Designing management training using a learning network approach

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Abstract

In academic literature there are many references to empirical research about collaborations between companies and Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in different network constellations in order to create change and development. However, when reading about all these different collaborations, it becomes obvious that the organising principles and under which conditions networks are effective to use as a development method are not clearly identified. In order to understand this complex area in a better way, I propose that researchers first need to understand the day-to-day work of managers and the issues they are confronted with in order to use a network approach as a transformation process that enables learning, in order to design a HEI-based management training programme that supports action and therefore enables change.

Another point of departure in this article is that, when using a learning network approach to design a management training programme, it is important to communicate and make different dimensions of learning very clear. Traditionally, it is often the cognitive (know how) and the social knowledge (know who) that is in focus when using a network perspective to work with management development. What I want to draw attention to in this article is that the psychodynamic knowledge (know myself), which creates self-confidence and the courage/motivation to work with and try out new ideas, is important if change is to be reached. Also, this will create learning, not only at an individual level, but also at an organisational level, when knowledge is made clear through action (trial and error).

Introduction

Today, there is a large amount of pressure put on managers, as they continually have to find new ways of exploring new opportunities as well as being effective and competitive with limited development resources. In recent years, there has been an increasing interest among researchers, policymakers and practitioners to focus on networks between firms as one way, with their limited resources, to achieve "some form of what is termed 'collective efficiency', which enables them to cope with the challenges of the current competitive environment" (Bessant and Tsekuoras, 2001, p. 82).

In academic literature there are many references to empirical research about collaborations between firms in different network constellations (see, for instance, the review by Street and Cameron, 2007). However, when reading about all these different collaborations, it becomes obvious that the organising principles and under which conditions networks are effective to use as a development method are not clearly identified. One plausible reason for this is that the value of participating in networks could theoretically be understood from at least three different theoretical perspectives, as proposed by Street and Cameron (2007) in their review of 140 articles and conference papers. If one, for instance, takes a resource-based view, it is the access to more resources (new products, manufacturing processes, patents or capital) that gives the firm a competitive advantage and a decision to cooperate. On the oth-

er hand, if one takes resource dependency theory as a starting point, it is the amount of control and power (due to the environmental conditions of uncertainty and high competition) that is important to the firm when choosing external alliances. The third proposed theory to understand the value of cooperation, which I will take as a point of departure in this article, is the punctuated equilibrium theory (as also suggested by Verreynne, 2006), used in order to explain strategies in use by small firms. This theory sees organisational change, as influenced by critical events on organisational decision-making and performance, and "provides an explanation of why, when significant events such as formation, termination or significant modifications to an external relationship occur, they progress over short periods of time and involve very rapid, major adoptions that have significant effects," Street and Cameron (2007, p. 256). The value of using a network perspective, as seen from this theory, is the active focus on learning to support change and not only on acquiring resources or securing control/power.

From a resource-based view as well as from a resource dependency theory, the values of cooperating in different network constellations are quite well researched. However, there are fewer published research papers that take, as a point of departure, the punctuated equilibrium theory and focus on external relationships as a management process for learning (Street and Cameron, 2007). The question that needs to be better understood from this perspective is how to organise such a collaboration, which focuses on learning and could generate the almost magical "collective efficiency", as described by Bessant and Tsekuoras (2001) in their descriptions of learning networks.

In order to better understand the values created in taking part in learning networks, defined as "a network formally set up for the primary purpose of increasing knowledge" (Bessant and Tsekuoras, 2001, p. 88), I propose in this article that researchers first need to understand the day-to-day work of managers and the issues they are confronted with. The rationale behind this is that empirical research in the area of managerial work has observed that managers' work situations seem to be characterised by a context where much of their work content is fragmented, the pace of work is hectic and where they are mostly involved in operative work of a problem-driven and largely reactive nature, primarily aimed at optimising organisational efficiency, which leaves little room for reflecting.

Learning networks, defined as a number of organisations with a common need to learn something, come together and use the network as a core transformation process that enables an increased knowledge capacity, that is an ability to do something more or different (Bessant and Tsekuoras, 2001). This is in large contrast to the lonely and hectic work the managers often experience on a day-to-day basis, and explains partly both a need for and why networks are seen as popular by managers.

