Competence management in Swedish companies
Design & Implementation

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Master thesis in the program Civileingenjör och lärare within the areas of technology and learning
Stockholm 2013

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Abstract
The research is focused on the need companies of today have of being able to adapt to changing demands quickly. An important factor in being able to do this is the management of knowledge. The ability to identify needs and connect them to learning in order to have a workforce that is able to both understand what is required and able to gain abilities that are necessary to meet changing demands and be competitive on the market.

The work started out with a will at better understanding knowledge in companies. The methodology was chosen to be qualitative due to the number of companies in the study (five) and the determination to be able to explain overall structures and motives.

During the gathering of data from the companies and the study of literature the work closed in on what was considered to be important questions and these were: “Why talent management?”, “How do you keep the concept alive and actual?” and “What conclusions can be drawn from working with talent management?”. These questions were used in analysing the data collected and together with a discussion on the subject were able to be answered.

An implication this work has on present research is that it is possible to apply world-wide documented ways of working in a Swedish company environment though you need to take care at adapting to local demands.

The research can contribute to the practice of understanding knowledge in company-environments for the work that is actually performed and the employees and managers that will benefit of a deeper understanding of the subject.

Further research is needed to be able to better understand the individual’s perspective, how a general model can be applied in companies with autonomous divisions and how the size of a company will affect its approach on working with knowledge.

Keywords
Knowledge, competence, competency, system, Swedish company culture
**Sammanfattning**

Undersökningen är inriktad på det behov dagens företag har av att kunna anpassa sig till ändrade krav snabbt. En viktig faktor i att kunna göra detta är hanteringen av kunskap. Företagen söker förmågan att identifiera behov och koppla dessa till lärande för att få en arbetssstyrka som både kan förstå vad som krävs och kunna uppvisa de förmågor som krävs för att möta förändrade krav och vara konkurrenskraftig på marknaden.

Arbetet började med en idé om att bättre förstå kunskap inom företag. Studien utgår från den kvalitativa forskningsmetodiken på grund av antalet företag i studien (fem) och målet att kunna beskriva övergripande strukturer och motiv.

Under insamlingen av uppgifter från företagen och studiet av litteratur fokuserades arbetet på vad som ansågs vara viktiga frågor och dessa var: "Varför hantera talang?", "Hur kan man hålla begreppet levande och aktuellt? " samt "Vilka slutsatser kan man dra av att arbeta med talang?". Dessa frågor användes under analysen av de insamlade uppgifterna och var tillsammans med en diskussion möjliga att besvara.

En slutsats som går att dra som följd av detta arbete är att det är möjligt att tillämpa globala sätt att arbeta i svensk företagsmiljö så länge man ser till att anpassa materialet efter lokala behov.

Undersökningen kan bidra till att bättre förstå kunskap i företagsmiljö och hur denna kan användas för att ge en djupare förståelse för det arbete som faktiskt utförs.

Ytterligare forskning behövs för att bättre kunna förstå individens perspektiv, hur en generell modell kan tillämpas i företag med självstänndiga avdelningar och hur storleken på ett företag kommer att påverka dess sätt att arbeta med kunskap.

**Nyckelord**

Kunskap, kompetens, kompetenser, systematisk, svensk företagskultur
**Acknowledgements**

I would like to thank everyone involved in helping me make this work possible. This includes my supervisors at KTH and SU but also the people I have been in contact with at the five companies in this study.

Due to the fact that none of the companies wishes to be identified their names will not be printed in the report and therefore neither the names of the individual people that have been involved. You all know who you are and which parts you have contributed to, the work would not have been able to progress to the extent it has without your help.
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1. Introduction

Human capital is a growing factor in business competition. As J. Evelyn Orr, Craig Sneltjes and Guangrong Dai writes in “The art and science of competency modelling: best practices in developing and implementing success profiles”. “Human capital has the potential to differentiate an organisation from its competition”...“Competitors can imitate each other’s products, processes or services. Ideas can be copied. What cannot be replicated is the source of the ideas – the people” (Orr, Sneltjes, Guanrong, 2010, p. 1). How companies work with the resource that their employees represent is what drives the development of ways of systematically viewing creativity and knowledge.

The researcher’s interest resides in how companies work with knowledge. Knowledge as a concept is wide and therefore can be difficult to put into concrete meaning. The theory of knowledge, also called epistemology (ne.se, “kunskap”), is a philosophical branch that studies basic questions about the nature of knowledge such as: What is knowledge? What is it possible to possess knowledge about? What does knowledge ultimately rely on, the senses or reason?

In a company environment knowledge is power in the fact that your employees’ capability to perform vastly will affect how successful the company will be, both at present and in the future. Due to rapid development and changes to markets all over the globe demands on knowledge change more rapidly today.

Lars Svedberg writes (Svedberg, 2012, p. 229-230) about the concept of organisational theory that deals with the work place as a playfield. If you understand the game you will understand the logic within the organisation. As any company consists of people that will interact in different ways relations will form. An organisation can be understood from its “soft” and “hard” variables. The hard variables are about seeing goals, tasks and structures as the fundamental elements that form a company. If you look at the soft variables they will be about social relationships and connections that will grow from people interacting within and outside the organisation.

If you want to or have to change the organisational structure it will mean a differentiated relational practice which can be used to explain the cautious attitude many people have against change initiated by others.

The possibility of an unbalance between structure and culture, the hard and soft variables, can lead to tensions whether the change is initiated as a shift from within an organisation or as a response to an outside change in market conditions. Knowledge mediation and learning development can be put in the context of organisational theory as they will affect both soft and hard variables. How competent your personnel are will affect both goal and tasks but also how interaction and social relationships will form and develop.

This central question of how you manage the dynamics between the “hard and the soft” are interesting and will follow through this thesis. This balance concerns understanding both concrete goals but also social factors that can be used to understand how people act, think and orient themselves in the social world. A useful concept to describe these factors is Bourdieu’s concept of “habitus” which is a way of ordering the social factors as systems that result from social experiences, collective memories and ways of moving and thinking that determine how people act (Broady, 1998, p. 16).
2. Background

2.1 Thesis background
The researcher’s education provides a combination of technical skills and ways of being able to mediate these, through e.g. teaching, to other people. The possibility of implementing this knowledge in a company environment and to look at what possibilities and ways of thinking that exists ultimately is the reason for why this thesis was initiated.

The research is conducted at Company A which is a global company with headquarters in Sweden.

Company A is interested in developing and evaluating its work related to knowledge and learning. This overall process includes determining which skills currently are in use within the company and how these can be developed and retained. What are required from new employees for them to contribute to the organisation and how is it concluded that you hire people that possess the competence you are looking for?

How is it possible to make the company’s core values and goals visible to the employees and make them connect in all tasks?

What competence needs exist today and what will be required in the future? Is it possible to create a flexible approach to knowledge within the organisation?

In this work, which is current at the organisation and the overall goal is to enable the company to identify its competence needs, develop competencies and be able to follow-up in a standardized and efficient way globally.

The work with competencies seeks to provide a way of being able to respond to changes in the world economy and to quickly being able to adapt as business cycles are becoming shorter with sharper fluctuations. As traditional learning management methods are blending with new methods such as social learning and informal learning, compliance and regulatory mandates are constantly changing and measurement and continuous improvement are essential to be able to keep up long-term success. To respond to these issues requires new ways to approach learning.

For the companies of today it is about coping with all these issues, perhaps with fewer resources and less budget. This leads to a need of being able to prioritize, doing the right thing at the right time to the right audience with efficient methodology. This will place great demands on organisation, teams and employees to do the right things that are expected from them. You need to have the ability to show clear evidence that you create a value to the organisation and for being able to do that the organisation needs to communicate its expectations to the individual employee.

2.2 Company background
Company A is a global company with a sales and service organisation in more than 100 countries. The company’s production units are located in different regions of the world. Company A conducts its own research and production and uses and develops its own training.
3. Conditions

3.1 Scope
Company A wants to work with a uniform model of competence management throughout the company. At present competence management is conducted but in very different ways depending on what division you look at.

To be able to standardize how competence management is conducted the researcher has chosen the following questions functioning as a framework for understanding the fundamentals needed to be identified in any company:

- How is knowledge mediation and preservation conducted within an organisation?
- Which kind of knowledge is needed at which positions and how is it able to make sure that a change in demand will be met?
- In which processes should competence management be included?
- How do you develop and implement a model that is applicable in different divisions within a large company?

The scope of this thesis includes how company’s globally view upon working with human resources and how this is affected by where you are currently situated. This takes into consideration such things as company culture and where in the world you are established.

3.2 Objective
A. Find out what is the best practice approach on designing and implementing competency-based management from present literature. This will mean establishing a literature base which defines the concept and vocabulary used. It will provide a common base on how present research view upon how to define, model, implement and maintain competency-based management worldwide.

B. Contact other Swedish companies that have implemented competency-based management and conduct interviews with these to be able to conclude what experiences they have drawn, what documentation they are willing to share and what parallels could be drawn from these companies to Company A. This will be done to establish a common view of what success factors are and what should be avoided in working with competency-based management at a Swedish company. This will provide data that can be analyzed against the theory base constructed in A and will by doing that provide a result on what similarities and differences can be seen from the literature way and how the work has been conducted at these Swedish companies.

C. Study current way of working with competence at Company A and evaluate this in relation to what has been found to be best practice according to literature and the Swedish companies that have been interviewed.
This will be done by establishing three different perspectives. The first will be of Company A from the external view of a consultant working with the project. The second will be from the internal view of the head of learning development & support at Company A. The third will be from material and interview on how one division at Company A that is considered to be representative for where the company is at present in its work with competency-based management.

### 3.3 Delimitations

The thesis focuses on the relation between the approaches done on implementing competence management by the Swedish companies involved in the research and the literature that exists on the subject. Further it seeks to find what can be considered to be a successful approach on implementing talent management in the culture existing at the companies interviewed. This will then be put in relation to the current way of working at Company A to see potential similarities and differences.

What will not be included is the view on specific parts of the external interviewed companies in order to get a more general picture. Further on the focus will be on conceptual opinions and experiences in order to not reflect singular moments but a current way of viewing upon work with competence management.

### 3.4 Aim for conclusion

The goal for the thesis is to provide a view upon how competency-based management can be developed, implemented and maintained at a Swedish company with the support of current research upon the subject and experiences drawn from other Swedish companies and put this in relation to the current work conducted at Company A.

For being able to analyse the data collected externally in relationship to the one collected to Company A research questions were constructed. These are meant to follow through the ongoing research and to ultimately be answered in the analysis.

### 3.5 Research questions

#### Why talent management?

- This includes both expected benefits and motives from involved parties.
- The objective with this question is to be able to expose which underlying motives lie behind working with the subject and how these can be seen.

#### How do you keep the concept alive and actual?

- This has to do with the level you put your intention at and how you communicate this to gain or change people’s attitudes.
- The objective with this question is to see whether there are explicit ideas on how to keep the concept alive.
What conclusions can be drawn from working with talent management?

- Seeks to give a broader view of what are the greatest lessons learned from working and developing the subject at Swedish companies.
- The objective with this question is to see whether there are any comprehensive conclusions drawn from working with the subject and how these can be put to use in future endeavours.

4. Introduction to the other Swedish companies interviewed

The process of deciding how many and which companies to involve was done in collaboration with a consultant with experience in the field of competence management, currently working at Company A. The reason for selecting four companies was because that amount was considered to be enough to provide relevance and spread over different kinds of markets. The four specific companies were then selected from the knowledge of the consultant of that they were currently working with competence management and therefore could be anticipated to have conclusions and experiences on the subject.

In the report the companies will be named Company 1-4 and be described in a general matter to give a sense of what kind of services they provide and how they are structured. The reason for keeping the names and other attributes general is that they have expressed that they wish to not be identified in print.

Company 1

Company 1 has many small sites and sells service and products to customers.

Company 2

Company 2 provides financial services to both individuals and companies.

Company 3

Company 3 is a world-wide provider of technical solutions and equipment. It offers end-to-end solutions for companies.

Company 4

Company 4 provide people and companies with the ability for transport.

5. Theory

The theory presented in this part of the thesis will introduce what talent management is, what is referred to when talking about the concept best practice and how you can view learning in a modern environment. The concepts and vocabulary introduced in this part will then be used in the evaluation of the results obtained at the different companies. Together the results and theory will be combined into a possible way to work with talent management in a Swedish company culture.
5.1 The modern environment

The term modern is used more or less regularly as a term describing something that is connected to present time. The limit back in time is vague but can generally be seen as the time from the industrial revolution and the breakthrough of democracy up till now. The term also makes clear that what is described is consistent with the most recent knowledge and technology. In other words the term “modern” is a way of saying that we have access to the newest and most profound ways of reasoning at present (though not meaning that we will) (ne.se, “modern”). In this context it is about describing companies in a modern environment and using all available knowledge in doing so.

5.2 Talent management

Ultimately talent management is used to ensure that organisations have the human resource capability needed to meet current and future business requirements. A talent management system is composed by a creed and a strategy. The creed consists of a set of company-wide core principles, values and mutual expressions that will guide the behaviour of the company as a whole and the people working there while the talent strategy makes explicit the type of investments an organisation makes in the people working there to achieve present and future excellence. (Berger & Berger, 2011, p. 3-5).

Once an organisation has a creed and a strategy a need for a human resources system to ensure its implementation and maintenance as a talent management system is raised (Berger & Berger, 2011, p. 6).

As the talent management model will look different from company to company due to differences in values, vision and strategy the approach to adopt a working model will look different from case to case. Though the differences in looks will be seen the basic processes involved at any company will be the same, as can be seen in figure 1. The design of processes will need to be considered for every unique case and once decided be implemented throughout the company consequently (Forman, 2011, p. 307).

![Talent Strategy Process](talentdrivenvale.com) The picture shows which processes in a company that are connected to its talent strategy.
Business strategies will directly shape organisations and through that have direct implications on which talent are searched for (Garonzik & Larrere, 2011, p. 34).

To be able to work systematically and design processes that support the company’s global vision, values and goals you have to determine an approach that will achieve what you are looking for. One way of doing this is to turn to systems thinking (Senge, 2006, p. 73) and how this can help with understanding how actions can reinforce or counteract each-other. In systems thinking you seek to:

- See interrelationships rather than linear cause-effect chains.
- See processes of change rather than snapshots.

