The role of the leader in a case study discussion

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to study how the leader’s role in a case study discussion is. In a case study it is the way to the best and the most convincing solution that is important. To be able to do that, it is in common to have a case study discussion where the participants exchange thoughts and ideas about the case with each other. A good case study discussion should lead to more understanding of the case and new approaches for the participants. Case study discussions are often perceived as confused, which is not the idea, therefore it is important that a leader is present during the case study discussion. To lead a discussion that both engages and enhances the understanding is a challenge for the leader. The leader’s role and tasks vary in a case study discussion. The leader’s role depends much on how the group is and behaves and also a lot on how the leader’s personality is. It is also important for the leader to feel how the group interacts together and if the group is used to work with case study discussions or not. The leader’s role may either be highly conductive and driving with a clear structure throughout the discussion, or can the leader take a more supportive role and ask a lot of questions to the participants or can the leader take a passive role and allow the group to drive and structure the discussion forward. The most important task for the leader is to ensure that the discussion is as rewarding as possible for all the participants.

Keywords: Case Study, Discussion, Communication, The Leader, Roles

Introduction

Case study as a learning method is becoming increasingly common, as the case study complemented the writing with the speaking. The purpose of the case study is to facilitate the learning and it is today an important teaching method. A Case study is based on a problematic situation from the reality to be studied and analyzed (Bengtsson, 1999). According to Dahlkwist (2007) have case studies no answers that are either right or wrong, just as our reality looks. A case study discussion means, according to Bengtsson (1999), discussing the problem, the analysis and the solution proposal of the case study in a group. Discussions will strength the ability to argue and to listen and take in information from others. It is an important aspect to highlight key-arguments and key-reasoning during a discussion (Bengtsson, 1999). This principle can be traced back to Platon and Socrates, whose education means that learning took place through communication (Dahlkwist, 2007).

Case study discussions are the most unstructured form of case study presentations, as each discussion is unique and generates surprises. These discussions perceived in many cases as confused and therefore it is good if a leader is present during the discussion (Bengtsson, 1999). This paper will focus on how the leader’s role and tasks in a case study discussion is.
Method

This paper is based on secondary sources, which are previous research by other scientists in form of scientific articles. The scientific articles are collected from the database of University of Halmstad. The names of the databases are Web of Science, Scopus and Summon. The scientific articles are collected to investigate how the leader’s role in a case study discussion is. Some of the sources have almost the same information, which confirms the theory further. The analysis and the conclusion in this paper are based on what the theory says. To find the relevant scientific articles, some books and one web page have the keywords been used for. The keywords are case study, discussion, communication, the leader and roles.

Literary review

A case study

In science is a case study an important method (Gerring, 2004) but defines in many ways. Beverland and Lindgreen (2010) indicate the case study as a research of a limited phenomenon that collects information about. The phenomenon is also limited by time and place (Beverland & Lindgreen, 2010). Ferrara (1981) means that a case study is best defined as an intensive study of a single unit. Case study is an important method in research and they are formed to analyze, carefully study and share new ways of understanding complex phenomena (Miles, 2015). The purpose with case studies, according to Merriam (1994), is not to reach a correct answer, but the aim is for the participants to come up with which conclusions that are false and from them reach the best and most convincing solution. Stake (1978) means that case studies can be used to test hypotheses.

Dumez (2015:44) wrote that Robert Yin, who is one of the great specialists of case study in management, defines case study like “a contemporary phenomenon in its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident”. (Dumez 2015:44).

Discussion

Parker and Hess (2001) define a discussion as an investigation that happens in groups. A discussion requires a group of people and a set aim that focus on a specific question. The good thing with a discussion is that it involves both speaking and listening, and a discussion is rationale for the thinking (Parker & Hess, 2001). Communications technology and information technology should be more of a priority considers Parker and Hess (2001). A discussion causes valuations and ideas are studied. The participants get a better understanding and a better learning of the phenomenon discussed (Parker & Hess, 2001). Discussions are usually used in teaching to motivate students and to improve learning in science (Bennet et al. 2010). According to Jaako (2014) contributes discussions to better attendance and participation than a lecture will do. The discussions are aimed to active learning, stimulation and independence by the participants to explore their ideas and develop ideas with the help of the other participants in the discussion (Bennet et al. 2010). Group discussions are central and groups should be seen as a system, which individuals integrate in (Fujimoto, 2015). Discussion means that the participants learn from each other and find new approaches together. A Discussion increases the ability to think scientifically (Bransford et al. 1999).
Bennet et al. (2010:70) write that "a number of people have advocated the use of discussions in science lessons. Lemke (1990) argues that "learning science means learning to talk science" and that this means moving away from science lessons dominated by teacher talk in which the teacher asks a question, then invites and evaluates a student response” (Bennet et al. 2010:70).

