Organizational culture and leadership

A qualitative study assessing the impact of leaders on organizational culture

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This has been a learning experience that has had an impact in my personal life and will lead to new beginnings in future.

Yours sincerely,

Doris Xhelili
Abstract

There are a number of qualities expected of a leader, such as flexibility, tolerance, empathy, vision, or to be a team player. This qualitative study aims to an increased understanding of the effect of leadership on organizational culture. The data collected was based on interviews and participatory observations carried out at the youth state facility Långanäs in Eksjö that provides treatment to the youth with psychosocial problems such as criminality, drug dependence or self-destructive behavior. The findings confirmed were as follows: subcultures within the culture, different leadership styles; mistrust and divisions within the leadership, and a people-oriented type of leadership.

While organizations and culture experience changes, there is an interrelation between the various concepts. The social worker is therefore placed in a position that entails having a bird’s eye view over the organizational management. Acquiring a deeper understanding of organizational culture and leadership dynamics is compulsory for the social worker. This is in order to keep abreast with the fast changing 21st century.

Keywords:
Organizational Culture, leadership, community service organizations, social work and leadership, leadership styles, dysfunctional leadership

Sammanfattning på svenska

Det finns ett antal egenskaper som en ledare förväntas ha, såsom flexibilitet, tolerans, empati, vision och att vara en lagspelare. Den här kvalitativa studien syftar till en ökad förståelse av effekten av ledarskap inom en organisationskultur. Insamlade data baseras på intervjuer och deltagarobservationer som gjorts på ungdomshemmet Långanäs i Eksjö, Statens Institutionsstyrelse, som erbjuder vård för unga med psykosociala problem såsom kriminalitet, drogberoende eller självskadebeteende.


Keywords:
Organisationskultur, ledarskap, socialt arbete och ledarskap, ledarskapsstil, dysfunktionellt ledarskap
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1. Introduction

The concept of culture has been researched by numerous cultural anthropologists who propose diverse theories as being characterized by assumptions, or phrases. There are different theories of culture from different schools of theorists such as symbolic, functionalist, cognitive and the structuralists. Anthropologists from the social cultural systems concept of culture have divided them into four schools grouped according to their epic time. They are conceptually separate in an ideal system. Another view is that culture is a social system in which the conditions involved are in the interaction of beings that constitute concrete collectivities with a determined membership. These systems focus on cultural patterns, meanings, values, norms, knowledge and beliefs in an expressive form (Packard, 2008).

Human and social services organizations exert a powerful influence in shaping the nature of social work practice. They provide legitimation and sanction for carrying out the society’s mandates in regard to health and well-being of our citizens and controls the resources necessary to accomplish this work. These organizations define and establish the boundaries of social work practice (Packard, 2008). The professionals in these organizations work in community, residential care or institutional settings that provide direct services such as leading a group, organizing an activity, or offering individual counseling, administrative tasks. There is a specified job description that reflects organizational policy and staffing patterns as well as the workers’ educational preparation and experience. Jobs in this type of organization involve direct contact with people who are vulnerable to exploitation, therefore applicants are screened for appropriate personal and academic qualifications and or experience.

There are many definitions and meanings of leadership that implies authority based on objective factors such as managerial ability and more subjective characteristics like personal qualities of leaders. Leadership can be shared in situations whereby there are interactions, rather than hierarchy, team problem solving, discussions rather than instructions, beliefs, shared values and honesty all of which form a desirable goal (Packard, 2008). Social work knowledge, skills and values along with organizational needs, norms, and culture, are dynamic forces that shape social work practice. Leadership involves vision, change management, culture management, strategy development, organization design and community collaboration. Human service organizations define administration as a combination of leadership and management. To be an effective manager requires leadership skills. The human and social services organizations operate in diverse cultural environments with professionals who manage resources and people. These concepts are interrelated and many anthropologists from different fields like sociology, psychology, management and social work have written about them.

This study is related to social work because it discusses the impact of leadership on organizational culture where social work skills will be used to better understand that specific culture. The 21st century requires the social worker to be equipped with social and
management skills in culture and organizational leadership so as to motivate their subordinates. The study aims at providing an initial understanding of the kind of culture and leadership that exists at *SiS Långanäs ungdomshem* in Eksjö, a state-run institution where the social workers work as administrators and leaders.

The following provides an outline of what this paper will cover in ascending order. First there will be the introduction, followed by the background of Långanäs that includes subsections on the vision and ethical values, changes (past and present), and the different professional cooperation involved in the treatment and the role of the social worker. The next section addresses the levels of culture, the types of leadership and the different organizational theories of culture. Previous research will be covered next to previous researched literature. The method of data collection, thematic analysis, research ethics, results, discussion, conclusion, and lastly, references and appendices with the letter used for approval of the participation of the respondents as well as the Interview Guide used in the study.

2. **Purpose of the study**

The social worker is required to understand the dynamics of organizational culture in order to be effective in their job. This study proposes to address the evolving perspective of social workers as team leaders dealing with human relations. Social workers are expected to build relationships that enhance teamwork, organizational loyalty, trust and personal development of the staff, and utilize the existing potential in managing diverse organizational cultures. The purpose of the study is to understand how leadership affects organizational culture and vice versa, to assess the impact of organizational culture on leadership. To investigate this issue, the following questions will be posed and hopefully, answered.

- What are the organizational goals, values and norms at Långanäs?
- What type of leadership exists at Långanäs?
- How does that type of leadership influence the organizational culture at Långanäs?
- How does the management at Långanäs perceive the impact of the organizational culture on their leadership?

3. **Background of the study**

To get a clear understanding of the study the section below describes Långanäs organizational structure, its place in the social care system, the history of Långanäs in terms of the changes, goals, the ideology and the professional cooperation with other actors involved in the treatment of the youth with psychosocial problems.
Fig. 1 illustrates the organizational structure of Långanäs SiS (2015).

Långanäs presently admits girls and boys aged 13–20 years although it will change in the course of this year when the institution will be transformed to girls only aged 16-21. There are 45 youth admitted at the facility. The institution is headed by a director assisted by a director assistant (see Fig. 1), while the Human Resources is responsible for the personnel recruitment, planning work schedules and organizing institutional functions, the Audit and Accounts deals with the budget, salaries and balance institutions accounts. There are seven units headed by unit managers, and assistant unit managers’ work in cooperation with each other to run the unit, while treatment assistants that are the majority of personnel are involved in the execution of the day-to-day life for the period that they are present at the institution (SiS, 2014). Every unit has four treatment assistants per working shift that are in charge of six youth.

Långanäs was started in 1900 to cater for “neglected boys.” It is situated about five kilometers south of the town of Eksjö by the Långanäs river in Sweden. It initially began as a gathering center for the juvenile delinquent boys who tended to follow a path of rebellion and who engaged in criminal behavior. There are two types of delinquents; one that exhibits an onset of severe antisocial behavior early in childhood and a second one whose onset coincides with their entry into adolescence. Different youth were admitted on a temporary basis in order to undergo socialization into mainstream culture whilst awaiting placement to an appropriate place like an institution or a foster home for longer durations. Over the years, the institution
has placed many youths into foster families whereby emotional treatment has been administered to make up for what was lacking at home (Nordin, 2000).

Långanäs became a part of the National Board of Institutional Care (Statens Institutionsstyrelse, SiS) in 1994 and it was upgraded to a state-owned institution. This agency (SiS) has several branches situated all around Sweden. It offers special individual-tailored care to youth suffering from psychosocial problems such as criminality, drug and substance abuse and self-destructive behavior (SiS, 2015). SiS provides care and treatment where voluntary interventions have not been adequate to curb the problems among the youth, thereby necessitating compulsory interventions. SiS runs several residential homes for the youth where some of them have committed serious crimes and are thus being sentenced to juvenile special treatment homes.

3.1 Långanäs and the social services

The social services carry out investigations for eight weeks on the needs of the youth, after which a decision is made requesting compulsory treatment from the administrative courts (förvaltningsrätt). When it is granted from the courts the youth, is apprehended compulsorily, and in some cases, it can require police assistance, depending on the condition and problem of the youth (SiS, 2015). The main goal of the operation is to provide treatment where the youth is supervised with limited freedom within the facility premises under its rules and regulations. This is to prepare the youth to move back into society, either to a foster family or to live on their own. It is the responsibility of the social worker assigned to the youth to do follow-ups every sixth months to review the need to continue treatment or to discharge the youth. The admission of the youth is often on an emergency basis due to their self-destructive behavior. For example school problems, conflicts with parents and a negative social life do take a toll on the youths’ self-image, confidence and the ability to learn, hence they drop out of school.