Filling a glass of water is a good example:

From the linear viewpoint what is happening is that “I am filling a glass of water”. But you can also break it down to processes as shown in figure 2:

As we are filling the glass we are watching the water level rise. At the same time we monitor the gap between the level and our goal, the desired water level. As the water approaches the desired level we need to adjust the faucet position to slow down the flow until it will be completely turned off when the desired water level has been reached. This means that when filling a glass of water we can be said to operate a “water-regulation system” that involves five variables: desired water level, the current water level, the gap between the two, the faucet position and the water flow. The variables are organised in a circle of cause-effect relationships which is called a “feedback process” due to the relationship between every subprocess to the picture as a whole (Senge, 2006, p. 74-75).

This view upon talent management systems as of processes affecting each other will help to identify the needs within a company and how these are connected to talent (Senge, 2006, p. 73). Talent management in a company is about maximizing everyone’s strengths, fighting for diversity and encouraging creativity and innovation. Individuals within the organisation must feel that they are valued and that they are able to make a difference. You have to get concrete evidence of that what you do will contribute to the well-being and development of the company (Thorne 2011, p. 256).

A key factor for an organisation to succeed is its ability to articulate what is expected from its employees in the areas that have real business impact. This is often connected to the company’s core values and vision and a part of successfully managing talent is to
communicate to the employees what makes the business “tick” (Kochanski & Elliot, 2011, p. 113).

5.3 Talent management is not a new concept
In the past structures, strategies and markets were more static than today. For example an organisation’s need may have been only one model for leadership and those that would fit the model were prepared for taking it on over years of training. This was in a time when many employees stayed in the same organisation for their entire career. Today a single leadership model is not applicable any more due to constantly changing demands within and outside organisations. To add more demands on those in leader positions there is no time for “warming up”; when you become a leader you are expected to be ready to deliver results (Dalziel, 2011, p. 132).

5.4 The concept of “Best Practice”
The concept of “best practice” has a common definition: “A method or technique that has consistently shown results superior to those achieved with other means, and that is used as a benchmark” (businessdictionary.com). Best practice is also a feature of management standards such as ISO 9000 and ISO 14001. An ISO standard is “a document that provides requirements, specifications, guidelines or characteristics that can be used consistently to ensure that materials, products, processes and services are fit for their purpose” (ISO.org).

The work with talent management is connected to best practice in the way that you do not want to reinvent the wheel again and therefore seek methods that have already been validated to provide the results you are after. The use of management standards are widely spread as it is and as employees already, to some level, can be used to read these kinds of documents they are close to what is trying to be achieved with talent management.

Best practice as a concept is applicable on a wide range of processes. Commonly it can be expressed as a generic step-by-step description of a process that is applicable to different organisations with comparable results.

5.5 Best practice in this context
This thesis’ focus on talent management as a concept globally applied to Swedish company cultures and how to implement this in an organisation using the approach that current literature considers being “best practice”. It is important to point out that best practice isn’t a static concept. What is considered best practice today might not be the best way to approach something tomorrow. Every process and company is under constant development and as a result so is the best way of doing things.

5.6 Competencies
Competencies are (Lamoureaux, 2008, p. 8) “a set of clearly defined skills, behaviours and knowledge that are used to evaluate, assess and develop people”. They are foundational to talent management and will play parts in recruiting, performance management, succession planning and learning and development.
HRSG takes it one step further by defining “Competencies are observable abilities, skills, knowledge, motivations or traits defined in terms of the behaviours needed for successful job performance” (Competencycore.com, 2012, p. 1).

The competencies are used for creating a framework for growing and developing talent aligned with an organisation’s strategic goals. The closer you succeed in aligning the framework to the strategy the more responsive you will be to changes in demands (Kunneman, Turchetti, Cresswell, 2011, p.184).

5.7 Competency-based management as a part of talent management
The starting point is to define the skills, knowledge and abilities employees need to be successful. As the competencies will manifest themselves as behaviours the common way of observing and through that being able to manage them are to study the everyday work performed by employees (Ritchie, Erickson, Whitney, 2012, p. 1).

The competencies are at the core of any talent management practice. They provide a common vocabulary able to describe what you should be able to observe an employee do in a specific role. As every role consists of a specific combination of competencies it will be easy to compare different roles to each other (Ruyle, 2011, p. 22).

5.8 Why companies use competency-based management
Competency management is a vital part of any organisation’s talent management strategy. A talent strategy makes it clear which investments a company does in the people whom it believes will make it successful. A talent strategy views people as a portfolio of human resource assets that are differential and possible to assess. Every person’s current and potential contribution to the company’s success should be assessable and encouraged (Berger & Berger, 2011, p. 4).

Competencies will provide a bridge connecting strategic vision and values into behaviours or actions that employees need to display for the organisation to be successful. This is accomplished by the use of competency-based management which standardizes and integrates all HR activities based on competencies that will support the organisation’s vision and core values (Competencycore.com, 2012, p. 1).

5.9 Developing a model suitable for a company’s needs
To be able to work consequently with anything crossing over different areas in a company you need to establish a set of common rules on how to approach and apply. This will represent the model and in the department of managing competencies there are different ways to develop this.

How you end up choosing a model for any specific company will depend on why the organisation wants to implement working with competencies and how it’s done most efficiently (Dalziel, 2011, p. 14). The competency model will work as a framework for organising competencies. It is often graphically displayed to be easy to overview by anyone in the company (Lamoureaux, 2008, p. 7).
When building the model you have to take into consideration the flexibility needed in order to not only meet current but future requirements. Competencies themselves are individualistic but an organisation needs to be more than a collective of individuals. As relationships (aka business networks) are at the core of any organisation the model will have to be able to handle this (Dalziel, 2011, p. 15).

To be able to build a model that is suitable for the business you have to be able to identify what requirements the model will have to meet. Examples are:

- **Risk management**: Does the company have the critical competencies needed to compete today and tomorrow? What knowledge, skills and abilities are lost when an employee leaves? How can we address changes in outside demands such as legislated regulations?
- **Succession planning**: How is it possible to develop career plans/possibilities? How strong is the knowledge/skills in a position if someone leaves?
- **Development planning**: Are we developing in the right direction? Are we using our resources on the right things in development?
- **Organisational alignment**: How do employees know what is expected from them? Are jobs and ways of working aligned with corporate objectives?
- **Recruitment**: Are the company hiring people with the right competencies at the right levels for the right positions? Are the competencies searched for available in-house? (Ritchie, Erickson, Whitney, 2011, p. 26)

The model can be structured differently depending on the needs of the company (figure 3 is one example) but usually involves different layers of competencies. The foundation lies in the vision, values and strategies of the company and will include (in some way):

![Basic Competency Architecture](image)

*Fig 3, Basic Competency architecture, HRSG, p. 23. The view upon the connection between competencies as a house provide a picture of how the core competencies provides the foundation on which the family-, specific- and leadership competencies will stand on.*
Core competencies – generic competencies that all employees must possess for the organisation to achieve its vision. They describe, in behavioural terms, the key values and principles of the organisation.

The core principles and values are often defined by the CEO of the company and can be used to evaluate and coach every employee in the company. They will be culture-setting and help to shape the company brand. Examples of core values are: quality, customer service and integrity (Competencycore.com, 2012, p. 11).

Functional competencies – Are specific to roles or jobs within a job family. The functional competencies define specific knowledge and skills an employee in a specific role need to perform effectively. They can be generic to a job family as a whole or specific to roles, levels or jobs within the family.

The functional competencies are job-specific and drive high-performance- and quality results for the specific position. They are typically developed through assessment of high performers in certain jobs, called job analysis. The functional competencies are formulated from critical job functions. They require regular maintenance as jobs and business objectives changes over time. (Lamoueraux, 2008, p. 14).

Leadership competencies – Key competencies for roles in the organisation that involves managing, supervising or influencing the work of others in some way. Some organisations integrate leadership in every job.

The leadership competencies include attributes, skills, behaviours and knowledge that the organisation uses to assess and develop leadership. The model used for describing what is expected from a leader can be simple or complex (Lamoueraux, 2008, p. 12; Competencycore.com, 2012, p. 3).

The use of a competency model is a fundamental cornerstone in the HR system. In many organisations different language and expressions are used to describe the processes involved in recruiting, training and promoting employees. A common model throughout the organisation will make these processes comparable. This is also important in global organisations which have a need of a common language to talk about and compare people (Dalziel, 2011, p. 21).

5.10 Profiles
Competencies can be grouped into unique combinations that are used to define success for a particular role in a particular context. Examples of combinations are:

- **Core**: Reflect the set of critical competencies required to shape capabilities and culture needed to achieve strategic intent.
- **Role-specific**: Based on job analyses, often used to create job descriptions, generate development plans, selecting assignments and promotions and being able to plan for the workforce.
- **Position-specific**: Used to enhance career planning and development.
A competency profile defines the required skills, competencies, certifications and other experience required for success in a particular job or role (Lamoureux, 2008, p. 7). If accurate the profiles are intended to represent the ideal leadership texture for a particular context. It describes people who perform well and deliver results it that particular context. The closer you perform to the profile that are applicable to your work the more competent you will be considered to be according to the model in use (Ruyle, 2011, p. 23).

The profiles typically follow some kind of guidelines that describe the number of competencies included and how these are distributed between the different layers of competencies. Generally the number of competencies included in any profile is kept in the range of 12 to 15 (Competencycore.com, 2012, p. 3).

5.11 Implementation

The typical approach puts too much focus on developing the model rather than implementing and making the effort worthwhile. To be successful it is more important to get the “big things right” at the stage of development and then focus on integrating the processes in the company’s way of working and make the model possible to use on a daily basis (Ritchie, Erickson, Whitney, 2012, p. 16).

Which processes are needed to support the survival of the model depends on what you want it to be able to accomplish. Examples are: workforce planning, competence development, recruiting, performance management etc. Not all of these practices are necessarily performed with the support of company-wide processes but their purpose are more for keeping a consistent operational level than optimizing talent. When you design processes this is often done by experts. The purpose is to provide proven tools, templates and systems for leaders and employees to be more successful in dealing with talent management.
When working with talent processes and practices the number of needs can be huge and need to be prioritized in order for being possible to apply and being relevant for the level needed. The place to start usually is where the need is the greatest (Forman, 2011, p. 310).

Before you begin to implement you have to decide where to begin. There are different ways of doing this but one possible is to look at the current status of HR and talent management practices within the organisation. It might be harder to start in places that already have processes strongly connected to how the work is done. In a place with a lower level of processes steering it is possible to get a more noticeable improvement. Identify where the greatest need lies within the organisation and begin there.

Another way to approach implementation is to look for where the largest influence on leaders behaviour lie in an effort to quickly gain noticeable results of leadership change (Orr, Sneltjes, Dai, 2010, p.10).

A way of trying the model in a smaller environment is to “pilot” the process of implementation. This has the advantages that it gives the possibility to manage outcome expectations and minimize concerns regarding the costs. It also has a major benefit of giving the possibility to choose the best “ambassadors” for providing input to the development and establish credibility to the work versus other employees. A pilot gives the possibility to fine-tune the processes and the ability to engage top-performers and people interested in the project that then can spread the word throughout the company (Wasylyshyn, 2011, p. 211).

5.12 How to maintain and keep the model up to date
When the model has been developed and launched the key for maintaining it is to involve senior management and through that have the priority of the senior leadership team. It also requires the collaboration between business executives on different levels in the organisation. This will ensure that the competencies are relevant and aligned with the company’s strategy. The involvement of senior management shows that the processes needed to maintain and develop the model are a priority to the company and will keep it up to date with the strategic goals (Lamoureaux, 2008, p. 22).

The company will need to establish a set of internal processes that will allow for updating, evolving and changing the core competencies over time. All profiles in use will need regular overview and maintenance to stay up to date. Profiles can be added and removed as the company’s needs are changing over time (Lamoureaux, 2008, p. 22).

Even if processes are defined for every need they will not do any good if no governance structure exist. It is appropriate to have a learning specialist assigned to the core competency team permanently. You also need to determine the frequency of doing updates connected to organisational or other changes in demand (Ritchie, Erickson, Whitney, 2012, p. 41).

5.13 Using competencies in learning & development
When the framework for using competencies is in place in an organisation this can support the learning process by:
Focusing learning activities on what is critical for success in a job.
Provide a generic way for measuring employee performance.
Support planning of future needs in learning.
Provide standards to measure how well learning occurs with employees.

5.14 The modern way of learning

The learning environment has become more global in the sense that people that will attend training of different kinds bring more different experience and knowledge with them than what the educational system was used to before. This brings an elevated level of demand on being able to understand the relationship between the teacher and the student and how this will connect to the cultural capital brought into the relation (Selander & Kress, 2010, p. 13).

An important fact regarding learning within an organisation is that it can only occur if the individuals within are learning. Though the individual learning does not guarantee organisational learning, without it organisational learning cannot occur (Senge, 2006, p. 129).

To create a learning organisation you cannot introduce new courses with the aim of training people into mental systems to think the way you want. You need to integrate the learning process into the daily work. To be able to accomplish a change that will last this has to be done by a shared vision that will act as a force driving people to accomplish beyond what would have been the result of a demand put on them from an executive level (Senge, 2006, p. 287).

Learning must be interesting and you have to capture the individual’s attention to be able to succeed. This can be about making the right choices in relation to what resources are available and taking the social interaction that will occur into account (Selander & Kress, 2010, p. 13).

Learning cannot only be accomplished in the traditional school environment but as the process of transforming knowledge moves outside the classroom new less formal places for learning are created. In fact learning occurs almost always as we struggle with understanding the reality surrounding us (Selander & Kress, 2010, p. 65).
The concept of “blended” learning involves at least using two out of three categories:

- Formal instruction
- Informal learning
- Instruction embedded in the work

This way of providing training through a combination of different channels is becoming more commonly used (Kunneman, Turchetti, Kresswell, 2011, p. 189).

5.15 Why you sometimes fail even if the idea is good

Even if you have done it all by the book when designing a talent management system it is not a guarantee that it will ever be put into practice. If you pilot the system and everything behaves as expected and provides the benefits you promised it is not equal to that it will lead to a full scale implementation. A possible way of explaining such failed attempts are looking to the concept of mental models.

Mental models are deeply held internal images of how the world works which limits people to thinking and acting in familiar ways. The models affect what we see and therefore will play part in what we do (Senge, 2006, p. 164).

The problem with struggling with mental models when introducing new ways of working lies in when they become implicit. This means that they lie beyond the level of awareness and therefore are difficult to change due to the subjects “in-awareness” of their existence (Senge, 2006, p. 166).