This paper seeks to add to the literature in the field of management development by taking the day-to-day work of the manager as a point of departure and combining it with considering networks between firms as a management process for learning and development, in order to design a HEI-based management training programme that supports action and therefore enables change, both at an individual as well as at an organisational level.

Managerial work

How is the work of the manager? There is an abundance of literature written on strategy making and leadership. The point of departure for most of this literature is an instrumental

perspective on management (Mintzberg, 2009), with its roots from 1916 following the ideas from Henri Fayol. A summary of this approach gives a POSDCORB-influenced approach, which means that a manager can carry out the following: Planning, Organising, Staffing, Directing, Coordinating, Reporting and Budgeting. How does this correlate with what managers really do? Is it correct to say that they actually work according to this? Rosemary Stewart, one of the pioneering researchers in the field of managerial work, stated, in the late 1950s, that we know more about the primitive people of New Guinea than we do about managers (Mintzberg, 2009). Since the studies of Rosemary Stewart, there have been studies conducted on managerial work in general (for a recent summary in this field, see Tengblad, 2011) and some studies of managerial work in small firms (for a review, see Florén, 2006). What this research has shown is that there is a large discrepancy in what we think the managers do/should do and what they actually do.

Studies of managerial work show that constant interruption seems to be the principal activator of managerial work, therefore giving it a largely reactive rather than proactive character. From my own empirical research concerning managerial work in small firms (Florén and Tell, 2011), it becomes obvious that the working day of the top manager in a small firm is characterised by brevity (tasks lasting a short time), variety (the tasks are different from each other) and fragmentation (many different tasks which seem unconnected with each other). For instance, in one of our studies (Florén and Tell, 2004a) of six managers of small firms, we found that the managers performed 57 different activities per day – 80% of the managers' activities lasted less than nine minutes. However, a few activities tend to take up the majority of the managers' time. These activities are either operational (for instance, activities related to production, marketing and sales) or administrative (for instance, activities related to the firms' personnel and to financial issues).

In another study (Florén and Tell, 2011), we explored the relationship between managerial behaviour and growth of the small firm by investigating similarities and differences in the behaviour of top managers in fast- and slow-growing firms. What the results indicated is that there were no significant differences between the groups but there is a generic aspect to managing, and that is, regardless of the pace of company growth, it involves generic, non-managerial behaviours, such as acting as a specialist or a substitute operator (see also Mintzberg, 2009). Another conclusion from studies of managerial work is that managers focus on the very things (e.g. operational issues, such as production processes) that caused the firms to grow initially (following a simplistic strategy), and they find it hard to let go of this focus. There is a strong tendency toward path-dependent behaviour by managers of small firms (Verreynne, 2006).

The limited time for observation and reflection is also evident by the largely operative and incremental problem-solving character of their work. As the managers are the ultimate decision-makers in their respectively organisations they have to take care of everything that no one else takes the responsibility for, which can include all sorts of problems. In practice, this means that managers deal with all kinds of different problems during a day which effectively "absorb" all the spare time that could have been used for more reflective and long-term planning or decision-making. In line with this focus on action, these managers prefer to learn through concrete experience. Several researchers have argued that because managers must focus on action and survival, they may lack the time necessary for the reflective processes needed for learning at a higher level (see, for instance, Bessant and Tsekuoras, 2001).

Henry Mintzberg, the Cleghorn Professor of Management Studies at McGill University, Canada, has, for more than forty years, tried to make sense of managerial work, ranging from his early observational studies of managerial work in the 1970s to later publications, for example, his 2009 book entitled "Managing". His long experience and his endeavour to simplify the complexity of managing has resulted in a model consisting of the manager in the centre with two personally centred roles – framing and scheduling. The manager constitutes the link between the unit and the surroundings, which is made up of the rest of the organisation and the outside world. What this simplified model further suggests is that managing could be seen from three planes, "from the conceptual to the concrete, with information, through people and to action directly" (Mintzberg, 2009, p. 49). What becomes obvious from Mintzberg's description is that managing is not only about working strategically through passing down documents to your subordinates, or giving orders, but a lot of managerial work is of an operational character, with action and conversations with different stakeholders, on all levels, in order to serve the basic purpose of the firm. Together, these roles on all three planes provide a balance that is essential to the practice of managing and also to take into consideration when designing a management development programme.

