

Authorising Managers in Management Development?

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Abstract:	<p>This article explores the relationship between management and leadership development (MLD) and leadership practice. Critical studies of MLD programmes have mainly focused on such programmes as spaces for identity work and/or identity regulation. This article extends the literature by investigating the notion of organisation, the organisational view, in a large MLD programme and how it works as a source of authority for the participating managers. Our inquiry is based on ethnographic studies of both an in-house MLD programme in a large Danish public organisation and of the managerial practice of six participating managers. Drawing on a communicative constitution of organisations (CCO) perspective, we analyse how the MLD programme (re)produces a unitarist organisational text, an organisational view that assumes the members of the organisation have the same goals and perspectives. We further analyse how this organisational text shapes the authority relationships that managers engage in in their leadership practice. The article demonstrates how the unitarist organisational text fails in authorising participating managers as it clashes with the plurality of perspectives and interests in the organisation and is not recognised as a source of authority by employees and collaborators.</p>

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Authorising managers in management development?

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Abstract

This article explores the relationship between management and leadership development (MLD) and leadership practice. Critical studies of MLD programmes have mainly focused on such programmes as spaces for identity work and/or identity regulation. This article extends the literature by investigating the notion of organisation, the organisational view, in a large MLD programme and how it works as a source of authority for the participating managers. Our inquiry is based on ethnographic studies of both an in-house MLD programme in a large Danish public organisation and of the managerial practice of six participating managers. Drawing on a communicative constitution of organisations (CCO) perspective, we analyse how the MLD programme (re)produces a unitarist organisational text, an organisational view that assumes the members of the organisation have the same goals and perspectives. We further analyse how this organisational text shapes the authority relationships that managers engage in in their leadership practice. The article demonstrates how the unitarist organisational text fails in authorising participating managers as it clashes with the plurality of perspectives and interests in the organisation and is not recognised as a source of authority by employees and collaborators.

Keywords

Management development, leadership development, authority, authorisation, relational leadership, communicative constitution of organisations, CCO, polyphonic organisations, critical leadership studies, organisational text

For Peer Review

Introduction

Despite the importance of management and leadership development (MLD) there remains limited empirical insight into the complex relationship between MLD programmes (MLDPs) and leadership practice (Gagnon and Collinson 2014; Larsson et al. 2020; McGurk 2010). Much of the critical and interpretative literature on MLD focuses on (re-)configuration of identities as an important element in the link between MLDPs and managerial practice (Warhurst 2011). In this perspective MLDPs are understood as arenas in which leader selves are shaped in accordance with dominant discourses (Gagnon 2008; Nicholson and Carroll 2013). However, not only identities but also notions of organisation are communicated during MLDPs. In this article, we suggest that an important but less explored element of the link between MLDPs and managerial practice is the significance of such notions of organisation in shaping participating managers' authority.

Drawing on the communicative constitution of organisations (CCO) perspective and the concept of organisational text (Taylor et al. 1996; Kuhn 2008), we supplement the focus on leadership identity and leadership selves with an emphasis on leadership relations and leadership authority as a communicative and relational accomplishment. The article is based on an ethnographic study of a large in-house MLDP in the Capital Region of Denmark and of the practice of six participating managers. It seeks to answer the following research question: how does the organisational text presented in an MLDP authorise the managers in their daily practice? To answer this question we describe the organisational text (the notion of organisation) produced in the programme and further investigate how this text was presented as a source of authority in participating managers' practice.

We extend the critical literature on the relationship between MLD and leadership practice, demonstrating that the organisational text presented at the MLDP was not recognised as a source of authority but rather disputed and challenged by organisational members. While supporting and

1
2 strengthening a certain managerial identity, the organisational text simultaneously contributed to
3
4 reconfiguring and even weakening the authority relations the managers engaged in their daily
5
6 practice. To interpret this finding we draw on the concept of a unitarist organisational view (Tourish
7
8 et al. 2010; Larsson et al. 2020), which assumes that members of an organisation share the same
9
10 goals, interests and perspectives. We argue that the unitarist organisational text presented in the
11
12 MLDP did not authorise the managers in practice, as they had to operate under polyphonic
13
14 conditions (Andersen 2003, Kornberger et al. 2006) characterised by the existence of a plurality of
15
16 interests, goals, hierarchies, and perspectives. The unitarist organisational text was not recognised
17
18 as a source of authority by employees and collaborators. These findings contribute to the research in
19
20 MLD by demonstrating the importance of an element of such programs that has previously been
21
22 neglected, namely notions of organisations. Our study shows a link between such notions of
23
24 organisation and subsequent leadership practices.
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30

31 **Theoretical foundations**

32
33
34 Studies of MLD employing an interpretive, dialogical and/or critical approach (Mabey 2013) have
35
36 mainly focused on identity as the link between programmes and leadership practice. Through
37
38 various practices within the programmes, such as coaching, feedback and personality profiling,
39
40 managers are equipped with new identity resources to be deployed in organisations (Meier and
41
42 Carroll 2019). Studies of discursively and interactionally mediated relationships between MLD and
43
44 identity demonstrate that discourse establishes certain notions of what a manager is; notions that the
45
46 managers may identify with, negotiate or resist (Carroll and Nicholson 2014; Gagnon and Collinson
47
48 2014). MLDPs are thus treated as arenas for identity construction (Carroll and Levy 2010;
49
50 Petriglieri and Petriglieri 2010), regulation and normative control (Carden and Callahan 2007;
51
52 Carroll and Nicholson 2014; Ford and Harding 2007; Gagnon 2008; Gagnon and Collinson 2014;
53
54 Heizmann and Liu 2018; Nicholson and Carrol 2013; Stead and Elliott 2019). We supplement this
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1
2 literature with a focus on the organisational perspective involved in MLDPs. As Gagnon and
3
4 Collinson (2014) observed, MLDPs not only offer participants new identity sources but also
5
6 worldviews or organisational perspectives that reinforce those identities. In subscribing to the
7
8 identities offered (Hay 2014), MLDP participants also tend to embrace the supporting
9
10 organisational views.
11
12
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14

15
16 As the organisational perspectives presented constitute a potentially powerful link between MLDPs
17
18 and managerial practice, it is of interest to consider their character and content. Dominant
19
20 functionalist approaches to leadership development have a bias towards consensus (Mabey 2013),
21
22 considering leadership development to be beneficial for both leaders and followers. This implies the
23
24 assumption that all members of organisations have common interests. A study by Tourish et al.
25
26 (2010) presents one of the few that examines the organisational perspectives related to teaching
27
28 management. Exploring business school curricula and study programmes, they distinguish between
29
30 a unitarist view of organisations in which all organisation members are assumed to share the same
31
32 (organisational) goals and a pluralist view wherein organisational actors pursue individual
33
34 (divergent) self-interests. Tourish et al. identify an inherent paradox in the emphasis of a leadership
35
36 ideal assuming a unitarist view of the organisation, while simultaneously embracing a view of
37
38 individuals as self-interested and agentic, implying a more pluralistic and potentially conflictual
39
40 view of organisations involving disparate interests, values and goals.
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42
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47

48 Larsson et al. (2020) noted that the unitarist organisational perspective could influence participants'
49
50 subsequent experiences in relation to daily managerial practices. A longitudinal study of a
51
52 leadership development programme found that participants came to embrace a unitarist view of the
53
54 organisation. The authors argued that since '[t]here is much distance between the unitarist intended
55
56 outcomes and the complex pluralistic context of organizations' (144), programme participants
57
58
59
60

1
2 experienced frustrations and setbacks when engaging with their everyday organisational
3
4 environment. To many of the participants the tensions between the unitarist organisational view of
5
6 the programme and the pluralistic context of the experienced organisation did not lead to the
7
8 development of a more nuanced perspective on the organisation. Instead the participants appeared
9
10 to distance themselves from the organisation as a means of preserving their preferred leadership
11
12 identities, which were closely linked to the unitarist view of the organisation.
13
14
15
16
17