A discussion involves dialogs together with other participants and it is important to ask questions to each other to solve problem easier. When discussing problem solutions with others, it means negotiation, agreements, and new depth knowledge (Gillies, 2011). The benefits with a discussion are the openness, because the participants can take up the issues and elements that they think are important and want to develop more (Gugglberger et al. 2013). To be able to argue is a necessary part of the development of knowledge within the science (Henning, 2005). With the help of discussions, the participants get a wider understanding of the subject by hearing how other indicates it. The goal with the discussion is to get several perspectives, listen to others, and get an increased understanding and wider knowledge. Those who participate in a discussion are expanding their views (Parker & Hess, 2001). Parker and Hess (2001) thinks that a discussion means a mutually search after wider and deeper knowledge about a certain subject. In a discussion, there is no struggle and there is not either some opponents, the goal is that commonly do an effective investigation together.

**A case study discussion**

A case study discussion is where the participants exchange thoughts and ideas about the case with each other, which emphasize the importance of communication competence (Kjellén, Lundberg & Myrman, 2008). Before a case study discussion, each participant has studied the case and made an own analysis. During the discussion the participants tell about their ideas and it is important that all the participants are well prepared so the discussion would be as rewarding as possible. A good case study discussion entails more understanding about the case (Ardalan, 1999). A good case study discussion should also lead to new approaches. This discussions are important because it efficiency the learning (Bengtsson, 1999). There is no right way to discuss a case study considers Baxter and Jack (2008).

Case study discussions are often perceived as confused (Bengtsson, 1999). The main idea with a case study discussion is to create knowledge and understanding from a complex situation, by help of community and be able to see context. It is important to be a creative problem searcher and a problem solver and to communicate well with others. Case study discussions provide benefits to creativity and stimulation to independence thinking, practice in problem solving abilities, training in decision-making, leadership and argumentation for it is position (Kjellén, Lundberg & Myrman, 2008). A good discussion means that all the participants are searching for clarity and expresses their arguments (Parker & Hess, 2001). Siku, Buttery and Guyton (1996) say that discussions are the most rewarding method of case study presentations. This is because discussion promotes not only one individual, as the other methods do, it encourage the whole surrounding.

**The leader in a case study discussion**

To lead an effective discussion that both engages and enhances the understanding is a challenge considers Henning (2005). By allowing the group to talk with each other before the discussion begins, usually in many cases, contribute to a positive atmosphere and it leads to better discussions. When the discussion begins, it is good to start with open questions
The leader should not take the discussion forward faster than what the group wants, because it can lose the group’s commitment (Henning, 2005). As a leader, it is good to know how the group interacts. If the group does not interacting well can it affect the communication and the discussion progress (Sutherland, Stuhr & Ayyazo, 2014). The leader must ensure that all participants have the opportunity to present their arguments and also have the chance to listen to all the other arguments to get a wider view and better understanding of the case (Smaling, 2002). According to Boston University begins a good case study discussion with that the leader ask a question that forces the participants to take a stand (www.bu.edu). It is important that the questions in a case study discussion had the same meaning for everyone in the group (Merriam, 1994). A good case study discussion leader should be able to summarize the discussion and defining moments of the discussion that are important. The leader should also have prepared questions that are adapted to move the discussion forward (Parker & Hess, 2001). Nordquist and Johansson (2009) argue that the leader should have set up a few goals with the discussion. If the focus is on to many goals can the discussion lose the precision and depth of the discussion. A discussion cannot cover all the content in a case study (Nordquist & Johansson, 2009). About five issues, that should control the discussion, should the leader have planned. It is acceptable if not all issues are brought up. The most important thing is that it becomes a useful discussion. It is good to use the participant’s knowledge by asking a particular question to a specific person in the group that the leader know have interesting thoughts about. It is also good to ask questions to the participants who have difficult to take their place in the discussion. The leader should therefore know the participants names because it facilitate it (Kjellén, Lundberg & Myrman, 2008). If the leader makes supplementary questions as “what do you mean by that?” and “can you support your answer with examples?” allows the group to develop and improve their arguments. Repetition of what the group have brought up can confirm further, which increases understanding and make the arguments clearer for everyone (Henning, 2005).

