How leadership behaviours impact employee engagement - a case study approach

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How Leadership Behaviours impact Employee Engagement - A Case Study Approach

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Candidate Declaration

I hereby declare that:

1. I have not been enrolled for another award of the University, or other academic or professional organisation, whilst undertaking my research degree.
2. None of the material contained in the thesis has been used in any other submission for an academic award.
3. I am aware of and understand the University's policy on plagiarism and certify that this thesis is my own work. The use of all published or other sources of material consulted have been properly and fully acknowledged.
4. The work undertaken towards the thesis has been conducted in accordance with the SHU Principles of Integrity in Research and the SHU Research Ethics Policy.
5. The word count of the thesis is 68.328.

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Abstract

The chemical and engineering industry, amongst other industries, is increasingly facing the shortfalls of experienced talent. Organisations need to react and empower leaders to attract and more importantly to retain talented employees. As a result, organisations put more focus and greater attention on employee engagement.

The level of employee satisfaction with a manager’s leadership style is decisive for the engagement level of employees. An employee’s engagement levels represent not only a sustainable competitive advantage, and consequently high levels of employee engagement lead to higher productivity levels.

Based on a grounded theory research methodology, this study aims to provide an understanding of the leadership styles and leadership behaviours which contribute to the higher levels of employee engagement at Linde Plc. – the case study organisation used for this research.

Data collection was carried out using semi-structured interviews with 17 business leaders reporting on their own experiences throughout their leadership careers at Linde Plc.

The study analysed how leadership behaviour and certain leadership practices have a positive impact on employee engagement.

The findings of this study indicate that a leader's understanding of employee engagement, a leader's personality and background as well as specific leadership practices have a positive effect on employee engagement. Furthermore, the research identified that a leader's focus on talent management activities drives employee engagement in a positive way.

Based on the findings, and as a contribution to practice, the research study presents and discusses six recommendations for the case study organisation in order to increase the levels of employee engagement.

The recommendations of practices can be applied to practices in a broader audience and other industries through further contextual research and analysis.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Significance of the Research

Various industry sectors, including the chemical and engineering industry, are increasingly facing the shortfalls of experienced talent. In order to cope with this challenge, organisations need to empower leaders to attract and more importantly to retain talented employees. This situation has led to a greater attention on employee engagement (Carasco-Saul et al., 2015; Christensen Hughes and Rog, 2008; Rothwell, 2002; Tarique and Schuler, 2010).
An employee’s company tenure, motivation at the workplace and engagement are very reliant on the work environment and the personal relationship with one’s line manager (Christensen Hughes and Rog, 2008; Gibbons, 2006). In many cases employees who are terminating their work relationship with a company are not leaving the company, they are leaving their manager (Tims et al., 2011). The satisfaction with a manager’s leadership style is decisive for the engagement level of employees. Employee engagement levels represent not only a sustainable competitive advantage but also high levels of employee engagement lead to higher productivity levels. Consequently, in most of the cases higher productivity levels lead to higher business results (Macey and Schneider, 2008; Sarti, 2014).
At Linde Plc. an employee survey is conducted every two years since 2010. The survey includes four questions which determine the engagement level of teams, departments and entire regions. Consequently, the survey provides very valuable data for the company, especially in regards to employee engagement.
In addition, line manager trainings are part of Linde Plc's corporate university programme. Studies indicate that there is a link between leader's leadership styles and the engagement levels of employees (Carasco-Saul et al., 2015; Shuck and Herd, 2012; Wefald et al., 2011; Wiley, 2010b). However, little has been done in the past to link these two components – leadership style and engagement level – together. In addition, there seems to be a scarcity of existing