18 Taken together these studies bring the importance of organisational views to the forefront of our
19
20 analytical attention when studying MLDPs; however, neither Tourish et al. (2010) nor Larsson et al.
21
22 (2020) explore how these different notions of organisations unfold in practice. We advance the
23
24 literature by following a specific organisational view from an MLDP and tracing its expression in
25
26 leadership practice. We are thus interested in investigating the links between MLDPs and leadership
27
28 practice, but less in terms of identities and more in terms of how the organisational perspective is
29
30 enacted as a source of authority in everyday practice. Organisational views may reinforce certain
31
32 identities but, as we shall see, they do more than this. We have found that CCO, more specifically
33
34 the concepts of text and authority, offer a productive point of departure.
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36
37
38

39 *Text and authority*

40
41 To grasp the different dimensions and implications of the organisational view in relation to MLDPs
42
43 we draw on CCO, which researchers have recently successfully applied as a theoretical approach in
44
45 leadership studies (Holm and Fairhurst 2018; Meier and Carroll 2019). CCO is a collective
46
47 designation for recent organisational theories based on the premise that organisations not only
48
49 communicate but emerge in and are made up of processes of communication. CCO has links to
50
51 Berger and Luckman (1966) and social constructionism and emphasises that the reality is a result of
52
53 interpretation as well as actual practice; that is communication not only interprets social reality but
54
55 also creates it (Ashcraft et al. 2009). All organisations consist of and are constituted by
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60

1
2 communication. Communication is seen as a dialectic between conversation (i.e. interaction) and
3
4 text (Taylor et al. 1996); a distinction that replaces previous distinctions between agency and
5
6 structure (Ashcraft et al. 2009: 22).
7
8
9

10
11 Texts can be both concrete (e.g. documents, images and rules) and figurative, i.e. abstract
12
13 organisational representations (Kuhn 2008: 1234 ff). Text articulates the relevant collective of the
14
15 organisation (Schoeneborn et al. 2019: 483); it is a 'representation of the collective' (Koschmann
16
17 and Burk 2016: 394). The text can come in the form of explicit self-descriptions as when
18
19 organisations outline mission, values, strategies, policies, bylaws or structures. A text has some
20
21 resemblance to what Campbell (2007) refers to as 'house paradigms' (11), but whereas house
22
23 paradigms are about thinking, feeling and believing, texts are structuring resources (Kuhn 2008),
24
25 both in the form of abstract representations and concrete artefacts (Bourgoin et al. 2020; Kuhn
26
27 2008). Communication takes place as specific events (someone says something), but these specific
28
29 events involve a reference to a certain collective – i.e. text. Inspired by Tourish et al. (2010) and
30
31 Larsson et al. (2020) we suggest introducing the term 'unitarist text', referring to a text that assumes
32
33 agents and subjects share the same goals.
34
35
36
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39
40

41 A text only comes into being when it is used and presented by agents who speak for or in the name
42
43 of it. Cooren conceptualises this as a form of ventriloquism (2012) asserting that people
44
45 ventriloquise ideas, ideologies, interests and organisations when they speak for or in the name of
46
47 such texts. He provides the following example:
48
49
50

51 When an official (let's say, an ICA president, for instance) invokes the bylaws of
52
53 his association to either justify a decision or decline a request that a member may
54
55 have made, he/she is ventriloquizing these bylaws by indirectly making them say
56
57 and do something, which creates an effect (always limited and limitable) of
58
59
60

1
2 reproduction of institutional/organisational/social order. Ventriloquizing the
3
4 policy also means that he/she is simultaneously ventriloquizing the association
5
6 and its interests, a form of representation that, of course, can always be
7
8 challenged and questioned (Cooren 2012: 5).
9

10
11 As the CCO perspective stresses, organisations continuously constitute themselves in processes of
12
13 conversations that lead to texts that may then be ventriloquised in further conversations (Cooren
14
15 2012; Kuhn 2008: 1233, Kuhn 2012; Schoeneborn et al. 2019: 482).
16
17
18
19

20
21 Endeavouring to empirically study the realisation of authority is a key interest of the CCO
22
23 perspective (Benoit-Barné and Cooren 2009; Bourgoin et al. 2019; Holm and Fairhurst 2018;
24
25 Koschmann et al. 2017; Koschmann and Burk 2016; Porter et al. 2018; Taylor and van Every 2014;
26
27 Vásquez et al. 2018).¹ In this regard the relationship between text and authority is a significant
28
29 concern. According to Taylor and Van Every (2014) organisational text is ‘a source of authority for
30
31 those who represent it’ (14). The word *auctōritās* derives from *augere*, which means to augment, to
32
33 amplify (Rabe 2004). Taking our cue from this foundation, we can examine authority as a
34
35 relationship in which a speaker’s words are amplified when the speaker speaks in the name of
36
37 something or someone else. Authority means that an agent amplifies the probability for the
38
39 connectivity of subjects, through the assumptions that they speak on behalf of a commonly accepted
40
41 collective – that is a text. A text as a source of authority implies the agent’s authorisation vis-à-vis
42
43 some subjects.
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48
49

50 *Authority is relational*

51
52 According to Max Weber (1978) the realisation of authority is through receivers’ following orders.
53
54

55
56
57 ¹ For a more general introduction to CCO see Ashcraft et al. (2009), Schoeneborn et al. (2014) and Schoeneborn et al.
58 (2019).
59

1
2 This definition is too restrictive as managerial communication is not only presented in the form of
3
4 orders. Drawing on a continental stream in CCO (Cooren and Seidl 2020; Luhmann 2018;
5
6 Schoeneborn 2011) we suggest that the accomplishment of authority is an increased likelihood that
7
8 subjects will connect to an agent's communication. Connecting to communication means that the
9
10 subjects use the agent's message as information that limits their room to manoeuvre. Authority is
11
12 thus linked to power but does not necessarily involve 'A affecting B in a manner contrary to B's
13
14 interests' (Lukes 2005: 30). Whereas coercive power is causal (Fleming and Spicer 2007:14),
15
16 authority is reciprocal. The probability that subjects will connect to the communication depends on
17
18 the addressee recognising the source of authority. If the subjects do not accept or recognise an
19
20 organisational text (that is, the source of authority), they are less inclined to connect to the
21
22 utterances of the agent ventriloquising the text. This is also why Barnard (1968) states, 'the decision
23
24 as to whether an order has authority or not lies with the persons to whom it is addressed and does
25
26 not reside in "persons of authority" or those who issue these orders' (163).² This highlights the
27
28 importance of recognition in the relational establishment of authority. Authority is not something a
29
30 leader can simply claim or possess; it must be accomplished through communicative and social
31
32 interaction between the subjects involved.
33
34
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41 Managers communicate based on their own identities as well as in reference to an organisational
42
43 text that then functions as a source of authority. However, the organisational text is not just
44
45 established as a simple fact, it must be presented and recognised by the subjects through ongoing
46
47 social interactions that authorise the manager as a manager. Investigations engaging the concepts of
48
49 text and authority enable us to explore how the organisational text presented within the framework
50
51
52
53
54

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56
57 ² See Kojève (2014) for a similar analysis of the importance of recognition to realising authority.
58
59

1
2 of an MLDP is ventriloquised in everyday organisational interactions and whether this
3
4 organisational text serves as a source of authority for managers in actual practice.
5
6
7

8
9 The concepts of text and authority also enable a more comprehensive understanding of leadership as
10
11 a relational phenomenon. Studies of the practice of leadership have shown the establishment of
12
13 direction and alignment to be a shared, cooperative and collective process (Larsson and Lundholm
14
15 2013; Ospina et al. 2020), rather than a process emanating from any single individual. The
16
17 suggested concepts of text and authorisation clearly follow this insight. Because the text must be
18
19 collectively recognised, leadership is not an individual act but a social relationship involving
20
21 connectivity. CCO and the suggested concepts of text and authority allow us to link two different
22
23 contexts (MLDP and leadership practice) to apprehend leadership practice as genuinely relational.
24
25
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27
28