To be able to work with mental models an organisation needs to provide tools that promote personal awareness and reflective skills, “infrastructures” that institutionalize regular practice with mental models, and a culture that promotes inquiry and challenging our thinking (Senge, 2006, p. 171).

When working with introducing talent management the way of overcoming the mental models can be to generate buy-in with for example business cases. When developing the case it is linked to employee or culture surveys, tied to organisational vision and clearly viewing what is the benefit of using the new system to the target group (Kaye, Cohen, Crowell, 2011, p. 167).

Mental models are strongly connected to the culture within a company and therefore in order to be able to successfully working with talent management in a company you need to understand the components of its culture. These components are:

- **Communication**: Who communicates and what is communicated?
- **Relationships**: Who controls relationships and how are they formed?
- **Rules and boundaries**: What are the explicit and implicit rules?
- **Self-esteem**: How do we talk about ourselves?
- **Environment**: Can we successfully do our jobs in this environment? (Pellant, 2011, p. 317).
These five components can be used to provide a current-state view of a company’s culture. As can be seen the cultural elements easily can be connected to the concept of mental models (Pellant, 2011, p. 317).

It can become necessary to change the culture in a company and this can be done according to the following five stages:

- **Unfreeze-Break with the past**: Set the new direction and explain the benefits.
- **Mobilize-Build the energy**: Begin to lead in the same direction using common language to explain the journey.
- **Realize**: Recognize process and shift metrics. Go from “what we need” to “what we have achieved”.
- **Reinforce**: Underpin the change with supportive enhancements to systems and processes.
- **Sustain**: Aim for continuous performance and identify which parts need to be “unfrozen”.


Parallels are possible to draw between the five stages and how talent management are defined, developed and implemented.

**5.16 Cultural capital as a way of understanding learning**

Capital can be described as symbolic and material assets. It can be divided into different kinds and one of these is the cultural capital which Pierre Bourdieu, a French cultural- and educational sociologist, described as a cultivated use of language and knowledge about high culture (Broady, 1998, p. 1).

Cultural capital can be exams from highly regarded schools, knowledge of classical music and the ability to articulate oneself both verbally and in writing. Bourdieu uses the concept of cultural capital as a way of describing the relationships of domination that tend to apply to society in general. For example the cultural capital can be said to be symbolic assets that are opposable to economic assets. If you are a part of the upper class but have no money, who are you? The cultural capital can also be defined in terms of historic titles, institutions, documents etc. In this last context the evolution of cultural capital is strongly connected to the one of the writing, printing and the educational system (Broady, 1998, p. 7).

Cultural capital in the context of modern education is about new possibilities of storing and changing symbolic capital. There exist alternate translations to the term which are “forming capital” or “educational capital”. These possible variations imply a connection between culture and education and in this context what is expected from someone in a specific position. Capital can be changed into other forms: a student that has inherited a large amount of cultural capital has a statistically higher probability of acquiring a valuable educational capital (Broady, 1998, p. 8).

When you are educating people different forms of capital are valued. It does not necessarily have to be concrete knowledge upon a subject but also general “know-how”. As a teacher it is
important to see what you are valuing and why. Many times it is not what is explicitly put as goals to achieve that are premiered but rather proofs of individual intelligence (Broady, 1998, p. 10).

This is just as important when it concerns learning in a company environment as you must make sure that you assess the qualities you are seeking to promote and not something else.

6. Method

6.1 Introduction
To be able to start with the project an orientation to the subject at hand was completed. To achieve this a literature study was conducted. The goal for this part of the project was to establish a base on which the study could stand on and relate to. The theory part also functions as an introduction to the readers of the report to give them an orientation on the subject.

The process of studying existing research was initiated before the actual research was conducted and continued as a parallel process during the complete time of the project. To study existing literature is about consuming the scientific knowledge already collected by others. The study is able to show whether there exist holes in the already conducted research and will also indicate the relevance in the questions at issue for the work. (Backman, 2008, p. 29)

To be able to find relevant literature a large amount of different compilations were read and evaluated against the goal of the study. It all started with that the researcher was given some literature on the subject at Company A as an introduction and orientation on the subject. The work then proceeded as the researcher searched for more literature relevant for the study. Throughout the research literature was added and some was discarded. The literature finally used as sources for the research was selected with the intention of giving a broad view of the subject at hand from a broad group of writers with different backgrounds and experiences.

The references used in the theory part of the work are used because they provide a view upon the different parts in light (model, roles, profiles, implementation, maintain) at the interviews but also gives a more profound picture of knowledge mediation in different environments. Literature that was chosen not to be included was done so because it was considered not to add more substance in contrast to already included literature or because it did not relate directly to the different parts in light of the study.

Everything read helped with formulating the research problem revolving competence management that later on evolved into concrete questions to be answered in the analysis and discussion.

6.2 General limitations
The study at hand has limitations that will affect the work regardless of the methodology that will ultimately be chosen. These limitations are connected to the general demand put on the study by the companies involved considering that no material and information that is considered to be internal within each of the companies is allowed to be written in a way that
can be traced back to a specific origin. This affects the study because no company names can be used and results, analysis, discussion and conclusions needs to be written at a more general level to describe context and relations more than specific occurrences.

Short introductions to the involved companies are included in the report and these are written in a general way to provide some context as to which kind of business and to which market each company are aimed. The ultimate choice of not naming any person or company involved is connected to the difficulty in having everyone involved reading specific versions of the final report in order for it to be approved for publishing. The number of involved parties would have delayed the report considerably without giving it that much more substance.

6.3 Choice of methodology
There exists no absolute difference between qualitative and quantitative methods. Fundamentally they can both provide better understanding of a subject and we need to make a strategic choice when it comes to deciding which one to use. The following questions are critical at deciding which method is suitable:

- Do we want a complete perspective or complete understanding?
- Do we want to formulate hypothesis and being able to nuance interpretations?
- Do we want to build up theories and create frames of reference?
- Do we want to understand social processes?
  (Solvang & Holme, 1997, p. 76-80)

All of the above questions come up in this thesis and in choosing method it is considered that the qualitative approach is the suitable choice in this case because it makes it possible to obtain:

- Large amount of information from few sources and the possibility to give depth at the conclusions drawn.
- Descriptions on context and structure.
- The possibility to describe and understand occurrences.
- A view from inside as the researcher is interviewing subjects that work directly with the subject.
  (Solvang & Holme, 1997, p. 76-80).

The qualitative methodology has the advantage of being able to show the situation as a whole. That kind of overview provides a deeper understanding for social processes and context.
(Solvang & Holme, 1997, p. 76-80).

When conducting a study based on the qualitative approach you need a matter of flexibility to be able to adapt to those experiences drawn during the study and the way to approach the questions at issue during the phase of data collection (Solvang & Holme, 1997, p. 80).

When conducting qualitative studies there are four principles described by John Lofland (1971) that ought to characterize the way you tackle your questions at hand:
• Proximity to what you are studying – This is about physical proximity and means that you should meet every person or occurrence face to face. This will provide a social proximity and a base for mutual confidence.
• The rendition of what occurs or said must be correct. This means that the report should strive to describe occurrences in an objective way.
• The report should include pronounced descriptive clear text when it is needed for correct understanding of the conditions studied.
• For giving the best possible understanding the report should contain direct quotations or other means showing the individual’s own way of expressing themselves.

These principles are meant to provide the analysis with the best possible authenticity of the structures and social context held within the participants. (Solvang & Holme, 1997, p. 93).

Though in this specific case direct quotation is not possible due to the limiting factor that the companies interviewed wish not to be identified explicitly. In this particular research the proximity is a factor as every subject interviewed is met in person. Though the meeting face to face only will happen once continuous communication is possible to retain through other means of communication as e-mail and phone contact. When it comes to trying to keep what is written as objective as possible it is a matter of awareness and transparency held with the researcher that is conducting the work. As the interview subjects consequently have been able to come with input on the data and analysis and discussion are kept as close to the literature as possible the result should be relatively accurate. The report is as descriptive as possible without revealing the companies specifically.

6.4 The qualitative research process

The qualitative research process begins with what the researcher has as preconceived perceptions on the subject at hand. These can possibly originate from experience, education or other scientific work.

The process will be built on a difference between values held by the researcher and facts considering the subject at hand. In the research these two perspectives are immensely connected and will express the interaction that will occur between the researcher and the observed units.

This interaction between theory and empirics will constantly occur during the process of conducting research and formulating the results (Solvang & Holme, 1997, p. 98).

In this research the above process (see figure 6) can be applied to:
• **Research idea:** The stage where the researcher had thoughts of where and what to study. This stage also includes the idea from Company A and how these two perspectives meet.

• **Literature review:** The initial and continuously ongoing study conducted to orient upon the subject.

• **Theoretical formulation of the research problem:** Using both the research idea and the literature studied to formulate the research problem.

• **Empirical research questions:** A kind of “melt-down” of both the theoretical perspective and the orientation given by outside conditions such as the interest of Company A.

• **Research design:** Overall planning of how the work would be conducted and what was needed at certain points.

• **Data collection:** In this study this is performing the interviews at the four external companies and at Company A.

• **Data analysis:** Writing down the collected data, reducing it to a manageable size and validate it against the interview subjects.

• **Answering the empirical research questions:** The data collected used for answering the questions earlier formulated.

• **Theoretical interpretation of the results:** Occur in the analysis, discussion and the result.

• **Comparison to earlier research:** Occur continually due to the fact that the theoretical perspective is constructed by results from earlier research.

• **Conclusions:** Drawn from the result used to answer the research questions in relation to the theoretical perspective constructed.

### 6.5 Method for conducting interviews

When conducting interviews you have to work consequently to be able to find the answers to your questions at hand. This part of the thesis contains the aspects considered by the researcher when conducting the interviews.

### 6.5.1 The difficulty of interpretation

A fault that can be made by the conductor of the interview is looking for to validate their own model of thinking and therefore interpret your own opinion in an answer (Lantz, 2013, p. 16). In this study the risk of doing this is eliminated by the interviewer trying to keep to pre-formulated questions while not steering the subjects in a way that will taint the results.

When using interviews as a way to collect data interpretation always will be made at some stage. The question is how it is possible to collect data which has the validity that are asked for. In this case it will be a question of the possibility to generalize. If it is possible to generalize the result from one company and compare this to the result of another the data fills it purpose (Lantz, 2013, p. 19).

To be able to get relevant data from the interviews you have to ask the right questions and to be able to compare between interviews you have to get answers to the same questions. The
starting point is why is the question important and relevant? In this study this was decided by a combination of studying literature on the subject to make sure that all relevant parts were included and the input from the project manager on Company A at which parts, according to his experience, where relevant to look at.

6.5.2 Formulate the questions

The question driving this master thesis is not the same that will be used in the interviews as these only represent a limited width of the complete thesis. The starting point is that we would like to know what experiences other Swedish companies have drawn from working with competency-based management.

As a start you have to know the relevant theory that is supporting the concept of competency-based management to be able to determine what is actually important and what is not. This stage is about connecting your questions to the theory base that has already been established (Lantz, 2013, p. 29). When the theory base exists it will provide the ability to reflect the results and content of the questions.

From this base five different topics, considered crucial to being able to implement and work with competency-based management, were selected:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>What competency model are you using?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How was this model chosen/developed?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Is the model new or based on another?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Which demands does the model need to satisfy from involved parties?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What is the goal for using this model?</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Roles</th>
<th>Were new or existing roles used?</th>
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<tbody>
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<td></td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Competency profiles</th>
<th>How were these developed? Which methods were used?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>From existing library or was job analysis performed?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How many competencies per profile?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Are there competency profiles for every job or a need for dividing into groups etc?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What structure do the profiles follow?</td>
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<tr>
<th>Implementation</th>
<th>Which problems did exist? Success factors?</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How was the work communicated with employees on different levels?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How was the support from management/employees?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>In which processes are the competency profiles used?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Was the implementation done in stages?</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Maintain</th>
<th>Is there a relevant organisation to support/maintain/develop the work?</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Is there a clear structure for governing/ownership of the profiles/model?</td>
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</table>
Each of these five then was given sub-questions related to the main subject. The idea is to be able to catch an overall picture while still being able to make sure that the relevant parts are touched. The subjects are meant to answer:

**Model:** to determine the overall view of competency modelling and to find out what approach has been chosen to work with and why. This includes getting a picture of any existing previous model used by the company and in that case how this can be connected to the one used at present.

This part of the interview seeks to obtain answer to what the model focuses on and how this has affected its construction.

**Roles:** to find how many roles there are and if the creation of these has been consistent with the overall determined model or has remains from older used models.

This part will provide an answer to what demands are put on the role structure both internally in the company but also if there are external stakeholders that will add content.

**Competency profiles:** to find out how these have been constructed. If there are guidelines and whether these have been followed.

The main objective in this part is to find out whether the profiles are built following the model constructed and if they are distinct and easy to understand to all stakeholders.

**Implementation:** To find the success factors and problems encountered while implementing the above overall model containing roles and competency profiles.

Focus lay on how the company has approached the implementation of the model constructed and the role and profiles contained. Particular interest lay on the communication within the company and whether the implementation was done in stages or all at once.

**Maintain:** What approach has been chosen for maintaining the model? This also includes developing and the focus on ownership and responsibility for the model and the included processes.

The overall focus lay on the clarity in ownership and whether the processes needed were defined at an early stage.

**6.5.3 Choosing a relevant type of interview**

When choosing the qualitative way of working this means using a certain approach at interviewing. The qualitative interview has the strength that the research situation somewhat resembles an everyday situation and an ordinary conversation. It is a form where the researcher performs the least grade of steering the subjects. We would like the subjects to be able to control the conversation to a certain grade. The researcher holds the outer limitations and has to make certain getting answers to the questions in focus (Holme & Solvang, 1997, p. 99).
To be able to provide an interview situation as free as possible while getting answers to the questions at hand a template was constructed. This put a structure to the interview in that sense that the phenomena and context are defined. This will mean that the person who is conducting the interview will introduce what is at hand and that will narrow the context to what is expected to be found, though not limiting the possibility to obtain answers that show that it is not (Lantz, 2013, p. 45).

The qualitative interview does not ordinarily use templates for the questions and it is important that the use of one does not limit the subjects’ answers but provides a “red thread” through the interviews. As the researcher beforehand has a certain view of what to expect and what factors are important it is not needed to follow the template in a specific order or to get explicit answers to all the questions on it. The template ultimately provides ability to overview if all the major areas have been touched (Holme & Solvang, 1997, p. 101).