At Långanäs they are provided with an opportunity to go to school under the requirements of the national curriculum. The ratio of student to teacher is minimal, so the students get individual attention according to their level of need and this is also followed up by the social services. There is a required treatment period which is five months but this is not usually the case, with some that require a longer stay (SiS 2015). About half of the youth are discharged within three months. The treatment offered is just a small fraction of what the youth require, and that is why the social services build this process, to ensure that the youth get the individual treatment based on their needs. In the event that a youth is sentenced and has served time, it is possible to be placed outside these special homes - in other words a discharge is executed. A life with freedom is under way and the youth is prepared by setting up concrete measures such as: education, internship, housing, leisure activities, and transfer to an open unit where the youth is given freedom to certain limits and responsibility or even to a foster home. All this is in cooperation with supervision of the social services. A plan for an eventual treatment in conjunction with the social services is done by Långanäs and the home
municipality. Most the youth that have been sentenced for serious crimes need help and support for a long time even after serving time at Låganäs.

The administrator in charge of every SiS institution is answerable to the overall General Director. The headquarters are situated in Stockholm and is responsible for follow-up, coordination, finance, and management support in the administration for the overall organization. SiS is supervised by a number of bodies including the Health and Social Care Inspectorate (Inspektionen för vård och omsorg) and the Parliamentary Ombudsmen. The services are highly accessible and guarantee legal security. SiS is divided into three administrative units namely; the Northern (Norr), Southern (Söder) and the adult addiction care (SiS missbruksvård). The institutions provide care and treatment to the youth and adults with addiction problems. This enormous task involves documentation, follow-up and collaboration between the social services and other actors (SiS, 2015). The goal is to offer the youth better conditions for a good social life away from crime and addiction. The social services have the responsibility of carrying out the placements under the administrative courts order (Förvaltningsrätten). The methods of treatment used are approved by scientific research where the processes observe high ethical standards and strictly safeguard the legal rights of the individual.

3.2 Vision and ethical values

This section illustrates what SiS Låganäs’ vision, ethical values and touchstones are and why they are vital to the organization. The vision is to provide the boys and, more recently, girls as well, a life-changing platform. The institution provides individual-tailored compulsory treatment in some cases instead of serving a prison sentence and the youth is offered treatment instead based on their age (Sluten ungdomsvård). Treatment of psychosocial problems is provided in conjunction with the social services aimed at facilitating a life without addiction and crime. The services are highly accessible and guarantee legal security. Care and treatment is fair and equal to all without discrimination, and it is provided with good ethics and high quality (SiS, 2016). The ethical guidelines and policy are complimentary to the national legislation law and the international agreement on the Human Rights and Child convention. These guidelines shall filter through all the institutions whereby all human beings are equal in value so it is therefore vital to respect the individual’s autonomy and integrity (SiS, 2016). Humanity is one of the fundamental basic ethical values. SiS strives to pursue treatment that is scientifically demonstrated as just and equal to all. Respect, consideration and clarity are touchstone reception terms towards everyone. This is crucial for the youth to create a sense of safety during treatment, and a good and safe work environment for the staff.

3.3 Changes
Långanäs has undergone gradual changes since its time in inception. Change is still an ongoing process to date as explained below in how the institution was run and the different treatment methods provided. The institution has, over the years, undergone structural changes which have resulted in a drastic increase in the number of youth admitted at the institution. On the 25th March 1983 history was made when the first girl was admitted at the institution. Currently Långanäs admits girls and boys aged 12-20 years old. The institution consists of only two boys’ units and four for girls with a total capacity of 43. Later this year Långanäs is set to undergo a transformation whereby it will only admit older school-going girls aged 16-21 years. Långanäs has undergone structural changes over the years by having the staff move towards developing deeper emotional connection with the youth. The purpose is to instill stronger emotional relations and norms that can transfer to a life in foster homes after treatment. This means, paradoxically, that the youth are able to connect and develop close emotional bonds with the professionals, even though it is a relatively short period of time (Nordin, 2000).

Gone are the days when organizations strived to transform human labor into machines or, more so, perceive employees as an expense but not an asset. The organization covets the employees’ potential to learn, solve problems, develop, and create networks, commitment and creativity (Nilsson, 2008). The above is emphasized when hiring employees; academic qualifications are a vital part to get the right candidate on the job, but appropriate personality to work with human beings is even more important. The employees are offered continuous courses in treatment methods and Motivational Interviewing (MI). The treatment process involves creating a treatment alliance between the youth and the professional. This is a vital moment in order to achieve change; therefore treatment methods are to be carried out professionally. The methods permeate continuous treatment that is flexible with the right timing. Långanäs requires its employees to exercise professional skills in order to sustain high quality treatment. The following are some of the treatment methods employed; Multidimensional Treatment Foster Care (MTFC), Motivational Interviewing (MI), Aggression Replacement Training (ART), Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) and the twelve-step program (SiS, 2014).

Långanäs expects that the social workers’ initial approach to the youth creates a positive first impression that lays a foundation for creating change in the problematic areas of the youth’s life. The leadership has effected changes that minimize the gap between the employees to create a favorable work environment. The duties of all staff are flexible so that all involved with the youth are able to document information, while at the same time being adaptable in an environment where there are constant changes. Investing in the individual is a driving force. Nilsson (2000) clarifies that it is an individual’s capacity to learn, develop, take on challenges, cooperate and commitment that is valuable to the organization. Social and ethical competencies are some of the key requirement virtues for all the employees at Långanäs due to the nature of the clientele.

3.4 Professional cooperation
This section describes the social workers professional networking in ensuring that the youth are provided with the right treatment and have their needs being met. The social worker acts as a link between different institutions and professionals. The investigation team consists of head of units, investigating secretary, treatment assistant, teacher, nurse, and psychologist and in some cases a medical doctor. Professional teams cooperate in bringing together their competence in order to map the way forward in providing the youth with the right treatment.

The social services duty is to map the needs and resources to be allocated to the youth. This is done in an 8-week period which is the stipulated investigation period while the youth are admitted at Långanäs. A team of professionals carry out assessment tests to gauge how to assist the youth. These are done through; observing the behavior of the youth while admitted at Långanäs, a psychologists’ assessment, a health assessment and pedagogic assessments.

The social worker has the responsibility to cooperate with other agencies, the government and organizations besides individual (youth) concerns but also the overall organizational network (Svensson et al., 2008). The social worker is also a bridge between the youth, school, health professional, social services and the families involved. The cooperation occurs on different levels; the other actors involved are within the health centers and the county council.

Långanäs offers legally compulsory treatment for the youth (LVU). The legal aspect plays a major role in administering treatment just like it does for a social worker in administration of duties with all the actors involved. In the event of discharge from the Långanäs, the social services provide the youth with a questionnaire to evaluate the treatment and his/her cooperation with Långanäs and the social services (Svensson et al., 2008).

4. What is organizational culture?

This section will examine the definition of organizational culture followed by the various elements within a culture. "The culture of a group can now be defined as a pattern of shared basic assumptions learned by the group as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, which has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think and feel in relation to those problems.” (Schein, 2010, p. 18). Culture has been studied widely as assessing the social beliefs, symbols status, values, language, behavior, rituals and norms of a people (Scott et.al., 2003).

There is a considerable variety of definitions of organizational culture however Lunenburg, (2011) points out that most of them include the following elements:

- **Rules:** These are the guiding principles of the day any newcomer has to abide to be part of the group.
• **Philosophy:** The policies’ organizational beliefs, for example, how the clients or employees shall be treated, mission statement and vision.

• **Dominant values:** Those espoused values an organization upholds and expects a certain conduct from its employees.

• **Norms:** This is the standard code of behavior accepted by the group. A measurable yardstick of what is acceptable or unacceptable.

• **Observed behavioral regularities:** Organizational members interact by use of a common, language, rituals, ceremonies and terminologies which relate to respect and conduct.

• **Climate:** The overall atmosphere portrayed by the organization like the physical layout, members’ interaction with clients and/or outsiders.

These in essence are representative of the organizational culture. However, most researchers are not in agreement on the definition of culture or how it should be assessed or measured methodologically (Scott, *et al.*, 2003). The next aspect of organizational culture is the categories of culture.

### 4.1 The theories and concepts of culture

In their article, Allaire *et al.*, (1984) discuss ways in which cultural anthropologists have provided diverse and complex schools of thought on concepts and theories of organizational culture. Prepositions have been suggested that organizations have cultural properties that breed meanings, values and beliefs. That it nurtures legends, myths and stories adorned with rites, rituals and ceremonies which have been popular over the years. The first concept of culture is an **ideational system.** It claims that culture and social spheres are distinct but interrelated. A group of theorists from the cognitive school like Goodenough and Levi-Strass from the structuralist school as well as Wallace from the Mutual Equivalence school believe in an interrelation with culture. The second group of theorists in these ideational systems believe that culture is the product of the mind whereby there are shared meanings and symbols. The theorists Geertz and Scheider belong to this symbolic school (Allaire *et al.*, 1984). The second concept of culture is the **sociocultural system** whereby culture is perceived as a component of the social system as a way of life and behavior. These can be seen as relating to time with no historical reference (synchronous). Malinowski, the theorist behind this belief is from the functionalist school whereas Radcliffe-Brown is a member of the functionalist structuralist school.