Taking the features of managerial work together, one can see that the managerial situation poses a large challenge for the person taking on this role in terms of living up to the planning and reflecting role as described in many textbooks and articles on the subject. To create the opportunity to reflect and learn, the use of relationships between managers in learning networks has, during the past two decades, been a popular concept, in order to create a more reflecting environment than the day-to-day work presents (Bessant and Tsekuoras, 2001).

Learning networks

Learning can be viewed as a cyclical process and, according to experiential learning theory (Kolb, 1984), learning is optimal when the cycle is completed. The problem for managers is that they are often alone, in that they do not have either the time to reflect or the group to do so with. "In other cases firms may recognise the need for learning but become locked in an incomplete cycle of experiment and experience, with little or no time or space given to reflection or the entry of new concepts" (Bessant and Tsekuoras, 2001, p. 86). In the field of managerial development, collaborative learning in so-called learning networks has been found to be one way to overcome this problem. Learning networks are defined as "network(s) formally set up for the primary purpose of increasing knowledge, expressed as an increased capacity to do something," Bessant and Francis (1999, p. 377).

Here, a network is not only an example of a certain sort of social structure, it is, above all, a continuous and developing process where every individual step is necessary to achieve a movement forward. How strong the network is depends on the participants' will and ability to cooperate. Personal engagement, personal chemistry, similar values, trust and a wish to mobilise and develop the participants' resources form the basis of a successful network (see, for instance, Tell, 2001; 2008). A learning network could be understood as a platform for conversations/talks, reflection and sense making, where managers come together in a non-competitive environment to discuss and reflect upon different issues in their day-to-day work. The learning network approach is, in this respect, a highly interactive pedagogical model where participants are encouraged to discuss different issues related to their own

organisations. These actors provide a non-hierarchical arena for experience exchange and learning which are expected to increase entrepreneurs' abilities to take advantage of business opportunities.

A conclusion from the seven-year participant observational study of two different network constellations, which I carried out together with a colleague (Florén and Tell, 2004b), is that the learning in owner/manager networks of small firms is based on trust. In writings on group-based approaches to management training and development, trust is often found to be an important condition for learning. In our work with learning networks as a means for management learning on the level of owner/managers in small firms, we have also found that the basis for reaching higher-level learning is to build trusting relationships that develop over time. The concept of trust, however, can be better understood as three subordinate prerequisites for learning that have emergent characteristics during the learning cycle: reciprocity, receptive and confronting capacity and transparency. The trusting relationships in the learning networks make it easier for managers to have the courage to take actions in their organisations, which is an important part of the learning process.

With reference to Kolb's (1984) learning cycle, a learning network between HEIs and companies could be understood as bridging the world of practice and theory where a continuous reflection over action is done in a learning cycle, as described by Ylinenpää (2005, p. 512), who refers to the situation facing small firms: "A smaller firm may be understood to orient towards active experimentation and concrete action forming a practical mode of acquiring new knowledge. A university, on the other hand, is normally more directed towards reflective observation and abstract conceptualisation in its education and basic research, resulting in a theory-based learning model." The benefits of a cooperation between companies and a university could be visualised according to Kolb's (1984) different learning styles, where both individual learning styles (reflective observation, which forms the basis for research and education in most universities, and active experimentation, which is the most popular learning style of managers) are important in order to obtain a "complete" learning cycle, and therefore are able to produce actions as well as reflections.

- First, in shared learning, there is a potential for a critical reflection from different perspectives.

- Second, the different perspectives bring in new concepts.

- Third, these shared experimentations reduce the perceived risk in experimenting.

- Fourth, shared experience helps to provide support and open new lines of enquiry. For business development, internal reflecting is often insufficient. External sources are often needed to initiate and stimulate improvements and tangible effects (Street and Cameron, 2007; Zhang et al., 2006). Help from outsiders (other firms and HEIs) may enable managers to gain both explicit and tacit knowledge with the potential to influence their firm's long-term ability to survive, grow and innovate.

By combining the learning styles of HEIs and companies through dialogue you can activate learning processes, which both contribute to development for the academy as well as for the businesses. Or, as Shani and Pasmore (1985, p. 440) present their view on cooperative research and actionable knowledge:

An emergent inquiry process in which applied behavioural science knowledge is integrated with existing organisational knowledge and applied to solve real organisational problems. It is simultaneously concerned with bringing about change in organisations and developing self-help competencies in organisational members and adding to scientific knowledge. Finally, it is an evolving process that is undertaken in a spirit of collaboration and co-inquiry.