Dumez (2015:47-48) has wrote about “The three fundamental questions one should ask when leading a case study are:

- What is my case a case of?
- What is the stuff that my case is made of?
- What does my case do?”

(Dumez 2015:47-48).

According to Bengtsson (1999) is the discussion leader active and makes sure that the discussion remains within limits by asking questions while at the same time is an open discussion. The leader should have some planning of the case study discussion and also ensure that all are involved, taking the initiative and ask questions to each other (Bengtsson 1999). Good if the leader can make eye contact with people in the group to reconcile that all follow the discussion well. The leader’s task is to nominate one person from the group that begins with an introduction and after that should the discussion be like a debate considers Bengtsson (1999). Ekström and Larsson (2010) think that the leader of the discussion should be as a moderator, which distribute the word, ask questions and guide the discussion to new relevant aspects. During the discussion can the leader use pictures and texts that the participants can converse about (Ekström & Larsson, 2010). If the discussion needs more support should the leader ask supplementary questions (Gugglberger et al. 2013). Bransford et al. (1999) consider that the leader should not be particularly active, only contribute with questions and information when the participants need it.
It is difficult to lead a case study discussion and be prepared for it because the leader does not know how well-informed the students are, what they will ask back and what they are looking for. It is important for the leader to prepare the temperament, style and personality (Laurence, 1999). When it comes to the style, Laurence (1999) talks about two main things, how to work with the tools and how to position the right way. Other aspects will come natural according to Laurence (1999). Ferrara (1981) means that a leader of a discussion must keep in mind both people and ideas. Everybody must get a chance to speak and when something can be developed further should the leader do it. Like asking following questions, invite several people to the discussion at the same time, and write up what the people say so they understand that it is good. A leader must know that what is said is also understood, just because the leader has a theory can the rest of the group have another that is just as right (Ferrara, 1981). Murray (1999) says that the leadership summarizes creativity, linking art and the leadership functions itself by connects all the categories as processes, instead of discrete methods. Laurence (1999) believes that a discussion requires more preparation than a normal lecture, when the teacher speaks and the student listen, for the leader and the participants.

The discussion process is based on a critical approach and the leader’s role is like a catalyst. The leader should only guide and not dominate the whole discussion (Kjellén, Lundberg & Myrman, 2008). The leader must master the case study material and be flexible, patiently, responsive and aware of the time. Experienced leaders have an educational plan for the discussion that include:

- What are the main issues/points to highlight?
- What resources are in the group?
- What pace should the discussion have?
- Which tools are needed?

(Kjellén, Lundberg & Myrman, 2008).

Dahlkwist (2007) considers that the leader of a case study discussion should be like a catalyst, only guide and not dominate the discussion. It is required that the leader know much about the facts about the case to be able to take the discussion forward in a safe and relaxed way. To lead a case study discussion well, should the leader be prepared and motivate the decisions and be confident and at the same time be a responsive listener. Good to be sensitive to other people’s body language and what is being said between the lines. A case study discussion has many outputs and it is important to understand the interesting aspect that shows up during the discussion. It is understandable if the leader cannot understand all the element of a case (Dahlkwist, 2007).

Berglund and Lister (2010:41) wrote, “The teacher who is an expert in their subject but who cannot communicate with her students is perhaps no more or less effective a teacher than the talented communicator who simply doesn’t know the content”. (Berglund & Lister 2010:41).

The leader should let the discussion develop depending on the participant’s activity and thoughts (Dahlkwist, 2007). An experienced leader has easier to drop by. The leader should mainly ensure that the discussion is rewarding as possible for everyone involved. The leader must act so the participants realize their knowledge gaps and ensure that the discussion kept within the subject. During the discussion could the leaders role shift, it can goes from being passive to being more supportive and then to be more driven. The leader should rather not share its knowledge, because the point is that the group will discuss it on their own. However, should the leader help the group to develop their knowledge by complete its knowledge, if it is necessary. The leader should in the end summarize what the group and the discussion have
come to the conclusion (Dahlkwist, 2007). Yin (2007) thinks that a leader most central task is to ask good questions. Good questions means that all of the participants easily understand the meaning of every question, so it creates a good discussion. The leader must be a good listener and not involve its own ideas. The leader should also be flexible and adapt to how the group structure the discussion. It is important that the leader is inserted of the issues about the case. The leader should be able to reproduce what the discussion has involved, understand the context and have an open mind and good memory capacity. The leader should also be able to explain and give advice to the participant (Yin, 2007). One of the leader’s task is to ensure that the participants do not finish the discussion to early. All the participants must accept the end of the discussion. Not good if some of the participants end the discussion. The discussion should be completed in common when the entire group thinks they come up with a good solutions and result (Smaling, 2002).