knowledge of which leadership behaviour or leadership practice seems to have the most positive effect on the level of employee engagement within a team.
In fact, research has identified a further requirement to investigate the link between effective leadership behaviours and its effects on employee engagement (Howell, 2017; Stoyanova and Iliev, 2017; Yıldız et al., 2016).
The upcoming study will address this gap. Therefore, the purpose of this research is to find out which leadership practice and leadership behaviour trigger the highest levels of employee engagement at Linde Plc. In the context of this study, employee engagement refers to engagement as a level of employee commitment in general. It does not refer to a specific employee behaviour which demonstrates high engagement. The results of the research will enable the Talent Management teams within Linde Plc. to customize existing leadership programmes accordingly.
In order to build on a competitive advantage for Linde Plc. it is highly important to find out which leadership practices and leadership behaviours have the most positive effect on employee engagement. In 2015, Carasco-Saul et al. investigated multiple studies in order to find out the relationship between leadership and engagement. However, these studies have only been done using secondary data. No primary data research was conducted.
Therefore, there is currently no specific data available which would help Linde Plc. to get an understanding of which leadership practices and leadership behaviours motivate the employees and lead to high employee engagement levels. The researcher chose to conduct semi-structured interviews with 17 national and international line managers from Linde who are either first line managers, second line managers, middle managers or executives. All 17 interviewed line managers had high or very high engagement scores in the employee engagement surveys conducted in the past.

1.2 Research Objective and Research Question

The research aims to address multiple objectives. The main objective of the research is to identify the leadership qualities, leadership practices and leadership behaviours that have the most positive effect on employee engagement in theory and within Linde Plc. In other words, the outcome of the research should provide an understanding of those leadership practices and leadership behaviours that tend to entail the highest degree of employee engagement at Linde Plc. Therefore, the study aims to get a realistic view on the leadership practices and leadership behaviours within Linde Plc. by conducting semi-structured interviews with leaders of highly-engaged teams. In order to build on a competitive advantage for Linde Plc. it is highly important to find out which leadership practices and leadership behaviours have the most positive effect on employee engagement.

An additional objective of this research is to review the existing literature on leadership and engagement in general, leadership styles, leadership behaviours and employee engagement. In addition, the relationship between leaders leadership practice, leadership behaviour and employee engagement shall be theoretically examined. The objective of the theoretical analysis is to gain an understanding of a possible causal relationship between leadership qualities, leadership practices and leadership behaviours and employee engagement.

Gaining in-house research data on the possible causal link between leadership behaviours, leadership practices and engagement levels will be the baseline for targeting existing leadership programmes and for establishing new leadership programmes at Linde Plc.

The output of this research will be used to validate the existing leadership programmes at Linde Plc. in order to address and teach the leadership practices and behaviours which tend to have the most positive effect on employee engagement. By doing this, Linde Plc. will ensure to equip leaders with the tools and techniques to embrace the leadership qualities, leadership practices and leadership behaviours which bring about the most-motivated and most-productive employees within their teams. Employees who feel a high degree of engagement are more effective and support the organisation to achieve higher business results to a higher degree than employees who work for organisations with lower levels of employee engagement (Carasco-Saul et al., 2015; Shuck and Herd, 2012; Wiley, 2010a). This is the reason why the researcher decided against interviewing leaders with less engaged teams. Because in the researchers mind the potential output of those interviews would not provide insights into effective leadership practices and leadership behaviours. As a result, the potential interview output would not generate insights for the identified research question.

Formulating the research question is an essential part in any management or academic research. However, one needs to respect and consider that the research question is not a precast hypothesis. Moreover, the research question is an attention or interest factor in order to be sensible to the overall research topic, without losing the ability to be open to new, emerging concepts (Truschkat et al., 2005).

In order to address the research objectives and in line with the study regulations, a first academic literature review was undertaken before the actual data collection took place. The review of the relevant literature entailed the formulation of the following original research question (RQ1):

> Original RQ1:
>
> Which leadership style or leadership behaviours have a positive effect on employee engagement?

Conducting the very first interviews and further research have led to the formulation of the first supplementary research question as well as the second supplementary research question:

> Supplementary RQ1:
>
> Which leadership qualities and practices have a positive effect on employee engagement?
>
> Supplementary RQ2:
>
> How do we gain an understanding of causal relationships between leadership qualities, leadership practices, leadership behaviours and employee engagement?

1.3 Research Methodology and Research Setting

The researcher's view of the world has led to the conclusion of using grounded theory as the underlying philosophical stance of this particular research (Gill and Johnson, 2010; Locke, 2000). In grounded theory, new theories should emerge from empirical material as well as the analysis of the gathered research material. In other words, the theories or the gathered data should be "grounded" in the empirical material (Flick, 2014).