From a university perspective, in order to organise an arena for learning, this means developing a "broker competence" of creating bridges between two different learning styles. This competence is crucial in order to create a learning environment and encompass the ability to create a trusting dialogue between participants. Another important aspect to take into consideration when using a learning network approach to design a management training programme is the ability to communicate all three dimensions of learning as proposed by Bergh (2008), see Table 1.

Learning outcomes	Forms of knowledge
1. Cognitive (knowledge)	Know how (practical understanding of the current system – efficiency) Know why (theoretical understanding of the principles – enable change) Know what (strategic understanding – a deliberate choice between efficiency and change – double-loop learning)
2. Psychodynamic (emotion)	Know myself (self-confidence and the courage/motivation to work on and try new ideas)
3. Social (collaboration)	Know who (network and contacts which enables managers to take advantage of others' knowledge)
All three learning outcomes lead to …	Know change (the potential and understanding of how to change practice – incremental or radical)

Table 1. The three dimensions of learning (developed from Bergh, 2008)

It is important to make all three dimensions clear when developing a management training programme aimed at managers. Traditionally, it is often the cognitive (know how) and the social knowledge (know who) that has been in focus when using a network perspective to develop management training programmes. However, what Bergh (2008) shows, and something that become evident in my own studies of the two different network constellations I researched over a seven-year period, is that the psychodynamic knowledge, which creates self-confidence and the courage/motivation to work with and try out new ideas, is important if change (incremental or radical) is to be reached. "The network's success at reducing the sense of uncertainty in a demanding and changing work environment has led all managers to achieve an increased level of self-confidence, an interest in organisational development and a readiness to try different things" (Tell, 2001, p. 38). This part is easily missed when management programmes are developed. The cognitive dimension of "know why" and "know what" is also something that benefits from the psychodynamic knowledge "know myself" and supports change.

HEI support and management training programmes

For many years there has been a discussion about the need for educational services to aid management development across Europe (e.g. Gibb, 1983; Handy, 1987), in order to come to grips with the overall lagging performance of companies in Europe vis-à-vis the United States and eastern Asia.

The main critique against previous efforts in this area is the poor performance of such initiatives. Despite the large sums of money that have been spent on management development over the past decades the efforts have not generally lived up to expectations. Scholarly investigations into the issue have suggested that often the training provided has been too short and of too poor quality to give any direct and observable effects (Storey and Westhead, 1996). Another critique that has been emphasised in the debate is the overall design of these educational programmes, as they have been largely driven by a top-down agenda and where learning has often been seen as "delivering a package" (Morrison and Bergin-Seers, 2002; Morrison et al., 2003). This "package" has then been expected to be implemented by the manager in his or her work. With the view of knowledge as a "package", the psychodynamic (emotional) learning outcomes are often neglected, and this could be one reason for the poor performance of such efforts, when the participants do not acquire the self-confidence or motivation to implement change efforts.

A review of the field of management development programmes made by Fuller-Love (2006) showed that usually these programmes include a mixture of experience, training and education. Moreover, compared to more general business education, which is often spread over a relatively long period of study, development programmes aimed at practicing managers are usually compressed into a shorter period of time, sometimes only a couple of meetings and seminars within a few weeks. Fuller-Love (2006) also pointed out that small business managers often need a wide range of multitasking skills and a reflective capacity that allows them to respond to the complex day-to-day demands in their businesses. How to meet this more ambiguous demand is not as easy and straightforward task as designing a lecture-based course package with clear and quantifiable content.

Learning in companies is usually an informal process, largely embodied in professional activities and embedded in the organisational context (Gibb, 1998; Johannisson, 2000). In this respect it is often suggested that managers prefer "learning by doing", something which is triggered by engaging in ordinary everyday work activities such as experimentation and copying, facing successes and setbacks and – perhaps most important – by making and learning from mistakes. However, the importance of supporting cognitive processes, such as critical reflection and sense making, in order to learn effectively, is also of great importance at an organisational level.

