainly applied to test and evaluate natural science models. In most cases, quantitative research strategy is used to test hypothesis deducted from theories (Bryman and Bell, 2011). Qualitative research is a constructionism research strategy which focuses on the comparisons of words and ideas (Heath and Tynan, 2010). The epistemological orientation of this research strategy is on interpretivism. Furthermore, new theories can be generated from inductive research by applying qualitative research strategy (Bryman and Bell, 2011).

Mixed methods research is a research strategy which combines both quantitative and qualitative approaches (Mertens and Hesse-Biber, 2012). Although this research strategy is not advocated by all scholars, it becomes particular popular in business and management research (Bryman and Bell, 2011). In order to adapt to different research requirements, ways to combine quantitative research and qualitative research could be quite diverse. For instance, methodological triangulation is a matured research strategy which belongs to the broad category of mixed methods

research. This research strategy mixes more than two research approaches including quantitative strategy and qualitative strategy (Ma and Norwich, 2007). The intention of this combination is to adjust the bias and inaccurate which could be generated from implementing one single strategy (Basu, 2010). In figure 3-1 presents a classic model of methodological triangulation.

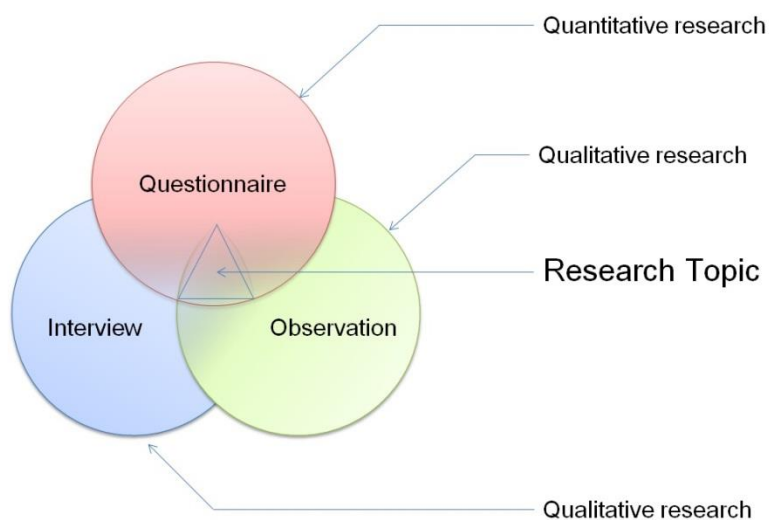


Figure 3-1: An example of methodological triangulation (Adopted from Mertens and Hesse-Biber, 2012)

In this research, the implementation of qualitative research strategy is the most suitable approach to fulfil the research goal. The purpose of this research is to explore the optimal method of implementing empowerment leadership style into an international project group through the training tool of coaching. It is an inductive approach. Besides, the approaches of coaching implementation are interactive activities, as well as the development of international project teams. Therefore, the best way to obtain sufficient and accurate data is to use subjective description (Bryman and Bell, 2011). It is unwise to cover all the possible parameters and evaluate them through numerical analysis.

From an idealised perspective, methodological triangulation could be the best research strategy. With data achieved from both quantitative and qualitative approaches, the research conclusion could be more persuasive. However, since the

participants of the target training programme are all managers, the implementation of the quantitative approach requires considerable supports and authorisations from the Volvo Car Cooperation. Meanwhile, the evaluated programme is formed by three sections which were took placed in both Sweden and China, the expected time consumption of the quantitative approach is also too much for a master dissertation research project. Considering these research barriers and the secondary importance of the quantitative data, the methodological triangulation will not be applied in this research.

3.2 Research method

There are various research methods which had been performed by scholars during the research of business and management. Within these methods, four of them were intensely used and discussed (Bryman and Bell, 2011; Hennink, 2011; Yin, 2009). These methods include experimentation, survey, observation and case study. Each of these research methods has its distinctive characteristics to meet different research demands. In table 3-1, their characteristics have been outlined and compared from four aspects.

Characteristic Method	Form of Research Question	Contemporary focused	Requirements of Behavioural Control	Position of the researcher
Case study	How, why?	Yes	No	External
Experimentation	How, why?	Yes	Yes	Internal
Observation	Who, what, where, when, how?	Yes	No	Internal/ External
Survey	Who, what, where, how many, how much?	Yes	No	External

Table 3-1: Characteristics of various research methods (Adopted from Bryman and Bell, 2011; Hennink, 2011; Yin, 2009)

Through comparing these research methods, case study is the most suitable way to conduct this dissertation research. Yet, in order to supplement the data achieved from the case study and facilitate the data analysis, making small scale of observations is

also advisable (Baker, 2002). The reason for this arrangement is determined by the research question of this dissertation which focuses on “how” and “why” with the consideration of “who” and “what”. Meanwhile, this research focuses on contemporary events and no behavioural control is required. Therefore, case study can be identified as the primary method for this dissertation, and observation is selected as the supplementary research method (Yin, 2009). In addition, the position of researcher also becomes more flexible by implementing observation as a secondary research method (Baker, 2002).

3.3 The research case and observation events selection

After the case study and events observation have been determined as the research method of this research, it is important to select an appropriate case to study and events to observe. The selections of case and events are based on three rules which are availability, validity and personal interest (Bryman and Bell, 2011; Yin, 2009). This research is carried out based on a dissertation placement of the case company. This position gives the dissertation author the possibility of accessing the real-word business cases and the daily operation of an international cooperation. However, due to the limited authorisation and duration of this temporary employment, not all the cases are free to choose. The target case and events are selected as they involve less sensitive information and can be evaluated within the time limit.

Validity is the most important parameter of the case selection process, as making sure all the necessary data can be obtained through the research is essential (Bryman and Bell, 2011). The target case and events in this research are chosen because they involve international project managers, empowerment philosophies and coaching approaches which match all the core elements of this dissertation research. Personal interest is also an influential factor which determines the selection process (Bryman and Bell, 2011). Since the dissertation author is highly interested in the selected case and events, he has motivations to make additional efforts and conduct further investigations.