A problem when conducting structured interviews can be that it assumes that:

- Words have the same meaning for different people
- That all people are able to place themselves into a category and on scales
- That the question at hand has meaning and similar meaning to everyone and that everyone that are asked the same question will perceive it similarly.
  (Lantz, 2013, p. 58).

These possible complications were considered not to taint the result of the interviews because of the fact that everyone interviewed works with the concept and everyone was interviewed by the same person that conducted the data processing.

6.5.4 Data reduction

Before conducting the interviews a choice had to be made regarding in which format the data collected will be saved. To be able to decide this you have to choose what format and what parts you will focus on in analyzing the data. In this case the research seek to find similarities or differences in working methods and approaches.

Though the reliability of the data collected is important it is not vital to be able to catch every possible tone in the interviews conducted. This led to making a choice not to transcribe the interviews but to take notes and record what was said. Afterwards the notes were used in combination with the recordings to write down the results. Every result was then e-mailed to the respective interview subjects who approved that the information was correct (Lantz, 2013, p. 144).

The data reduction was done with the aim of creating good conditions for analysing while keeping the data needed accurate. Focus is on the five key subjects and every part that does not directly relate to these have been removed (Lantz, 2013, p.145)
6.5.5 Using the data collected for analysing:

When the data have been collected and reduced to give a relevant source for analysis it is time to view it from the perspective gained by compiling the theory base. When applying the theory base on the data collected you are able to get a more profound and wider understanding of the subject at hand (Lantz, 2013, p. 159-160).

It is now possible to view the data collected from another perspective and this is the initial part of the process of analysis. The aim for this thesis is to use the data collected through the interviews to perform an analysis that will find differences between the theory perspective and the reality. The goal of the process is not to find “faults” done in the translation of theory to actual use in the daily work at companies but rather to find out what interpretations and experiences Swedish companies have done (Lantz, 2013, p. 159-160).

The process of analysing seeks to answer the research questions and when doing this the complete material collected will be used. The research questions are defining the area of interest and are used when reading through the collected material to choose which parts to focus on (Holme & Solvang, 1997, p. 142).

6.5.6 Validity and reliability

In the completion of this thesis conclusions have been drawn using the data collected. In this stage the validity of the conclusion are being tested. This is done by having read through the material searching for whether there are any alternative ways of interpretation. Because of the fact that the persons that were interviewed have approved the material gained in all stages of translation and reduction the data is considered accurate. This put the focus on the connection from data to analyse to conclusion (Lantz, 2013, p. 161).

A possible problem with the collection of the data is that it is heavily controlled by the fact that none of the companies involved wish to have critical information that can be connected back to them in a master thesis. This has led to that the level of writing is general and due to the fact that the data collected has been viewed by the ones giving the interviews and has been revised a couple of times in order to not reveal unwanted things the material will lack some level of gradation.

Another fact is the possible problem originating with the fact that all studies have been in the form of interviews due to the condition that there was no possibility to study the work with competence in “real life”. This has to be taken into consideration when reading the work.

7. Data

7.1 Introduction

The interviews were conducted in person at the companies in question. To be able to compare between the different companies all interviews used the same template for questioning, where recordings and notes were taken. The interviews were conducted in Swedish and the result then was put to print and verified to be correct by the person that was interviewed.
The data collected will be sorted as Company 1-4 and the data from Company A will be sorted into which perspective it represents (internal, external or division).

Here is a table-formatted overview presented of some of the facts gathered while the complete records are to be found in the appendix-section of the thesis.

**7.2 Model**

The section is focusing on the model used to determine the overall view of competency modelling and to find out what approach has been chosen to work with and why.

This is connected to the theory with the statement that the talent management model will look different from company to company due to differences in values, vision and strategy. The approach at adopting a working model will therefore look different from case to case. The design of processes will need to be considered for every unique case and once decided be implemented throughout the company consequently (Forman, 2011, p. 307).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Company 1:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Make learning available to employees.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Focus on leaders.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Education of leaders needs to involve hard and soft skills.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• External legislated demands are present. Responsibility lay on the closest manager that they are fulfilled.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Tasks at work more complex now than before, model provides a way of finding what drives people and stimulates that.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Developed from existing structure in company.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Will be used for bringing the workforce up to date, make learning objectives clear and bring change of attitude towards learning.</td>
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<th>Company 2:</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Based on which roles that meets with customers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Combines what is needed for a successful meeting with external demands put on by legislation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Focus lay on the individual’s ability to perform with the adding of legislated demands.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The model is becoming simpler and more personal. It needs to leave room for diversity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Focus lay on the individual and the model is used to describe a person in a way that makes it possible for the organisation to make use of you in an efficient way.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The parts of the model must be able to be combined in different ways to be able to fit into all situations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Previous ways of modelling have been too far from the individual and has functioned as a template for saying how the individual should perform. Now it is the other way around.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Company 3:</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Focus lay on the individual and the business.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Identifies which business processes are in the company and breaks them down into tasks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• All competencies are measured after a scale of proficiency.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
- The model is used in career planning, individual goals for development, performance analysis and in combination gives the possibility to perform gap analysis to find specific needs of learning development and application.
- Provides transparency between roles and different sites.
- Define what you do and why you do it. Descriptions should be short and concrete.

**Company 4:**
- Based on roles that are connected to tasks performed.
- All parts must be concrete and easy to grasp.
- Legislated demands are connected to roles. These demands you either satisfy or not.
- Goal to be generically applicable and useable throughout the company.
- To meet the need of a common vocabulary to describe such things as: position, role, competence and permission.
- Supports the leader and the employee in the way that it gives the ability to understand the daily tasks at hand.
- Provides transparency between roles and sites. Gives the ability to take part in own development.

**Company A external:**
- Each division in the company has its own way of working with competence management.
- No company-wide model at present, existing parts are born from different needs in different divisions.
- Existing parts are about manning position at production, create demands on which education is required, being able to create descriptions for different positions and to recruit personnel.
- There exist no company-wide standard on how descriptions of positions should be developed and what they should contain.
- The existing models have been used for the ability to have the right amount of workforce at the right time and to qualify employees to be able to perform the tasks required.
- A recent implementation is the use of the employees’ closest supervisor in setting the pay. The manager makes an assessment of how well the employee meets up with certain requirements. These requirements are not standardized which makes the assessments depend on the person doing them.

**Company A internal:**
- The present model is regulated by central documents which control the overall development of competence within the company.
- The present model is too general to provide an effective way of working.
- Central processes are defined but are not followed in a consistent way because they are perceived not to connect to the work actually performed and the fact that not everyone is aware of their existence.
- There is no common method to provide a possibility to have comparable evaluation which rules out the possibility to measure that the correct learning activities are applied and whether the wanted result is accomplished.
- The aim for using a model is to make sure the company possesses the right competence needed, at the right place and time.

**Company A section:**
- The general goal for using a systematic approach is to retain the people employed by
providing training and to educate managers in the ability to lead, assess and develop
the people working for them.

- The model used comes from HR, centrally.
- It is easier to assess against technical qualifications than administrative roles which
leads to an update of the role descriptions to be able to assess them all.
- The division’s descriptions are virtually identical with the main organisations but
some adjustments have been made and all descriptions have been translated into
Swedish.
- In the descriptions social and leadership qualifications are defined.
- The social qualifications apply to all employees while different departments then have
individual needs that are added.
- The formal qualifications are formulated centrally and will be put on the intranet for
everyone to have easy access. These are formulated in cooperation with the managers
closest to the roles.
- When formulating and updating descriptions it is a matter of combining what written
descriptions exist with what the actual managers put as needs.

(Table 1)

7.3 Roles
This section seek to find out how many roles there are and if the creation of these has been
consistent with the overall determined model or has remains from older used models.
An example of why defining roles are so important is that every role consists of a specific
combination of competencies that will make it easy to compare to others (Ruyle, 2011, p. 22).

Company 1:
- Every site has limited number of roles.
- Every position is a combination of roles.
- Every employee is expected to be able to man all positions.

Company 2:
- Based on legislated demands and how the company views upon how successful
business is performed.

Company 3:
- Central policy documents issued by management level define what the company does
and divide it into functions to be able to do this.
- Roles have been identified from these central documents and the company structure.

Company 4:
- Combination of previously existing and newly developed is used.
- Legislated demands affect certain roles.
- Based on external demands (such as legislated). Made more specific and added
internal demands.

Company A external:
- Every job has a description but they vary in range, shape and clarity.
- Positions can consist of different roles but is done differently in different divisions.

Company A internal:
- Uncertainty concerning the definitions of position, role and competence.
- All divisions have job descriptions but with different structure.

Company A division:
- Demands that are put on roles come centrally from the company.
All employees should have role descriptions.
- Descriptions of positions should be kept general to not limit the possible use.
- Roles and descriptions of positions should be connected.
- Role descriptions need to be flexible enough to adapt to for example market changes.
- Some competences apply to everyone, for example the company’s core values.

(Table 2)

7.4 Competency profiles
This section seek to find out how the profiles have been constructed, if there are guidelines and whether these have been followed.
A competency profile defines the required skills, competencies, certifications and other experience required for success in a particular job or role (Lamoureaux, 2008, p. 7).

Company 1:
- In development at the moment.
- Focus is on the individual.
- No library used, developed by studying the work conducted.
- Contains a limited number of core competencies.
- Used in appraisals to give meaning to follow-up on what has actually been performed.
- Assessed against how close to the company vision you are.
- Difference between ability to manage and leadership.

Company 2:
- Based on which demands are put on the specific role.
- Narrowed down to clarify what are core competencies.
- Developed through job analysis and adding personal characteristics.
- Work in progress to limit the number of competencies included.
- Structured after which competencies are needed in different parts of the company.
- All profiles include core competencies which are based on the company’s vision and values.

Company 3:
- Developed through job analysis, studying the highest achievers in specific positions.
- A competency library is used but is not considered able to include everything which leads to the adding of company-specific parts.
- Every profile consists of a specified maximum number of competencies.
- Traditional values and expectations are connected to specific roles but the individual and the connection to outside market demands are more unpredictable and volatile.
- Every profile is structured after functional areas to make clear that it has a purpose.
- Traditional competencies are fetched from a company-wide library, the rest are connected to specific roles.

Company 4:
- Work in progress. The profiles will not be used to evaluate individual employees initially. Makes development easier as it focuses on the tasks and not how well they are performed.
- Challenge to be concrete and still generic. If there are expectations on how a role should perform this is described through a competency.
- The company has internal documents which describes expectations on how different roles should perform. These have been translated into competencies.
• A position is able to consist of different roles and permissions. This creates a dynamic way of creating positions locally that consists of generic pieces.

• The same demands on behaviour are put on all employees and are strongly connected to the company’s values.

**Company A external:**

• There are profiles but as there is no company-wide model in use they lack a common structure.

• Some divisions have profiles which define competencies and which proficiency levels that should be aimed for.

• The existing profiles are defined from the view of what the local division needs and not from a company-wide perspective which provide no possibility for comparison across divisions.

**Company A internal:**

• Profiles are not established in a generic way.

• Ownership and maintenance of profiles and role descriptions are unclear.

**Company A section:**

• Different roles have different demands put on them.

• The demands regulate which courses you are able to attend.

(Table 3)

**7.5 Implementation**

This section seek to find the success factors and problems encountered while implementing the model containing roles and competency profiles. As the typical approach puts too much focus on developing a model rather than implementing and making the effort worthwhile it is usually more important to get the “big things right” at the stage of development and then focus on integrating the processes in the companies’ way of working and make the model possible to use on a daily basis (Ritchie, Erickson, Whitney, 2012, p. 16).

**Company 1:**

• Key success is to create interest and through that a curiosity to know more.

• Introduced centrally with education of employees who then was “let” out in the organisation to demonstrate the benefits.

• Create something that people throughout the organisation are talking about.

• A change in the view of education as knowledge-passing- to a behaviour-encouraging process is needed.

• It has to be made clear that the use will make the everyday work easier.

• Primarily communicate to local managers which then can pass the work onto their respective employees.

**Company 2:**

• Keys for success are to define the ownership and processes needed for maintaining the model.

• The model is used in securing the competencies needed for legislated demands.

• The model needs to be able to combine structure and level of compliance in order to work.

• You cannot build a competence process from a structural need within the company to map things concerning the overall competence supply. This approach fails to see the value for the individual.
- Communication to everyone involved is needed and everyone involved need to see the benefits.
- The project was not driven by HR but as part of a general reconstruction of the company.

Company 3:
- Start with designing the processes needed and the governance structure to maintain them.
- Determine which combination of systems you need in order to satisfy your demands.
- Do one piece at a time when implementing. Make a pilot, evaluate and revise every stage.
- Clear communication is needed to determine that everyone knows what they should and when.

Company 4:
- Challenge that people do not want to change vocabulary. Need to find common ground of describing things.
- You have to make sure that you have support for what you are introducing and find expressions that have a natural feeling and are easy to use by everyone involved.
- A success factor was that the company lacked a systematic approach on competence management. The project has been driven close to the operation and not from a strict HR-perspective.
- The need originated from employee level as to being able to describe the daily tasks. Also a need of being able at showing that legislated demands were met contributed to the work.
- A pilot was conducted on a smaller division of the company. This was able to test all parts and afterwards an evaluation was done and the model revised.
- Always started with the managing group for every local division and their understanding and support for the approach.

Company A external:
- There has been no systematic way of implementing and working with competencies.
- A competence process exists but covers only appraisals and development plans and lack the possibility to assess.
- There is no clear ownership defined for the competence process. Each division is highly autonomous and it is unclear if every division has someone that works with competencies.
- Roles has been mapped against learning activities but are not used on a regular basis.
- The main connection to the competence process has been to learning and development and to some extent having the right people in production.
- Descriptions are used in recruiting but not in a generic way tied to the competence process.

Company A internal:
- Present work is about establishing processes, methodology and templates that are applicable to what the organisation requires.

Company A section:
- During the recent two years training of all leaders and managers have been performed.
- The training was mandatory initially but then awoke interest with the employees which lead to the development of more courses.
- A course management system is used to keep track of training in progress, completed and future needs.
Focus at present is to attract new personnel and is accomplished by connecting with the schools which hold the future employees. If a need for a specific course cannot be met locally at the division a request is sent to the company’s central provider of education. If the courses do not exist new ones are developed and a pilot is completed before implementing in full scale.