Furthermore, the decision was taken by the researcher to conduct an inductive research approach for this study. Specifically, the inductive research approach by Strauss and Corbin (2015) to grounded theory was used for this research. This variation of grounded theory has been used multiple times in management and business research due to the flexibility in its approach (Corbin and Strauss, 2015).

In regards to the research setting the researcher decided to follow a case study approach for this research. Case studies allow very detailed and in-depth investigations into a real-life situation by delimiting the research area to a small number of units, a particular organisation or setting (Farquhar, 2012; Fulton et al., 2013). In business research, a case study refers to a particular organisation, setting or situation (Fulton et al., 2013). It has proven to have many advantages by investigating a phenomenon within its real location, organisation or industry (Easton, 2010; Verschuren, 2003).

The case study company used for this research was Linde Plc. Linde Plc. is a global gas and engineering company with more than 80,000 employees, which work in over 100 countries all over the world. The researcher herself is employed at the case study company and was therefore able to gain easy access to the interview respondents. The entire qualitative data collection took place between autumn 2017 and winter 2018. The author decided specifically to undertake the research in one organisation because the limited time undertaking a part-time DBA study allowed her to reduce the scope of the research to one organisation. In addition, being an employee of the case study organisation made access to the research participants uncomplicated and simple. The research data was collected using semi-structured interviews. All interviews were conducted in English, although German is the native language of the researcher as well as of some of the research participants. Nevertheless, the author decided to use the English language since she speaks English fluently and the research participants felt comfortable to do the interview in English.

At the same time as conducting the research interviews, the researcher engaged in intensive data analysis after the first interviews had been conducted. This approach allowed the researcher to explore emerging themes in more detail in later interviews. The process of conducting and analysing interviews was done until the author reached the point of data saturation. The researcher coded the interview transcripts in order to engage in the data and to identify emerging themes and categories. The coding was done using the computer-based software MAXQDA. The software allowed the researcher to work with the data in a more structured way. Furthermore, the researcher felt more at ease to keep track of the enormous amount of interview data.

In addition, the researcher wrote memos while conducting and analysing the interviews. The memo-writing allowed the researcher to reflect and record thoughts, ideas as well as additional information that came to mind while working with the data. Especially, towards the end of the data analysis the researcher found it beneficial to recap her own notes and reflect upon them. Based on the identified findings, the researcher proposes recommendations for the case study company. The intention of the researcher is to use the research findings by implementing the identified recommendations.

A detailed description of the research methodology, the research setting as well as the research approach is described in chapter 3 starting on page 52.

1.4 Personal Research Interest

Engaging in writing a doctoral thesis has been a dream of the author since a long time. Ever since the author decided to engage in Business studies for her Bachelor's and Master's degree, the dream to continue her educational studies with a doctorate was present.

There are three points that have to be mentioned in regards to the personal research interest. The first point to acknowledge is the personal interest of the research topic to the author. Leadership, leadership styles, leadership practices, leadership behaviour as well as employee engagement are important aspects of the author’s daily work and business. Leading the Talent Management & Development department of the Linde Engineering division of Linde Plc., the re-

searcher is seeing in her day-to-day business which positive and negative impact leaders could have on their teams.
A second reason to undertake this study is to allow the researcher the possibility to make progress in the research area in order to become a known expert in leadership behaviours, leadership practices and employee engagement at Linde Plc as well as in the industry.
Furthermore, the author will benefit personally from the research outcome for her own leadership career. Motivating and engaging her team members is of utmost importance in her day-to-day actions and interactions with her team members.

1.5 Structure of the Thesis

This thesis is divided into six main chapters:

Chapter One presents the significance of the research as well as the research objective and research questions. The research methodology and the research setting are briefly explained. The researcher's interest and role are discussed in this first chapter as well.

Chapter Two contains the literature review conducted for this study. The chapter begins with a short introduction explaining the researcher's decision to divide this chapter into two main parts: the background theory and the focal theory. The background theory presented in the first part of the chapter has been part of the early stages of the researcher's grounded theory approach, mainly but not fully done prior to the actual data collection. The literature review discussed in the focal part of this chapter has been conducted during and after the data analysis by the researcher.