Ellet (2007) considers that it is important to avoid repetitions and the leader should work to get everyone in the discussion involved and interested. When leading a discussion, it is important to be confident in that role. The leader should speak convincing and be sure of the fact. The leader should teach the participants how to think and what to think in a discussion. The leader can possibly give examples of cooperation exercises for the group to get more knowledge about how case study discussion is performed (Ellet, 2007). Bengtsson (1999) believes that there is no right or wrong way, how a leader should act in a case study discussion. The leader may either be highly conductive and driving with a clear structure throughout the discussion or the leader can take a passive role and let the group drive and structure the discussion forward on their own. If the leader has planned to take up some substances, but the group will discuss other substances, should the leader let them do it, as long as there are relevant. The leader may even be completely passive, which means that the leader only distribute the word and make notes about what the group discuss about. Most leaders are neither extreme driving or extremely passive, leaders are usually there between (Bengtsson, 1999). If the group is used to use and attend with case study discussion, is it best if the leader is more passive but if the group is unused with case study discussions can a passive role lead to a disaster according to Bengtsson (1999). The leader’s role should be indicative character and a good case study discussions required talented and knowledgeable leaders (Bengtsson, 1999). Kjellén, Lundberg and Myrman (2008) think that actually everyone can be a good case study discussion leader.

Analysis

There are different ways to present and work with case studies, discussion is one of the methods. According to Bransford et al. (1999) are discussions increases the abilities to think scientifically by learning from each other. Jaako (2014) states that the discussion contributes to better attendance and participation than a lecture will do. Which depends on what Gugglberger et al. (2013) says that the benefits with a discussion are the openness for the participants, because the participants can take up the issues that they think are important and want to develop more. When discussing problem solutions with others, it means negotiation and agreements according to Gillies (2011). However, the leader should tell the participants that in a discussion, there is no struggle and there are not either some opponents, the goal is that commonly do an effective investigation together considers Parker and Hess (2001). Even if it means negotiation and agreements. Those who participate in a discussion are expanding their views, and one of the leader’s tasks is to ensure that the participants actually do that (Parker & Hess, 2001). With the help of discussions, the participants get several perspectives and a wider understanding of the subject by hearing how other interprets it. A case study
discussion means that a group discusses the case study together (Bengtsson, 1999). According to Ardalan (1999) have all the participants in a case study discussion studied the case before and made an own analysis. A case study is usually a situation from reality, which is good in the purpose of learning and discussing. The participants may be able to make clear links to something they can relate to. The main idea with a case study discussion is to create knowledge and understanding from a complex situation. Therefore it is important for the participants to be a creative problem searcher, problem solver, think “outside the box” and to communicate well with others. Case studies are often good examples of discussion paper, because case studies create new ideas, thoughts and questions. It is important that the leader has told the participants that preparation is required, so the discussion will be as rewarding as possible.

Sikula, Buttery and Guyton (1996) suggest that discussions are the most rewarding method of case study presentations. This is because discussions promotes not only one individual, as the other methods do, it encourage the whole surrounding. It is certainly due those discussions it brings exercise of analysis ability, not only in the theory but also in practice by talking with others and interprets what they tell. Those who participate in a discussion teaches each other and becomes more involved, which leads to a better understanding, exercise in decisions and to think critical. Stake (1978) means that the purpose with case studies is to test hypotheses. However the purpose with case studies, according to Merriam (1994), is not to reach a correct answer, but the aim is for the participants to come up with which ones that are false conclusions and from them to reach the best and most convincing solution. Which can be done effectively by a discussion. A discussion allows the participants to get a chance to discuss the case study together and exchange thoughts and ideas with each other, which also exercise the communication competence. The understanding of situations can be facilitating by discussing it, because in discussions the participants use more than one of our senses. Discussions also lead to more comfort in situations where you are going to be questioned and better at talking and listening to others. The benefits with a discussion are that it involves both speaking and listening and that is good preparation for future positions and jobs as well. A discussion is also rationale for the thinking according to Parker and Hess (2001). Parker and Hess (2001) considers that communications technology and information technology should be more of a priority today. Although his principle can be traced back to Platon and Socrates, whose education means that learning took place through communication (Dahlkwist, 2007). Bransford et al. (1999) states that discussions are more and more common in teaching context today, because discussions are built on independency.