The second group of theorists believe in culture as a **socialcultural system** and it is diachronic. It is concerned with the linguistics features and the changes it undergoes through time. There is the historical diffusionist school by the theorists Boas, Kroeber and Kluckhohm while the ecological adaptationist school is derived from theorists like White, Rappoport and Harris. For the purpose this study, the cognitive school also known as ethnographic will be discussed because ethnographic method of data collection was applied. It believes in culture as a system of knowledge, of learned standards for perceiving, believing and evaluating and
acting (Allaire et al., 1984). **The cognitive school (ethnographic school)** views culture as a system of knowledge, of learned standards for perceiving, believing, evaluating and acting. Culture is a set of functional cognitions organized into a system of knowledge that contains what one has to and need to know in order to be an acceptable member of the society. It is the peoples organized experiences the reality they live in. It provides structure as a phenomenal of the world in forms of perceptions and concepts. It embraces organizational climate shared and endures the perception of the organizational attributes. Culture is an individual’s cognitive map, created from personal experiences with the organization that provides members with useful cues to adapt their behavior to what is expected of the organization. Organizations are artifacts of shared cognitive maps of a representative collective mind and belief. For the purpose of this study, the views of the cognitive school, also known as the ethnographic school, are applicable since it believes in culture as a system of knowledge, of learned standards for perceiving, believing, evaluating and acting (Allaire et al., 1984).

### 4.2 The three levels of culture

The following three levels of culture provide an overview of the cultural phenomena which are observable in deciphering a culture (Schein, 2010; Jain & Jain, 2013).

1. **Basic underlying assumptions:** Those perceptions that are taken for granted for example behavior, thoughts, feelings, belief or values.

2. **Espoused beliefs and values:** How did they come into being? Was an individual’s assumption of what is right or wrong a key pillar in the formation of the organization? The individual could have had an influential position to be able to have the entire group doing things their way. This might explain the underlying reason as to why things are done the way they are.

3. **An artifact:** This refers to the physical environment, technology, style of artistic creations, manner of dressing, emotional displays, myth and stories narrated about the organization.

### 4.3 Leadership and organizational theories

This section will elaborate on the different leadership and organizational theories, the type of leaders that emerge from it, and lastly, an analysis of these theories. Organizational theorists have documented that organizations are different and unique in personalities just like humans: for example, they can be rigid or flexible, unfriendly or supportive, conservative or innovative (Lunneburg, 2011). Pacanowsky and O’Donnell-Trujillo (2009) are researchers that have contributed immensely towards understanding the organizations’ cultures. Their theory argues that organizational culture is diverse; it takes a good communicative strategy from members
of the organization in order to understand it. The researchers argue further that organizational cultures vary and are impossible to generalize due to the connections formed within. Pacanowsky and O'Donnell-Trujillo’s theory is about bringing out the uniqueness in the values of every organizational culture rather than generalizing them (West & Turner, 2013).

Explained below are four proposed organizational theories and leadership approaches according to various researchers found in the literature search.

**Behavioral theory** is based on the leader’s behavior focuses on the mental, physical or social characteristics. The theory is about the leaders’ relationship to those around him. The behavior is analyzed giving an added advantage to the individual demonstrating the right behavior. This theory reiterates that the leaders can focus their interest either on the people or tasks at hand (Jain¹ and Jain², 2013).

**Contingency theory** contends that there is no single effective style in leadership and organization. One style can be successful in one situation and not in another. The internal and external limitations such as; technology used, and size of the organization, how it adapts to the environment, differences in resources, operational activities and the leadership assumptions about employees all have a bearing on success (Lunenburg, 2011).

**Transactional theory** states that there is a supportive leader has a mutual agreement with the subordinates on rewards and punishment and there is a supportive mutual working environment towards organizational goals.

**Transformational theory** proposes that the leader charismatically transforms, and motivates the subordinates by building a relationship that leads to trust. A sense of purpose is therefore instilled in the group when they identify themselves with the leader (Bass & Avolio, 1993).

In view of the above stated theories, a leader is bestowed with the power and capacity to influence the organization. This position entails leading in accordance with his or her vision, values, and codes of behavior and modes of leadership. Secondly, the leader has the capability to inspire the organization while at the same time shows sensitivity to the uniqueness of the organizational culture in order to achieve harmony. Thirdly, they may make adaptations in their leadership patterns whether they are autocratic, democratic-participatory or charismatic, task-oriented or person-oriented leaders (Schmid, 2006). Klein *et al.* (2013) commend significant work done by culture and leadership theorists in explaining the aspects of relationship among leadership, culture and effectiveness.

Most theories were not developed for the human and community service organizations or healthcare, but rather more business management. Leadership theories are dynamic and are evolving from time to time as world faces globalization changes. Al-Sawai, (2013) points out that an emergent theory is one involving leaders that support and build relationships with their employees. Large organizations encompass subcultures and numerous groups that can experience conflict with each other. Strong leadership exploits group diversity and polarizing conflicts by channeling energies into utilizing the available resources to work towards a common goal (Al-Sawai, 2013). The leadership role and development is at vital crossroads
where a leader is expected to prepare future leaders that can uphold and maintain organizational progress in this dynamic organizational culture and leadership environment (Al-Sawai, 2013).

5. **Previous research**

This section explains the procedure used to identify: - the relevant literature to this study, evaluation of the articles, a content summary of the relevant articles to this study and questions about the knowledge gap. The literature search was carried out to establish the relevance of this study to the existing literature, to fill a gap in the previous literature or possibly to develop a foundation for a new study. The search resulted in the review of several articles related to and about organizational culture and leadership but only 12 articles appeared most relevant to the area of study. The search area was conducted from the following databases; Google Scholar, Libris, Sage, Academic Search Elite (http://www.ebsco.com) and Primo. Course books and reports were also used as reference material. It was necessary to get a comprehensive and comparative understanding of what other experts in the field have written on the area of study. To scale down the search number of articles available the following keywords were used.

**Organizational Culture, leadership, community service organizations, social work and leadership styles, dysfunctional leadership**

In one article, Scott *et al.* (2003) take on the challenges of measuring organizational culture and advocate for critical thinking whilst using instruments. The authors argue that the instruments available in measuring culture or culture change require an assessment on how accessible they are to the organizational environment for quality improvement. The culture assessment tools have to be flexible and appropriate for whatever purposes they serve. Scott *et al.* (2003) advocate for a plea to the policymakers and researchers to not define organizational culture single handedly. In order to achieve strong and adaptable insights several notions of instruments and methods are a necessity. The leader has to be reconciled with the nature of what is being studied, but not rely solely on a single instrument or even a set of them.

In “*The impact of leadership styles on organizational culture and firm effectiveness: An empirical study*”, Klein *et al.* (2013) discuss the relationship between different leadership styles, culture norms and the organizational quality. According to Schein (1992), leaders control the mechanisms through which they influence the culture. These are:

- Adapting to their environments through establishing and evolving workgroups
- Empowering sub-cultures that represent ideal norms, and
- Creating systems of task forces and committees to manage culture.

Other ways in which leadership can shape culture are also discussed, such as developing competencies in creating trusting relationships and establishing personal accountability. A positive work environment conveys a culture whereby members work as teams. Also in
developing knowledge, skills, and abilities which translates into employees commitment to meet the client’s needs. Contrary to the above, researchers in organizational culture indicate that there are challenges in assessing the impact of culture on performance in terms of measurement. Another factor that reinforces the results indicates that leadership skills of managers and supervisors are critical factors in the creation and reinforcement of cultural norms. This article is relevant to this study because it proposes ways in which effectiveness and quality can be achieved by leaders in effecting teamwork, innovation and creativity. Social workers strive to create this environment in order to achieve organizational goals.

An article by Vangen and Winchester (2014), and Winchester (2014), “Managing cultural diversity in collaborations a focus on management tensions” gives insight into how to manage cultural diversity in inter-organizational collaboration. The authors suggest focusing on a ‘culture paradox’ which implies that cultural diversity can be both a source of stimulation, creativity and reward as well as a source of prospective conflicts of values, behavior, practices and beliefs. Perceiving culture in this manner, redirects the challenge to not only address the friction through processes such as recognizing, searching for and reconciling the differences, but it also generates a mutual advantage through the cultural diversity. Naturally, tensions cannot be resolved by favoring one side over the other, but by informing the individuals’ judgments about possible available channels in addressing the issue. The principle of culture can be a source of contradiction, the authors’ advice that the way forward is not to look for right answers, but rather to embrace the principles of a culture paradox and to accommodate, arising agency and quantity management tensions. This article is relevant to this study because Långanäs is a culturally diversified institution therefore the management most probably does encounter the same challenges.