29 In sum, using the conceptual tools of organisational text, authority and connectivity amplification,
30
31 we engage with our research aim: to explore how the organisational text offered by an MLDP
32
33 emerges in and shapes authority relationships in managers' leadership practice. We do this through
34
35 a case study described in the upcoming sections.
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39

40 **Methodology – case, data and analytical process**

41
42

43 We studied an in-house MLDP conducted by the Capital Region of Denmark (Capital Region) in
44
45 cooperation with a group of private and public consulting firms. The Capital Region employs
46
47 approximately 39.000 people and spends more than 90% of its budget on health care. The MLDP
48
49 was part of an overall investment in leadership. Leadership reform in Denmark in 2007 specified
50
51 that all public managers had the right (often also obligation) to have at least a bachelor's degree in
52
53 management. This prompted huge growth in MLDPs – of both formal programmes at educational
54
55 institutions and of in-house programmes (Knudsen 2016). The MLDP we followed in the Capital
56
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60 10

1
2 Region was by far the most ambitious in terms of the number of participants and duration in the
3
4 history of the Region. Several purposes were ascribed the programme. Two of its central designers
5
6 called it a ‘strategy implementation machine’ and claimed in a Danish healthcare journal that the
7
8 programme’s purpose was to qualify managers to couple the strategy and the goals of the Capital
9
10 Region with daily operations at all levels of the organisation (Fischer and K hler 2014: 13).
11
12
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14

15
16 The Capital Region is the largest owner of hospitals in Denmark, and MLDP participants mainly
17
18 came from these hospitals. The MLDP includes several sub-programmes targeting different groups
19
20 ranging from leadership-talents to top managers. We conducted a qualitative study of a programme
21
22 called ‘leading subordinates’ that targeted first-line managers. This was by far the programme with
23
24 highest number of participants who were typically nurses, doctors and other health professionals
25
26 managing health care units as well as managers of cleaning units, medical secretaries, kitchen units
27
28 etc. As the programme was mandatory, participants included both newly appointed and more
29
30 experienced managers. Every six months approximately 120 managers joined a new iteration of the
31
32 programme, divided into classes of 20–25 participants. Each class took place over 14.5 days
33
34 distributed over about six months. Approximately 85% of the participants were women, mirroring
35
36 nursing as primarily a women’s profession. We will return to these participant characteristics in the
37
38 discussion ahead.
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45
46 Two of the authors observed one class each, which ran from autumn 2014 to spring 2015. Our data
47
48 comprise about 250 hours of observation (overnight modules also included evening activities), most
49
50 of which was also audio recorded. After the programme ended, and to get a broad impression of the
51
52 perceived outcome of the programme, we conducted 15 follow-up interviews with participants that
53
54 focused on the relationship between the participants’ leadership practice and the programme. To
55
56 follow the programme’s impact on leadership practice, we later shadowed six participants (three
57
58
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1
2 from each class) for three days each, and interviewed their employees (6), colleagues (5) and
3
4 managers (6). The six managers were selected based on the 15 follow-up interviews. As the purpose
5
6 of the study was to investigate the potential links between the MLDP and leadership practice, we
7
8 prioritised those who indicated that they had gained a lot from the programme. On the first day of
9
10 observation we presented our research project and our role as researchers. All participants
11
12 consented to our presence and audio recordings. We also obtained consent prior to recording group
13
14 sessions.
15
16
17

18 19 *Coding and analysis*

20
21 The analysis of the organisational text is based on background documents, interviews, presentations
22
23 by guest speakers and the consultants running the programme, and teaching materials such as slides,
24
25 tests and articles. The analyses of leadership practice are based on interviews and observations. All
26
27 interviews and selected audio recordings of interactions were transcribed. Documents and
28
29 transcripts were coded using NVivo. In the analysis of the organisational text we looked for the
30
31 organisational aspects selected by the programme (e.g., steering technologies, structure, strategy,
32
33 rules and goals) and analysed how these aspects were observed by participants (for a more elaborate
34
35 analysis of the organisational view of the programme see 'authors 2021'). The analysis of
36
37 leadership practice proceeded as follows. Based on the CCO assumption that decision-making is a
38
39 core organisational operation (Luhmann 2018) we began by coding situations involving managerial
40
41 decision-making. Most decisions were readily accepted as part of the manager's jurisdiction;
42
43 however, some situations were more problematic in the sense of a lack of connectivity. This was
44
45 expressed through conflicts as well as employees and collaborators simply not following the
46
47 expectations communicated by the manager in question. We interpreted the lack of connectivity to
48
49 decisions as expressions of managers' difficulties with becoming authorised.
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58 In the next step of the analysis, we coded for the sources of authorisation used by managers to
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60

1
2 amplify the probability of connectivity. This resulted in an initial list of 17 different sources of
3
4 authorisation. Guided by CCO we grouped some of the sources into categories as part of the same
5
6 overall organisational text (official hierarchy, strategy, rules, standards and management tools),
7
8 mirroring the text of the MLDP. Relating the use of organisational texts to previously identified
9
10 connectivity challenges showed a clear pattern (see Appendix 1). Managers with connectivity
11
12 problems were also those most prominently employing formal hierarchy, rules, management tools
13
14 and official strategies as sources of authorisation. Conflicts often arose when decisions were
15
16 authorised in reference to the organisational text, which was also identified as a central text of the
17
18 MLDP.
19
20
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23
24

25 In the analysis presented here, we have selected a subset of four managers for analysis. The cases 1-
26
27 3 represent managers whose reflections and leadership practice most clearly ventriloquised (Cooren
28
29 2012) and presented (Benoit-Barné and Cooren 2009) the authoritative text produced in the MLDP.³
30
31 The cases 1-3 demonstrate what happens to managerial authority in practice when it is based on the
32
33 assumptions of the unitarist organisational text authored in the MLDP. In order to obtain depth in
34
35 the analysis we especially focus on case 1. The cases 2 and 3 are included in order to add nuance to
36
37 the understanding of the links between the unitarist text as a source of authority and situations
38
39 involving lack of connectivity. Finally, we present a manager (case 4) with successful authority
40
41 relations as a contrast-case demonstrating how authority can be established in polyphonic
42
43 organisations. We present our findings in two parts, first detailing the text authored in the MLDP in
44
45 question, then following the managers to identify how they make the text present in daily practice.
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57 ³ The cases have been anonymised as to the managers' names.
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MLD and the authoring of the organisational text

Following the CCO concept of authority, according to which the organisational text is a primary source of authority, we analyse the core characteristics of the text presented in the programme. We use three empirical sources for this analysis: the formal ambition of the programme, the curriculum and our interviews with the managers (and the managers' managers) participating in the programme.

The ambition of the programme

In an internal note regarding the ambitions of the programme the Capital Region stated the following about its specific expectations of managers after attending the programme:

The managers know their mandate and their role and responsibility to manage up, down and across. They can therefore transform strategy and goals into action in the everyday work and secure high quality and safety for the users (Capital Region of Denmark 2013: 6, translated by the authors).

This describes an organisation in which strategy, goals and everyday actions are aligned. The aim of the MLDP, correspondingly, is to turn managers into agents for an organisation as described in official goals and strategies (see also Walker (2018) for a similar observation).

The curriculum

To realise the ambition of educating managers authorised with reference to the Capital Region's strategies and the notion of an aligned organisation, the programme involved a mixture of features focusing on a) knowledge, skills and competencies; b) self-insight employing more individualised methods like coaching and personality tests; and c) collective learning activities like roleplay aimed at enhancing collective capacities (see Table 1 for an overview).

Module 1:	Module 2:	Module 3:	Module 4:	Module 5:	Module 6:
-----------	-----------	-----------	-----------	-----------	-----------

Operation management and economy <i>2 days</i>	Leadership with self-insight <i>3-day overnight</i>	Managing consistently and personnel law <i>3 days</i>	Leadership with direction <i>2-day overnight</i>	Management of quality and patient-oriented innovation <i>1.5 days</i>	Management of relationships <i>3-day overnight</i>
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Table 1. The six modules in the Capital Region of Denmark's employee management programme.