There have been several different approaches developed over more than 50 years to support management development (Florén, 2003). Examples of these collaborative approaches to management learning (CAML) are: action learning, cooperative enquiry and appreciate enquiry, just to mention a few. In the next chapter I will highlight two interesting programmes on management training that have taken the nature of managerial work as their point of departure and incorporated the ideas of experiential learning and the advantages of learning networks. These two programmes, together with other management development efforts, have functioned as a source of inspiration for the development of the Halmstad School of Innovation (HSI), and they are:

- The International Master's Programme in Practicing Management at McGill University, in Canada, and around the world.

- The Clinical Innovation Fellowship at the Karolinska Institute, in Stockholm, Sweden.

The International Master's Programme in Practicing Management (IMPM)

"Managers can't be created in a classroom. Instead they should be engaged actively in their learning, which means it should relate to their personal experience" (Mintzberg, 2004, p. 28). What Mintzberg criticises is that many of the management development programmes that are offered either rely on other people's experience, that is lectures and the discussion of cases (first generation), or artificial experience, that is specially designed projects that focus too much on action at the expense of the learning (second generation), both approaches ignoring the managers' own experience. Mintzberg (2004) states that when the managers are so busy they do not need programmes that create more work for them, they also do not need artificial experiences when they are already overwhelmed with natural experiences. What they do need is to slow down, step back and reflect on their own experience. What is important, however, is that, as Mintzberg and his colleagues stress, all the participating managers have to have managerial experience in order to learn, when the programme takes as a point of departure that management is rooted in practice. From the faculty's side, experienced reflection means bringing in concepts to create insights and learning for reflections in the classroom and impacts on the job.

IMPM consist of five two-week modules spread over 16 months. These are held in each of the five locations around the world (McGill University in Montreal, Lancaster University Management School in England, the Indian Institute of Management in Bangalore, INSEAD in France and several universities in Japan) to create the IMPM. The five modules that were developed do not follow the conventional framework of traditional university courses, instead, the focus is on management and not, what is usually the case, business. The IMPM is organised around five managerial mindsets:

1) Reflective (about self) – self-knowledge (experience necessary).

2) Collaborative (about relationship) – manager's networks of relationship.

3) Analytical (about organisation) – organisations depend on the activities around.

4) Worldly (about context) beyond the organisation, the world.

5) Action (about change).

The rationale behind this framework is that managers "enjoy sharing their experiences, why can't that be the focus of the classroom instead of being left to the coffee breaks? Above all, if an executive programme is meant to develop insight and innovation, shouldn't its design be insightful and innovative?" Mintzberg (2004, p. 38). Another important point is that the action mindset pulls everything together through confidence in the process of change – in self, relationships, organisation and context. People become more reflective, more open and more understanding of the need to change.

Clinical Innovation Fellowship (CIF)

Another interesting programme is the clinical innovation fellowship initiative launched by the Karolinska Institute, in Stockholm, Sweden. The programme is inspired by Stanford University, where the Bio designs Fellowship Programme has been successful. The goal with this CIF is to identify the future leaders of the medicine technique industry or hospitals as well as contributing to the development of hospitals in the Stockholm area. The participants are carefully selected in teams of three "fellows", representing competence in the areas of medical technique, medicine and management. By the end of the programme each team will present two results: one business plan based on an innovation and one well-documented proposal for the development of the organisation the have studied. The programme consists of three phases: education, fieldwork and innovation.

The programme is similar, in some ways, to a traditional university education, as it starts with a crash course, for about four weeks, in subjects such as creativity, innovation, entrepreneurship and management. Then there are also more specific subjects that focus on medicine and medical techniques, which is the main focus of the programme. The second phase focuses on fieldwork, which is carried out over a period of eight weeks. Here the "fellows" follow the clinical personnel during their working day in order to identify any needs and opportunities. As the work progresses, the teams adds to the list, to enter the third phase, the innovation phase.

The purpose of the third (innovation) phase is to: (1) identify the needs and opportunities that have the best potential (both medically and economically); (2) choose the need that can be best solved with technical solutions and the need that can be best solved through organisational development at the clinic; (3) for each solution, a business case will be prepared and presented to the management team. The teams will also create a network of expertise for the most promising ideas.