3.4 A narrative review of previous research

A narrative literature review is an essential approach for researchers to obtain the initial knowledge for carrying out the study. For this dissertation research, the narrative review of previous literature provides the necessary information regarding each core elements as well as the methodology selection. This background knowledge is considered as an initial input for the research, and they work as a guideline for the construction of the theoretical framework and also the further evaluations of this dissertation. The literature review process starts before the official initiation of the dissertation research, and it proceeds until the termination of the whole dissertation. This tactic was suggested by Bryman and Bell (2011), and the purpose of it is to keep a dynamic knowledge input and supervise the research procedure.

3.5 Data collection approach

In this research, the primary data was achieved through interviews. This method is adopted because it was widely implemented in previous successful similar research. In addition, it is also a method recommend by specialists of research methodology. According to Bryman and Bell (2011), interview could be the most typical method of qualitative research. Yin (2009) perceived interview as one of the most effective methods to obtain data for a case study.

Unstructured interview and semi-structured interview are two major forms of interview (Bryman and Bell, 2011). In unstructured interviews, the interviewer may only use a memo or a hint to indicate the topic and direction of the interview. The interviewees are free to say anything relevant to the topic. Contrarily, the conversation of a semi-structured interview will be channelled by interview questions which are prepare beforehand. The semi-structured interview is unnecessary to go exactly as the plan, but it is important to focus on the pre-determined topic (Clissett, 2008). In this dissertation research, semi-structured interviews are implemented since the dissertation topic is the intersection of multi major subjects. Through pre-prepared interview questions, it will be possible for the

dissertation author to obtain the expected data effectively and accurately (Bryman and Bell, 2011). The participants of the interviews are listed in the table 3-2.

Name	Title	Team diversity
Arvidsson, Anna-Karin	Senior Manager of IT	International
Berg, Britta	Manager for Quality, Sourcing & Skills	International
Debackere, Veerle	IT Application Manager in Gent, Belgium	International
Engdal, Anette	IT Development Manager	International
Maglica, Robert	IT Manager	International
Persson, Bo	IT manager	International
Raask, Niclas	Manager Infrastructure Management Services	International
Josephson, Magnus	Manager Business Improvement Office	International

Table 3-2: Basic information of interview participants

The duration of each interview is about an hour. During the interview, most of the pre-determined questions were asked in a well-considered sequence. Furthermore, some additional questions were asked and the interviewee were encouraged to go slightly out of the designed topic range, as the intention of interview questions is to conduct and channel the interview instead of controlling it. All questions asked during the interviews can be found in the appendix. In order to facilitate the research, audio record were allowed by all the participants of the interviews. However, since the interview involves management experience and sensitive business information of the case company, transcripts and notes will not be provided.

The secondary data was achieved through observations which include observation of coaching trainings, meetings and behaviours of coaches as well as coachee in the evaluated coaching session. This method was selected as the secondary method because it is especially suitable to investigate how people actually behave (Baker, 2002; Bryman and Bell, 2011). Furthermore, the potential distortions which could be generated by inaccurate self-image and biases can be mitigated by conducting observations. All observation activities are listed in table 3-3.

Name of activity	Time	Region	Title of participants
Purchasing leadership Day	2013/03/20	China, Sweden	Managers
IT Coaching training	2013/04/04	Belgium, Sweden	Managers
Global Diversity Council Meeting	2013/04/09	Sweden	SVP/ VPs
Talent Management Team meeting	Tuesdays	Sweden	Team members

Table 3-3: Basic information of observations

3.6 Data analysis approach

There is no mature structure or guidance to analysis quantitative data. According to Bryman (2012, p.565) “Unlike quantitative data analysis, clear-cut rules about how qualitative data analysis should be carried out have not been developed.” Therefore, the data analysis approach of this dissertation is based on the experience of prior successful cases instead of well-developed theoretical foundation. According to Clissett (2008), the data analysis should be initiated while partial data has been achieved. The intention of it is to adjust further data collection process and increase the effectiveness of the research (Bryman and Bell, 2011). For this dissertation research, the core questions for semi-structured interviews are tailored for the research goal based on similar research. Throughout the research, they remain the same in order to keep the consistency. However, more questions are added and the sequences of the questions may be adjusted, for the purpose of highlighting the theme and connecting the relevant information.

The analytical induction procedure encouraged by Bryman and Bell (2011) is adapted to analysis the data achieved in this research. Data analysing starts from the middle of the interview phase. Dissertation author begins to compare the achieved data horizontally. Answers from different interviewees are categorised based on their topics and connections. Through depicting the same theme from different angles, the dissertation author intends to achieve a relatively complete picture about the research question (Yin, 2009). The hypothetical explanation of the research question will be drawn from revised interview notes. Once a new interview is done, its note will be sorted into previous categories and compared with proposed hypothesis. If the new

data reconfirms the previous hypothesis, the previous hypothesis will be strengthened. Otherwise, efforts will be made to explain the reason of the contradicting situation. In order to obtain a more precise conclusion, either the special case will be excluded from the general analysis due to its unusual features, or the hypothesis will be reformed to better reflect the real situation of the Volvo Car Cooperation. This process is presented in figure 3-2.