The first module, Operation management and economy, introduced organisational management tools (e.g. budget, operations and quality) with an emphasis on operational target management. This was presented as the core steering technology of the Capital Region. A short film called *Focus and simplicity* that was shown on the first day of the programme stated:

It [operational target management] is a tool that will prove its worth. Having this on hand ensures that no one will get lost and that, one by one, we will know that we are on the right track towards our common goal (Capital Region of Denmark, translated by the authors).

Operation target management was thus presented as a specific tool designed to align daily activities with strategic goals. The same idea regarding alignment was also an integral part of module 4 Leadership with direction, which was presented in the slide shown in Figure 1.

Insert Figure 1.

The slide illustrates how strategic areas of priority can produce a shared focus and direction to align various kinds of activities, symbolised by the chaotic array of arrows on the left that are funnelled into a group of arrows pointing in the same direction. Similarly, the Capital Region presented the leadership pipeline as its formal leadership model, which is designed to align levels of leadership and organisational functions to produce a common output, to develop a shared language among managers and to secure a smooth transition from one managerial position to the next (see Figure 2).

Insert figure 2 here

1
2 Congruent with the ambitions of the programme the curriculum represents an organisation that acts
3
4 as one – an organisation aligned by management tools, strategy and structure in the form of a
5
6 leadership pipeline.
7
8

9
10 *Perceptions of the outcome of the programme*

11
12 After the programme was completed we interviewed participating managers and their managers. In
13
14 general both groups indicated that providing an understanding of the wider organisation permeated
15
16 the programme. One newly appointed manager talked about the programme as a way for her to
17
18 become acquainted with a previously unfamiliar strategic perspective for the first time.

19
20 Supplementing this, one of the managers of managers explained and evaluated the overall outcome
21
22 of the programme as follows:
23
24

25
26 I think it gives them an insight into what management is. You don't necessarily
27
28 have any experience, even if you've been employed as a middle manager (...).
29
30 You can't continue acting as an employee; there are different expectations toward
31
32 you. You must have an understanding of the strategy work within the Capital
33
34 Region and how this is felt all the way down to your own position. That specific
35
36 rigor is good, I believe.
37
38
39

40
41 Following the programme is considered a way for managers to acquire a more precise
42
43 understanding of the larger context of their managerial practice, as well as the accompanying
44
45 expectations for this particular situatedness: the responsibility of adhering to regional strategies.

46
47 Mirroring this quite closely another manager of managers stressed the managers' ability to
48
49 acknowledge and integrate the awareness that their responsibilities involve adhering to certain
50
51 frameworks and conditions:
52
53

54
55 *Manager:* After Jane took this course I feel that she gained a greater awareness
56
57 that she works within a region, and that there are frameworks and conditions that,
58
59

1
2 as a manager, one has to adapt to. This concerns personnel policies, budget and
3
4 finance issues, the regional strategy and mission (...).

5
6
7 *Interviewer:* So it [course participation] shines through in a quicker acceptance of
8
9 the framework and conditions?

10
11
12
13 *Manager:* Yes, exactly.
14

15
16 This interview excerpt demonstrates that the programme is successful in producing a specific
17
18 organisational text that serves as a common point of reference for the managers and thus as a shared
19
20 source of authority.
21

22 23 *Summing up*

24
25 Our research question asks how the organisational text presented in an MLDP authorises the
26
27 manager in the home organisation. In accordance with the programme's ambitions, curriculum and
28
29 perceived outcomes, we identified a specific organisational text characterised by the overall idea
30
31 that there is (or should be) *one* common organisation with which top-level strategies and everyday
32
33 operations align, and which authorises the managers. Accordingly, managers are envisioned as
34
35 individuals whose primary source of authority is derived from this specific organisational unity and
36
37 whose primary purpose is to integrate the various levels of the organisation by aligning daily
38
39 operations with the Capital Region's overall strategy. This organisational text closely resembles
40
41 what Tourish et al. (2010) and Larsson et al. (2020) called a unitarist view of organisations, which
42
43 is characterised by the assumption that organisational members share the organisational text; or, in
44
45 other words, a widespread organisational text, resonating with what Mabey (2013) calls a
46
47 functionalistic perspective. Further, it is often used when designing and delivering MLDPs, as
48
49 suggested by McGurk (2010): 'The traditional approach to training managers rests upon a
50
51 rationalistic framework in which organisational strategy is translated into appropriate individual
52
53 behaviours at the respective levels of management' (458). This is in line with the notion of the
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1
2 unitarist view of organisations.
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6 We will address the second part of our research question in the next section by analysing emerging
7 dynamics in practice when unitarist organisational text is enacted and whether it serves to authorise
8 managers' communication.
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13 14 **Making the MLD programme text present in leadership practice**

15 16 17 18 *Case 1 - Marie*

19
20 Our first and most detailed case concerns Marie, a recent participant in the Capital Region's MLDP
21 who is the manager of a secretarial unit in a hospital department consisting of two outpatient clinics
22 and four laboratories. Marie is educated as a medical secretary but she also has a degree in business
23 and several years of work-experience from private companies. Previously the secretaries were
24 employed in the clinics and the laboratories but they have recently been merged into one unit
25 managed by Marie. We demonstrate how the unitarist text of the MLDP is presented in the way
26 Marie envisions her own role, furthermore following how Marie fails to achieve connectivity with a
27 group of doctors as she ventriloquises the unitarist text.
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42 Marie stresses the streamlining of work processes as key to her managerial task. Recently hired to
43 head the new joint secretariat, Marie states: 'So we attempt to streamline the processes across the
44 organisation and to make the employees understand that they are part of the Capital Region'. In this
45 way Marie clearly ventriloquises the unitarist organisational text in her desire to relate the new
46 secretariat and its activities more closely to the Capital Region's strategies. One specific tool that
47 she has found particularly useful in this regard is operational target management, which was
48 presented in module 1 of the MLDP. According to Marie she has made it her personal responsibility
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1
2 to promote operational target management and lean board meetings as a routine activity in her daily
3
4 management, even if it is not necessarily met with enthusiasm by her employees and collaborators.
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7

8
9 To Marie the necessity of creating a common ground for daily operations by using specific
10
11 techniques, such as lean boards and shared targets, comes with her specific function as a manager.
12
13 As opposed to being a manager who refers to a specific profession Marie stresses that she practices
14
15 management as a distinct discipline and function,
16
17

18
19 I consider management a discipline, and I'm employed to treat it as such; it is my
20
21 role. I could just as well have been a secretary. I could have also been department
22
23 director if I were a doctor and had the desire to do so; however, I am not. But we
24
25 all fill a role.
26
27

28
29 By positioning herself and her management in this way Marie presents the general approach to
30
31 management within the MLDP. She adopts the basic idea of the leadership pipeline in the
32
33 programme by envisioning herself as having a specific position and task within the framework of
34
35 the organisational whole in which everyone has a specific role in relation to the overall goal. Marie
36
37 thus presents herself as a ventriloquist of the unitarist organisational text as well as its faithful and
38
39 eager proponent. While following her in her daily practice as she attempted to (re)present the
40
41 organisational text of the MLDP, we observed Marie's authority being repeatedly challenged.
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45 46 *Ventriloquising the unitarist text*

47

48
49 In the following we describe a meeting in detail in which Marie fails in her attempt to establish an
50
51 authority relationship based on the unitarist organisational text of the MLDP. The specific issue
52
53 Marie has put on the agenda and attempts to gain the authorisation to manage is a new common
54
55 categorisation for medical records, while at the same time shifting the responsibility of writing a
56
57 specific category of medical records from the secretaries to the doctors. Marie sees this change as
58
59

1
2 closely related to the ambition of creating new productive synergies across units to meet the
3
4 politically instigated treatment guarantee; in short, to work in accordance with the strategic goals of
5
6 the Capital Region. Drawing directly on the operational target management tool from the MLDP
7
8 curriculum, Marie introduces the categories to facilitate mutual coordination as well as shared goals
9
10 between the administrative staff and the doctors, thus ventriloquising the ideal of the unitarist
11
12 organisation. In the following, as we focus on the interaction at the meeting, it becomes clear that
13
14 the text Marie presents as a source of authority ends up being misrecognised and overruled by the
15
16 medical doctors.
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22 We follow Marie into a Lean board meeting. Three secretaries, four doctors from the outpatient
23
24 clinics and the department director attend the meeting. At the beginning of the meeting, Marie
25
26 presents the agenda and emphasises the importance of medical records. She then moves forward by
27
28 explaining a new categorisation of medical records based on different timeframes: urgent, semi-
29
30 urgent and normal, depending on the urgency of the specific case. At the very beginning of the
31
32 meeting, a controversy emerges when a doctor enquires about the category 'normal':
33
34
35

36
37 *Doctor:* And what about the category of normal?
38

39 *Marie:* Normal ones are red (meaning they are not completed within the allotted
40
41 time, the authors). And the oldest notes, including yesterday's, are six months old.
42
43 But records were also written last night.
44

45
46 *Doctor:* But what are we to tell the patients?!