Schmids’ 2006 article, “Leadership Styles and Leadership Change in Human and Community Service Organizations” presents and analyzes different types of leadership and patterns of management in human and community service organizations. The following approaches were discussed. One is a description, analysis and an evaluation of change in organizations, the impact of different leadership styles in different situations and how to deal with emergencies at different stages of an organizations life cycle. Another aspect discussed is the range of leadership styles and their relevance to different organizational structures. Several recommendations to the public boards of nonprofit and community organizations are suggested. There is a need to select leaders, who are suited to the organizations’ unique characteristics, example in accordance to culture and in accordance with the organizations’ stage of development or organizational life cycle (Schmid, 2006).

Schmid (2006), discusses the different types of human service and community service organizations. Two were relevant to this study, the first one being organizations which provide social services according to age groups and areas of specialization. Långanäs is that kind of organization. It provides treatment with regard to age groups. The second type of organization relevant to this study embraces organizations that provide services for children and youth at risk which also is offered at Långanäs.
6. Method

Qualitative research is a method that seeks to unravel behavior and perceptions of a target group with the purpose of gaining a deeper understanding of the group’s experience. This method was appropriate to this study because it is not based on collecting quantity data but rather on quality (Royse, 2011). The data collected was not meant to maximize the numbers but rather to achieve a saturation point of the information required on the topic. This occurred when there was consistency in the information when an additional data collection repeated itself. Secondly, the study questions are open-ended, requiring a discovery of new perspectives which can only be answered by carrying out a qualitative study. It describes a phenomenon providing a more detailed understanding of what already is known. Therefore, answering the study questions would possibly provide the reader with information of new discoveries. Lastly, the researchers were not experts but rather being unaware of what is going on at the identified study site, but they want to learn and discover more - creating curiosity of what the outcome of the analysis will be (Royce, 2011). Observation, recording and interpreting non-verbal communication from the respondents provide a valuable feedback during interviews and observations.

This qualitative study was carried out through interviews and participant observations with social workers and administrative managers at Låganäs – Eksjö in southern Sweden. The section describes the data collection process; the selection of research questions, the selection of respondents and the process for establishing contact, the data collection methods, and the advantages and disadvantages of the methods used. The study utilized ethnographic tools and approaches that require making an assessment of the behavior and culture of people by observing and talking to them as they go about their daily routine (Royce, 2011). An inductive approach was undertaken in which pattern similarities in the responses were searched for after observation and interviewing. The purpose was to help to analyze the social worker’s role as a leader in the existing organizational culture at Låganäs. The patterns assisted in developing an explanation leading to an analysis (Royse, 2011).

6.1 Selecting research questions

The review of previous academic research carried out on organizational culture and leadership provided a lot of information on this topic. Reading various articles and books on the same topic gave a better understanding and knowledge of the field. Hartman (2003) suggests proficiency in the subject of study in order to know what to look for when structuring interview questions. A deeper understanding of the topic, through this proficiency, made it easier to structure appropriate questions that would provide answers to the research questions. Previous research questions were a way of examining previous findings to possibly anticipate and also guide the development of new questions. Those studies therefore provided a knowledge area that needs to be researched. This served as a motivation for asking questions
in a different way from previous studies adding a different dimension to the study. Previous familiarization with Långanäs before the data collection served as background knowledge which helped in framing the interview questions.

6.2 Selection process and establishing contact

The process of identifying the location of the data collection was facilitated by a previous internship at Långanäs as a part of a social work course. The experience was an added advantage in carrying out this study in terms of obtaining permission from the authorities concerned and familiarity with the environment when carrying out the study. Bryman (2011) points out that location familiarity before the data collection makes it easier to select the key respondents when conducting interviews and participating as an observer. The gatekeepers are “those who have the authority to give permission for the research, and those who have the credibility to obstruct or facilitate the study.” (Morris, 2006, p.84). Information on confidentiality and voluntary participation of the respondents was discussed. This process of working first with the gatekeepers was to gain trust and a sign of transparency to Långanäs while carrying out the study (Bryman, 2011). A formal letter had been sent to the administration informing them and asking for permission to carry out the study (See Appendix 1). The unit managers were selected for interviews as respondents because they were leaders in charge of the employees in every unit. Therefore it was appropriate to interview them for purposes of answering the study questions pertaining to organization culture and leadership. There are six units at Långanäs headed by unit managers who are social workers. Five of them were able to take the interviews while one could not due to sickness. Five of the unit managers are men while only one is a woman. The top administration is headed by women. Out of the administration team that runs the institution, two senior managers were interviewed. The interviews lasted 45 minutes were recorded and transcribed verbatim.

6.3 Data collection

This section explains the methods used in the data collection and why they were relevant for this study. Participant observation and unstructured interviews using an interview guide were the two methods that were appropriate. Royse (2011) terms it triangulation, meaning using more than one method of data collection in one study to ensure that the findings are credible and accurate. The main purpose of these two methods was to identify the different dimensions of organizational culture and leadership. Participant observations entailed familiarizing myself with the cultural environment to achieve a touch of personal experience of the human interaction. Observing the day-to-day activities of the organization included the non-verbal communication, interactions, code of conduct, events, and the use of language by the staff (Bryman, 2011). In this study certain aspects of the culture were observed. These
included the physical setup of the institution and its norms, values, rules and behavior. The observations were unscheduled, less structured, and occurred at any time of interaction with the staff at Långanäs. In some instances timing was crucial, for example, observing staff during meetings or conferences which were scheduled to specific times.

The observations took two weeks to carry out - the duration depended on the setting and activity in progress. As an example, it took a series of afternoons and mornings to observe the handing over of shifts by the employees or it took an hour or more to fully observe the physical setting of the institution. In order to avoid disrupting the natural order of activities, the role of an active participant was taken on; this meant that the activities were observed with complete participation (Bryman, 2011). The following was carried out in order to blend in during observations:

- Familiarity with the facility before the onset of data collection - initially the observations were kept short to avoid being overwhelmed.
- Honesty in providing the participants with simple explanation of what was being observed.
- Paid attention to key words in conversations that would help in recollection of the content.
- Shifting attention from a wide- to a narrow-angled focus on the persons and the activities interactions and the overall view of the activities.
- Mentally replayed remarks and scenes observed and observed keenly on the specific details, for example the artifacts.

Acceptance into the Långanäs community gave a better understanding of the diverse perspectives existing at the facility and at the same time helped to interpret the relationship between them. Factors important for a deeper understanding of the culture can be brought to the surface by participant observations. It seemed that the respondents provided accurate views of their perceptions, but there was no way to “verify” the truth of those perceptions. By using participant observations, this not only helps in understanding the data collected, but also helped in framing questions that gave a better understanding of the organization culture and leadership (Royce, 2011). The main disadvantage with participant observation was that it was time consuming and several trips had to be made to the location. Royce (2011) explains that ethnographic studies require researchers to spend at least one year in the field on location collecting data through participant observations or other methods. Being in the environment to capture the cultural aspects was time consuming so as to discover the cultural elements. It was also a challenge documenting while at the same time participating in what was happening around.

Careful objective notes were made about what was seen while observations were recorded in form of field notes in a field notebook. Informal conversations and interactions of the employees and managers were taken down (Bryman, 2011). It was important to make a distinction between what was observed from what was expected, and the interpretation of what was observed. This was done by the use of three columns to prevent obtaining invalid results that were not a true reflection of the study. Royce’s (2011) description is that
participant observations are used for confirmation of what is already known but often carried out to discover unexpected truths. Confidentiality was maintained during the observations by ensuring that the respondents could not be connected to the data they provided. No names, addresses or titles were used during the observations and the characteristics of those involved were also kept anonymous.

A semi-structured interview was the second method of data collection. It was suitable for this study because it served the purpose of identifying symbols, certain expressions, stories and anecdotes in the organization (Royce, 2011). The social workers were informed about the recording of the interviews. It was emphasized to them that they were to be used for examination purposes of this particular study and nothing else. The interview dates and venue, which were at the Långaniäs premises, were agreed upon prior to the interviews. The respondents decided on the venue which was quiet and conducive to recording without interruptions. There was no issue of privacy because the entire organization was aware of the study being conducted. In fact, many more people wanted to be interviewed, but this could not be done due to time constraints. Bryman (2011) emphasizes that semi-structured interviews allows for an open discussion enabling the interviewer to ask probing questions to the social workers in order to investigate the topic of the study even further. The interview guide served as a guideline for generating more questions in order to discover what the social workers felt and their reaction to the existing organizational culture and leadership. The interviews were concluded by thanking the social workers for their time and cooperation, and asking them if they had additional remarks on the study’s topic. However, the semi-structured interviews had the disadvantage of being time consuming.