(7.6 Maintain)

This section seek to answer which approach has been chosen for maintaining the model. This also includes developing and the focus is on ownership and responsibility for the model and the included processes. Any company will need to establish a set of internal processes that will allow for updating, evolving and changing the core competencies over time. All profiles in use will need regular overview and maintenance to stay up to date. Profiles can be added and removed over time as the company’s needs are changing over time (Lamoureaux, 2008, p. 22).

Company 1:
- Key is to keep it simple.
- Do one thing at a time.
- Would need more resources.
- The competence management process is owned by the company business school and from this cooperation with HR is ongoing.

Company 2:
- The lack of processes to maintain the system made it soon out of date.
- The only part kept up to date is the one connected to the legislated demands.
- There is no organisation with the responsibility to maintain and develop the work.

Company 3:
- There is a group responsible for updating which competencies there are and which are needed. The group revises which job roles exists and which are needed to meet future demands.
- Every profile has a global owner who is responsible for ensuring that the role’s description is actual and relevant, satisfies the demands put on it and accurately describes different levels of career possibilities.
- The process of keeping the model up to date connects throughout the company.

Company 4:
- The model affect many subprocesses and controls the overall competence supply which makes it business critical. This fact reduces the risk of decay.
- The competence supply is a sub process to the HR-process which is owned by the HR-director. Every sub process has an individual owner with the responsibility to keep it up to date.
- It is critical to clearly define owners to all processes; these are responsible to see to that new needs are brought into the model and obsolete ones are taken out.

Company A external:
- There is an organisation to maintain the process but more resources are needed.
- It is unclear who owns each individual job and who is responsible for keeping corresponding descriptions and profiles up to date.
- The present work is conducted in groups coordinated by HR.
Company A internal:
- The future model will be managed by a central support function consisting of experts on learning, methodology and strategic planning.

Company A division:
- The division’s competence process is owned by the personnel manager.
- Responsibility for keeping the content and processes surrounding it up to date lies with HR.
- When used in recruiting it is made sure that the role descriptions contain enough to meet what is searched for in new employees.
- Regular updates are done when the central roles are changed. These changes are evaluated and then decided if they are relevant for the division or not.

(Table 5)

8. Analysis

8.1 The result from the four best practice companies
8.1.1 Why talent management?

The motives behind why the companies have chosen to work with talent management are about laying focus on the individual (company 1-3) and what it takes to perform successful business tasks and decisions (company 2-3). The focus on the individual is about making it clear what is expected and how this can be achieved (company 1, 3, 4). An example is that the concepts of position, role, competence and permission are not used with consequent meaning and therefore cannot be compared within a division of a company or within the company as a whole (company 4). In the literature talent management is described as a way of providing a bridge between a company’s strategic vision and values into behaviours expected to be seen with the employees (Competencycore.com, 2012, p. 1). The need to provide frameworks and common vocabulary for being able to provide the employees with understanding and ability to compare between each other also is a strong force for any attempt on implementing a systematic way of working (Ruyle, Orr, 2011, p. 22).

In more than one of the companies the need is presented as to making company-wide objectives and values connect to the employees and the way they interact (company 2, 3, 4). A special focus is put on leadership and the effects this has on the development of a company (company 1, 4). The leadership is a vital part in working with talent management and often is the focus of initial implementation. This is a way of both generating better leaders within the company and also makes change happen quickly. This is due to the fact that when you obtain the support of the leaders within the company and the application of the concept starts to be seen, the employees will most likely follow (Orr, Sneltjes, Dai, 2010, p. 10).

A common factor that leads to the use of systematic talent management is to being able to present evidence that outside demands such as legislated requirements are met and successfully kept up to date (company 1, 2, 4). As a company’s talent strategy makes it clear which investments they will do in the people working there it will only come natural that you would like to cover outside demands as well (Berger, Berger, 2011, p. 3-5). The systematic
approach makes legislated demands easy to keep track of and up to date and presents an easy way of displaying both outside and inside the company that these demands are met (Ritchie, Erickson, Whitney, 2012, p. 26).

The market, that can be described as an outside combination of factors, is constantly changing and all of the companies would like to keep up to meet these changes for being competitive (company 1-4). This includes the ability to make the employees able to adapt quickly but also the possibility for personal growth and career development. For the companies to be able to adapt it is more about understanding that working with talent is not a new idea but it has changed due to the agile environment of today. Present companies meet more diverse demands due to more agile structure, markets and strategies today than before (Kunneman, Turchetti, Cresswell, Sleezer, 2011, p. 184; Dalziel, 2011, p. 132).

The exact focus on working with talent management varies but includes: making learning available to the employees (company 1), give appraisals that are relevant to what individuals actually have performed (company 1, 2, 4) and connect this to the organisation’s vision and goals (company 2, 4). Different companies will have different needs and therefore approaches will be more or less extensive. Some kind of company-wide vision and values are required for making company-wide approaches and these will always stand in the centre though the model connecting with them will look different (Dalziel, 2011, p. 14).

8.1.2 How is the concept kept alive and actual?

All of the companies have central documents that, at some level, describe the overall goal for the business performed (company 1-4). For the concept of talent management to be kept alive these documents often have been rewritten to mirror reality (company 3, 4). This can be put in relation to the idea of that in order for an organisation to succeed it must be able to articulate to the employees what is expected in the areas that have real business impact. The evidence of how you should perform for contributing must be concrete (Broady 1998, p. 7-8; Kochanski, Elliot, 2011, p. 113).

To make the individual able to grasp the concept and find it meaningful descriptions also need to reflect what actual high-achievers are doing. This has been done by for instance job analysis where actual performers are studied to see what it takes to be successful in certain roles and positions (company 1-4). The focus on the individual also is about making the concept meaningful on an individual level (company 1, 3). It is communicated to the individual that applying the use of a system will provide a flexible but manageable way for the company to use their employees effectively but also for the employee to be able to have certainty in what is expected from the employer (company 1, 3, 4). The flexible approach can be connected to the need of meeting not only known present but unknown future requirements. Though the connection to the individual is clear it must also be firmly connected to the company as a whole through the core values and vision. A company cannot be seen as either a solid unit or mere individuals but as something in-between. This dual image can be connected to the fact that a learning organisation needs the individuals to successfully learn in order to be able to learn as a whole (Dalziel, 2011, p. 15; Senge, 2006, p. 287).
Some of the companies have used pre-constructed dictionaries and models to some length (company 2, 3) but are consistent in the view that a model constructed outside cannot provide a company with all its needs due to differences in values and ways of working. Therefore adaption to the specific needs and company culture are needed (company 4). The process of adaption also will provide a way of understanding the present culture at the company, the cultural capital that employees possess and the mental models that exist. The process of adaption will need the employees to be able to be self-aware and have reflective skills in order to work (Pellant 2011, p. 317; Broady 1998, p. 7-8).

The source of the need has been from different levels of the different companies but the way to make the use consistent is to view the relationship between the local supervisor and employee as the base for introducing and managing the concept (company 1). This is reflected in the development and implementation of the concept as it often is introduced to the local supervisor that will understand the benefits initially and then introduce these to respective employees (company 1, 4). It can be seen as with the modern way of learning you have to capture the individual’s attention for being able to even start with a new concept. To simply introduce new courses designed to change how individuals view concepts will not get the work done (Selander, Kress, 2010, p. 13). For an approach to be able to evolve into a consistent way of working you will need explicit support from the company management level (Lamoureaux, 2008, p. 22). It is also appropriate to initiate the work in stages and prioritize what you really need to apply and which level of processes is needed to get the model running. It is a thin line at getting what you ask for but at a reasonable level of complexity. Once the use can be viewed in operation in some part of the company and create value to those working there the word will spread and others will be interested to join (Wasylyshyn, 2011, p. 211).

8.1.3 What conclusions have been drawn?

Any company working with implementing talent management has to define what functionality they need and what motives lie behind as soon as possible in the process of development for being able to communicate these to everyone involved (company 1-4). The definition of what you want and which processes will be required to obtain this will provide means for providing everybody with answers to why they should be interested in the concept at all (Kaye,Cohen,Crowell,2011, p. 167).

For the work to be successful clearly defined processes are needed (company 2, 3). You have to resist the temptation of creating models that are on a too high level and therefore will result in a low level of compliance (company 2). All companies agree on the fact that the model must be understandable to everyone involved for being of any use (company 1-4). Though the model also cannot be too simple, you have to stay clear on what it is required to do. This can, at an early stage, be focused on defining which areas the model should be able to be applied in and what requirements it should satisfy (Forman, 2011, p. 310). If the processes are going to satisfy the intended use but still remain on a general understandable level you can use systems thinking as a way of breaking down actions to understand how they interact and can be
described individually. In order to understand the whole you need to be able to successfully break it down to its underlying components (Senge, 2006, p. 73).

When implementing you need to take one thing at a time (company 1-4). How this is done varies between the interview subjects but generally it is about containing the process at an early stage to be able to create buy-in and evaluate to straighten out potential kinks (company 3, 4). The literature suggests piloting the model in stages. This has advantages such as manageable outcome expectations and minimizes concerns about costs. The major benefits though are the possibility to straighten out problems and make the usefulness of the model visible to employees on a small scale that then can spread the word throughout the company (Wasylyshyn, 2011, p. 211).

Everyone agree on the fact that clearly defined ownership of the processes and content are crucial for the survival of the model (company 1-4). Another fact that is brought up is that before you have the purpose and processes defined it is difficult to develop a model that will capture the overall needs while being able to successfully survive in the long run (company 3). A governance structure that are clear to everyone involved and defines what are required for being successful will make the operation of keeping everything running manageable (Ritchie, Erickson, Whitney 2012, p. 41).

Generally it is easier to implement systems that support the securing of meeting outside demands than inner. This is due to the fact that the outside demands almost always are more clearly defined and either you meet them or not (company 2). There is no scale to be assessed against and therefore this part often is the one that is most likely to work in implementation and survive due to the outside pressure put on the company at being able to present its status at any time (company 4). This can be connected with the idea of mental models and cultural capital (Senge, 2006, p. 164, 287). When it is an outside instance that are making demands it becomes a situation of “us against them” that unites the company against an outer “enemy” so to say. Also the fact that legislation are deeply rooted in most individuals as something natural to obey this becomes a situation that is enhanced to work with the help of mental models and cultural capital (Broady, 1998, p. 10).

Who initiates the work and where it continues to reside within the company affects its outcome. The companies’ implementation and origin of need differ from management level directions (company 3) to individual employee’s needs of understanding the daily tasks at hand (company 1, 4). In this it is both important who initially has the need and how this is communicated through the company but also that the management level of the company shows its support for the development of the model. Different companies have different structures that will affect where and why the need arise, how it is seen and what will happen afterwards (Pellant, 2011, p. 317; Senge, 2006, p. 287).

8.2 Result from Company A
8.2.1 Why talent management?

The present motive overall is about having the right amount of workforce at the right time and make sure the employees are qualified to perform what is expected from them (Company A
external, internal). This is much alike the view upon talent management as a means to ensure that organisations have the human resource capability they need to be able to meet current and future business requirements (Berger, Berger, 2011, p. 3-5).

Though the overall goal can be said to be mutual the approaches done look very different in the divisions of the company (Company A internal, external, division). The motives for approaching the subject therefore are divided. It can be everything from manning specific positions (Company A external), define requirements on training activities (Company A external, internal, division) to creating descriptions for positions used in recruiting (Company A external, division). The literature states that the motive for using a system must be clear and understandable for everyone involved. It also needs to be generically applicable throughout the organisation in order to work as intended (Forman, 2011, p. 307). If you are able to communicate the same motives to everyone involved it is a start but you also need to define the processes involved in doing it. The process of developing and implementing will have to be adapted to the way the company is working (Senge, 2006, p. 73). As talent management in a company is about maximizing everyone’s strengths, encourage diversity and encourage innovation the way this is communicated and what it is intended to be used for must be clear to everyone involved and everyone in a leadership position need to be shown the benefits in order to be onboard (Thorne 2011, p. 256). This regards every leader from management level down to the individual’s closest supervisor (Pellant, 2011, p. 317).

There are central documents which control the overall development of talent within the company (Company A internal). The documents describe the processes involved in competence development, management planning, remuneration, employer branding and recruiting (Company A internal). The model is meant to provide the possibility for the company to possess the competence needed, at the right place and time (Company A internal). Talent management is not a new idea but today’s structures, strategies and markets are more agile than before thus requiring a more flexible approach (Dalziel, 2011, p. 132). A key factor is to not only communicate what is needed from within the company but also have the capability to adapt structures and ways of working to outside demands such as rapid changes in the market (Kunneman, Turchetti, Crasswell, Sleezer, 2011, p. 184).

In a division that is working with a systematic approach this is focused on keeping employees by providing training and being able to educate managers in the ability to lead, assess and develop the people working for them (Company A division). Though the model is based on the central structure adjustments have been made to meet local demands. The key at this point is central control but with the flexibility to meet up with local demands (Dalziel, 2011, p. 15).

As an important part of talent management is being able to correctly describe everyday situations and the needs that arise there you have to turn to the people actually performing the work and their closest managers (Ruyle, Orr, 2011, p. 23). In this case the model used is central and could be applied to a company as a whole (Company A division). As the components are kept unchanged and the adaption is about describing in more detail and providing the ability to break down the concept to something that is easily recognizable to the individual employee but still manageable as a resource in the company as a whole (Competencycore.com, 2012, p. 13).
8.2.2 How is the concept kept alive and actual?

Due to the non-consistent approach the use of the model are in the range from almost nothing to clearly defined (Company A external, internal). As different divisions of the company have defined their needs differently and therefore have different ways of working these needs are what drives the work (Company A external). As there is no clearly defined picture of what the needs are the process of maintenance looks very different all in range from full use in a division of the company to nothing in other parts (Company A external, internal). This can be connected to the literature concerning what will happen if you develop a model, that is complete and applicable to the company as a whole, and the processes are not implemented as fundamental in the regular way of working. A change in structure needs to be under-pinned by clearly implemented and understandable processes (Pellant, 2011, p. 319). When a model is constructed it needs to be tested, revised and get the support from management for being able to stay alive. It is important to get the cornerstones right but not to focus on details initially (Ritchie, Erickson, Whitney, 2012, p. 16).

To be able to implement a concept that will survive clearer processes, methodology and templates that are applicable to the organisations needs are required (Company A external, internal). The key for adopting this part is to keep everything at a manageable level that will be able to reach the goals but is kept at a reasonable level for everyone involved. In order to manage this a prioritizing of needs may be needed (Forman, 2011, p. 310).