Chapter Three provides an overview of the philosophical position of the researcher with epistemological and ontological considerations. The research design explained in this chapter reflects the researcher's decision to use the grounded theory methodology by Corbin and Strauss (2015). Furthermore, this chapter includes discussions about the research setting, research ethics, the empirical research approach as well as the analytical research process.

Chapter Four presents and discusses the research findings based on the research respondent's perspective. The four emerging themes in regards to the research objectives are explained and discussed in detail.

Chapter Five provides the detailed recommendations for the case study organisation based on the emerging themes presented in the previous chapter. The recommendations are compared with the existing literature.

Chapter Six is the last chapter of the thesis. It includes a personal reflection of the researcher on the research journey and her personal development throughout this entire research project. Furthermore, the chapter includes a summary of the research findings and it highlights the contribution made to business practice and knowledge. In addition, the chapter includes an analysis of the quality of the grounded theory based on Corbin and Strauss's (2015) identified checkpoints to assess the methodological consistency as well as quality and applicability. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the limitations and recommendations for further research.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

Within grounded theory research the usage of extant literature has been a divisive and problematic issue since the origins of grounded theory (Dunne, 2011). Since the first publication of *"The Discovery of Grounded Theory"*, there is a big debate on how research students should use extant literature relevant to their specific research topic (Bryant and Charmaz, 2007). The issue is not whether the literature review should be done at all. There is no doubt about that. Moreover, the issue is rather *when* and *how extensive* the literature review should be conducted (Cutcliffe, 2000; McGhee et al., 2007). A literature review, which arrises from the emerging grounded theory, is important to academic honesty and in order to show how the research study builds up and contributes to existing knowledge in research and practice (Stern, 2007).

The author of this study has decided to engage in an early high-level literature review before starting the data gathering process. This decision was based on the very detailed research on the grounded theory approach as well as a review on how other researchers have addressed and solved this issue. The early literature review enabled the author of this study to identify gaps as well as the work that had been done in the past in the chosen field of research. Further, the early literature review started to inform the research question. The researcher named this part of the literature review *Background Theory*.

At the later part of the data gathering and data analysis period the author of this study has engaged in a detailed literature review of the chosen field of study. During this phase of the literature the research question was finalised. This part of the literature review is called *Focal Theory*.

The relevant areas for the literature review have been visualised in Figure 1.