A case study has usually different solutions and therefore it is good to discuss it with others. Just like Bengtsson (1999) writes, case study discussions are the most unstructured form of presentation of case studies and are often perceived as confused. Different aspects are brought up depending on what the group is interested in. The participants get more responsibility and can affect the discussions content. It is different participants, different angles of incidences and different solutions, which is not similar to others. This makes every discussion unique. It has emerged that the leader should have planned some issues to the participants before the case study discussion begins. According to Bengtsson (1999) should the leader allow the group to discuss other aspects as long as it stays within the subject. So even if the leader has planned some issues but the group will take up other things in the discussion should the leader let them do that, as long as it is relevant. During a case study discussion it is therefore important that a leader is present throughout the discussion for guidance and to lead the discussion to the right track. Every case study discussion brings surprises, and therefore it is
hard for the leader to prepare itself. Just like Henning (2005) claims, it is a challenge to lead a good case study discussion.

According to Henning (2005) should the leader begin by allowing the participants to talk to each other before the discussion begins. By allowing the group to talk a moment with each other usually lead to a more positive atmosphere, which allows the participants to express their views more and that leads to better discussions and make the discussion becomes more rewarding. Probably because the participants feel more confident and relaxed with the group, which is one of the leader’s tasks. According to Ellet (2007) should the leader before the case study discussion start, if it is necessary, make collaborative exercise for the group to feel more comfortable with each other before the discussion begins. The leader should also have explained for the participants how the case study discussion will be done and what the participants should consider during the discussion (Ellet, 2007). Then when the discussion begins, the leader’s task is, according to Henning (2005), to ask some open questions that the participant can start discussing about. However, Boston University believes that a efficient and a good case study discussion starts with that the leader ask questions that forces the participants to take a stand already from the beginning. By starting the discussion with questions that force the participants to take a stand it apparent whether the participants thinks in different ways directly, which can lead to a more-lived discussion. The leader should keep an eye on the experiences and personalities who are in the group, and by that decide about whether open questions or questions that forces the participants to take a stand is the best for the discussion to be as efficient as possible. According to Bengtsson (1999) should the leader begin the discussion with nominate one person from the group who should begin the discussion by telling a short introduction about the case study and then should the discussion be like a debate.

The leader should be able to feel how the group interacts. If the group does not interact well can it affect the group’s communication with each other, which means that the discussion may not be as effective it could have been. If it is so, the leader needs to take a greater role and help the group forward to important aspects in the discussion. According to Bengtsson (1999) have a leader planned in advance how the discussion should be proceeded ahead and what important aspect that would be discussed. An experienced leader, according to Kjellén, Lundberg and Myrman (2008), has prepared a plan before the case study discussion begins. The plan should include important issues that the leader can set during the discussion. The leader must also know how the resources appear among the participants and also know about the rate at which the discussion should have given considering how the group interacts. The leader should also, according to Parker and Hess (2001) prepare questions to the participants to move the discussion forward, if it is needed. At the same time as the leader should remember to not take the discussion forward faster than what the participants want. Because the participants have more opportunity to influence in discussions, which is good since it tends to increase participants’ involvement.

The leader’s main tasks in a case study discussion, according to Bengtsson (1999), is to ensure that all the participants are involved, takes initiative and ask questions to each other. In order to do that as a leader, it is required that the leader is active, have eye contact with the participants and follow the discussion well considers Bengtsson (1999). The leader’s most important tasks according to Ferrara (1981) is to ask supplementary questions and note what the participants say so they understand that what they said is important. The leader must also ensure that all the participants understand what is said during the discussion. If not, should the leader explain further. Which may not always be easy, because the participants do not admit
always that they do not understand. So it is better for the leader to explain rather too much than too little. The leader should also keep in mind that the questions asked from both the leader and the participants is understood by everyone and has the same meaning for everyone. If not, should the leader step in and explain that more too (Merrian, 1994). Ferrara (1981) states instead that the leader’s task is to ensure that all the participants have the chance to express their opinion. The leader should attach great importance to consider both the participants and the new ideas that will come up. The leader should develop the ideas if the participants cannot do it by themselves. Smailing (2002) considers instead that the leader’s task is to ensure that all the participants have the opportunity to present their arguments and also have the opportunity to listen to the others arguments.