6.4 Audio recording and data transcription

This method was applicable to this study because recording interviews ensured that that the information was accurate when transcribing verbatim (Royce, 2011) as one could review what had been recorded. Interviews and transcription was done in the Swedish language. Due to the fact that the study will be presented in English, it was decided that the quotes from interviews remain as transcribed verbatim in the Swedish language to preserve the accuracy, although a translation will be added in bracketed italics. Transcribing the interviews was time consuming which was a disadvantage of this method.

6.5 Thematic analysis

Thematic analysis (TA) is a qualitative data analysis method that focuses on identifying a patterned meaning in the data. It is used to provide answers to the research questions related to people’s experiences, views, perceptions, understanding and representation. This study is about understanding organizational culture and leadership and hence being a relevant method. The data were collected through observations and interviews and then analyzed using themes. To understand and analyze the data collected, similar patterns and different perceptions
resulting from them were analyzed to form themes. By reading the empirical data thoroughly, the recurring patterns were then documented as 1st order themes. These themes were further narrowed down to metathemes or 2nd order themes whereby a major theme could have several subthemes under it as follows: 1st order themes girls’ organization, work schedule, rotation of unit managers, mistrust among the leadership, divisions, solution focused leadership approach, task oriented leadership approach. The 2nd order themes were created by having a main theme with subthemes under it. Changes with subthemes: girls’ only organization, rotation of unit managers, fixed work schedule and the youth treatment approach, Communication with subthemes: Mistrust in leadership and divisions (rumors and gossip), Leadership styles, with subthemes: solution focused and task oriented and espoused values.

6.6 Field notes from observations

These were notes taken continuously during observations on what was seen or heard (Royse, 2011). The main aim was to compare the interrelation between what was observed and said during the interview sessions. There was a main column containing specific elements of the topic to be observed, then a column for personal reactions, a column for what was observed subjectively and a column for interpretation of the observations. The date, time and place of the activity were also recorded. The analysis of what was done whilst being on the facility so as to facilitate an self-reflection in understanding what the notes mean. There was also a revelation of the specific concepts and how relevant they were to the study which led to a deeper focus to investigate. The concept observed to decipher meaning was artifacts, which includes; the physical environment, communication, the dress code, the language and the rituals. After completion of the observations a typed transcript of notes was done in order to note any details that might have been omitted. A descriptive compilation of the observations was made providing an understanding of how these aspects relate to what was discovered during the interviews.

6.7 Ethical considerations

Social work research should not be imposed on involuntary respondents (Royse, 2011). The respondents in this study volunteered to participate and no coercion was used. They were competent to understand that their participation in the study was voluntary and that they were free to withdraw from the study at any point if so wished. A letter advising on the above was sent to the administration and the same information was communicated to the respondents prior to the beginning of the interview. Potential research respondents were provided with sufficient information regarding the study in order to deduce whether there could be any risks, benefits or discomforts involved. Information explaining the purpose of the research, the expected duration of the interviews or observations was given. The respondents in the study were also given an opportunity to raise questions regarding the nature of the study when in
doubt at any time. **Anonymity** is whereby the respondents cannot be identified by any means (Royse, 2011).

The research respondents were not put in harm’s way as a result of improper management of the information provided. Their **confidentiality** was guaranteed; this was on the understanding that the respondents' identity would be protected, while the information provided would be used only for the intended study purposes. (Royse, 2011). This was done in the following manner: Their responses were noted as anonymous, information that could identify them was separated from the research by use of ‘pseudonyms’ (false names) during the recording of the interviews and the transcribing. The sensitivity of the information provided was discussed prior to the interview whilst at the same time emphasizing on their anonymity. Lastly, this study ensured that no harm would result as a consequence of the respondents’ participation in the research. This was done by debriefing the respondents about the study in order to neutralize any negative feelings, should such follow afterwards.

However, it was a dilemma carrying out the research as an “insider” at the institution. My previous working experience at the facility was considered as both an advantage and a disadvantage. This meant that it was easier to recognize both the ties that bound the organization and the social splits that cause divisions within. The insider status easily facilitated acceptance into the group leading to the respondents’ openness during interviews and observations. On the other side, it could also impact on the way the respondents perceived the researcher. This gave them greater access to the private self of the researcher as opposed to being an “outsider.” The boundary between the private and public self is closer to the private self when one is an insider. This would influence the objectivity of the study which is the base for a qualitative study. Bearing this in mind a copy of the study shall be presented to the administration as a guarantee that it was only for study purposes and not to cause harm.

7. **Results**

This section is divided into two parts, one interview and one observations section. The interview part covers four main themes that evolved during the interview analysis. These are:

- changes
- communication
- different types of leadership
- espoused values, and
- the way forward for Långanäs.

The second section is observations describes themes arrived after the observation analysis. The themes covered under observations include:

- the physical environment
- communication
- the dress code, and
the language and rituals

This two methods of data collection were used in this study in order compare the results of the two methods for accuracy purposes. As previously explained in the audio recording and data transcription section, the interviews were transcribed verbatim therefore in this section the Swedish translation will be followed by an English translation since the study is written in English. Note that the names after the quotations of the respondents are pseudonyms and not real names.

7.1 Changes

Långanäs has undergone a series of changes since its inception up until today being a dynamic institution. This section describes the social workers’ perception on the impact of recent changes on the leadership and the institution. The first upcoming change is that it will turn into a homogenous institution consisting of girls only, aged 16-21. All the social workers interviewed were disgruntled about the way the decision was made. The decision was made solely by the head office without having a discussion on the advantages and the disadvantages of changing to a girls’ institution. During the interview, Josephine’s reflection on this was as follows:

"Angående att målgruppen ska bytas till en homogen institution, är det så att vi fick det på remiss och skulle skriva vad vi tyckte om att ha bara flickor, vi fick skicka in synpunkter och svaret vi fick tillbaka var att det var bestämt att vissa institutioner ska ha en homogen målgrupp. Då var Långanäs en av dem. Dessvärre har ingen gett oss en motivering till vad det är som är bra med att ha bara flickor. Hur kan det bli effektivt behandlingsmässigt? Det känns föråldrat att ha bara tjejer institution. Vad är det som man ser är fördelar med att göra så här?" (Josephine)

The social worker explains that the institution was not given an opportunity to discuss the question why the change to a girls only facility. Instead the management and the social workers were requested to write down their perceptions and send them to the head office. A directive came later explaining that it had been decided that certain institutions qualified for this change and Långanäs was one of them. No more explanation was provided. She still wonders what they think is positive with this change as pertains to the treatment of the youth since it appears to be old fashioned.

7.1.1 Rotation of unit managers

The second change that has occurred within the institution is the rotation of unit managers every 5 to 8 years. Some of the unit managers had worked in the same unit for a many years resulting in what the management described as, the unit itself being identified with the
individual instead of the job description. To avoid personalizing a unit, this was a measure to ensure that managers have projects to accomplish after which evaluation is done and then rotate to the next unit. The advantage of this is that new projects get worked on while the institution utilizes the different competences available at the institution. Josephine explained that for a long time the management had experienced divisions between the units, including a lack of cooperation, mistrust towards the management, and gossip amongst the workers creating speculation about people and issues within the work environment.


(Josephine)

The main reason for the rotation of unit managers was to create a “we feeling” around the institution. Managers had headed units for many years leading to personifying the individual instead of focusing on the effectiveness of the job. Over time the units were operating as separate entities engrossed with rivalry and gossip creating a negative climate at the institution. This change would ensure new goals to achieve for the manager, more cooperation between the units, and a feeling of the organization as a single unit.

7.1.2 Fixed work schedule

This is the third change implemented at the institution in September last year. One of the social workers pointed out that it was a source of discontent among the employees. It does not cater to single parents or divorced parents who co-parent with one another and thirdly, the employees were never approached for input on change; the decision was directly implemented without their point view. The old schedule was flexible and it catered to the needs of these different groups within the workforce. On the other hand one of the senior administrators supported this idea in the sense that a fixed work schedule was the best alternative in certain units where sometimes there was less manpower. Another positive result was that the units could easily help each other in the event of employee absenteeism or sickness since the work schedule was standard for all the units.


(Esther)
A fixed work schedule is contributing to bridging the differences between the units in the sense that they can help each other in the event of staff deficits. Our budget expenditure is over the required so it is important that we keep it. Money is not everything but we have also increased the staff in certain units that are in need of more backing in the event of an emergency.

7.1.3 Youth treatment approach

The fourth change discussed during interviews was in the youth treatment approach as described below. Some of the social workers interviewed have had many years of experience serving at Låganäs and had a perspective of what had been and what is happening at the present. The social workers explained that there are changes at all institutions and that they are dynamic, but at the same time a number of these changes are dragging the institution backwards, instead of forwards. Back in the time when the institution was boys only, it was a place where socialization was taught. This process entailed punishment whereby some of the methods used were very inhumane, and, are today, unacceptable and even illegal. It was a culture that focused more on what was not done right rather than not complimenting and appreciating the positives. The institution has currently adopted different perspectives in treatment of the youth. One is discussion and involving the individual in the planning of and involvement in treatment process. Informing the youth on why certain measures are in place, and engaging them in a discussion, provide a platform for them to voice their concerns. Solomon gives an insight in what should be done in order to experience positive changes from top to bottom of the management.