Key organising principles

Managerial work suggests that most managers lack the time and discretion to effectively learn from their daily practice and transform their experiences into actionable knowledge that has any meaning for them. This implies that management education should aim to provide time and support for "processing" experiences in order to help managers in their attempt to acquire new skills and internalise theory through guided reflection (Dennehy, Sims and Collins, 1998) and on-the-job training (Ylinenpää, 2005). Furthermore, results suggest that course organisers should be aware of the short-sighted problem-solving character of managerial behaviour. Therefore, it seems that educational programmes should put an emphasis on developing a mindset that favours exploration and open-ended problem-solving rather than focusing on the mere exploitation of procedures and formal methods.

To summarise the experiences from managerial development approaches like IMPM and CIF, and taking the working days and the needs of managers as a point of departure, as well as applying a network perspective, the education of managers could be organised according to the following principles:

Management develop-ment approaches and perspectives on learning	Main characteristics	Organising principles
Managerial work	Brevity	"Real" development projects
	Fragmentation	Provide a reflective capacity
	Variety	Provide a wide range of multitasking skills
A network perspective	Trust	*"Broker competence"*
	Dialogue	*"Network competence"*
	Reflection over action	Critical reflection and sensemaking
IMPM	Natural experience	*"Use work, don't make work"*
	Managerial experience	Relating to personal experience
	Action mindset	More reflective, more open, more understanding of change
CIF	Education	"Crash courses", to provide fundamental knowledge and a common language
	Fieldwork	Managerial exchanges, "tables not chairs"
	Innovation	"Learning by doing" and "action impact"

Table 2. Organising principles for management development programmes

Taking the previous knowledge and experience from organising management development programmes into consideration, I exemplify how to organise a management development programme, by visualising it with the HSI. This programme is under construction and dialogues have been initiated with industry on how to organise a joint management development programme with the aim of creating an innovation capability, here seen as: "A collective capacity to permanently and simultaneously recreate new sources of value (products, concepts, patents, environmental values etc.) and competencies (knowledge, knowhow, professions etc.)" (Hatchuel, Le Masson and Weil, 2005, p. 345).

Halmstad School of Innovation (HSI)

The HSI will have a special focus on business innovation, with the aim of developing different ways of working with innovations across the whole organisation. The proposal combines it with the development of managers and their leadership skills by synchronising two processes, education and "real" development projects, through:

(1) An educational project for the development of innovation management capabilities of one or more managers of the company and

(2) An innovation project for the development of new products and/or services within the company. The effect of this overall "skill package" is expected to be:

(3) and innovation as well – and most importantly – as a development of the organisations' innovation capability.

The HSI approach is a cooperation between industry and the university and, in that sense, it contributes both to the research and education that is carried out at the university as well as to the development of the participating companies. It is the interaction between the partici-