A recent implementation is the use of the opinion of the closest manager in setting the pay (Company A external). This is in close connection to talent management and works as an initiator for implementing a company-wide system. This can be compared to the way of implementing in small scale but in the manner that it is a wide approach but at a limited scope. Even if it is not a classical “pilot attempt” it has the possibility to manage outcome expectations and the ability to establish credibility with the employees if they can feel that they are judged by a common model. Another possibility is to create buy-in with the closest manager with the possibility of providing tools to facilitate the process of assessment (Kay, Cohen, Crowell, 2011, p. 167; Ruyle, Orr, 2011, p. 21).

As there are processes centrally defined but the resources available are not enough for keeping them integrated into the daily work the model will become outdated and lose its connection with the individual employees and managers (Company A internal). It is unclear who has the explicit responsibility for keeping the job descriptions and profiles that exist relevant for the demands put on them (Company A external, internal). In order for the work to be performed systematically the processes involved need to be clearly connected to the company’s vision, values and goals and through that become “natural” in the sense that the use of them comes naturally (Senge 2006, p. 287; Lamoureaux, 2008, p. 22).

In a division the development of descriptions are a process consisting of the centrally defined formal qualifications and what the managers closest to the actual work has to say about what is needed for being successful (Company A division). All employees have role descriptions and these are kept general to not limit the purpose for which they can be used. This attempt can be closely connected with what the literature has to say about the fact that you need to
stick to a central model but do not have to let it be limiting in that it is formulated on a level too high or low to be relevant. An adoption can be made when you are listening at what the employees that perform the actual work and their closest managers have to say. As long as you are true to the common framework and vocabulary of the central model and are able to communicate the underlying motives behind why you are using it you are free to adapt to meet local needs (Dalziel, 2011, p. 15).

8.2.3 What conclusions have been drawn?

The overall model is too general to provide an efficient way of working (Company A internal). Though processes are defined centrally these are not followed consequently. This is because the level of the model does not provide a clear connection to the work actually performed. The existing processes are focused on the appraisals and need to be widened to include more. As these processes have been so strongly connected to the appraisals they can be described as mental models that are deeply held with people and controls the way they look upon the present model (Senge, 2006, p. 164).

Descriptions are on a too high level and vary so much in their design that though comparison is possible they will not provide the possibility to generically apply different descriptions across divisions or company-wide (Company A external, internal) (Forman, 2011, p. 310). The need to be able to connect to what is described is crucial for the work with talent and a way of doing this is to give the descriptions input from the ones actually performing the work and their closest managers (Ritchie, Erickson, Whitney, 2012, p. 1). The view of working with talent management as systems affecting each other makes it easier to break down company structure to subprocesses but when doing this you need to keep every part on a level that is understandable and meaningful to everyone involved (Senge, 2006, p. 73).

The future model will be managed centrally supporting the rest of the company in actively breaking down organisational goals to manageable competencies (Company A internal). It is vital to clearly define the ownership of the model. There is an organisation that maintains the process today but more resources are needed to be able to do a company-wide approach (Company A external). The literature clearly states the importance of having a clear governance structure to be able to keep the model actual (Ritchie, Erickson, Whitney, 2012, p. 41).

Also the central management of the new model will have the benefit of being able to stay in close contact with all of the company’s divisions and the central senior management. This will help in ensuring that the model and its content will remain relevant and aligned with the company’s strategy (Lamoureaux, 2008, p. 22).

9. Discussion

In the analysis the result was put against the research questions. In the discussions these are still present throughout but here the questions (as found in the definition of scope earlier on) concerning what you need answered to be able to standardize how competence management is conducted will be used as topics.
9.1 How is knowledge mediation and preservation conducted within an organisation?

Selander & Kress (2010, p. 32) write that knowledge can be put as expressions for an activity and a practice. Knowledge appears through the different ways a person represent the world and through that show how the person understand and relate to the world. Knowledge is produced in order to articulate and deal with different kinds of dilemmas and challenges and stands as a ground for our choice of action.

As can be seen through the above description understanding knowledge cannot be achieved without understanding the individual.

In the results and analysis of results it can be seen that the view on knowledge in the companies at present are very wide. All the companies wish to have employees that can perform their daily tasks and are of use to the company as a whole. The difference lay in how it has been done before a systematic approach was adopted and how it is done after (the implementation in some of the companies are ongoing). When you do not have a systematic approach that is in use throughout a company the matter of different scales used and the very time-consuming task of comparing between different vernaculars will make the content of the term knowledge and where it resides in a company impossible to compare between for example internal divisions.

Peter Senge (2006, p. 287) writes about the problem when organisations start to see learning as something that will be put as an additional factor to the work that is already performed. This ad-hoc way of approaching company-wide learning is doomed to fail and can be applied to the overall view upon knowledge within an organisation as well. The concept is not new but if you choose to put it that way it will be seen as something adding up to more work. The key must be considered to be able to implement knowledge as a natural currency within any company and this can be seen with the four Swedish companies in this study; any attempt must be transparent in order to survive. A factor that could be used for understanding the need of being transparent can be the one Selander & Kress (2010, p. 90) writes about when they describe the cultural framing and identity that is connected to what is knowledge and how these are valued. The cultural setting in a company will determine its view upon knowledge and this can be connected with the theory of cultural capital by Pierre Bourdieu. Donald Broady (2008, p. 10) write that the culture promoted in a system not necessarily promote the same values that are put on paper as goals to strive for. The same thing goes for the companies. If the cultural setting is in conflict with what is written this will not be seen put into practice.

When comparing Company A to the result from the other companies no critical difference can be seen in studying the company’s view upon knowledge within the organisation. Knowledge is needed, it is with the employees and it travels around the company when employees switch positions, disappears when employees are leaving and is added when new people are hired. The problem comes to that in order to be able to get a complete overview of the knowledge within an organisation and how it is mediated and preserved you need a common vocabulary with the same conceptual meaning independently of where in the company you are. This
problem has existed and still exists in some of the companies but has been a strong driver for implementing a way of working systematically with the area.

Company A is a company that has many divisions with a high level of autonomy. This is a part of the company’s cultural and organisational heritage and is a working way of dividing a large company into divisions with clear individual areas of interest. When looking to the result from the other companies the conclusion of how to implement a systematic approach is that it either must arise as a need with the common employee or from the management in order to work in practice. In the case of Company A an additional factor comes into play as you will have to not only show the need of describing and understanding knowledge at employee- and management level but also to every individual division in connection to the company as a whole.

9.2 What kinds of knowledge are required at which positions and how to make sure that a change in demand will be met?

The “kind” of knowledge can rather be said to be a need for clearly being able to give requirements of what is expected from employees in different parts of a company. This is not only for making the employees feel useful and that they contribute to the success of the company as a whole but for the individual to be able to clearly see what is expected from him or her.

The use of a systematic approach provides a company with the possibility to clearly describe what is expected from specific roles and positions. How you do this is what is different between the companies in this study. In regard to the four Swedish companies the common structures used for profiling are alike but adjustments have been done in order to suit specific needs. The common factor is that the profiles describing specific combinations need to be consistent throughout a company in order to work as a part of a system. This does not mean that no adaption can be done but the parts used to build the profiles must be generic and centrally controlled throughout a company in order to be comparable and be put as pieces into the overall talent management system used.

Kochanski & Elliot (2011, p.113) are spot on when they write “One of the secrets to the organisation’s success is its ability to articulate what it expects of its employees in the key areas that have real business impact”. The employees need to understand what is expected and how this will contribute to achieving a greater goal. In order to make a whole it needs to be broken down into pieces. The “kind” of knowledge that is required in this context will be the one that provides the ability for a company to gain excellence through its employees’ competence.

In the case of Company A there exist central documents describing the processes involved in managing competence but these are put into practice very differently in different divisions within the company. Some parts have approximately no connection to the central documents while others have constructed their own. This makes it difficult to “objectively” compare demands of knowledge between divisions and hampers the intention of being able to overview the company as a whole.
9.3 In which processes should competence management be included?

From what the four companies have done when implementing competence management the conclusion is that it is up to what you need for the system to accomplish. If you try to include the working with competence into every single process you may find you will create a system impossible to ever get off the drawing table and if you try to create a system that will not connect to the processes needed for what you want nothing will happen.

Common use of competence management in the four Swedish companies is for describing roles, recruiting, assessment, learning & development and career planning. This to be said, not all of the companies have implemented all of these areas yet due to the understanding that you must start somewhere with a reasonable level of complexity to then be able to add more functionality when the processes needed are clearly defined and ratified.

The possibility exists for developing a model that catches all thinkable future areas of use but a model like that is in danger of becoming too complex and felt not to connect to the daily work at hand. At Company A the processes need to be clear to everyone involved and on a level that they will do what they are meant to but also will let the individual divisions recognize themselves and connect the new processes to the way they work.

Peter Senge (2006, p. 284) writes that in order to create learning organisations you have to address two questions: “What are our aims?” and “Where do leaders focus their attention and efforts to create such a culture?”. When designing the processes needed for competence management you have to stay focused on what you want to accomplish while also making the design work for the leaders that will have to use it.

The short answer is that there should exist no more processes than needed, they must be kept concise and meaningful to everyone involved and they need to be kept under close evaluation to stay up to date and in place.

9.4 How do you develop and implement a model that is applicable in different divisions within a large company?

The key when looking to the four Swedish companies is to be clear on what you want, include that as a framework and then focus on creating a model that will be able to meet the demands throughout the company while being flexible enough to meet local variations. A common opinion seems to be that many earlier attempts have been on a too detailed level and have not had the room for the diversity describing individuals’ need. The problem has not been the lack of models but the non-compliance the complexity of them has led to.

At a company as Company A which has a central model defined but a low level of compliance when you look at the company as a whole it seems to be more about getting a basic concept running at some division and being able to show that the processes work. Not only for the ones working there but it is an important starting point to meet up with these local employees and their managers to see what their demands are and make it clear to them which are the benefits of being on-board. As any model used must make it clear that it is not there to
fill a structural need but to deliver advantages to everyone in the company it must be clear 
what the purpose is throughout development and implementation.

Focus in the four companies has been on describing the individual and how successful 
business is performed. Those factors are central but have to be defined in ways that are clear 
and not interpreted differently while still leaving room for the employees’ individuality.

9.5 Is it possible to generalize limits for the kind of companies the study is valid for?

When it comes to determining whether the results of any study are possible to generalize to 
apply to a complete set of situations or kinds of organisations you have to try to think outside 
your own study. In this case the relevant question could be if the results are applicable to 
every Swedish company or even every company in the world. It is a matter of which parts you 
are looking at and how you decide to interpret these. Of course a study as this with its limited 
size, both in scope but also in the allocated time, cannot be said to be able to describe every 
motive, way to keep actual and conclusion drawn. But it can provide an outlook on the subject 
that offers the ability to see similarities, differences and common ideas upon how the subject 
is, should and will be approached.

Already in the five companies included in this study there are a broad variety of business 
areas and company structures, though it can be seen in the study that when approaching a 
subject such as talent management the motives and aim for goal are very similar. The idea of 
putting the individual at the centre and providing a system that can be used both to ensure the 
understanding of the daily tasks with the employees but also give the management a 
possibility to manage human resources and effectively be able to communicate changes in 
business demands are very similar, if not identical, with all of the companies.

The difference between the five companies occurs when it comes to the more “physical” way 
of handling the ability to achieve the vision above. In this the interception of need, 
communication to different levels, development of model, implementation and maintenance 
are included. Every company at some point touches every one of these six parts and it is vital 
for the continuation of the work with talent management how you choose to respond at every 
single one.

When it comes to the ability to generalize this thesis is very focused on doing just that. Due to 
the relatively low number of different sources and thereby choice of using a qualitative 
approach the results will be very general as they tend to provide more of conceptual 
similarities and differences than specific cases. The results should be possible to be applied to 
any Swedish company with similar size and relatively similar goals. When compared to other 
companies a matter of common sense will have to be applied to see whether there are 
substantial differences in company structure of business area that makes this study non-
relevant.
9.5 The concept of KASAM

The Israeli-American sociologist Aaron Antonovsky formed a concept he called “KASAM”. The concept consists of three components: comprehensibility, manageability and meaningfulness (Gagnehag, Magnusson, 2006, p.4). The concept can clearly be applied to the process of working with talent management in companies as:

- **Comprehensibility** is the social process where people in interaction with each other develop their understanding. In talent management this describes the need for clearly communicating what is going on and why.

- **Manageability** describes the subjective experience that there are sufficient resources available for meeting different situations. A high sense of manageability can lead to that a person does not feel like a victim of circumstances and like a crucial component in developing any company-wide approach. This is for making sure employees feel that the individual is given the resources needed to be able to meet up with changing demands.

- **Meaningfulness** creates motivation through making visible the significance of being involved. In talent management every individual employee and manager has to be shown the gain of approaching and adopting a new model in order for the overall process to survive in the long run. (Gagnehag, Magnusson, 2006, p.4).

The above three components can be applied to any of the five involved companies at any stage of working with talent management. In fact the concept of KASAM probably can be applied to any situation that concerns working with common models and concepts through groups of people.

10. Conclusions
10.1 Why talent management?

Talent management as a concept is broad but ultimately is used for companies to be able to take care of their human resources. A critical part for being able to do this is the ability to articulate what is expected from employees in order for the company to be successful. This serves multiple purposes as it will give employees the possibility to better understand their everyday work and their position in a company. It will also give the company a better picture of what resources it has and to be able to quickly adapt to changing demands. It is in this the use of competencies as a way of describing desired behaviour comes in.

When it comes to new ideas and the thinking about change it always has to start somewhere and the case of talent management is no different, though this study shows that the need in a company to begin working systematically with its human resources appears in different locations and at different levels. The conclusion concerning where the need appears is that it is not as important where it originates as why. Once the need arise it has to be caught and a decision has to be made on how to meet it.
10.2 How do you keep the concept alive and actual?

When going from the stage of idea to the stage of concept you have to be able to understand the company culture you are working with. The culture will determine how a concept will look, which information concerning benefits will have to be spread and ultimately how the project will proceed from concept to model. Throughout any stage it is vital to communicate its benefits to everyone involved in a way that makes sense and provides benefits to all stakeholders.

For any concept that has evolved to a functional model it is vital to take on one piece at a time. When implementing do so in a limited area in order to get better overview, straight out potential kinks and be able to communicate success stories throughout the rest of the company.

Before going from development to operation to any extent you have to make the benefits clear to everyone involved, create the processes needed for operation and maintenance and have a clear structure that will own and govern the model.