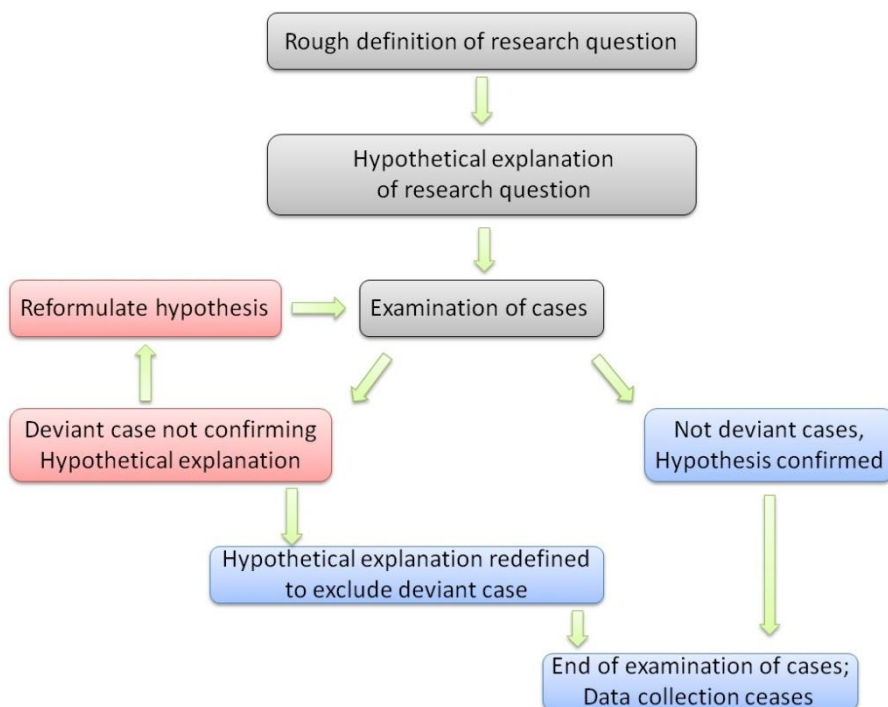


Figure 3-2: Procedure of data analysis (Adopted from Bryman and Bell, 2011)

After finishing the data collection and hypothesis testing phase, the outcome of the data analysis will be compared with previous research to generate potential development directions. These potential directions will be arranged according to their importance. During the arrangement process, factors including urgency, feasibility and rate of return will be taken into the consideration. The dissertation mentor and several other senior employees will participate in this process to exam whether the achieved result is suitable for the current situation of the company. In addition, efforts will be made to provide possible proposals. The proposals are formulated through theory analysis, situation evaluation, brainstorming and mind mapping. The final outcome is a recommendation on how the coaching approach should be adopted to implement empowerment leadership style within international project groups.

3.7 The consideration of research ethics

The confidentiality agreement was signed by the dissertation author with the case company before the initiation of the research. Therefore, all the classified information has been excluded from this dissertation. Due to this restriction, the note and transcript of the interviews cannot be provided. Before the starting of each interview, the interviewee is told the purpose of the interview, as well as the confidentiality responsibilities of both sides. The consent forms are signed before all interviews. Additionally, in order to further confirm the ethics of this dissertation, all the notes and transcripts have been shown to the mentor in the case company to consult his idea. Therefore, all the information in this dissertation has been proved to meet all the ethical conditions and regulations.

3.8 The consideration of research reliability

The reliability of this dissertation has been verified through several different channels. After the dissertation topic had been confirmed by teachers from the both Universities, the dissertation author began to construct the theoretical framework and it was verified by both of the supervisors. The dissertation employment was started from March, and the afterward verification process was focused on the data collection and analysis. After each interview, the dissertation author reconfirmed the core points with the interviewee, and the dissertation mentor of the case company was consulted for further advises. The dissertation author was given the opportunity to report his progress during the weekly meetings in the case company, and other participants of the meeting made a great contribution by asking questions, giving suggestions about the achieved results. These monitor activities were mentioned by Yin (2009) for the purpose of achieving a more impartial and objective research result. It is also worth to mention that, another master dissertation student who also worked temporarily in Volvo Car Cooperation contributed to this dissertation by giving valuable opinions.

4. Data Analysis and Recommendations

In this chapter, the achieved data and results are reorganised and analysed. The chapter is separated in three sections. In the first section, all the data achieved through interviews and observations is reorganised, in order to achieve a complete understanding regarding the current situation of Empowerment leadership style and the implementation of coaching in Volvo Car Cooperation. In the second section, discussion and recommendations is made based on the analysis conducted in the first section. The source of these discussions and recommendations includes both previous research and the feedbacks of the participants in the leadership coaching training programme. In the end of this chapter, the discussions and recommendations is justified, in order to ensure they are reasonable and suitable to the case company.

4.1 The current situation of empowerment leadership style in Volvo Car Cooperation

In this section, the data achieved from both interviews and observations is reorganised, in order to present a complete picture of the current situation of empowerment leadership style and coaching in Volvo Car Cooperation. Since the data is collected based on five major clusters, this section adopts the same structure, for the purpose of providing consistency and connections between each segment. The intention of the dissertation author in this section is not only providing information, but also formalising the consensus achieved through the investigation of different channels. Therefore, all the opinions have been taken into the consideration during the formation of the following paragraphs.

4.1.1 The leadership context in Volvo Car Cooperation

The current leadership philosophy of Volvo is based on a solid foundation which formed by both historical factors and current company values. The leadership style of Volvo Car Cooperation has been changed many times along with the shifting of the ownership. Before Volvo Cars was acquired by Ford Motor Company in 1999, the trend of the empowerment management could already be spotted. However, because

of the structure of Ford is severely hierarchical, the leadership of the company was back to the “command and control” style. Currently, based on the new aspired culture and the core value of “move fast, aim high”, the leadership style of Volvo Cars regains its empowerment characteristics since the Zhejiang Geely Holding Group involved in 2010.

The relationship between Geely and Volvo Cars is more like cooperation rather than ownership. Therefore, Volvo Cars is able to make its own decisions and development strategies. With this leadership style implemented to all the levels of the company, all employees are encouraged to take responsibilities and make decisions. Almost all the managers perceive the current empowerment leadership style as the most suitable one for now. The primary concern they have is regarding the habits developed during the Ford era. Since the intense management was continued for more than ten years, it takes time to rebuild the ideal environment for the implementation of empowerment leadership. In addition, since the adoption of the empowerment leadership style sets higher requirements to leaders, more training is necessary to safeguard its expected outcomes.