The participants in a case study discussion get more influence in determining about what the discussion should be about, so it requires a case study discussion more preparatory for the participants and also for the leader than a normal lecture does, according to Laurence (1999). It is understandable that the participants need to prepare more because they are more involved in a discussion than in an ordinary lecture. That the leader needs to prepare more could be due to that Laurence (1999) says about that it is difficult to lead a case study discussion and be adequately prepared because the leader does not know how well informed the participants are and what they will take up and ask about. At a lecture has the leader more control than with a discussion, because in a discussion have the participants more influence. If the leader has an own problem solving but the group finds another better problem solving should the leader approve it. However, can the leader explain the other problem solving to get the participants another perspective (Ferrara, 1981). Nordquist and Johansson (2009) argue that the leader should have set up single goals with the discussion. If the focus is on to many goals can the discussion lose the precision and depth of the discussion. A discussion cannot cover all the content in a case study states Nordquist and Johansson (2009). Kjellén, Lundberg and Myrman (2008) says that about five issues should be enough for the leader to plan and it is acceptable if not all the questions are used. The most important is that the participants get the chance to speak and that the discussion leading up to something rewarding. A great tool for the leader to use is the participants’ knowledge. If the leader knows that one or more of the participants have interesting thoughts, should the leader ask questions directly to those people, so the remaining participants also hear about it, which might also lead the discussion forward. The leaders task is also to keep an eye if there are some of the participants who have difficult to present their thoughts. If there are some people in the group who have that, should the leader take a more significant role to help that person or those persons by asking a question to them. To be able to do this should the leader, considers Kjellén, Lundberg and Myrman (2008), know the name of the participants.

Bengtsson (1999) believes that a good case study discussion leader is active in their role and ensures that the discussion is kept within certain limits by asking questions while there is still an open discussion, which is a difficult balance for the leader. Both Kjellén, Lundberg and Myrman (2008) and Dahlkwist (2007) states that the leader’s role in a case study discussion should be like a catalyzer. With catalyst mean Kjellén, Lundberg and Myrman (2008) and Dahlkwist (2007) that the leader should only guide the participants and not dominate the whole discussion. However, it is still important that the leader mastered the case material well. The leader must act flexibly, patiently, be responsive to all the participants and be aware of the time, because the time is often limited. Ekström and Larsson (2010) argue that the leader’s role should be as a moderator. The leader will thus distribute the word, ask questions and guide the discussion to new relevant aspects. During the discussion it is helpful if the leader uses images and texts that the participants can discuss about. Bransford et al. (1999)
states instead that the leader of a case study discussion should not be particularly active. By that they mean that the leader should contribute with few questions and information, but only if the participants ask about it. Gugglberger et al. (2013) is on the same track and considers that a leader should ask supplementary questions if the discussion need support, otherwise not. Henning (2005) gives example of that like “what do you mean by that?” and “can you support your answer with an example?”. These issues do that the participants need to develop their arguments, which also improves the understanding for all involved. Repeats is always good considers Henning (2005). According to Dahlkwist (2007) requires that the leader knows about the case to be able to ask good questions and help the discussion forward in a safe and relaxed way. The leader should know where the discussion should lead. The leader’s role should also be quite cautious, according to Dahlkwist (2007). Dahlkwist (2007) think that a good case study discussion leader allows the participants to control and develop the discussion themselves by their actions and thoughts. An experienced leader has easier to let the participants take more control argues Dahlkwist (2007). Dahlkwist (2007) considers that the leader of a case study discussion should be prepared to be able to feel confident in the role of a leader. However, Laurence (1999) believes that when it comes to lead a case study discussion come the most aspects naturally for the leader.

The leader’s role will be more like a supporter to ensure that the participants get more knowledge and that the discussion is held in the subject. The discussion should simply be as productive as possible for everyone. But the leader’s role depends much on how the group is and behaves. According to Dahlkwist (2007) can the leader’s role shift during the discussion. A leader can go from being passive to being more supportive and then to be more driven during the same discussion. Although the leader’s main role during the discussion is to ensure that the participants get more knowledge, so the leader should not tell their knowledge to early. Since the point of the discussion is that the participants will discuss it on their own. Something that the leader should think about is the participants’ body language and what is being said between the lines. That is what the participants themselves do not think about. A case study discussion has many different outputs (Dahlkwist, 2007). Even if the leader should master the case material is it understandable, according to Dahlkwist (2007), that the leader cannot think of everything and understand everything about the case study. But Yin (2007) argues that the leader should master everything that has to do with the case material.