47
48 *Marie:* You can tell them that they are four ... that the deadline is four months,
49
50 right? Unless you write them yourselves. And this is where we have to make a
51
52 deal with you. We came up with these categories for you but writing them creates
53
54 a bottleneck.
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1
2 The doctor's upset and accusatory tone when she asks about what they are supposed to tell the
3
4 patients clearly implies that she felt that Marie and the secretaries should be responsible for
5
6 managing the current delays. However, Marie responds by putting the responsibility on the doctors,
7
8 stressing that their response to the patients depends on the doctors themselves: the timeframe is four
9
10 months *unless* they write the medical records themselves. By introducing certain categorisations of
11
12 medical records, Marie seeks to carve out the responsibility of the doctors, obliging them to take
13
14 part in the production goals of the department. She assumes that the doctors and secretaries have (or
15
16 should have) the same goals. In doing so, she also ventriloquises the unitarist organisational text of
17
18 the MLDP.
19
20
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25 Despite Marie's attempt to frame the categorisation of medical records and the new division of
26
27 labour as a shared interest across the professional groups, her version of roles, tasks and
28
29 responsibilities vis-à-vis the organisation is not accepted by the medical doctors, but on the
30
31 contrary. For example, one doctor states agitatedly:
32
33
34

35 But I just have to know, how can you believe that we would be able to find time
36
37 for this in the clinic? To write an urgent note, go get the copy and then also
38
39 manage to take in patients, get them to undress and weigh them and measure
40
41 them? I simply don't get it!
42
43
44

45 This doctor appears to have misunderstood Marie's attempt to have them write normal records and
46
47 not the urgent ones, but the message is clear enough. According to the doctors, including further
48
49 administrative tasks while attending to patients is simply unsuitable in terms of the reality of the
50
51 outpatient clinic. The doctors begin to mutually support one another in the belief that implementing
52
53 documentation tasks into their daily work is not feasible on a practical level, adding that the desks
54
55 and printers are inadequate and that standardised categories are simply incompatible with real
56
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1 patients and standards do not match the complexities of the real-life people the doctors are treating.

2
3
4 A lengthy, heated exchange between the group of doctors and Marie ends as follows:

5
6
7 *Doctor:* This thing about making some general rules about what you can do and
8 cannot do ... I guess you've known us long enough to realise that we're not going
9 to stick to them anyway.

10
11
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13
14
15 *Marie:* But this is precisely why we're ...

16
17
18 *Doctor:* ... but if we think it's important to the patients, then we'll do it!

19
20
21 As the exchange implies the doctors are not going to adhere to the common categories since they do
22 not see them as being in the best interest of the patients. The doctors simply do not recognise some
23 general categories and goals as a relevant source of authority. As opposed to having an idea of
24 common production goals and a strategic notion of the unitarist organisation as the authority base
25 and organising principle, the doctors refer to the well-being of the patient as the primary source of
26 authority. In line with this, the doctors opt for their own professional judgment from case to case, as
27 an alternative to common categories. Nearly speaking as one voice, two of the doctors argue:

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38 *Doctor I:* I was just thinking, considering the categorisation, I think a lot could
39 be done by letting the doctor sitting there ...

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41
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43
44 *Doctor II:* ... make her own call

45
46
47 *Doctor I:* ... use her own professional judgment

48
49 According to the doctors, professional judgement and the welfare of the patient, and not some
50 generalised rule, are what should act as the point of reference and main source of authority. As the
51 meeting progresses Marie's initial ambition becomes even harder to envision. While Marie
52 continues to appeal for a shared understanding of the categories to enable cooperation and an

1
2 overall improved ability to meet the official timeframes for patient treatment, the doctors opt for
3
4 patient welfare, professional judgment, flexibility from case to case and a correspondingly close and
5
6 individualised involvement of the secretaries. In this sense the doctors speak in the name of an
7
8 organisational text that diverges from the organisational text presented by Marie. As the debate
9
10 becomes more and more intense, time is running out. Towards the end of the meeting, agreement
11
12 has not been achieved. The result is the rejection of Marie's intended introduction of common
13
14 categories for aligning the activities of the secretaries and doctors in relation to the Capital Region's
15
16 strategic goal of timely patient treatment.
17
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22
23 In summary, the analysis shows that in her attempt to change the categorisations and responsibilities
24
25 of writing medical records, Marie draws on a perspective of the organisation as unitary; a collective
26
27 with common goals. This unitarist organisational text, which was presented to Marie in the MLDP,
28
29 and which she eagerly ventriloquises in her self-representation and in this meeting, is not
30
31 recognised as a source of authority by the others; thus, it does not amplify the doctors' connectivity
32
33 to Marie's plans. Rather, the doctors present a different organisational text emphasising the various
34
35 needs of patients and their own professional judgment on a case-by-case basis, as their sources of
36
37 authority. Marie and the doctors clearly speak on behalf of separate organisational texts.
38
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40
41

42 *Case 2 - Sarah*

43
44 The same pattern of authorisation by means of the unitarist text and lack of connectivity was clearly
45
46 apparent across all of our empirical material. In the case of Marie the lack of connectivity
47
48 concerned collaboration between different professional groups with different hierarchical structures.
49
50 In other cases we observed connectivity problems in direct hierarchical relations. For instance we
51
52 observed Sarah having connectivity problems in relation to nurses. Sarah was a nurse and a newly
53
54 appointed ward manager in an outpatient clinic treating terminally ill patients. She had decided that
55
56 the nurses should start the day by preparing treatments individually at 07:30 and then have a
57
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1
2 meeting at 08:30. Previously the 15 nurses working in the ward started the day with a brief meeting
3
4 at 07:30. The manager says:

7 This morning we were three who came half past eight – out of 12 in attendance.

9 And then one says ‘should we not soon evaluate?’. Then I say, that I do not really
11 think we need to evaluate it, because it is something we continue with. And there
12
13 one could say that I am the one making that decision.
14
15

17 The ward manager insists that she as the formal manager has the right to make this decision. She
18 thus authorises her decision in reference to her position in a formal organisational hierarchy. This
19
20 general idea of an organisational hierarchy had been reproduced and legitimized by the MLDP
21
22 which promoted ‘the leadership pipeline’ (defining tasks based on hierarchical level) and the formal
23
24 rules defining the jurisdiction of the managers. The statement that she is the one making the
25
26 decision is, though, falsified in practice as the nurses simply do not abide by or connect to Sarah’s
27
28 decision. This is related to the way the nurses perceive themselves as a relatively autonomous
29
30 group. A nurse explains:
31
32
33

36 Before Sarah we had a manager with whom we had a strained relationship. She
37
38 was very much one sitting in her office. We did not know what the hell she was
39
40 doing. We have always made jokes about that here we are all ward managers –
41
42
43 having run the place ourselves.
44
45

46 The nurses perceived themselves as an autonomous group, independent of the formal hierarchy
47
48 represented by the ward manager. In their notion of the organisation, they were authorised by
49
50 themselves, rather than by the formal hierarchy. The nurses observed their own group of colleagues
51
52 as the primary collective and did not recognise the formal organisation, to which Sarah refers as
53
54 equally authorising. The nurses did not connect to Sarah’s decision, as she relied on the formal
55
56 hierarchy as the single authorising text. Several organisational texts were at play simultaneously.
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60 24