4.1.2 Feedbacks and reflections of the coaching training programme

The general feeling of the participants regarding the Business Leadership Training Programme is excellent. Based on the information obtained from the interviews, the positive outcomes of this programme are not only limited within coaching techniques. The philosophies and ideas of coaching are reinforced within the minds of the participants. Besides, it is also a cherish opportunity for the managers to get together and exchange their working experience and reflections.

Since most of the participants of the training programme are experienced managers, the coaching philosophies and techniques are widely echoed with their intentions and experiences. Before their participation of this training programme, several of them have actually already implemented certain technics. Therefore, instead of instilling new knowledge, the function of this coaching training programme is to formalise

their good experiences and point out the future directions. Furthermore, within this coaching training programme, participants have also achieved considerable consensus which has a great value. With these consensuses, they can get a better understanding about the work they are doing. More importantly, cooperation between different segments becomes more coordinated and convenient.

As a training tool, the most important benefit of coaching is that, it has the function of building people. Coaching is a bilateral development approach which benefits both managers and employees. Through the implementation of coaching, managers can obtain more contribution from their subordinates, as their employees are better motivated and cultivated. From the perspective of employees, coaching gives them the opportunity to involve in management activities, as well as the opportunities to develop themselves. In addition, by being led in a more positive way, employees can also enjoy more freedom as well as self-achievement through their work.

4.1.3 Empowerment leadership style and culture

All the interviewees have mentioned that, the empowerment leadership style is the ideal way of leading employees in Sweden. With the suitable foundation (culture, history and social context), the environment for empowerment was formed naturally. However, it could be a little bit challenge to implement empowerment leadership style in an international team for the following reasons. Firstly, people from different cultures are used to work in different ways. For instance, people from equilibrium cultures are tend to work in a more autonomous way. In the contrary, employees from a hierarchical culture like China and England tend to work for the managers instead of working with the managers. Therefore, in an international team, managers can hardly apply the empowerment leadership style in a universal way which is suitable for people from all cultures. Secondly, people from different cultures tend to have different abilities to work autonomously. With more previous experiences, people come from more equilibrium cultures tend to show outstanding awareness abilities and they also take responsibilities more naturally. Thirdly, the values and goals of employees could be slightly different, even though they are working in the same project. For instance, differentiations about goals have already been spotted

between the Volvo courier in Sweden and Volvo China, as the Volvo China is more directly influenced by Geely.

According to the participants of interviews, there are not so many differences between the implementation of empowerment leadership style in permanent departments and temporary project teams. In general, both of the tasks are completed through coaching approaches which share very similar set of techniques, so the primary divergence is related to intentions. The adoption of the empowerment leadership style in project teams is more important and beneficial, even if the process could be more challenging. The primary reason is that, the project manager has limited authorities over the project team members. Therefore, it is important to motivate them effectively in order to achieve the expected performance. Other than that, there are almost no differences between coaching in project teams and coaching in line departments.

4.1.4 The implementation of the tool of coaching

The implementation of coaching is a trend and it is not negotiable. During Ford's era, the management structure of Volvo Cars was highly hierarchical and bureaucratic. Some of the daily decisions cannot even be made within Volvo, and employees had utterly no authority. With limited motivation and intellectual contribution of employees, the company was unable to react properly to the current turbulent business environment. Therefore, in order to make a better use of the creativity and intellectual abilities of all employees, they need to be engaged through coaching, instead of purely managing. Managers need to train themselves to hold back during the decision making process, in order to obtain more contributions from employees.

People with various culture backgrounds react to coaching approaches differently. For instance, employees from India, China or even UK could be too polite to their managers, and they may more hesitate to express their feelings and take responsibilities. They can be considered as in "different stages of coaching", or different starting points of coaching. However, these culture variations unnecessarily

influence the effects of coaching as a training tool. If the managers are able to coach people with different culture backgrounds in suitable ways, the effectiveness of coaching is unquestionable. According to many managers, the differences between individuals are more obvious than the differences between cultures. Most of their employees have already obtained some international experience and global perspective, but there are considerable differences between their personalities.

Meanwhile, it is important for international managers to keep in mind that, coaching is not a panacea for all the challenges. It is only a training tool. Coaching should be implemented along with managing and leading, instead of implementing coaching individually. Acknowledging the suitable occasions of coaching could be more important than understanding the techniques of coaching. Regarding the implementation of coaching in project teams, the primary challenge is the time constrain. Coaching is a tool to develop employees which have a profound benefit for both individuals and the organisations, but the effects can hardly be seen within a very short period. Furthermore, most of the coaching models and techniques include many steps which can hardly be done sequentially in a project environment. For project managers, the ideal models of coaching application are more like guidance. Instead of following the theories literally, project managers need to implement elements of coaching in suitable occasions, and they should be able to balance the consumed time and the expected outcomes of coaching.

4.1.5 The future of leadership style and coaching

All the interviewees are agreed that, empowerment leadership style is the ideal leadership style for the current and future business environment, and coaching is the most suitable tool to implement it. Therefore, future coaching training is warmly welcomed. From the philosophy perspective, the major function of coaching training is to remind managers about the guideline and principle to communicate with their subordinates. From the technique perspective, the future coaching training should focus on the case study and other implementation perspective. It is an indispensable process to develop a concrete foundation to implement coaching, but it is not

sufficient for managers to implement them. With more practical examples and real-life case study, it will be easier for them to coach their employees in daily works.

During many interviews, it has also been mentioned that, the coaching training should not be limited within the management level. More information and training activities should be done in the lower level of the organisation. In general, there are three reasons to provide lower employees more coaching trainings. Firstly, the future daily coaching activities between managers and employees can be facilitated if employees have received similar trainings with their managers. With more unified information, it will be easier for employees to open their mind and reduce their defence mechanism. Secondly, it also gives the employees the opportunity to coach each other or even themselves. Coaching activities should not be limited between managers and employees, it should be generalised. Thirdly, if more people have received coaching training, the formation of coaching environment will also be facilitated. If the consensus is reached, people will encourage each other to implement coaching approaches. Even if some people retreat to the formal habits, other colleagues can bring them back to the right track.