A leader’s most central task according to Yin (2007) is to ask good questions to the group. A good question is defined as an issue that all the participants understand the meaning of (Yin, 2007). Because if everyone understands the issues will the discussion also be better. Even Yin (2007) considers that the leader must be a good listener, flexible, engaged in the discussion and at the same time be able to adapt to what the participants want. To make the role as a leader good should the leader have the characteristics of an open mind and a good memory. Yin (2007) also say that the leader must ensure that no one of the participants end the discussion to early. All the participants need to accept the end of the discussion. If the participants are not agreed about the end should the leader take a greater role and help the participants to solve it (Smaling, 2002). Ellet (2007) believes that the biggest challenge for the leader is to be confident in the role as a leader. It is up to the leader to speak convincingly. A discussion has often a limited time and therefore, considers to Ellet (2007), should the leader prevent it to doing repetitions in the discussion. The leader must ensure that the discussion is kept in the subject, everyone is involved and thinks that is interesting. When the group is done can the leader develop their knowledge and thoughts, if it is necessary. In the end of the discussion should the leader summarize what the group through discussion has come up with (Dahlkwist, 2007). Although Yin (2007) considers that the leader should reflect what the
discussion has come to the end with. Even Parks and Hess (2001) argues that a good case study discussion leader should in the end of the discussion summarize the discussion.

Based on the theory can it be noted that they are different roles of the leader and also the leader’s tasks are different in case study discussions. Bengtsson (1999) states that there is no right or wrong way to how a leader should act in a case study discussion. The leader’s role may be highly conductive and driving with a clear structure throughout the whole discussion or can the leader take a more passive role and let the group structure and guide the discussion forward on their own. The leader can even be completely passive, and with that mean Bengtsson (1999) that the leader only distributes the word between the participants and makes notes about what the group says. Bengtsson (1999) believes that leaders are neither extreme driving or extremely passive, the most common is that the leader has a role somewhere between that. Bengtsson (1999) also says that the role of the leader depends much on how the participants are individually and also how the group is together. If the group is used to have case study discussions, it is best for the leader to have a more passive role. But if the group is unused with case study discussions can a passive role of the leader lead to a disaster considers Bengtsson (1999). The most important is that the leader is supportive argues Bengtsson (1999). The leader’s role depends also al lot on how the leader’s personality is. But the leader should never control the whole discussion completely, if so, fit a normal lecture or a presentation better. Bengtsson (1999) believes that for the discussion to be as good as possible requires it knowledgeably leaders who are understood with its role and importance. Kjellén, Lundberg and Myrman (2008) considers that principle everyone can become a good case study discussion leader. Berglund and Lister (2010) argues that a leader who can the case study material but can not communicate with the participants is no more or less effective leaders than the leaders who are talented communicators but not as good on the case study material.

**Conclusion**

The leader’s role and tasks vary in a case study discussion. The leader’s role depends much on how the group is and behaves and also a lot on how the leader’s personality is. It is also important for the leader to feel how the group interacts together and if the group is used to work with case study discussions or not. If the participants are used to work with case study discussions should the leader take a passive role and let the group structure the discussion. But if the group is not used to do case study discussions should the leader take a more structured and supportive role, by ask a lot of questions and drive the discussion in to the right direction. Based from the theory are there three distinguishing types of roles for the leader in a case study discussion. The first role is a passive role, when the leader observes and is more in the background of the discussion and allows the group to take control over the discussion. The second role is the more structured role, when the leader is more supportive and makes a lot of questions to the participants. The third role is the role that is more driven, when the leader control the discussion more. There is in fact no right or wrong way how a leader should act in a case study discussion. The most important task for the leader is to ensure that the case study discussion is as rewarding as possible for all the participants. So, the leader’s role will be more to ensure that the participants get more knowledge and feel confident and relaxed during the discussion.
Further research

A case study as a method is used in many countries. So, it would have been interesting to investigate further about how common case study discussions are to present and work with. Although if there are some differences in how the role of the leader is between different countries. The survey method can be based on qualitative interviews to get a broader understanding of how the leader’s role tends to be in a case study discussion.

References