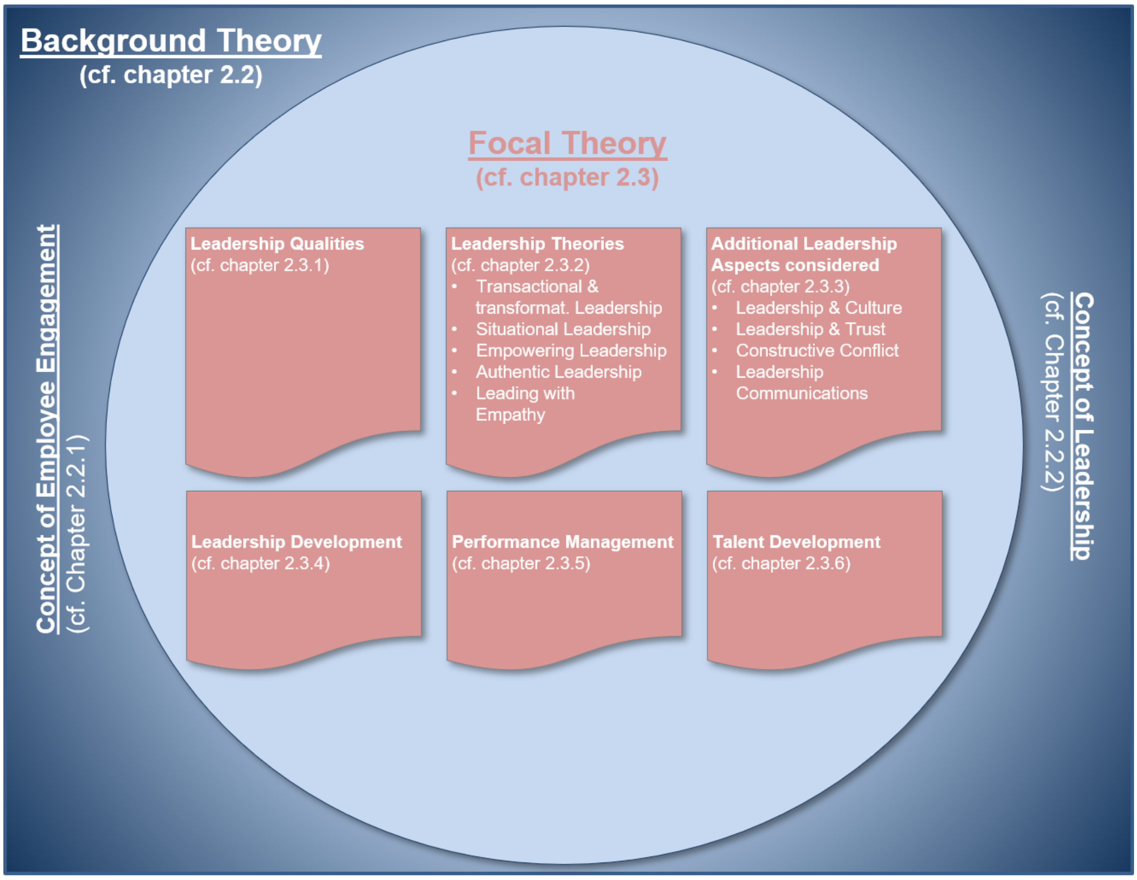

FIGURE 1: RELEVANT AREAS FOR LITERATURE REVIEW (OWN ILLUSTRATION)

The following chapter starts with the background theory. Broadly, this includes the literature review of employee engagement and leadership. Then, the chapter reviews the literature regarding the topics that emerged through the data analysis phase. Particularly, the chapter reviews the literature in regards to specific leadership qualities and theories, leadership development, performance management as well as people development. The chapter concludes with a summary and conclusion.

2.2 Background Theory

In line with the methodological approach of this study as well as addressing the research question, this section starts with the review of the background theory applicable for this study. The background theory review has been part of the early stages of the researcher's grounded theory approach, mainly but not fully

done prior to the actual data collection. General theory, which the author of this study considered to be relevant for the conceptualisation of the research, is discussed in the background theory chapter. The literature review included in the background theory started to inform the research question. The overall research objective was an important aspect during the early stages of the literature review because it provided clarity for the researcher that scarcity exits in the literature about the leadership practices which lead to highly engaged teams in the chemical industry. The research objective and research question have been previously discussed in section 1.3. Using a grounded theory approach approach limited the researchers possibilities to engage completely into the existing literature on the chosen research topic. The grounded theory research approach will be described in detail in section 3.3.2 starting on page 62.
The section starts to explore the existing theories of employee engagement, influence factors on employee engagement as well as criticism of employee engagement. The second part of the background theory review is addressing the concept of leadership by taking a close look at the history and definitions of leadership as well as the social exchange theory which highlights the close link between leadership and employee engagement.

2.2.1 Concept of Employee Engagement

The talents, discretionary efforts and knowledge of employees are more and more seen by companies as a competitive advantage. Therefore, employee engagement has become important again in recent years (Dalal et al., 2012). It is one aspect of talent management which touches every part of an organisation, yet the importance is often underestimated (Arnold, 2018). In spite of the relevance, there is no consistent definition on employee engagement (Saks and Gruman, 2014). This is due to the fact that the concept of employee engagement has a relatively short history and a considerable part of the research has been based on well-being and burnout theories (Rich et al., 2010). There are many overlapping definitions of employee engagement. Therefore, a consistently used definition of employee engagement does not exist (Macey and Schneider, 2008). However, the majority of academics and practitioners agree that willingness to perform as well as emotional commitment at work are essential aspects of employee engagement (Arnold, 2018). In other words, employee engagement is the emotional commitment an employee has towards the organisation that he or she works for and the organisation's goals. Further, it can be regarded as a multidimensional concept of motivation which is consistent with positive organisational psychology. This emotional obligation implies that engaged employees care about their work and their company (Jeung, 2011; Wiley, 2010a). As a concept, employee engagement has often been interchangeably used for motivation, commitment, satisfaction and involvement by both practitioners and academic researchers (Macey and Schneider, 2008).