4.2 Discussions and recommendations

In this section, the current situation of Volvo Car Cooperation will be further discussed based on the achieved information, and recommendations will be given based on both the theoretical knowledge, as well as the comments of managers. The discussion and recommendation will be made from three major perspectives. These recommendations are mainly focused on the international project teams which are mainly formed by Chinese and Swedish employees. This arrangement is supported by two reasons. Firstly, after Volvo Car Cooperation is purchased by Geely, the cooperation between Chinese and Swedish employees is crucial for the company. Secondly, the cultures of China and Sweden are very different, so it is a good example of the cooperation activity between an eastern culture and a western culture.

4.2.1 Project management perspective

During the interviews, all the managers have confirmed the importance of implementing empowerment leadership style and adopting coaching approaches for the development of international project teams. They have also mentioned that, time issue is their major concerns. However, through the analysis of the project activity curve, team development model and the theoretical knowledge of coaching, this challenge can be greatly mitigated (Boddy, 2012; Maylor, 2010; Rickards and Moger, 2000). In figure 4-1, the project activity curve is displayed.

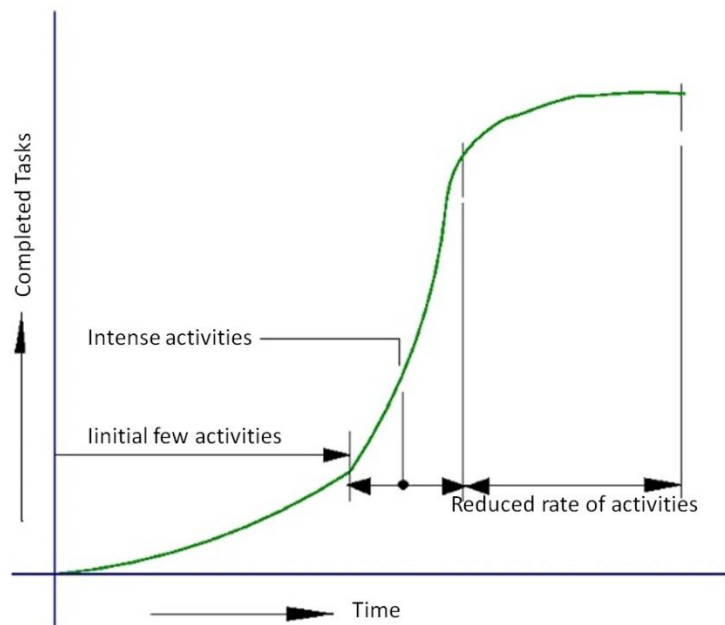


Figure 4-1: Curve of project activities (Adopted from Maylor, 2010)

The initial phase of the project is critical. According to Maylor (2010, p.33), “activities are not evenly distributed within the whole project duration”. Due to the insufficiency of information and the ambiguity of the project goal, only limited activities are taken place in this period of time. Meanwhile, the project team are actually in the forming phase during the project initiation period which means people are more willing to show their positive sides and involve into the project team (Bonebright, 2010). Therefore, it is a wonderful time to organise activities to develop cooperation and trust which are the fundamental elements for the future coaching activities. It has been mentioned by plenty of mangers that, developing the environment of coaching are just like making an investment. Maybe it is a little bit

time consuming at the beginning, but the project team will be greatly rewarded during the hard time of the project.

Furthermore, the necessary time for the development of coaching environment can actually be saved within the project time limitation. For most of the companies like Volvo Car Cooperation, their commonly used organisational structure is the matrix structure instead of the pure project structure. It means that, with the cooperation between departments and segments, the consensus and philosophy of coaching can be introduced to employees before they enter project teams. Through this approach, considerable time can be saved for more important activities of the project. In addition, since the department managers have the absolute authorisations over their employees, the effects of coaching trainings are optimistically estimated by couple of managers during the interviews.

4.2.2 Culture perspective

The culture differences between Sweden and China have already been fully expected and recognised by both Swedish and Chinese employees. Their challenge is that, they do not have sufficient knowledge regarding the specific differences and they do not know how to react to the issues generated by these differences. The difficulties regarding ineffective communication and cooperation between Chinese and Swedish employees have been reflected by many departments and managers. The company has already made great efforts to cope with the urgent situation.

Giving culture training sessions is the most standardised way to increase the culture awareness of employees and facilitate communications. However, the content and format of the sessions will greatly influence their outcomes. According to the theoretical knowledge and the feedbacks from managers, culture training activities should put more efforts on the common aspects of different cultures. The purpose of doing this is to provide employees with a base to cooperate with each other, as well as to motivate them to communicate and cooperate. Furthermore, Swedish and Chinese employees should be put together to receive the culture training for the

following reasons. Firstly, it increases the credibility of the lecture, as it is witnessed by people from the culture. Secondly, more ideas can emerge and more discussions and interactions can take place. Thirdly, it will definitely make the activity more memorable and impressive. Fourthly, it is also an opportunity for people to get to know each other. In addition, it may be difficult for all the geographically separated employees to receive this type of training, but at least, this should be done through the Video Conference system. In the indispensable follow up sessions, feedbacks from Chinese and Swedish participants should be exchanged mandatorily and publically.

Confirming the common goal before the initiation of discussion or cooperation is actually the most effective facilitator for the communication within international project teams (Lee, 2009). In most cases, international project team members are coming from different branches of the company. With different organisational and cultural backgrounds, international project members need to make great efforts to overcome differentiation and achieve cooperation (Gesteland, 2005; Hofstede, 2003). Consequently, giving them a reason to make such effort or even sacrifice is crucial and beneficial for the success of the project.