1
2 *Case 3 - Marianne*
3

4 Further up in the hierarchy there may also be problems recognising authority based on the unitarist
5 text. We thus experienced how Marianne, a manager at a call centre for acute illness, was regularly
6 bypassed by top managers. In the call centre standards have a central role in how the work is
7 managed and evaluated, and in many ways the managers simply function as administrators of these
8 standards. At the same time, the call centre is a highly politicised organisation as it recently
9 replaced medical doctors with nurses. Doctors subsequently criticised the unit and politicians were
10 very keen on making it a success. This meant that top managers stayed very close to the nurses'
11 work processes, even after being staffed with 500 individuals. Marianne's boss expressed,
12 'suddenly the vice-director is here, asking Marianne to do something. You are quickly by-passed'.
13 According to Marianne's boss it became very hard for her and for Marianne to take any decisions
14 without the interference of top management. Furthermore the hierarchy was challenged as a source
15 of authority, as higher levels of the organisation also directly interfered in the work of the nurses.
16 Marianne's (and other managers') authority, based on standards and hierarchy, was thus fragile, as
17 both standards and line of command could be overruled by higher level managers. Marianne
18 seemed lost in this confusing situation. From the MLDP and its organisational text (not least the
19 presentation of the leadership pipeline and its inherent notion of clearly separated hierarchical
20 layers) Marianne had the idea that the formal position gave her her authority. As this organisational
21 text obviously did not align with her actual situation, it did not work as a source of authority and
22 Marianne did not know what to do.
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50 Marie, Sarah and Marianne experienced lack of connectivity as they spoke on behalf of a unitarist
51 text that was not recognised as a relevant source of authority by their associates (Marie),
52 subordinates (Anne) or managers (Marianne). Conversely, we did also observe managers with
53 unproblematic authority relations during our fieldwork. Hanne's case serves as an example.
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1
2 *Case 4 – Hanne and successful authority*
3

4 At times managers employed different kinds of texts as sources of authority. For instance, Hanne, a
5 ward manager at a medical bed-unit who attended the MLDP as Marie, Sarah and Marianne.
6

7 Whereas Marie presented herself as a ventriloquist of the unitarist organisational text, Hanne
8
9 instead referred to the other participants when asked about her gains from the programme:
10
11

12
13
14 We are in a workday with a huge amount of problems, and it was absolutely fab
15
16 to have that group (a group of participants at the MLDP). In a way we got
17
18 psychological help from that group, because you could get something off your
19
20 chest and get some tips back. That was what gave me the most.
21
22

23
24 Exchanging experiences and getting tips from other managers indicates an orientation towards
25
26 different texts – an orientation we also found in Hanne’s managerial practice. After a large-scale
27
28 structural change in 2015, part of Hanne’s clinic was to move to a different hospital 10 km away.
29
30 The staff could choose between staying at the hospital (though in a different specialty) or moving to
31
32 the new hospital. It was announced that 10 people could move. They ended up moving 12 nurses
33
34 and nursing assistants. All the staff moving hospital did it voluntarily – following Hanne, the
35
36 specialty and their colleagues. Hanne thus implemented an unpopular relocation from one hospital
37
38 to another. Nonetheless the staff volunteered to follow her and the ward. While previous cases
39
40 presented dis-connectivity this is a case of connectivity. The question is: what amplified the
41
42 probability for connectivity, what gave Hanne her authority?
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49 When we shadowed her, she spent most of the time in the nurses’ common office; a room with five
50
51 computers (for documentation and electronic files) and a whiteboard with an overview of the
52
53 current ward patients. In this room Hanne was observed discussing patients with the nurses and the
54
55 doctor, talking about private weekend activities, ordering new materials and speaking on the phone
56
57 with municipalities and other actors outside the clinic. Hanne knew the patients, their treatment and
58
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1
2 their history. Once, and sometimes twice a day she went to a brief meeting with the other middle
3
4 managers from the ward to distribute new patients between the clinics. She was concerned with the
5
6 ‘hotel-logistics’ keen on keeping all beds occupied (to have a good argument against savings in case
7
8 that would become relevant) – without having too many patients. Regarding Hanne, one nurse says:

9
10
11 I think she is good at speaking her mind also in relation to the other clinics.

12
13 Moreover, she is good at accomplishing things. For instance we are three during
14
15 the night in this section, while at the other wards, they are only two. And that is a
16
17 thing Hanne has accomplished. So I think she is really good at saying no and
18
19 fighting for our cause – also when something is not quite reasonable.
20
21

22
23
24 It seems that loyalty to ‘our clinic’ is a source of authority. This is the same source of authority
25
26 behind the request to evaluate the new meetings in Sarah’s case, but in that case it was ignored
27
28 rather than built upon by the manager. It gives authority to fight for the local unity with which the
29
30 employees identify. The nurse continues:

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32
33
34 I think she is always willing to lend a hand. I think she is always ready to step in
35
36 and help. Also if you are short of personnel in the weekend, then she is willing to
37
38 come in, if you cannot find someone else and – yes – we are always allowed to
39
40 call her.
41
42

43
44 This approach gives Hanne authority as it does not require that she insist on her authority of
45
46 position but is instead ready to help with the nursing activities. It is exactly because she is ready to
47
48 suspend the formal hierarchy that she receives authorisation. By suspending her hierarchical
49
50 position she recognises the importance of the professional work and is perceived as a professional
51
52 resource. A nurse explains:
53
54

55
56 Hanne is reading about the patients in the clinic, she is updated and knows the
57
58 plans (...). I just think she knows very many things, also about how things are
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1
2 going on and, well, I just think she keeps informed about a lot of things. So she is
3
4 probably the one I would go to, if there was something professionally.
5
6

7 Hanne's continuous pursuit of knowledge about treatment, the organisation, personnel and specific
8 patients is a core source of authority. This knowledge is maintained partly through remaining
9 present at an everyday level in the clinic – among both personnel and patients who she always
10 welcomes personally at the clinic. Another source of authority is Hanne's track-record. She
11 accomplishes things which also benefit the clinic. In this sense her prioritisation of the clinic gives
12 her authority among the employees. According to CCO a text is an expression of a collective and
13 clearly Hanne speaks on behalf of different collectives: a) the local clinic, which she protects and
14 supports b) a professional nursing collective of knowledge and care and c) speaks on behalf of the
15 hospital as a unit when speaking to units outside her clinic.
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29 Discussion