"Om det ska ske förändring på Låganäs, det måste sker förändring både i ledningen på Låganäs och i verksamhetens kontor. För nuläget är det alldeles för mycket att följa. Det kommer principer som inte är bra och med det så kryddar man det med saker som är personliga och inte verksamhetssaker. Detta ska förändras i ledningen här på Låganäs" (Solomon).

Change at Låganäs will only happen if the leadership here together with SiS head office implements it. There is too much going on at the moment. We receive directives on principles to be followed that are spiced up with personal issues. This has nothing to do with the organization. This has to change right here at Låganäs.

When asked about values and norms, Solomon replied that Låganäs is founded in catering to the individual’s needs whereby respect, autonomy and clarity are the key words that govern it. This is reflected in how the youth and every employee should be treated at the institution. The youth were not involved in the treatment in the past; they were only corrected for their wrong doings. Currently, the youth are move involved in their treatment plan; it is about reinforcing individual needs and maximizing their potential in whatever area of interest they have, like school or internship programs. The social worker expressed that the youth have too much freedom to decide what is best for them. By this he means that they do not have the capability to make decisions that can affect their lives which that is why they are in an institution to get help. However, respect autonomy and clarity have transformed the approach
in administering the treatment programs at Långanäs. The units led by the social workers now work as teams that are pulling towards a common goal.

During a different interview session - when asked whether words clarity, respect and autonomy are synonymous with Långanäs - one social worker explained that some treatment assistants are disrespectful to their colleagues. And in certain cases the leaders are not clear in what they want to have done, which leaves the treatment assistants confused. The impression from this explanation was that in reality these words have a relative meaning. Most of the social workers described Långanäs as an institution that has helped the youth who have difficulty fitting into society due to their social problems. They were proud to be associated with the institution which has always taken up the challenge of treating youth who are perceived as failures in the society. All the social workers generally admitted to having an exciting, challenging and dynamic job that requires a lot of empathy and patience to get results. When asked about what they were most proud of as social workers at Långanäs, the general response was that: “When a youth pulls through the treatment process and changes their life around - that is a proud moment!”

7.2 Communication

Communication was a significant element that was brought into discussion throughout the interviews. There was a general perception that the management team is divided, giving rise to a sense of mistrust towards the leadership at Långanäs. There is a team in charge of emergency preparedness (beredskap) after office hours and a team in charge during office hours however; these two have divisions between them. This is supported by the fact that the unit managers felt left out in being a part of certain decisions affecting their units, for example, the standard work schedule. There are rumors and gossip circulating around between units or amongst employees within the same unit instead of channeling these grievances to the persons concerned or the management. In some instances, employees have had to channel their grievances to the trade union rather than towards the leadership at the institution.


This is the manner in which we receive information, it has been decided that this and that must be to done. I do not feel involved in what has already been decided. We receive lots of information but no dialogue. Involve is a very popular vocabulary in this institution, I would like more involvement in issues there is not much of that happening right now not as I would expect. This is frustrating and I feel disappointed that is the reason why I choose not to
The social workers had different approaches to leadership. One approach was common among them; that is a solution-focused approach with the main focus being team work rather than dwelling on the underlying problem (Schein, 2010). This perception is advocated around the institution since having dialogue is important. Contrary to this, the leadership team is divided on issues that should call for dialogue and consensus. As one social worker said, some unit managers had a need to have control and power which made the treatment assistants working under them to be submissive instead of working independently. There was an emphasis on having the tasks done following a routine, rather than taking care of the team as a whole (task oriented). He acknowledged the fact that leadership styles and personalities can differ, but the basic principles and values of the organization should be the same. The social worker went on to explain that academic qualifications are not good enough to head the units at Låganäs - it takes a particular personality that can lead even during the challenging moments with the youth.

**7.4 Espoused values**

According to Schein (2010), espoused values provide a standard for acceptable behavior of the organization. It ensures that employees adhere to the organization’s value system in regard to decision-making rather than personal values. One of the social workers explained how new employees are oriented into the organization it takes three days. New employees are assigned to coworkers to introduce them to the organizational policies and values, and a pamphlet of literature on Låganäs is handed out. There is evidence of constant reminders everywhere of the institution’s mission statement phrase: integrity, respect and clarity (*integritet, respekt och tydlighet*) put up in conference rooms, the dining hall and toilets. The employees have a set of rules and principles to abide by that are in line with the organization’s goals and an annual conference for new employees is held to get feedback on their experience at Låganäs.

Despite this socialization process that is clearly stipulated, the social workers had a common perception regarding being involved in certain decision making processes. They expressed that words such as involvement (*delaktighet*) did not apply in certain situations at a leadership level as stated in the organizational policies. Decisions affecting them as leaders of units were made without considering their input.

**7.5 Observations**

Culture as a concept is useful in understanding a group or organizations and events that could
be peculiar and not well understood. Schein (2010) proposes an anthropological approach to observe culture. These are the observable events and core forces that can describe a culture:

- People’s behavioral irregularities during interaction.
- The norms being the standards and values.
- The espoused values what the organization is working towards to achieve.
- The formal philosophy in terms of ideologies and policies.
- The rules of the game or the unwritten rules to abide by in order to be part of the group.
- The climate, which is the impression conveyed by the group by observing the physical layout.

In addition, embedded skills are the deep rooted skills or competencies that can be passed to generations, the language, the thinking habits or linguistic patterns, the shared meanings amongst the group members, and the rituals followed when the group celebrates events reflect the groups values and are all elements of culture.

The following concepts were selected and observed for the purposes of this study due to time constraints, considering the fact that it is time consuming to carry out ethnographic observations. Therefore, due to time constraints, the following elements of culture were selected for purposes of this study:

- The artifacts including the physical environment
- Communication
- Dress code
- Language
- Rituals

### 7.6 Artifacts: the visible symbols

This section describes what was observed through sight, smell and hearing on arrival at the premises. Långanäs is situated on a vast land, in the center of a forest green vegetation, a bridge over the lake (Låganässjön) flowing down on the right side as one makes entry into the facility. The architectural buildings are traditional wooden houses surrounded by forests, well mowed lawns and clean gardens. The buildings are self-contained houses that serve as offices as well as residential units for the youth; they are spread all over the facility, painted in white and red earth colors. There was an ongoing construction of a unit into a modern house fitted with self-contained units for the youth as opposed to the current communal bathrooms and toilets. The houses contain spacious kitchens, living room, dining room and the youths’ bedrooms. The other houses include: key storage room near the gymnastic room purposely for depositing keys and telephones after signing off from duty. There are open parking places for staff and visitors; there is a basketball court, a main kitchen and dining hall that caters to everyone, a training gym, a school, nurse’s office and an administrative block. There are six
youth units with specific names to them. The windows to the youth’s units are reinforced with a double thick glass window fitted with metal grills, while the doors have an electric alarm installed. The units are well furnished with modern furniture such as a cozy sofa, a big flat screen television, digital versatile disc (DVD) players, wall paintings as well as a common living room for the youth and employees to interact. There is also a kitchen, a toilet, a bathroom, some small sized bedrooms and a laundry room.

The unit manager’s offices and assistant manager’s offices had an open plan office space, with work stations, whereas some unit managers had separate offices from the assistant managers. The observation made was that there was free communication between the managers and the employees. The interaction between employees was spontaneous, but on a regular basis. There was a flow of information (formal emails) indicating teamwork where everyone is willing to help out or answer questions in the event of uncertainties. There was movement in and out of the office all the time creating an informal atmosphere. The managers were accessible all the time by telephone or direct approach. This could also be a downside to this type of office plan. It was distracting to concentrate and take notes due to the noise from the telephones and ongoing conversations by those walking around and open computer screens. There is a room where the staff can eat, rest, relax and unwind. It was a motivational tool for the employees to take a break and get energized.

7.7 Communication

An observable element was that the flow of information was centralized. The institution has a website where all information about the organization is posted, and all employees have an organizational personal e-mail address. An important item to have as soon as one parks their car is to pick up a key and a telephone which are important gadgets to have while at the facility. Keys are for opening and locking doors since this is a security institution, therefore the rule is to never leave any door unlocked. The entire staff walks around with a telephone and the door keys attached to their trousers or shirts. The telephone is a vital tool to have while on duty, as it has a code number and an alarm connected to it. This is in case of emergency, like when a youth turns violent, or attempts to escape from the facility, and even to keep communication within the units and amongst the staff in the entire institution as a whole. As one walks along the corridors and on the paths from one department to another, there is silence although people are friendly and exchange greetings as one walks past the other. During meetings or “conferences”, the managers and assistants meet the social services personnel, the youth in question, parents, teachers, and the contact person to the youth who is usually one of the staff members. This is a special meeting where the youth gets to present opinions on the treatment and the general atmosphere at the facility. The general impression observed was that the managers interacted freely with the assistant managers and the team, and that the main focus was the youth. The team weighed in with their opinions giving rise to a lighter moment. In some specific instances, the youth was not in the mood to talk about
himself, therefore the contact person gave a briefing on how the progress had been.