From the organisational perspective, besides giving lectures, other supply and necessary education should be provided to international team members. For instance, making the communications and tasks relevant to people. Since China is a highly relationship focused culture (Gesteland, 2005), the development of interpersonal relationship will greatly reduce the difficulties of communication. For daily working environment, the inter-unit communications should be replaced by interpersonal communications. Meanwhile, small but interesting tasks and discussions among employees from different cultures should be always assigned to employees to provide them with opportunities to train themselves. With the experiences accumulated from small tasks, they can be expected to have a better performance in major international projects.

4.2.3 Empowerment and coaching perspective

It is amazing to see that, the aspirational culture and the empowerment leadership style have been fully accepted by managers and employees. Meanwhile, people in Volvo Car Cooperation also have a strong faith regarding their continuance.

Therefore, figuring out how to maintain and implement this culture is the primary task for the whole company. During the observations, the participants have mentioned that, the follow-up practice session after each theoretical lecture is beneficial, as the participants need an opportunity to practice coaching in a risk free environment, and they can also obtain a better understanding regarding the situation of their colleges. Furthermore, in order to achieve the maximum outcome from each training activities, the preparation should be done in detail. The coaching groups should be determined by human resource managers before training activities.

Specifically, employees with close working relationship should not be arranged into the same group, since they may concern about interest conflicts or other issues (Vries, 2005). Additionally, the coaching questions should be well prepared before the coaching sessions. The coaching training is actually business oriented with the intention of enlightening and problem solving. Therefore, with well developed, identical coaching questions, more effectiveness could be expected.

Although coaching is highly coordinate with the company's aspirational culture and it is also an ideal tool of training for employees, it is not a panacea for all the challenges encountered by employees. It needs to be implemented in the suitable time and occasions, in order to achieve the expected outcomes (Whitmore, 2009).

The leadership trends include three parts which are leading, managing and coaching (Ricciardi, 2012). Even if the implementation of coaching is the primary task, the "leading and managing" aspects should be stressed at the same time to provide participants with a complete picture. Meanwhile, the approaches of coaching implementation should be adapted to culture contexts. For instance, China has a long tradition of being a relationship focused and hierarchical culture (Gesteland, 2005). Therefore, people with this culture background should be coached differently. For instance, in China, it could be neither necessary nor effective to coach people in all the daily occasions, due to the lack of the equilibrium social context (Fang, 2012). Therefore, focusing the energy on meeting, discussions and other similar occasions

to implement coaching could be more effective. It is always easier for people to change gradually, and the suitable differentiation also gives coaching activities necessary emphasis to facilitate its implementation.

4.3 The final verification of the recommendations

All the recommendations made in the previous section are strictly based on the interviews and theoretical literature reviews, with the consideration of the current situation of the Volvo Car Cooperation. All the recommendations are original ideas of the dissertation author, and the validity and possibility of them have been confirmed by more than one senior employee who has more than 10 years of working experience in Volvo. Furthermore, great effort has been made by the dissertation author to confirm that all the recommendations are closely corresponding to the research question of this research. Regarding the layout of the recommendations, the dissertation author has consulted most of the managers during the interviews for advices. Since all core elements of this research are fairly independent and with very limited interlinked effects, the current layout of the recommendations is considered as the most practical arrangement.

5. Conclusion

In this chapter, the dissertation study will be concluded through answering the research question, discussing the contributions of this study, and rethinking the limitations. The intention of the dissertation author is to recap the content of the dissertation and give his readers a complete summary. Meanwhile, this final chapter will also serve as a reminder between the research questions, research objectives and research results. Finally, the proposal of the future research direction will be suggested at the end of this chapter.

5.1 Recap of the research

Through conducting this research, the effort was made by the dissertation author to fulfil both the academic and practical purposes. This dissertation is based on the research question:

How to adopt the coaching approach to implement empowerment leadership style within international project teams?

From the academic perspective, the intention of this dissertation research is to evaluate the effects of the empowerment leadership style and the tool of coaching for the development of international project team. From the practical perspective, this dissertation research is meant to assess the outcome of the “Business Leadership Coaching Programme”. In addition, exploring the solutions to facilitate the implementation of the empowerment leadership style and coaching, are also critical practical purposes of this dissertation.

Through the study, it has been proved that the positive outcomes of the empowerment leadership style and coaching are enormous and obvious. They are widely considered as indispensable approaches for the companies of the future. The

culture diversity in international project teams will unavoidably make the environment of working and coaching more complicated, but it is also an opportunity to form a more advanced culture. The effect of empowerment leadership and coaching techniques are unlikely to be undermined by the diversification of the culture. However, the dynamic environment definitely upraises the requirements for managers. They are expected to acknowledge the differences of the culture and coach their employees with different culture background in suitable approaches. The project environment can make the implementation of coaching more challenging and rewarding, but no special techniques are considered as more effective than others. Limited technical differences were recognised by managers in the implementation of coaching in line organisations and project teams.

The Business Leadership coaching programme carried out by Volvo Car Cooperation is high successful. It corresponds to the company's Aspired culture, and it also fits the core value of the company. Most importantly, this training programme translates these ideas into concrete behaviours as it provides managers the applicable tools to implement empowerment leadership. Through this evaluation, the future direction of the coaching training programmes is also pointed out. Since the primary information and the foundational theories have been acquired by most of the managers, more focus should be put on practical aspects. Case analysis and interactive coaching between multi-departments should be future trend of coaching programmes. In addition, coaching programmes should also be provided to lower level employees, in order to develop a more complete environment of coaching.

5.2 Contribution of this research

This interdisciplinary dissertation study contributes to the research of project management, cultural diversity, leadership and coaching implementation by testing theoretical models in a real-world industrial environment. Due to the complexity of the environment in international project teams, too many potential factors are involved because more than one theoretical model is applicable. Through the evaluation of the Business Leadership Coaching Programme, the importance of these involved factors is validated. Based on the result of this study, the resource and

efforts of future research can be used more effectively. Meanwhile, the ideas and improvements proposed in this study will also facilitate the formation of future theories and models in the field of project management and cross-culture team development.