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32 Our analysis has outlined the organisational text presented in the MLDP and analysed situations in
33 which the participants of the programme used this text as a source of authority, i.e. ventriloquised
34 the text, in their managerial practice. The analyses showed how the unitarist organisational text
35 supplied in the MLDP reduced the possibility for Marie, Sarah and Marianne (the cases 1-3) to
36 successfully engage in authority relations, as the unitarist organisational text was not recognised as
37 a source of authority by the managers' subjects, collaborators, and superiors. We observed how the
38 collaborators of Marie did not connect to the new categorisations in the medical records, how the
39 nurses did not connect to Sarah's new meeting-schedule, and how the managers of Marianne
40 bypassed the hierarchy and thus her as they interfered directly in the work of the nurses at the call
41 center. In contrast the manager, Hanne (case 4), focused on the variation of experiences in the
42 program, employing a more pluralistic organisational text in her communication. She managed to
43 speak flexibly on behalf of different collectives and was thus able to engage in successful authority
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2 relations, as her nurses and collaborators connected to her communication.
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6 Drawing on CCO and the concepts of text and authority in interpreting our ethnographic empirical
7 material, we have demonstrated an important link between MLDPs and organisational practice that
8 has hitherto received minimal attention; namely, the notion of organisation, the organisational text,
9 embraced by and articulated in the programmes. In the introduction we asked: how does the
10 organisational text presented in an MLDP authorise the managers in their daily practice? We may
11 now conclude that it does not. The unitarist text appeared to reduce rather than enhance connectivity
12 to the managers' plans and ambitions. There are several sources of the unitarist text but the affinity
13 between the organisational text presented in the MLDP and the organisational text that Marie, Sarah
14 and Marianne perceived themselves as representing indicates that the programme further
15 articulated, supported, confirmed and reinforced the notion of a unitarist organisation.
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31 Critical studies of MLDPs have demonstrated how identities may be (re)constructed through
32 MLDPs to be subsequently enacted in organisations (Carroll and Nicholson 2014; Gagnon and
33 Collinson, 2014; Meier and Carroll 2019). Our analysis resonates with this literature, as it
34 demonstrates how Marie, the manager in the first case presented, formulated her own managerial
35 role in direct continuation of the organisational text presented in the MLDP and readily adopted the
36 programme's tools and overall ideas. By connecting herself to this authoritative text, her own view
37 of herself as a manager – her identity – was seemingly supported and strengthened, making her
38 prone to present the text in her home organisation. However, as the analysis demonstrates, we also
39 extend critical studies of leadership identities by demonstrating how the organisational text in
40 practice complicated and challenged the manager's ability to act as a manager. While the
41 organisational text may have served to stabilise the manager's identity, offering her a clearer role
42 and view of herself as a manager, the text simultaneously weakened her possibility of establishing
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2 authority relations. It is thus intriguing that the organisational text presented in MLDPs may
3
4 simultaneously stabilise and strengthen participants' leadership identities *and* problematise their
5
6 authority relations in practice.
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11 Our findings raise the question of why the organisational text authored in the MLDP made it
12
13 difficult for the manager to establish authority relations. Building on Tourish et al (2010) and
14
15 Larsson et al (2020), we suggest that this is due to the specific character of the organisational text
16
17 identified. The organisational text authored in the MLDP of our case study has clear affinities to
18
19 what Tourish et al. (2010) and Larsson et al. (2020) called 'a unitarist view of organisation'.
20
21 According to Tourish et al. (2010) the unitarist view of organisations and the idea of a common goal
22
23 are in opposition to the perspective of organisations consisting of individuals pursuing individual
24
25 self-interests. Inspired by CCO we suggest supplementing the distinction between unitarist
26
27 organisations and individual self-interest with a distinction between unitarist and polyphonic
28
29 organisational contexts.
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37 An examination of the lack of connectivity to Marie's, Sarah's and Marianne's communication
38
39 indicates that this should not be reduced to a matter of self-interest. The lack of connection to the
40
41 managers' communication is based on a more profound difference in the conception and
42
43 articulation of the organisation – and thus also to the various articulations of the organisational text
44
45 that may authorise the communication. Polyphony has been used to describe the existence of
46
47 multiple voices, discourses or perspectives in an organisational setting (Andersen 2003; Cooren and
48
49 Seidl 2020: 26ff; Hazen 1993; Knudsen and Vogd 2015; Kornberger et al. 2006), thus
50
51 characterising a circumstance with fundamentally different articulations of the organisation, which
52
53 goes beyond a variety of self-interests. A polyphonic organisation is a *unitas multiplex* (Luhmann
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1
2 1995: 19) – simultaneously one and many – a differentiated unity containing diverse and potentially
3
4 conflicting purposes, aims, hierarchies, priorities and observations.
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9 According to CCO an organisational text is a certain articulation of the collective – the organisation.

10
11 Such texts can, of course, have a variety of contents. We suggest that a unitarist text is an
12
13 articulation of the organisation which assumes one shared organisation with a common purpose,
14
15 aim and hierarchy. For this reason, it does not acknowledge the polyphony of the organisation.

16
17 When managers in a polyphonic organisation communicate as if there was just one shared
18
19 organisation, the result may be a lack of recognition of the organisational text presented. This
20
21 became clear in the cases of failed authority presented. The unitarist organisational text of the
22
23 programme did not help managers amplify connectivity under actual polyphonic circumstances, as
24
25 the doctors and nurses simply did not recognise the unitarist text presented as a valid source of
26
27 authority. The result was lack of connectivity. In a polyphonic organisation, managers using the
28
29 unitarist organisational text of the programme were not authorised. Thus, we do not interpret this
30
31 lack of connectivity as resistance (Fleming and Spicer 2007) but rather as a result of the
32
33 unsuccessful constitution of authority. This also points to the important role of the prospective
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35 followers in the constitution of authority. For instance, when the prospective followers do not find
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37 the authorising text credible, they are less likely to become followers (cf. DeRue & Ashford, 2010).
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46 Our study supports the observation that unitarist organisational perspectives as worked with in
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48 MLDPs might be both widespread and attractive, but when such learning encounters polyphonic
49
50 organisational practice, social relations may become problematic. While Larsson et al. (2020)
51
52 described the frustrations of managers meeting a polyphonic organisation with unitarist
53
54 expectations, our analyses examining authority relations reveals how the clash between unitarist and
55
56 polyphonic notions of organisations is not just an individual, cognitive process but also relational
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2 and practical to a large extent. Thus, polyphony in organisations is not limited to how individuals
3
4 understand their surroundings, but something which is played out in the relational practices of
5
6 leadership.
7

8 9 10 *Limitations*

11
12 As with other studies the present article has limitations. It is a limitation that we have not taken into
13
14 consideration aspects such as level of experience, professions, gender, ethnicity, or other diversity
15
16 dimensions. Our selections of managers prioritised participants that expressed a positive outcome of
17
18 the programme. We thus shadowed less experienced managers as they tended to connect more
19
20 strongly to the organisational text of the programme. A question is whether the managers' authority
21
22 was challenged because they were inexperienced (and therefore in need of a simple organisational
23
24 text to authorise their practice) or because they ventriloquised the unitarist text. Another question –
25
26 in relation to Marie's case – could be if the doctors did not connect to her communication because
27
28 she was heading the secretaries and not the doctors. The doctors' lack of connectivity to Marie
29
30 could be interpreted as professionals protecting their own jurisdictions (Abbott 1988) more so as
31
32 research has demonstrated the gendered nature of much of leadership and managerial practice
33
34 (Ashcraft & Muhr, 2018; Muhr, 2011), it is relevant to note that the managers we shadowed are all
35
36 women. An analysis of authorisation that pays particular attention to diversity would clearly deepen
37
38 the discussion. In general, further research could investigate the role of a range of texts in
39
40 authorising different managers.
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46 47 48 *Implications for the design of MLD programmes*

49
50 The analysis has possible implications for the future design of MLDPs. As contemporary
51
52 organisations tend to be dependent upon collaboration, networks, self-management and professional
53
54 communities, it is to be expected that leadership authority will inevitably depend on the ability to
55
56 draw from a range of different and sometimes competing organisational texts to balance the
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1 multiple needs and rationalities characteristic of polyphonic organisations (Iedema et al. 2004),
2 which was illustrated in Hanne's case. As authority is relational and depends on recognition leaders
3 in polyphonic organisations need to understand that interlocutors may recognise different
4 organisational texts as sources of authority. We thus propose that the design of MLDPs should be
5 informed by discussions of the following questions: If authority presupposes a commonly
6 recognised articulation of the organisation, i.e. an authoritative text, and the increasingly polyphonic
7 tendencies of modern organisations must be recognised, how can authority relations be understood
8 and leaders supported in developing them? How can authority be practiced and developed under
9 polyphonic conditions?
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25 We believe that the answers to these questions can build on knowledge regarding how managers in
26 polyphonic organisations actually manage the incommensurate, ambiguous and potentially
27 contradictory dimensions of their positions. Iedema et al. (2004) have an instructive analysis of how
28 a doctor-manager practices heteroglossia, which is a context-regarding talk attuned to the discourses
29 populating the organisation. Heteroglossia, they assert, enables managers to keep conflicting
30 agendas in play across a range of settings as, 'it realizes a deeply embodied sensitivity to the
31 ongoing swirl of organisational currents, countercurrents, and undercurrents' (29). We imagine
32 MLDPs cultivating such a sensitivity and aiming for the development of a heteroglossic managerial
33 practice. If nothing else it would be more attractive than the unimaginative idea of the tight
34 couplings between overall strategies and daily operations in the unitarist organisation. Future
35 research may explore the links between such sensitivity-cultivating MLDPs and practice.
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51 **Conclusions**