In the literature, four research areas are identified in the field of engagement: work engagement, burnout engagement, personal engagement and employee engagement (Simpson, 2009). However, this study focuses only on employee engagement. Further, terms such as work engagement, personal engagement and employee engagement are often muddled in the literature (Attridge, 2009). Bruce Rich describes employee engagement as

> *"... a multidimensional motivational concept reflecting the simultaneous investment of an individual's physical, cognitive, and emotional energy in active, full work performance"* (Rich et al., 2010, p. 619).

Another view on employee engagement is by Schaufeli et al. (2002) who define employee engagement as

> *"... positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind characterised by vigour, dedication, and absorption"* (Schaufeli et al., 2002, p. 74).

In this regards vigour is viewed as the eagerness to put effort in one's job. Dedication is seen as the significant involvement in one's work with pride and enthusiasm. Furthermore, absorption is absolute immersion on the job (Schaufeli et al., 2002).

For the purpose of this research the definition of employee engagement by Gibbons (2006) is used. Gibbons defines employee engagement as

> *"... a heightened emotional and intellectual connection that an employee has for his job, organisation, manager, or coworkers that, in turn, influences him to apply additional discretionary effort at his work" (*Gibbons, 2006, p. 5).

The literature has identified three behavioural outcomes of employee engagement:

1. **Say**: the employee promotes the organisation to colleagues and others and refers positively to potential future employees and customers;
2. **Stay**: the employee has a strong desire to remain working in the organisation, despite having possibilities to work somewhere else;
3. **Strive**: the employee commits additional effort and time for the organisation when necessary (Baumruk, 2006; Heger, 2007).

In addition, high levels of employee engagement can be a sustainable competitive advantage (Macey and Schneider, 2008). Studies show that high employee engagement has a positive effect on the business performance, quality, customer loyalty, employee motivation, turnover, safety as well as an increased productivity and therefore higher business results (Salanova et al., 2005; Zhang et al., 2014).

The findings of this research regarding the views on employee engagement and how leaders could engage their teams will be discussed in section 4.3 starting on page 113.

2.2.1.1 History of Employee Engagement

For more than two centuries there has been a debate about labour's role in the capitalist production. One paradigm sees labour as input in the production, the second paradigm sees labour as "special" because human beings with needs and wishes are involved. These so called social and human relations had already preoccupied Karl Marx and Adam Smith, two of the founders and drivers of political economy. In managing labour, employers have to decide between (a) controlling labour by driving cost down or (b) driving a work enrichment strategy based on employee engagement (Bryson, 2017).

More recently, in 1990, William A. Kahn wrote the article *"Psychological Conditions of Personal Engagement and Disengagement at Work"* about studies conducted to learn about conditions at work in which employees personally engage and disengage (Arnold, 2018; Kahn, 1990). This had been a major milestone in the thinking and studying of people at work (Schneider et al., 2018). Since then, especially HR professionals place high importance to improve the levels of employee engagement in the workplace (Arnold, 2018). In 2010, Kahn wrote in more detail what he meant when a person is engaged at work:

> *"We believe that people are engaged when we see them working hard, putting in effort, staying involved. They truly show up for work. The remain focused on what they are doing. They strive to move their work ahead"* (Kahn, 2010, p. 21).

William A. Kahn's qualitative research on engagement focuses mainly on the relationship between employees and their work, with a strong focus on how the employees are engaged cognitively, emotionally and physically with their daily work. Through this he found out how focused and energised employees had been in their jobs (Schneider et al., 2018). William A. Kahn's research focuses on the psychological conditions of individual engagement and disengagement of people at work (Bridger, 2014). About a decade after William A. Kahn first studied engagement, he interviewed employees to identify and understand what it meant to the people to be engaged at work, the quantitative research on engagement begun (Saks and Gruman, 2014; Schneider et al., 2018).