For the Volvo Car Cooperation, this dissertation study confirmed the positive outcomes achieved in the Business Leadership Coaching Programme. Most importantly, the evaluation proposes possible solutions for current challenges and potential directions for future development which may upgrade the programme and optimise its outcomes. In addition, this dissertation study also points out plenty of unpredicted effects of the Business Leadership Coaching Programme. These unexpected outcomes further reinforce the motivation of the company to adopt empowerment leadership style and the training tool of coaching.

5.3 Limitation of the dissertation study

This dissertation study is based on the environment of Volvo Car Cooperation and its focus is on the international project teams which are formed mainly by Chinese and Swedish employees. So the results can hardly be generalised directly. This limitation can hardly be broken, since the study has to be specific and focused, in order to best benefit the case company. Therefore, the results achieved in this study are specifically valid for the Volvo Car Cooperation in the current environment. Besides, it is worth mentioning that, the theoretical framework and the conclusions drawn from the literature reviews can be directly adopted into future research.

Meanwhile, another limitation of this study is regarding the perspective of the evaluation approach. The results of this study could be more persuasive and complete if qualitative research strategy is also implemented to facilitate the evaluation by assessing the general attitude of all participants. However, this limitation is caused by compromising between the scale of the study and the time available to the dissertation author. Therefore, few efforts can be made to deepen the research within the dissertation time limitation.

5.4 Suggestions for further research

From the author's point of view, the future research should focus on the implementation of the empowerment leadership and coaching approaches. The potential effectiveness of them has been repeatedly verified, and the achieved positive outcomes have been recognised by a high percentage of managers. Therefore, it is beneficial to optimise the implementation methods of empowerment leadership and coaching approaches, in order to further unleash the potential of them. Meanwhile, with the development of practical implementation methods of empowerment leadership and coaching approaches, their advantages will become more obvious and distinctive.

Additional research should be initiated to explore the correlation between culture and coaching approaches. Since the coaching approaches are widely welcomed and applicable, investigating the relationship between culture characters and coaching approaches can increase effectiveness of coaching in international project teams. As the trend of internationalisation is unavoidable in the current business environment, coaching will become the primary training tool if it is able to handle the diversification of culture in a more flexible and effective way.

6. Appendix

The appendix contains two parts. The first part includes all the questions for the interviews. They were used as a guide during the semi-structured interviews. Due to the ethical considerations for both the participants of interviews and Volvo Car Cooperation, the transcripts of the interviews cannot be displayed here. The second part of the appendix includes all notes taken during the observations.

6.1 Appendix A: Interview Questions

1. VOLVOS FUTURES LEADERSHIP CHALLENGES?

- 1.1. How would you describe Volvos leadership philosophy today?
- 1.2. Has it changed since Geely involved? (Volvo changed ownership) In what way?

2. BUSINESS LEADERSHIP COACHING PROGRAMME

- 2.1. When and where you have participated in the Business leadership coaching programme? How many days you have spent there? (1) (2) or (2+1)?
- 2.2. What's your general feeling about the Business leadership coaching programme?
- 2.3. What are your outcomes regarding the Business leadership coaching programme?
- 2.4. What do you think are the benefits of a coaching leadership approach?
- 2.5. Have you tried to implement coaching techniques after you've finished the Business leadership coaching programme? Can you give an example? (The specific techniques like active listening, SBR model (Situation- Behaviour- Results), or GROW model (Goal, Reality, Options, Wrap up) and Feed-back techniques) (The ideas like increasing the awareness and responsibility of employees)

3. EMPOWERMENT AND CULTURE

- 3.1. Do you think empowerment and coaching approach will work out in your culture?
- 3.2. Do you think culture differences can influence the effects of coaching leadership and empowerment management style?

- 3.3. Do you think coaching and empowerment can help you to optimise the performance of your employees?
- 3.4. As a department manager, do you always manage projects?
- 3.5. Is there any difference between implementing coaching and empowerment in project teams and in permanent departments?

4. IMPLEMENTATION OF COACHING LEADERSHIP

- 4.1. How about the nationalities of your colleagues/employees? They come from an identical culture or different cultures?
- 4.2. Have you noticed any differences while you try to implement coaching and empowerment between people with different backgrounds?
- 4.3. Do you think coaching is an effective tool for the development of an international project team (department)?
- 4.4. What are the differences between the reality and the ideal coaching model you've learned?
- 4.5. What are the challenges you have encountered when you try to implement coaching? (in a project team environment)

5. FUTURE LEADERSHIP

- 5.1. In the future, are you going to (keep) implement coaching techniques in your department?
- 5.2. Are you willing to further improve your coaching abilities? (specific techniques / general education)

6. CULTURE ISSUES

- 6.1. How do you perceive cultural challenges? Have you ever experienced it?
- 6.2. What support would you like to receive to deal with these challenges?
- 6.3. What support is given to you?

6.2 Appendix B: Notes of the observation events

Name of activity	Time	Region	Title of participants
Purchasing leadership day	2013/03/20	China, Sweden	Managers
IT department coaching training	2013/04/04	Belgium, Sweden	Managers
Global Diversity Council Meeting	2013/04/09	Sweden	SVP/ VPs

6.2.1 Purchasing leadership day event

Duration of the activity: About 30 minutes

Coaching questions:

1. With focus on Performance management, what are the clear responsibilities of the Functional manager vs. the Local Manager?
2. How do we as leaders motivate our employees to walk the extra mile?

Group participants	Group 5, 10 participants
	Swedish, German, Chinese
	Operational Managers & Local Managers 5:5

Reflections:

1. The participants didn't fully understand the question at the beginning. Since they are also not very familiar with each other, they need a little time to warm up. Therefore, if the duration of the coaching session could be longer, there will be more ideal effects.
2. Some answers may block the conversation to some degree. One participant mentioned there is no problem at the beginning, and then other participants were a little bit reluctant to put questions on the table.
3. Participants who are more willing to talk can dominate the conversation to certain degree, as other participants have the tendency to follow their topics.
4. Coaches have a great responsibility to channel the discussion, as participants tend to focus on the topic they are interested in, instead of the task topic.