52 Drawing on the CCO perspective and particularly the concepts of text and authority this article has
53 extended the critical literature on the relationship between MLD and leadership practice. Processual
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1
2 and relational notions of text and authority have enabled us to develop a novel way of linking
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4 MLDPs and leadership. Our analysis illustrated how the specific (unitarist) text authored in an
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6 MLDP, based on the assumption of one shared organisation, was presented in leadership practices
7
8 as the managers under study attempted to authorise their leadership accordingly. However, although
9
10 the managers clearly ventriloquised and identified with the MLD text, the analysis demonstrated
11
12 that this text was not recognised by their collaborators, causing the managers to be unsuccessful in
13
14 amplifying the connectivity of their communication. In effect, by offering only a unitarist
15
16 organisational text, MLDP text rendered the managers unauthorised in practice, as they had to
17
18 operate under polyphonic conditions.
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Appendix

Managers	Sources of authorisation	Managers experiencing lack of connectivity
Hanne	Performance (a history of accomplishments, an ability to get things done, to achieve things).	No
	A willingness to suspend hierarchy and take part in the operations of the unit.	No
	Loyalty to the local organisational unit and its interest.	No
	Knowledge about general treatment and specific patients.	No
Jane	Rules and standards	No
	Observations of level of cleaning	No
	Rule-breaking	No
	Private favours	No
Christine	Solution-oriented	No
	Professionalism of care	No
	Reciprocity	No

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Marianne	Standards	Partly
	Formal hierarchy	Yes
Sarah	Organisational rules	Yes
	Organisational structure/hierarchy	Yes
Marie	Formal hierarchical position	Yes
	Official strategy of the Region/local department	Yes
	Backup by closest leader	Partly
	Steering-technologies (like operational target management) and steering goals	Yes

Appendix 1

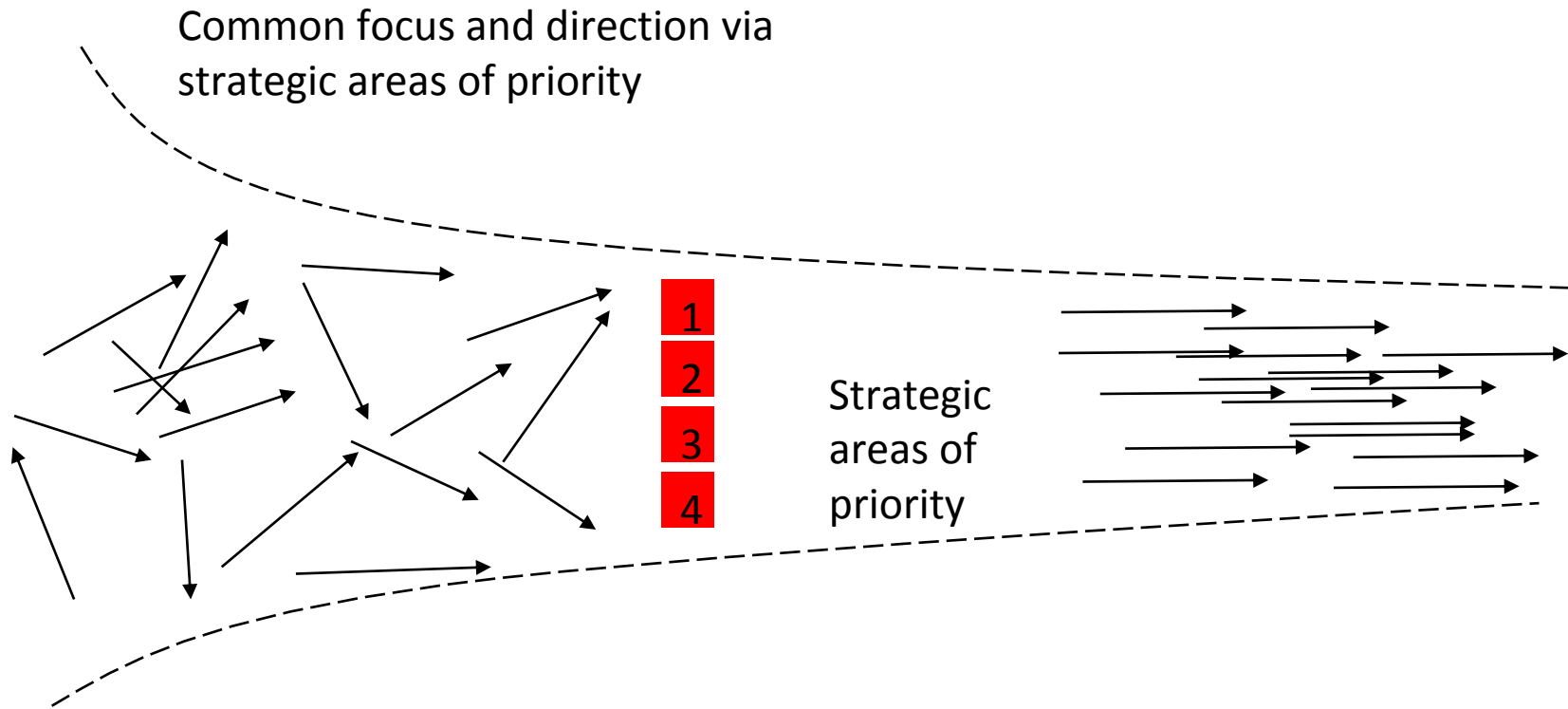


Figure 1. Slide from the Management and leadership development programme on strategic areas of priority (own translation)

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Leadership pipeline – 4 basic points

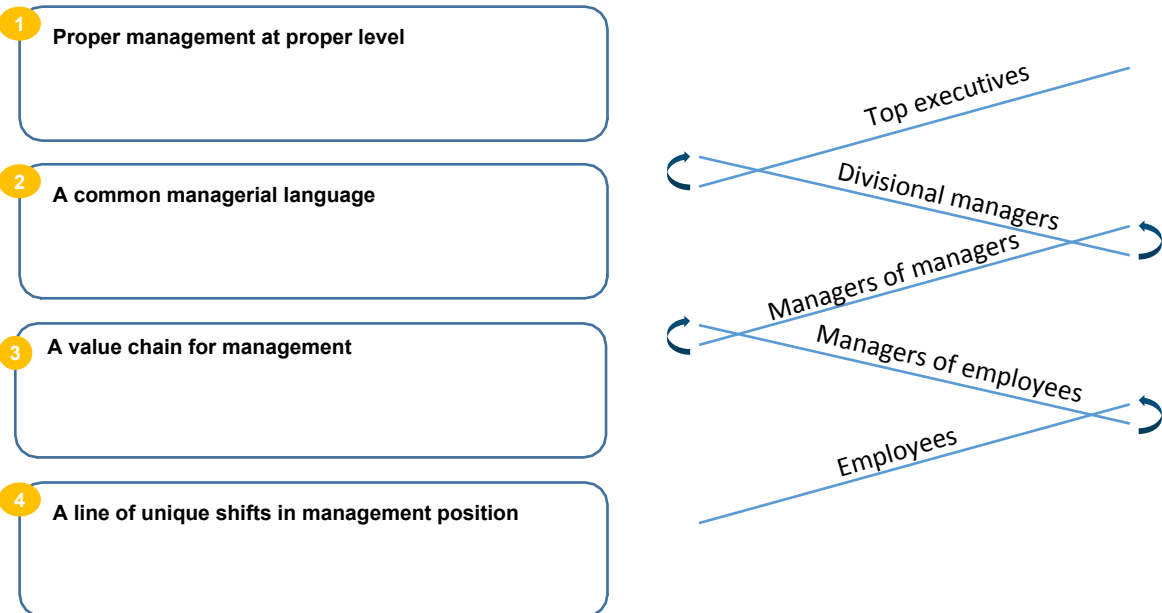


Figure 2 Slide presenting the leadership pipeline model (own translation)