10.3 What conclusions can be drawn from working with talent management?

It is clear that there is more to working systematically with anything, it does not necessarily have to be managing human resources, than the creation of a system that can be implemented. When working with people you have to take the time and provide the information needed for everyone to feel like they are a part of the whole. A fundamental part of the concept of a company-wide system is providing a clear connection between values and vision at management level to the individual employee. It needs to be formulated to be able to achieve its purpose but at the same time be understandable for everyone involved.

At Swedish companies every employee is meant to understand which his or her role is and which responsibilities come with that. If there exist common ways of measuring and explaining what is expected this leads to less confusion and an elevated level of transparency throughout the companies.

Even though the study is limited to its scope it gives a picture of what the theory will become once put into practice and the conclusions made by the ones that have done the implementation. In the end the common factor comes back to the people within a company and its understanding of what is happening and for what reason.
11. Recommended further studies
Some suggestions for research that will provide more depth in the area are:

- Study the employee perspective at companies that are working with systematic approaches.
  o How is the work experienced through the eyes of the individual?
  o Should the individual employee be involved at every stage?
  o Does the employee feel the “need” of the system naturally or is it brought on by others?

- Study different divisions in companies and break down the structure that already exists in order to make it recognizable when put in context with a company-wide approach.
  o Which are the different needs?
  o Does such cultural differences exist that a “clean” start is needed?
  o How do you awake interest in different cultures for being part of something mutual?

- Focus on the development of profiles.
  o How this is done most effectively while providing accurate descriptions and give the understanding needed at different levels of a company?
  o Who should be involved?
  o How to keep the profiles on manageable levels even in a distant future?

- How does the size and orientation of a company affect how it works with competence?
  o Is the need different?
  o Will the organisation needed for developing, implementing and maintaining look different?
  o How is the work communicated in a very small/a very large company?
12. References

Literature


Web pages:


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Pictures:

Figure 1: The talent Strategy Process: http://talentdrivenvalue.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/Talent-Strategy-Model.jpg


Figure 4: Job profile compilation: Lamoureux, K. (2008). Competency management – Gateway to an integrated talent strategy. Bersin. (p. 8).

Figure 5: The learning cycle. http://blog.competencycore.com/2013/01/the-learning-cycle-at-individual-level.html

Figure 6: The qualitative research process: http://www.bcps.org/offices/lis/researchcourse/images/research_process.gif
13. Appendix A
13.1 Question template

Model:
- What competency model are you using?
- How was this model chosen/developed?
- Is the model new or based on another?
- Which demands does the model need to satisfy from involved parties?
- What is the goal for using this model

Jobs/roles:
- Were new or existing roles used?

Competency profiles:
- How were these developed? Which methods were used?
- From existing library or was job analysis performed?
- How many competencies per profile?
- Are there competency profiles for every job or has there been dividing into groups etc?
- What structure do the profiles follow?

Implementation:
- Which problems did exist? Success factors?
- How was the work communicated with employees on different levels?
- How was the support from management/employees?
- In which processes are the competency profiles used?
- Was the implementation done in stages?

Maintain:
- Is there a relevant organisation to support/maintain/develop the work?
- Are there a clear structure for governing/ownership of the profiles/model?
13.2 Complete results from interviews

Company 1

Model

The model should make the possibility to learn available to the company’s employees. The focus lay on the view that managers, and through that leaders, are the key for successful business.

The education of leaders needs to have a combination of soft and hard skills. Hard skills are for example economic requirements such as a good results and well-kept accounting. Soft skills involve such attributes as being able to manage employees and make them feel appreciated working as a team. The company has developed a leadership vision which is meant to be used as a tool in following-up the everyday work. Almost every one of the traditional competencies used in the model is about leadership.

There are external legislated demands involving such things as safety requirements. These have to be fulfilled and the responsibility lays on the manager closest to the employee. The central operations purpose is to provide the support the local manager needs to fulfil the competence requirements put on underlying employees.

The tasks at work are becoming more complex and it requires employees to be able to quickly adapt. The model is meant to provide a way of finding what drives people and to stimulate this. To accomplish this you have to be clear and able to mediate the company vision from a central- to an individual perspective.

The model was developed from the existing structure on the company’s different sites. Career paths are defined and are meant to provide the employees with a driving force, wanting to find out what possibilities and opportunities that can be seized. It should always be clear to the individual why certain knowledge is needed and when.

The use of the model will bring the workforce up to date, make the learning objectives clear to everyone involved and bring a change of attitude towards learning that it should be brief, actual and arouse curiosity.

Jobs/roles

Every site has a limited number of roles. Previously every position was connected to the role expected but now every position is a flexible combination of roles. Nowadays every employee is expected to be able to man every position.

Competency profiles

Profiles are not fully developed today; it is a work in progress. Focus in developing competency profiles is on the individual. It has been difficult to implement throughout the organisation. The smaller sites have a smaller number of roles which has made it easier to implement here and has led to that the work has progressed further there. The profiles are
developed through job analysis and no library has been used. Every profile contains a limited number of core competencies; the maximum value for any given profile is set to 10 in every career stage. The stages in the core competencies allows for career advancement. The profiles provide a way of advancing towards being a manager and leader. In each role you become more and more experienced to finally advance to a higher level and then a new level of competencies are available to describe desired behaviour. It is important to be concrete in which behaviours you are describing and how you are able to learn and develop these. The company has a leadership vision which is divided into ten different properties that everyone is assessed against. A competency level is set against how close to the vision you are. The vision is developed through external research and has been adopted to suit the company’s needs and culture.

Difference is made between the ability to manage and leadership. A good manager makes things happen while a leader is more about how it is done. Manager is a position given by a company while leader is something you earn.

The profiles are used in appraisals to give meaning by providing a follow-up on what the individual actually has performed and connect it to the organisation’s vision and goals.

**Implementation**

It used to be white papers and policy’s, kept centrally. The challenge is to translate the meaning of these to reality while doing it in a non-controlling way. The key to success is to create interest and a through that a curiosity to know more. To do this the company began with talent management centrally and the let the people educated out in the organisation. The centrally educated employees started to place demands on leadership locally and this awoke the local managers’ curiosity. This was the way to success because there was no existing support from management level at implementing and therefore the bottom-up approach was the way to go. This created something that people throughout the organisation were talking appreciatively about and it made the implementation work.

A change in the view of education as a knowledge-passing to a behaviour-encouraging process has made the impact that employees are able to find the information they need at the local site by learning through the channels available.

The implementation was primarily communicated to the local managers which then passed the work on to their respective employees. This is a key factor to bring everyone on the train. A lot of the work is about personal trust and you have to be visible to the managers at gatherings to become a familiar face.

The profiles are used in appraisals, somewhat in recruiting and in the development of leadership. Every local site was able to implement on its own. It is about making it clear that the use of profiles will make the everyday easier.
Maintain

The key is to keep it simple. If you would like to add things do it one step at a time. More resources would make it easier to maintain the work. Presently it is more about administrating and coordinating the resources available to the local managers.

The competence management process is owned by the company business school and from this cooperation with HR is ongoing.

Company 2

Model

The model is based on which roles meet with customers and needs to combine what is needed for a successful meeting with a customer with the external demands that are put on by legislation. It is built from the outside and in with focus on what makes good business. From this basic structure competencies have been added from a library. These are categorized in personal properties-, social capabilities-, common-, specific- and generic business competencies.

The legislated demands control parts of the interaction and therefore place an external competence demand that must be satisfied. These demands are validated through certificates and are connected to the specific competence needed to perform the job.

To build a successful model involves two parallel processes: to build a traditional competency library and then the legislated demands has been added at a later stage. These two have been merged to create a functional model.

The work is ongoing and the demands on the usability are constantly changing. Previously there has been too much focus on the possibility to mechanically connect processes to the professional role. At present the focus has shifted and now lay on the individual’s ability to perform, though the legislated demands still exists.

The model for using competencies is becoming simpler and more personal. Competencies describe behaviour on a personal level and will have to be understandable to the individual for being relevant. The model has to answer the question “Who am I?”. The previous way of modelling with competencies was that they function as a template for how the individual should perform; now it is the other way around. Competencies need to be open and leave room for the diversity human resources present.

The starting point is the individual and the model is a way of describing you in a way that makes it possible for the organisation to make use of you in a good and efficient way. It is not possible to construct a competency library to just put in place and hope for success. The model needs to be flexible to meet changing demands from involved parties. It will be used in the planning of the next-coming year’s operation, recruiting, learning, legislated demands, succession, performance management and employee catalogue. The legislated demands are at the core. These must be satisfied; everything else can be changed and adapted.
Roles must be able to be combined in different ways to be able to fit all situations. Successful business is driven between people and the model need to be able to describe this.

**Jobs/roles**

The roles in use are based on the legislated demands and how the company views upon how successful business should be performed.

**Competency profiles**

The profiles are developed based on which demands are put on the roles. They have been narrowed down to clarify what are core competencies. This was done using job analysis and adding personal characteristics such as social capabilities etc. Any profile should not contain more than 12 to 15 competencies but the number at present is 15 to 20. This is a work in progress and a specific number of competencies for any profile in general have not been set. There are competency profiles for everyone working in one division of the company but not elsewhere. This is due to the limited number of generic roles which makes it difficult to develop profiles that are applicable in a generic way.

The profiles are structured after: generic business competencies, specific business competencies, personal characteristics and social capabilities. The profiles also include generic core competencies which are applicable to all employees. These are based on the company’s vision and values and are the only competencies that are regularly evaluated at the yearly appraisals.

**Implementation**

The key to success is to clearly define the ownership of the model. You also need to define the processes to maintain and keep it relevant to the organisation. On the company there has been no such processes defined which has led to that the model was relevant when implemented but then fell into decay. The idea was that the employees should maintain their own profiles but this failed due to the failure of communicating the benefits to the employees. If the individual fail to see the value in doing something it will not be done.

The competency model are used in the competence assurance of legislated demands, performance management (values through core competencies) and to some part in recruiting.

When developing the model it is important to understand that in order for the actual work and processes to have an impact on the business it is a question of combining structure and level of compliance. If the model is too advanced in its structure the level of compliance will be low but if the model are to blunt it will not change the way of working with competence management in any way measurable.

You cannot build a competence process from a structural need in the company to map a lot of things regarding the total competence supply. This approach fails to see the value for the individual. A system that is not up to date provides zero reliability in the data it holds.
The work of implementing the model was successfully communicated to all employees, everyone were given a professional role. It was a true work of change where the main responsibility was placed on the managers with the support from HR. The implementation worked in the way that everyone was given roles, thought it was a good idea and understood why.

The project was not driven by HR but as a part of a general re-construction of the company. If you would like to do it as separate competence project within HR you really must be able to point out the benefits to everyone involved.

Maintain

The lack of processes to maintain the system made soon out of date. The only part kept up to date were the one connected to the legislated demands. This led to that there are no organisation with the responsibility to maintain and develop the work.

Company 3

Model

The model used is developed with the focus laying on the individual and the business. The people that perform specific tasks are the ones to know how it should be done in the most efficient way.

The company had a previous model but this was to rough and gave a lot of room for interpretation. The level was too high for the areas it was meant to be applicable to. The present model identifies which business processes there are in the company and these are then possible to be broken into tasks.

The model’s core consists of 20 behavioural competencies. Outside the core there are: portfolio-, job role- and company-wide competencies. Outside the core there are local competencies that support local needs.

The job role competencies define: “What you do?” and “Why you do it?”. Their descriptions should be short and concrete. They must support the company’s global vision and values and make sense to the individual.

All competencies are measured after a scale of proficiency. The scale is not linear but rather exponential. The model are on its way to be used for career planning, individual goals for development, performance analysis and these combined will make it possible to perform gap analysis to find out specific needs of learning development and application.

The model will provide transparency between roles and a global format which will increase understanding between roles and simplify resource allocation in projects.
Jobs/roles

There are central policy documents issued by the management level at the company. These define what the company does and divide it into different functions to be able to achieve this.

The company has functional areas which include all divisions needed to make the company work. From these central documents and the company structure required roles has been identified.

Competency profiles

The profiles were developed through job analysis. This meant studying the highest achievers in specific positions. Interviews were conducted, not only with the individual performers but also with their supervisors to be able to find out what makes them perform at a high level.

A competency library is used but considered not able to include everything needed which lead to the adding of company specific parts. The job role and company-wide values are considered stable and are therefore included in the model. The closer you get to the portfolio competencies the more volatile they become. The traditional values and expectations are connected to a particular position. The closer you get to the individual and the portfolio the more unpredictable and volatile it gets. To be able to build the system you have to meet with outside demands which today leads to an agile approach to learning as the environment are in at current state of change.

Every profile consists of a maximum number of 6 behavioural competencies which comes from an industry standard and 6 job role competencies that always need to be but into context. There exist 1200 job competencies to choose from and everyone is connected to the specific role they are describing. The traditional competencies which are a maximum of 10 in every profile are fetched from the company-wide library which holds 120 of these. Finally there are the portfolio competencies which can be combined in over 400 ways to meet external demands.

Every profile is structured after functional areas to make it clear that every role has a purpose. They are used in recruiting, career planning, appraisals and learning design.

Implementation

The first thing to do is to design the processes needed and the governance structure to maintain them. After this has been done you need to determine which combination of systems you need to satisfy your demands.

When implementing, do one piece at a time. An example is to implement in waves sorted after groups of job roles. You should choose a way that suits your company’s needs and support its way of working. Make a pilot in every wave, evaluate and revise every stage. The most important thing is to not try and do everything at once.

The work at the company was communicated from management level and down. This made it clear who should know what and when.
Maintain

The company has appointed a group who is responsible for updating which formalised competencies there are and which are needed every third month. They revise which job roles exist and which are needed to meet future demands.

There exist approximately 200 profiles which everyone has a global owner. The owner is responsible for ensuring that the roles description is actual and relevant, that it satisfies the demands put on it and that it accurately describes different levels of career possibilities. To be able to achieve these demands on keeping the model accurate the owner has to keep in touch with different levels of the company and listen to what are needed at present and what will come to be needed in the future.

Company 4

Model

The model is based on roles and these are connected to tasks performed. The role, and through that the task, must be concrete and easy to grasp. Every role contains 2-3 tasks. The number of containing tasks differs but they must not be too many because this will create a too wide role. Every role should be of the sort that there exists an interest from the employer to be able to assess how well an employee is performing while doing the task. To every role competencies are connected. These are a soft description of how you as an employer expect your employees to comply with the tasks held by the role. Every competency can theoretically be measured against a scale of proficiency if you like.