5. The coach in group 5 had done a great job regarding channelling the direction of conversation, summarising the ideas, and controlling the steps of the coaching session.
6. Culture differences also emerged in the coaching session. Western participants are more active than the Chinese participant. But the situation also highly depends on the people. Everyone have a strong interest regarding other cultures.
7. Participants are keener to talk about their problems, and lots of energy was generated during the coaching session.
8. Maybe silent participants need more encourage.

6.2.2 IT department coaching training

1. I think it will be even more awesome if more reasons regarding the coaching implementation can be given. For instance, the experience of Niclas regarding “Giving solutions in HRBP” is a really excellent. If people can see the reason clearer, they will be more motivated to participate. (Just like what happened before the coffee break, everyone begins to concern about the requirements of coaching.)
2. The participants have reflected, the follow up session today is really beneficial, as they were really given the opportunity to practice coaching in a risk free environment, and they can also obtain a better understanding regarding the situation of their colleges. The broad picture is very important for them.
3. I still remember that, coaching is not the solution of everything. The leadership trends include three parts which are leading, managing and coaching. I think maybe the “leading and managing” aspects should be more stressed, and a more balanced picture should be given. From this approach, I think people may get a more realistic and concrete feeling about coaching.
4. Maybe more information regarding the book should be given, if people are really encouraged to read it. I have gone through the book. It is a really nice one, but I guess not all the chapters are important for everyone.
5. I think the reflection session in the beginning is brilliant. It really wakes people up, especially in the morning. My little concern is that, people may feel a little bit too anxious. But in general, I think it is good and it makes people think.
6. The coaching questions are really great. From my observation, I think people will

benefit more from the self-coaching session if they are encouraged to ask more challenging questions at the beginning. Challenging questions make people think, otherwise they will just say something they have already known.

7. Maybe it will be advisable to add one more break?
8. There were really lots of knowledge sharing took place! I am so amazed about its effectiveness and the degree of engagement.
9. Maybe you can put them into groups before the session? If people in one coaching team are too closed to each other, they may concern about interest conflicts or other issues. I guess they will be more willing to talk if they are not too closely related.

6.2.3 Global Diversity Council Meeting

1. Regarding the improvement of communication between Swedish units, Chinese units and international project teams.
 - a) I think it is not so important for people to understand the culture differences, as long as they can cooperate and work together effectively.
 - b) Maybe giving pure lectures is not the most ideal way to improve the intercultural cooperation. (according to many managers)
 - i. Pure lectures about culture differences actually emphasises on the different aspect of culture, instead of the similar aspect of culture.
 - ii. Without experience, the effects of lectures are limited.
 - iii. Small interesting tasks and discussions among employees from different cultures could be a very effective way to improve the culture understanding and cooperation. The effect will be more ideal if they are in a competition environment with a time pressure.
 - c) Proposals to improve intercultural cooperation and communications
 - i. Make it relevant to people: Distribute tasks in detail, and set responsible person. Encourage the inter-personal communication, instead of inter-unit communication.
 - ii. Confirm the common goal before initiate the discussion or cooperation: It is important to give people a reason to cooperate.
 - iii. Learning to cooperate with people from other cultures just like learning to swim or ride a bike. Theoretical knowledge could be helpful, but

- practice is everything.
- iv. Giving positive feedbacks publically and giving negative feedbacks personally.
 - v. Interpersonal communication is always the best way to develop an effective working environment, even for international project teams. Face-to-Face > Video communication > Audio communication > e-mails. Always try to use telephones instead of e-mails. Emails without reply cannot be considered as a communication.
 - vi. It is important to know that, Chinese employees can make great sacrifices for their career. Not like Swedish employees, most Chinese employees pay very limited attention to their families. There is no such thing as “having no time”. They are just “having no time for you”. But you should give them the forgiveness and understanding.
 - vii. Small tasks, which cannot be done without intercultural cooperation, should be always assigned to employees, to train them in a pure real-life environment.
 - viii. Swedish and Chinese employees should be put together to receive the culture training:
 1. It increases the credibility of the lecture, as it is witnessed by people from the culture.
 2. More ideas can emerge and more discussions and interactions can take place.
 3. It will definitely make the activity more memorable and impressive.
 4. It is also an opportunity for people to get to know each other.
 5. At least, this should be done through the Video Conference system. In the indispensable follow up sessions, feedbacks between Chinese and Swedish participants should be exchanged mandatorily and publically.
 - ix. The best way to make them generate the WE feeling is to give them the environment which they have no choice but cooperation. Telling them to cooperate is just like throwing pebbles into the sea. Nothing will change at all.

2. Regarding people come back from China
 - a) The most important function of these people is to facilitate the communication between Swedish organisation and Chinese organisation.
 - b) They can be used as ambassadors, as they have the following advantages:
 - i. They have developed relationships or even friendships with many Chinese colleges.
 - ii. They have more experiences about the Chinese way of working and communicating.
 - iii. They have better understanding about the Chin-English.
 - c) They can introduce successful experiences and tips to their Swedish colleges.
 - i. True stories are always charming and memorable.
 - ii. According to many managers, guidance about daily behaviour is very useful.
 - iii. Maybe right or wrong is not so important comparing with the practical effects.
 - d) They should be given following opportunities
 - i. They should be provided opportunities to maintain the connection with their Chinese colleges.
 - ii. They should be given the time and opportunity to introduce their experiences.
 - iii. They should be given the understanding when they make mistakes
 - iv. They should be given the opportunity to participate in different occasions and to make the comparison between Chinese and Swedes in various situations.
 - e) Regarding their changes
 - i. Obvious changes should not be expected. It is meaningless to demonstrate their changes, as long as their abilities are actually optimised.
 - ii. As written in the document, living and working in a foreign country cannot guarantee a positive change.
 - iii. People with improved communication abilities should be rewarded.

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