pating companies, students, researchers and specialists in the development process that facilitates reflection and learning between individuals as well as the development of new products/services for the participating organisations and, in the long run, the renewal of business and growth. To be able to offer an education that is suited to both the individuals' training needs and development needs of individual companies, company-specific projects will be created where education and innovation meet and are woven together based on each company's unique conditions. While the managers (at least two managers from each company, "tables not chairs") take a variety of crash courses in subjects such as innovation, business development and internationalisation, an innovative project is run in parallel, in collaboration with the university and its partners, where a new or improved product, service, process or business model will be developed.
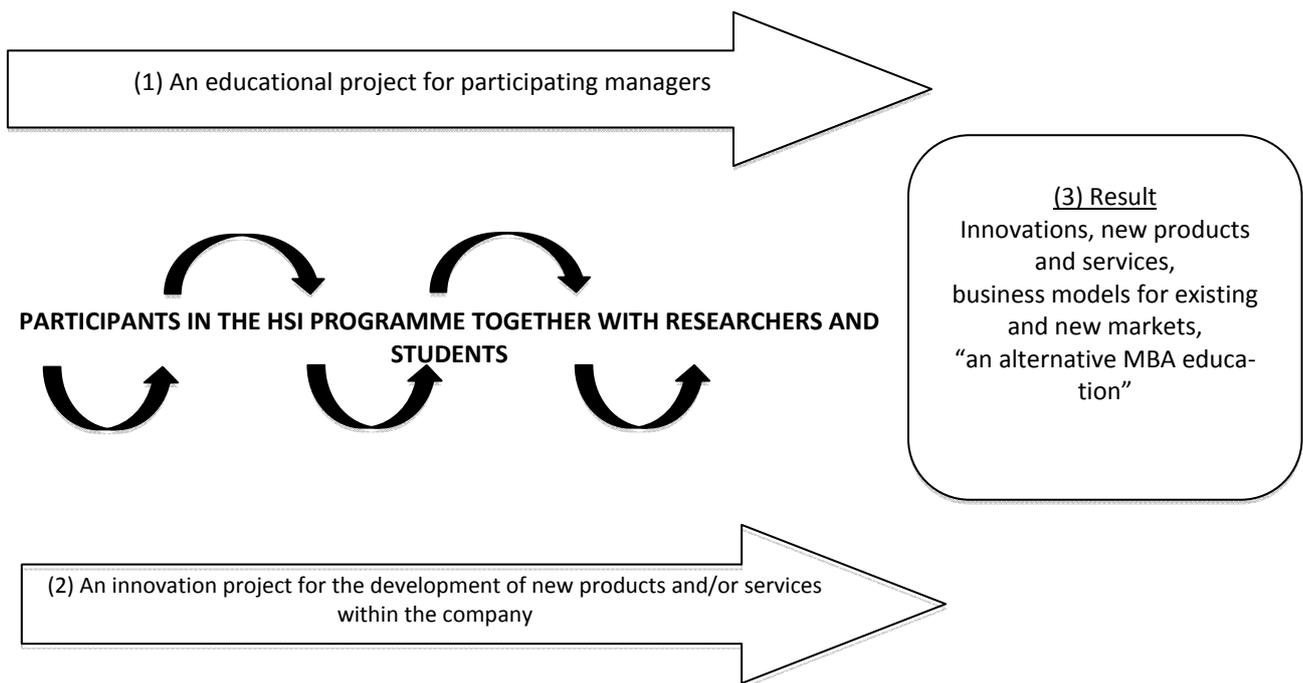
(1) An educational project for participating managers

PARTICIPANTS IN THE HSI PROGRAMME TOGETHER WITH RESEARCHERS AND STUDENTS

(3) Result
Innovations, new products and services,
business models for existing and new markets,
"an alternative MBA education"

(2) An innovation project for the development of new products and/or services within the company

Figure 2. The main ideas of HSI

With this attitude to cooperation we see that there is much to gain from a knowledge and learning perspective, with enhanced cooperation between academia and businesses. The possibilities are:

From a research perspective:

- Provides depth, contextual knowledge.

- Provides common knowledge.

- Builds trust – provides access to core processes and decision-makers (important

- for the understanding innovation).

From a practical perspective:

- Creates a continuous sharing of knowledge.

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- Creates cognitive and social knowledge (through collaboration).

- Creates a common language – facilitate continued interaction.

- Creates change, not only at an individual level, but also at an organisational level when working with real innovation projects.

From a managerial/personal perspective:

- Three levels of cognitive knowledge: "know how", "know why" and "know what". These three levels create a strategic understanding which enables a deliberate choice between efficiency and change – double-loop learning.

- Creates a meaningful and psycho-dynamic (emotion) learning which leads to an understanding about how to change practice – incremental or radical

Compared to the traditional role as an instructor, the HSI course organiser is more of a facilitator (broker) responsible for creating and supporting an open and trusting learning environment where participants can restructure the new information and their previous knowledge into new insights. This is necessary as the goals and objectives cannot be clearly formulated and as the agenda emerge with reference to what the participants have on their minds at that moment. Obviously, taking part in a management development programme requires that participants have a rich source of experience as a basis for their reflection and personal theorising. As such, this approach is in favour of sharing experiences and perspectives that can stimulate deep and critical reflection in the group. Moreover, the HSI approach is best suited when working with open-ended questions where there are no easy and obvious answers, but rather a need for an indirect and holistic understanding of a situation. The open discussion in the management development programme provides an opportunity for managers to reflect on their own experiences with other managers, therefore promoting both learning and meaning-making through peer conversations (e.g. Baker, Jensen and Kolb, 2005). In this respect, this approach can be a helpful source of inspiration for questioning the guiding value system and a way to help them overcome the often-locked positions that can prevent learning in companies.

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