Harter et al. (2002) define employee engagement as the involvement and the satisfaction of the individual in addition to the individual's enthusiasm for the work. They studied employee engagement using data gathered by Gallup to study satisfaction of employees at work. They found out that employee engagement has a positive influence on business results such as productivity, profit, customer satisfaction and retention (Harter et al., 2002). This approach to employee engagement is referred to as satisfaction-engagement approach. Harter et al. (2003) identified four key elements inevitable in engaged organisation. First, clarity of expectations from the line manager as well as access to the required resources. Secondly, employees must have the feeling that they are contributing to the organisation's overall goals and strategic direction. A third element influencing employee engagement according to Harter et al. (2003) is the employees sense of belonging and that employee's feel their opinion is heard especially in decision-making processes. The fourth and last element is the employee's positive sense in regards to personal development and career opportunities in their respected organisations (Harter et al., 2003).

A different view on employee engagement is from the area of burnout research. In this research employee engagement is viewed as the opposite of burnout. Maslach and Leiter (1997) claim that burnout is more likely when there is a significant discrepancy between the nature of the job itself and the nature of the person who does the specific job (Leiter and Maslach, 1997). In this regard engagement is seen as the opposite aspect or dimension of burnout (Maslach et al., 2001). However, critiques state that burnout and employee engagement are two separate constructs (Schaufeli et al., 2002).
Year after year the interest in employee engagement and its importance for the performance of businesses is increasing constantly (Bridger, 2014). A big influence on the increased importance of employee engagement is played by Gallup, an American-based leading market- and opinion research centre. Gallup studied what is unique and special about high-performing businesses. This research led to the introduction of a 12-question survey intended to measure engagement (Bridger, 2014). Further, in the early 2000s, a range of academic survey measures of engagement emerged. The most commonly used measure and mostly used engagement questionnaire is the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) (Saks and Gruman, 2014; Schaufeli et al., 2006; Schaufeli and Bakker, 2004; Schneider et al., 2018). There have been other measures which focus on employee engagement but the UWES is still the most commonly used engagement questionnaire nowadays (Adler, 2012; Schneider et al., 2018).

2.2.1.2 Influence Factors on Employee Engagement

Several studies highlight the factors which have an influence on employee engagement (Rich et al., 2010; Saks and Gruman, 2014; Shuck and Herd, 2012). The author of this study would like to highlight a study conducted by Gallup. Gallup highlights the fact that work is often viewed as a source of frustration by the employees. The reason for this frustration is most often the line manager of the employee, who influences, consciously or unconsciously, the immediate work environment of an employee and a team the most. 75% of the reasons employees resign from their job are due to their current line manager. This is very alarming. Employees who are highly motivated and engaged become unmotivated and unengaged when they are faced with a working environment which does not focus on their expectations and their needs. This is an immediate result of bad and ineffective leadership. In other words, how long an employee stays with a company, how engaged and how motivated an employee is, is very much dependant on the disciplinary line manager (Nink, 2014). Culture and leadership drive employee engagement more than anything else. Moreover, leaders are viewed to be responsible for employee engagement (Arnold, 2018).

The employee's satisfaction with the line manager's leadership style has a significant influence on the emotional commitment and engagement of the employee. Further, employees who are treated as partners on an equal footing are more likely to be highly engaged as those employees who are treated as subordinates. Very effective managers listen to their employees and involve them in decision-making processes. Employees need to have the feeling that their voice is heard regardless of job title or hierarchical level in the organisation. Autonomous decision making responsibility of the employees is one important element of ongoing engagement (Bryson, 2017; Nink, 2014). William Kahn described this as Psychological Meaningfulness, a feeling and emotion that an employee has when one feels useful, worthwhile and valued at work. In the study Kahn conducted he found out that employees experienced more likely Psychological Meaningfulness doing work autonomously as well as doing challenging and creative tasks (Kahn, 1990).

Further, employees who feel that their performance is recognised and who get feedback regularly are more likely to be highly engaged than those employees who do not get recognition, feedback as well as praise for a job well done. Furthermore, employees who are highly engaged have a line manager who is interested in them as a person and who is actively contributing to their further development (Nink, 2014). Furthermore, meaningful interaction in addition to those with the line manager, interactions with colleagues, in some way touch the emotional lives of employees positively as well. This results in increased engagement levels of the employees as well (Kahn, 1990).