To the roles permissions are connected. These you either have or not. They are not measured against a scale. Permissions support the role. Except from the permissions the model makes use of three kinds of competencies: company strategic, personal and social and role specific.

The goal is to provide a generic model applicable and usable throughout the whole company. The basic need came from that the company were searching for a rational way of connecting learning activities to make sure that a person in one or several roles possessed the correct competence and permissions to be able to perform. To standardize permissions makes it possible to compare and add learning activities. Different positions in the company had different underlying roles which made it crucial to define a common concept for being able to compare and understand how positions on different sites were connected through which roles they contained and through that which tasks they were expected to perform.

In Sweden the concept of position, role, competence and permission are used differently in different companies. The need for a common base of concept are strong and the company has translated the international standard that exists and adapted it to its own needs and culture.

The model has to support the leader and the employee. The employee is supported in the understanding of the daily tasks at hand. It is a matter of transparency and the possibility to take part in your own development. The leader has the same need but also has to understand this when supervising. To be able to lead you need to think strategically and not only see to
present but also future needs. The system is built so it addresses the connection between the closest supervisors to the employee but also gives the possibility to look from different levels in the company if needed. As a result of making the vocabulary used generic it is possible to look at the company as a whole and, for example, be able to get a list of permissions presently within the company.

The use of the model is a way to make the supply of competence development and supply remain actual and able to overview, now and in the future.

**Jobs/roles**

A combination of present and newly developed roles is used. There are legislated demands which affect certain roles and also regulations which demand the presence of different roles. The roles are based on these external demands and are then made more specific and internal demands from the company are added.

**Competency profiles**

This work is not finished in the company at present. Competencies will not be used to evaluate individual employees initially. This has made the work easier because it has limited the development of competencies to describe the tasks and not to evaluate the level of how well they were performed. The profiles should answer what tasks are included in a role to the performer. The challenge is to be concrete in a way that is generic and able to be applied everywhere in the company. If there are an expectation on how a role should perform this is described through a competency. Any profile is always meant to be read in the context it will be applied to.

The company has internal documents with, more or less described, expectations on how different roles should perform when placed in certain situations. These expectations have been translated into competencies and then put into profiles. Sometimes expressions commonly used in the industry have been used but as no common description exist for everything an adaption has been done to match the company’s specific needs. The same goes for competencies gathered from literature, they always need some fine-tuning.

The company is closely governed by its values and vision. From this employee- and leadership principles has been developed and are describing what are expected from every employee and have been converted into competencies. The same demands on how you behave are put on every employee in the company with no difference made from what position you possess. This is formulated in the employee profile which is applied to everyone employed.

Every other role satisfies specific tasks but the competencies included always originate from the company’s values. The employee role will provide a way of assessing the employees in the future after how well they comply with the company’s values.

A position is able to consist of a number of different roles and permissions. There are employees with only one role to those with 10-15. To every role there are approximately 5 defined competencies. This means that a position can include everything from a handful to 60
competencies. It is not realistic to assess an employee in a position on all competencies included. The closest supervisor needs to determine which the most dominating competencies for a specific position are. These are the competencies that will have the most impact on the everyday job and should be evaluated.

The roles are connected to positions which are dynamic and therefore unique for every individual. The positions are constructed locally which means that titles also are dynamic. The system provides a way of being able to keep the titles and break them down to generic roles and permissions. This is made possible because the system allows for local needs to be described in terms general for the company.

**Implementation**

It has been problematic that people do not want to switch vocabulary. What has been called a position is not that anymore and role descriptions do not match what they used to. It has been a challenge to introduce a common ground at describing things. The key is to make it fair to the employees in that way that it is applied to everyone. You have to be sure to have support for what you are introducing and find expressions that has a natural feeling and are easy to use to all involved.

A success factor was that the company lacked a systematic approach on competence management. In order to gain this the company was ready to make some sacrifices. The project has been driven close to the operation and not from a strict HR perspective. This made it easier to succeed.

The need originated from the employee surveys conducted. In these emerged an uncertainty with the employees concerning which roles they had and if they were competent to perform the tasks included. This comes from the 21-st century approach on that employees are multitaskers and should be able to perform a diversity of tasks. The lack of a common base also made it difficult to show that the company complied with the legislated- and external demands put on them.

The need came from the bottom and the management level were then approached with the offer of being able to provide a good systematic way of working, a possibility to clarify concepts from an HR-perspective, make recruiting easier, place the same demands on equal tasks and provide the same pay for the same performance. This approach made the two views meet and it was easy to see a whole.

The model will be used in recruiting, succession planning, competence development, appraisals, performance analysis and the setting of wages.

A pilot was completed on a small division of the company which contained many complex roles. They were able to test all parts and after this an evaluation was done and the model was revised. The division was chosen because they had shown interest for the model and they have afterwards spread a positive view of the project to the rest of the company.
All implementation has started with the managing group for every division and their understanding and support has led to a successful result. The way to succeed is to centrally help people implement and describe their everyday with the use of a company-wide common vocabulary.

**Maintain**

The model affect many subprocesses and controls the overall competence supply which makes it business critical. This fact reduces the risk of decay because the process touches everywhere in the company.

The competence supply is a sub process to the HR-process which is owned by the HR-director. Every sub process also has an owner with the responsibility to keep it up to date. It is critical to clearly define owners to all processes. The owners of the subprocesses meet up every third month. They are responsible to see to that new needs are brought into the model and obsolete ones are taken out.

**Company A external**

**Model**

At present each division of the company has its own way of working with competence management. There is no approach that covers the complete picture and some divisions view competence supply as a question of courses employees must take part in.

There is no company-wide competence model at present. The existing parts are born from an ad-hoc approach which has sprung from different needs in different divisions.

What is documented regarding competence differs from division to division. It can be about what tasks employees are able to perform to lists of unclearly formulated competencies. This leads to that managing of competencies is non-existent in parts of the company.

Most companies in the Swedish market have not started working with managing competencies and very few have done company-wide systematic approaches at present.

The existing parts at Company A are about being able to man positions at production, create demands on what education is needed, to be able to create descriptions for different positions and to recruit personal.

There exist no company-wide standard on how descriptions of positions should be developed and what they should contain. There are systematic approaches in some divisions with the aim at reducing the amount of jobs described through providing a standardized way of describing them. Most divisions have done some work on this but the current status is vastly divided.

The existing models have been used for the ability to have the right amount of workforce at the right time and to qualify employees to be able to perform the tasks required. In other parts it has been about tying training to what are required.
A recent implementation is the use of the employees’ closest manager in setting the pay. The manager makes an assessment of how well the employee meets up with certain requirements. These requirements are not standardized which makes the assessments depend on the person performing them. This put demands on subjectivity and the possibility to make fair assessments between divisions. This is a driver for implementing the use of a systematic approach on competence management.

**Jobs/roles**

Every job has a description but they vary in range, shape and grade of clarity. The future model will have to be adapted to the different divisions. A position can consist of different roles but how this is done differs today and will have to be narrowed down to be more concrete. Build on the existing positions and standardize what are described regarding positions and roles is a possible approach. A potential way is that the description will be for the position and the demands are put on the roles connected. A company-wide generic model probably will need some adaption to fit the need of every specific division.

**Competency profiles**

There are profiles but there is no common structure due to the lack of a company-wide model. Some divisions have profiles which defines competencies and which proficiency levels should be aimed for. The profiles are defined from the view of what each division need and not from a company-wide perspective. This gives no possibility to compare across divisions and one result is that employees experience an uncertainty of what demands are put on roles.

Profiles can also contain roles that have courses corresponding to the competence needed to perform successfully. The role descriptions contain expressions for what are expected from a role but with variations on the grade of clarity.

**Implementation**

There has been no systematic way of implementing and working with competencies. There exists a competence process within the company which describes how to work. In this there are parts that cover appraisals and development plans but they lack the possibility to assess. Roles have been mapped towards learning activities but are not used on a regular basis. The mapping is global which provides support. It has been successfully implemented but the result of how often and to which level it is used varies widely. The support on how to work with the processes of implementation needs more resources to be able to perform effectively.

The existing competence process is well described and is available on the intranet but is focused on how the appraisal should be performed and how the development plans should look like. There are no standard that describes how different competencies should be assessed. This leads to that, at present, it is not possible to perform gap analysis.

The competence process have been ancillary, the approach is more on optimizing production than people. The culture on the company is more on networking and passing knowledge in this way than doing a company-wide systematic approach.
There has been no clear ownership of the competence process. Every division of the company are very autonomous. It is not clear whether every division has someone working with competencies or not. More resources are needed to be able to take on a central approach.

The main connection to the competence process has been to learning and development and in some extent to be able to have the right people on production. Description of positions are used in recruiting but not in ways that provide a generic connection to what are used in the actual process.

Maintain

There is an organisation to maintain the process but more resources are needed. It is unclear who owns each individual job and are responsible for keeping the corresponding descriptions and profiles up-to-date. This work is done in groups coordinated by HR.

Company A internal

Model

The model used today is regulated by central documents which control the overall development of competence in the company. The documents are approved by the highest level of management and are applied globally. The document describes the five main processes within the area of HR. These are competence development, management planning, remuneration, employer branding and recruiting.

The model today is to general to provide an effective way of working. There are central processes defined but these are not followed consequently within the company as a whole. This is because they can be perceived as not connected to the work actually performed and the fact that not everyone is aware of their existence. There is no common method to provide the possibility of comparable evaluation which rules out the option to measure that the right learning activities are applied and whether they give the result aimed for. Competence development is done differently in different parts of the company.

The target for using the model, present and in the future, is to make sure that the company possess the right competence needed, at the right place and time. This is essential to be able to compete on the market. It has been established that the needs throughout the company are very alike and thus gives the ability to create a standardized way of approach.

Jobs/roles

There exists an uncertainty about how the expressions position, role and competence are defined. A common approach on how these are interpreted and implemented throughout the organisation is needed. All units have job descriptions but with different structure. The work with a new model will develop generic roles with competencies attached. These will explain what is required to perform successfully in a specific role.
Competency profiles

Are not established in a generic way and ownership and maintenance of profiles and role descriptions are unclear. In recruiting a list of requirements are compiled from the job description but this is done manually for individual recruitment and not in a standardized way.

Implementation

The present work is about establishing processes, methodology and templates applicable to the organisation’s needs.

Maintain

The model will be managed by a central support function consisting of experts on learning, methodology and strategic planning. This will provide support to the rest of the company in managing the system, developing job roles with connected competencies and actively working with breaking down strategic goals to competencies applicable throughout the organisation.

Company A Section

Model

The general goal for using a systematic approach is to retain the people employed by providing training and to be able to educate managers to be able to lead, assess and develop the people working for them.

The model used comes from the central HR-function. It is easier to assess against technical qualifications than administrative roles. These facts led to a process of updating the role descriptions to gain the ability to assess at all. The result was the formal qualifications, social skills and functional skills. The division’s descriptions are virtually identical with the main organisation’s but some adjustments have been made and the descriptions have been translated into Swedish. In these leadership and social qualifications are formulated. The descriptions lay as a ground for recruiting. Social qualifications are a part of how the pay is set and also a part of the collective agreement. The social qualifications apply to all employees while the different departments then have different individual needs. The formal qualifications are formulated centrally and will be put on the intranet for everyone to be able to see what different roles require. This is developed in cooperation with the managers closest to the roles. When updating and formulating the descriptions it is a matter of combining what written descriptions exist with what the actual managers put as needs.

You learn the most at the place where you work but traditionally have been travelling to attend courses which are not completely directed at your needs. A problem with training at the place you work can be that there are distractions; the possibility to have another site close by to perform training makes it cheaper and more effective than central training. It is about trying to change the way people look at training.
Traditionally the technical courses have been held centrally. Due to the large travelling distances a more local focus on training has emerged. At present an equipment package are developed to be used in schools to better aim the training performed there to the needs of the company. The benefits are that the equipment also can be used for local training of employees in the company and if the students at the schools are given the possibility to use the correct tools already when studying it is believed to cut a year of training on the job. It is also easier to send one teacher to train a group of people than to send all the people to the trainer.

**Jobs/roles**

The demands put on different roles come from the company centrally. Demands are connected to the company globally, the division at hand and what area you are working with, for example economy or sales.

All employees should have a role description. The description of a position should be kept general for not limiting the use. As an employer you do not want a too narrow view of what a role is.

Roles and descriptions of positions should be connected. Some competences apply to all as for example the companies’ core values. Role descriptions need to be flexible enough to be able to manage for example market changes. It place demand on the ability to provide adequate training and to be able to identify future demands.

**Competency profiles**

A local workshop plans its competence development through the use of a planning tool. This is divided into areas of competence related to, for example, technical levels of expertise. Everyone is expected to possess a certain level of competence and then advancement into different areas of expertise and following knowledge can occur. Different roles have different demands. The demands regulate which courses you are able to attend. The managers, twice a year, go through the planning and marks which need every person has for training. The need should be communicated in the yearly appraisal or done ongoing. The individuals are able to see what they have attained and what they are expected to.

**Implementation**

In the recent two years training of all leaders and managers have been performed. The leaders with a little experience have been put through training to deepen their competence in the area while new leaders have gone through an introductory course. This was decided from management level. Initially the courses were mandatory in a sort of forced way but after a while the talk of them being good lead to the development of more courses and a more profound interest in what training can give.

The division are using a course management system to distribute and keep track of training in progress, completed and future needs. Three years ago an extensive training of all the retailers in Sweden was performed to make them able to use the system effectively. The course management system is used as a database containing all data, information of employees and
the training they have performed. For the managers there are a tool for planning that helps them to overview what the employees should know and what the current state of competence are.

Much focus at present is at attracting new personnel. This is accomplished by connecting with the schools that have the future employees. This is done by lectures for teachers and students. If a need for a specific course cannot be met locally in the division a request is sent to the company’s central provider of education. Depending on whether there are existing courses or complete new ones are needed a discussion is held and a pilot is done before implementing. The training corresponds to specific needs of competence.

Maintain

The outermost responsibility for the competence process lies with the personnel manager for the division. The model is directly from the central company but adjusted to suit the divisions’ way of working. The responsibility for keeping the content and processes surrounding it up to date lies with HR. When recruiting it is made sure that the role contains enough to meet what are searched for in new employees. Regular updates is done when the central roles are changed, then it is decided whether these changes are relevant for the division or not. The demands on roles are, mostly, static. The change can come from specific needs of competence which lead to specialist roles but there are few of these.