7.8 Language

Language is one aspect of communication; hence it was observable that the use of it was both negative and positive. During the interviews, the language used was formal and serious, but during the observations it was observed that a lot of swearing words are used in communication. The youth do, in some instances, use vulgar language, or swear at the employees, but no one reacts to this, so it is normalized. The use of language is very casual, even between employees and the managers. On a positive note, it can be helpful that staff use the same language in order to get along with the youth, who are used this kind of language. One of the social workers was asked about the coping mechanism of regular use of foul language at work. The response was that employees are oblivious to this occasional indecency and disrespectful approach by the youth. They work to get past the swearing during interacting instead focus on the potential of the youth and how best to tap into it and make a change in their lives. Additionally, this was also covered during the orientation in preparation to take up a position that could entail this kind of language considering the target group at the facility.

Another aspect of use of language is use of words that categorize sexes. For example, when the boys are having a heated argument between them, often it is the male co-workers that intervened and not the women. They would mobilize for backup (alarm) in the event that it escalates. On the other hand, the males did also resolve conflicts in the girls units effectively through dialogue. Use of organizational jargon is present and like certain procedures have short forms, for example Isolation is termed just “iso”.

7.9 Changing work shifts

A key observation point was when staff was switching shifts from day to evening. The managers and the assistants were very keen on who would be working which specific time. It is a routine at Långanäss that all the employees who have worked during the day meet together with those that will take over an evening shift. The latter must be updated on what has happened during the day and documentation done to support it. Daily reflection is another vital session before signing off for the day when the night shift takes over. Some days are coupled with conflicts and misunderstanding with the youth who are not willing to follow their daily routine. This session gives all the parties involved a chance to reflect on how the day could have been better or complement one another for a good job done. The unit managers and the assistants encouraged their employees. For instance compliment when good team effort was done as well as give individual praise whilst encouraging the way forward. Even when things do not go according to plan, they gave positive criticism for improvement.

The dress code is casual for employees, unit managers, and the youth. It is not evident who the manager or employee is. An observable habit was smoking; most of the staff and the
youth smoke. Therefore this meant frequent smoking and coffee drinking breaks since this is a culture where the coffee machine is almost always on. The employees generally interacted freely. The discussions were sometimes formal, and even private, for example, one would ask the other how the family was doing. This reflected a kind of connection between the employees in the sense that they have relations beyond the formal. The discussions involved conflict resolution or mapping the way forward with the assistant unit manager. Joking and laughing was part of the conversations too, and this signaled an open ambience, especially during meal times in the dining room. Every unit shared one table with the unit managers and the youth. An observable element was that there were five male unit managers and only one was female, while six assistant unit managers were female. For a state institution that advocates equality of sexes and opportunity it would give a balance to have more than one female as a unit manager. The institution’s head and assistant were female.

7.10 Rituals

These acts performed to serve a symbolic as well as an emotional value to the organization. (Schein, 2010). The social workers gave an account of what it was like being introduced to the organization given the nature of the clientele. The orientation consists of a three day introduction at the premises; it is a form of ritual that every aspiring employee interested in working at Långanäs must undertake. This is directed by the human resource department and supervised by the assistant unit manager. The main purpose is to assess recruitment eligibility due to the nature of the institution. Besides information about the goals, rules, values, responsibilities and policies of the organization, is also made known “this is how things are done here.” There are no rituals, or ceremonies, performed to celebrate the organization or employees as a whole. However, the organization is accommodating to freedom of religious celebrations such as Christmas, Ramadan or Easter. The organization invests in organizational development whereby the employees attend training courses, seminars or conferences in order to develop themselves.

What do these observations mean in the context of existing literature (theoretical and empirical findings)? According to the article by Klein et al. (2013), the leadership style should provide a positive work environment whereby a team work is encouraged. The observations revealed that the department managers have created tightly knitted departments that coordinate and support each other and the team work is the backbone. During the observations, the values, visions, goals, rituals, language and the expected behavior of the organization were confirmed. These are well documented on brochures and the website and are ingrained in the orientation of everyone who joins the institution. Vangen and Winchester (2014) provide insights into the management of cultural diversity. Långanäs can maybe be seen as a paradox whereby the leadership have to deal with a multicultural mistrust amongst the leadership group. The tensions and mistrust are arising from a lack of transparency in the communication within the managing staff, as opposed to the cultural diversity of the institution as a whole, which forms the paradox. The expectation was that the diversity of cultures could have a negative bearing on the organization. On the contrary, it provides
stimulation and enriches the institution whereby Arabic speaking workers are an asset in translating what the youth want to say in cases where they do not speak Swedish, or English. This was observed during conferences with the social services, the youth, and the heads of department.

7.11  Way forward for Långanäs

The administration discussed several measures put in place to curb the ongoing divisions and grievances at the facility. During the data collection at the administrative buildings there was a suggestion box ready to be dispatched at a central place. These written opinions and complaints would be anonymous so that individuals would not fear being victimized or picked on. The management has also begun to contact the units frequently about ongoing issues as a gesture to prove accessibility. A forum has been created to look into complaints voiced through the suggestion box, and a plan to bring together the leadership groups in order to iron out the differences causing friction between them and the administration is in the pipeline. The biggest challenge facing Långanäs at the moment is how to keep the treatment assistants to stay, and this is due to the high influx of refugees that have migrated to Sweden. Many refugee homes and facilities have been opened up causing a shortage in personnel at the institution. These accommodation facilities are located all over within the bigger towns. Given the geographical location of Långanäs, some employees have chosen to resign and move to these new refugee facilities. At the time of data collection, the management was having a crisis on how they will cover personnel shortage during the summer holidays.

8.  Discussion

This section will discuss the study questions, the results of the study in a broader perspective and the research methods used. The study results confirmed insights on how leadership affects organizational culture as evidenced by Klein et al. (2013) that subcultures can arise due to the work conditions or employee or management characteristics. It was evident from the results that Långanäs has subcultures, despite the fact that there are formal rules and policies of shared values and norms that set the standard of behavior. The different units have managers with different personalities and leadership styles. Founder values, assumptions, and artifacts of the organization are responsible for the formation of the organizational culture. Långanäs values were founded on the touchstones of taking care of the rebellious “neglected boys.” Value similarity is a factor that weighs in during the orientation at Långanäs to examine whether a candidate fits in the organizational culture before hiring, as opposed to fit the with job description or academic qualifications. The organization culture self-defends itself, meaning that it seeks to maintain the homogeneity of personalities whereby the misfits are kept out through employment turnover or disqualification after the orientation process.
8.1 The articles and the study results

In summary of the issues raised in the articles, it was evident that most of the literature studies have been carried out internationally. A renowned Swedish author, Mats Alvesson has also made contributions on this topic about changing organizational culture. In the articles, various approaches have been employed in studying this area, for instance ethnography, rounded theory and case studies of organizations which demonstrate that this is a concept that has been well researched. From the results of this study, two leadership styles have emerged as proposed by Schmids (2006). The first one being a people-oriented style meaning that the leader focuses on people, their motives, and delegates authority, consults them, and that there is a division of duties. The leader also guides and empowers others to achieve organizational goals.

The second style is people oriented – external, whereby there is an investment in developing human resources and training. Schmid (ibid.) argues that the leaders are selected according to how well they fit into the changing organizational situations. Therefore, they should abide by organizational behavior while at the same time assess critically the needs at hand and then make adjustments to their leadership style. Vangen and Winchester (2013), Klein et al. (2013), and Schmid (2006) argue that organizations differ in goals, ideologies, objectives, cultures, human resources or professional expertise in their approach when selecting leaders.

How can an organization find the right leader? Schmid (2006) claims that the leaders shape the structural behavior and patterns of the organizational culture according to their personality. However, depending on which organizational phase the organization is undergoing, different types of leadership styles and leaders are an asset to that specific phase of development or change. In this context, a mismatch in the existent leadership at a certain phase creates a crisis resulting in the employees’ lack of confidence in the management. Organizational cultures vary in strength and stability as a function of the length and emotional intensity of their actual history from the moment they are founded (Schein, 2010). What happens in organizations has a bearing on the history of events and the kind of leadership.

The artifacts are visible symbols that gauge organizational dynamics that are not easily changed. In order to understand culture symbols, they should be connected to the organizational values because a meaning given to symbols would not necessarily give the concrete meaning of the members (Schein, 1992) such as the physical settings and what they stand for. Every individual has a unique way of interpreting messages. Långanäs has no tangible reward system which might be attributed to the fact that it is a human and community service organization. Instead it is the managers and peers who evaluate an employee’s performance by assessing the person’s conduct as well as their results. This is an attribute of an organization that is comparatively people or team oriented. There are ongoing professional courses and training opportunities for personnel development. This can be perceived as an intangible reward system. The units at Långanäs operate like closely knitted families which was observable in the treatment of assistants and their interaction with the unit managers. The social workers’ differences in perception on leadership are evidence that a leader of the 21st
century has to be transparent and have a dialogue with the employees. This is culture pushing against traditionalism and wants a change. The ongoing tensions and differences at Långanäs is a sign of a culture that is demanding change within the leadership.

The first question was what are organizational goals, values and norms? This question was answered by stating that the organization mission is to create change in the lives of the youth given the existing values that social workers had different opinions about. 

Second, what type of leadership exists in the institution? It is clear from the results that every leader had a different leadership style depending on other factors such as the personality. Schmid (2006) confirms that large organizations encompass groups with subcultures that can be in conflict with each other under different leadership styles.

Third, how does that type of leadership influence the organizational culture? The level of discontent at Långanäs is an indication of the employees’ desire to see a change at the leadership level - therefore it's the culture pushing for change.

Fourth, how does the management perceive the impact of the organizational culture on their leadership? The management has taken up the responsibility and seems to be addressing the issues at hand which is a move in the right direction. Långanäs being a state owned organization makes it bureaucratic and controlled. The organizational hierarchy is an indication of the bureaucracy involved in planning, organizing and effecting changes. The rules are general with no application to specific organizations under SiS. For example, the changes to a girls’ institution may not apply to Långanäs. This predetermined action from the organizational hierarchy may not fit the local situation. Planning for eventuality is the rule, yet the meetings, committees and the paper work involved creates a back and forth slow decision making process, resulting in lack of efficiency. Directives from the head office were made to effect drastic changes but their implementation takes time.

In conclusion of the results, Långanäs physical open system and a people focused leadership style is an example of how today’s organizations are substantially different from the classic bureaucracy model. Efficiency is not appealing as the optimum goal, but the work environment is a critical variable in how well the organization functions to achieve its purposes. An intangible reward system is in place which emphasizes the importance of the human element in the organizational dynamics and informal communication and leadership structures. Concepts of the modern organizations include emphasis on symbols, values, beliefs, norms, and rituals to provide meaning and direction for individual and collective behavior within the organization. Organizations today professed to be open systems connected to their environments (Gibelman & Furman, 2012).

Every organization develops a distinctive culture governing operations. Social workers are increasingly becoming recognized and legitimized professionals. They can now influence the culture and operation approaches of human service organizations as managers and leaders. They are open to the client and adopt a mutual management style whilst employing a degree of autonomy in regard to the professional practice (Gibelman & Furman, 2012). As a state organization Långanäs has to constantly adapt to changes in laws, drastic decisions, budget allocations and cuts, contractual arrangements, and cultural attitudes of the organization. Functions of the organization are therefore not constant. Legal mandates and fiscal allotments
decided by the authorities outside the organization control the flow of events. On the other hand, the social workers are consistent in their loyalty to the professional norms and commitment to service in whichever capacity within the human service organizations.

### 8.2 Limitations of the study

The entire data collection and transcribing phase was carried out in Swedish while the written phase was done in English. Interchanging languages was a challenge depending on the scenario. In some instances the researcher interchanged the languages in order to clarify issues during interviews. In this case there was no equivalent vocabulary or meaning to certain concepts which created a challenge during translating what was said in English. The qualitative method is dependent on the researcher’s skills, which could be easily influenced by personal biases. The amount of data collected can be overwhelming to sort out and therefore being time consuming. The presence of the researcher during the data collection process is unavoidable although it could certainly have affected the respondents. There is a controversy of not accepting and understanding the method scientifically (Royse, 2011).

Triangulation minimized the inadequacies of a single method study. The two methods used interviews and observations, complemented and verified one another so as to reduce the bias effect (Royse, 2011). The question remains whether one of the methods was more appropriate than the other or whether they were sensitive to the study area which challenges the purpose of triangulation. Not only does it stimulate but also define and helps in enhancing the analysis of the study.

**Participant observations:** It was difficult to account for how the participant role affects the study. Observing requires writing field notes after the conclusion of the activity at hand. Certain situations required participating in order to understand the concept. On the other hand, it was ethical as an observer to participate in activities that are known to the group. The main focus of the researcher was data collection as opposed to participating in the observed activity. The “interviewer effect” could have affected how the respondents responded to the interview questions despite the fact that the interviewer had had previous contact with the organization. It was time consuming transcribing interviews verbatim in Swedish and writing the study in English.

### 9. Conclusions

This study is relevant to social work because social workers work in different organizational cultures that require social and leadership skills. Their actions and behaviors as leaders are easy to observe due to the openness of today’s organizational setup - especially if they are not transparent or accessible to the organization or clients. Sending emails and directives is not a leader’s norm anymore in the leadership of the 21st century. There is a need to keep a dialogue, to engage with the employees and show transparency in leadership style and
approach to employees and clients. As a public servant, the social worker serves in various capacities, making decisions that affect the afflicted in the society. Therefore, an understanding of how leadership affects organizational culture is a necessary tool as a leader in the 21st century.

From the literature search, the conclusion has been assembled to best explain the connection between organizational culture and leadership. An understanding of the organizational culture is a vital skill for leaders trying to achieve strategic outcomes. Strategic leaders have a perspective of where they want to get with the organization so it would mean analyzing the dynamics of the culture in terms of what needs transformation and what could stay. In an effective organization, the leader engages people through team building where human potential is a valued asset (Jain and Jain, 2013). “Leaders have to appreciate their function in maintaining an organization’s culture. This would guarantee a consistent behavior amongst members of the organization, reducing conflicts and creating a healthy working environment for employees.” (Tsai, 2011, p. 2). The core values of an organization begin with its leadership, which evolves to a leadership style. Subordinates are led and motivated by these values and behavior; both parties should become increasingly aware in agreement with each other. A strong unified behavior of values and beliefs will develop, and therefore, a strong organizational culture emerges (Tsai, 2011). Like people, organizations are complex; each has a personal style, strengths and weaknesses. People make decisions about the features they prefer on organizations and leaders on the basis of their own personal preferences and styles.

The results reveal Långanäs to be a people oriented culture that seeks to support and encourage workers with difficult tasks. Socializing with the team to build relationships is vital, coaches and mentors participate during the introduction period, conflict resolution is a part of working together and recruitment of new competent members is a prerequisite for the organization. It is important for the communication to start from the top management going downwards in order to create a safe, motivated environment that is goal oriented. Poor communication leads to unmotivated workers, hence low work morale builds up within the management team. Speaking in one voice alleviates divisions and mistrust, builds relationships, honesty about mistakes made while respect, wins trust from the employees. The management should therefore provide a strong rationale behind every decision made for transparency purposes. Loyalty and dedication comes after a genuine commitment that is inspired by true leadership.

9.1 Recommendations for the future research

Sweden has continued to receive immigrants on humanitarian grounds, creating an overload on the human service organizations. Research on the impact of this continued influx on social workers and the organizational culture would be an area of interesting research. The high demand on distributing available resources coupled with bureaucratic decision making
processes can only create an unhealthy work environment for social workers and diluted quality services to the clients.

10. References


A. Appendices

A.1 Appendix 1. Letter of information to participate

To whom it may concern

I hereby request you to participate in this study on organizational culture and leadership.

The social worker is expected to understand the dynamics of organizational culture in order to be effective on the job. The purpose of the study is to assess the impact of organizational culture on leadership and to assess how leadership affects organizational culture.

Data collection will be by interviews and participant observations. The data collected will be treated with utmost confidentiality; no unauthorized persons will access the material. The material be stored and used for only study purposes. All the participants in the study will be kept anonymous. The result will be presented as a bachelor thesis in social work studies at the Jönköping University, Sweden.

Your participation and contribution to this study is voluntary. You may if you so wish terminate your participation and are not bound to any explanations.

Do not hesitate to correspond with me in the event of any questions.

Yours faithfully,

Doris Xhelili
adukha@hotmail.com
1. Background of the interviewee
2. Introduction
   a. An overview the study
   b. My background
   c. The purpose and duration of interview
3. What words would you use to describe this organization? Examples?
4. What are you most proud of as an employee of this organization?
5. What is the purpose of the organization?
6. Why is the purpose of the organization important?
7. What special character does the leader posses that have influenced the character of the organization?
8. What is the personality or character of this organization? Describe?
9. What is the core of the organization or should never change?
10. Does the organization have any goals?
11. Are there values employees must abide by in order to achieve the organizational goals?
12. If you had a friend that was going to start working here what would you tell him/her?