2.2.1.3 Criticism of Employee Engagement

The construct of employee engagement has been criticised in the literature (Jeung, 2011). It has been stated that employee engagement as a concept is nothing more than a buzzword or a fad. Critics argue that the concept of employee engagement fails to meet many of the criteria which are linked to positive organisational practice, such as being valid, theoretical as well as unique (Wefald and Downey, 2009). Further, critical literature state that the construct of employee engagement is not much different to job-related approaches and attitudes and therefore, it is critically discussed whether employee engagement contributes additional knowledge beyond the pre-existing knowledge and concepts such as job satisfaction, job involvement as well as organisational commitment (Harrison et al., 2006; Newman et al., 2011). However, research has evidently shown that employee engagement is an apparent construct which is worthwhile to further explore. Elements of organisational commitment as well as Organisational Citizenship Behaviour OCB are linked to employee engagement (Robinson et al., 2004). On the contrary, Saks (2006) sees organisational commitment entirely different to employee engagement due to the fact that the commitment is about individual's attachment and individual's attitude towards the organisation and their individual jobs. Furthermore, Saks (2006) states "engagement is not an attitude; it is the degree to which an individual is attentive and absorbed in the performance of their roles" (Saks, 2006, p. 602). Employee engagement is about how an individual sees their role (Maslach et al., 2001). It is about the involvement of oneself in the role, physically, emotionally as well as in a cognitive way (May et al., 2004; Rich et al., 2010). However, employee engagement is different from job satisfaction, job involvement as well as intrinsic motivation due to the fact that engagement demonstrates and reflects an intrinsic drive and not a feeling of being completely satisfied or satiated (Schaufeli and Bakker, 2004). Employee engagement is a construct which explains job performance and satisfaction whereas other constructs such as job involvement and intrinsic motivation fail to indicate explanations for job-related performance (Rich et al., 2010).

2.2.2 Concept of Leadership

2.2.2.1 Definition and History of Leadership

"Leadership is one of the most observed and least understood phenomena on earth" (Burns, 1978, p. 19). It is not defined by competencies or individual qualities, moreover leadership explains what leaders do when they are faced with a challenging situation. The leadership aspect comes to the surface when leaders react to these challenges (Pedler, 2010). There is a wealth of different leadership definitions, leadership theories and concepts available in the literature and it does not seem possible to find one definition which is commonly used and accepted (Bass and Stogdill, 1990; Daft, 2015). The tremendous amount of literature about leadership, leadership theories, leadership concepts as well as leadership best practice is overwhelming. Scholars differ significantly in describing concepts and using leadership terminology.

One of the most common understanding of leadership includes four central aspects:

1. Leadership is a process
2. which entails influence,
3. takes place within a group context or setting and
4. comprises achieving goals and objectives that mirror a common vision (Hunt, 1991; Northouse, 2018).

Studies about leadership started in the 1930's (Hunt, 1991). These first studies focused on the identification of the personality traits characterized for a successful and effective leader. However, critical voices emerged quickly on the validity of the identifications which led to the development of the behavioural and style approaches of leadership. The new development shifted the focus away from the characteristics of a leader towards the behaviour and style of a leader (Stogdill and Coons, 1957). The behavioural studies only focused on the identification of the best possible way of leading people. Nevertheless, situational factors which influence the effectiveness of leaders have not been taken into consideration (Mullins, 2010). As a result, the situational and contingency theories of leadership emerged which focused on the context instead of the one best approach to lead people (House, 1971).

The theories of transformational and transactional leadership style emerged from the constant search for a comprehensive and inclusive leadership approach (Bass and Stogdill, 1990; Burns, 1979). The transformational and transactional leadership styles are perceived as one of the leading approaches in leadership studies (Dulewicz and Higgs, 2005; Vera and Crossan, 2004). Another leadership paradigm is organic leadership in which numerous leaders can be present within a team (Mehra et al., 2006). Organic leadership is defined as a dynamic influence process among individuals within one group in which all have the same objectives. This influence process involves peers, lateral, upward and downward hierarchical influence (Pearce et al., 2008). The most effective leaders switch between the different leadership styles and judge a situation quickly to adapt the style. This ensures to maximize the influence a manager has on his or her team (Avolio et al., 2009). Some people are born to be leaders. If someone is a born leader he or she will have these main traits: intelligence, self-confidence, determination, sociability and integrity. However, not everybody with those traits becomes a leader (Northouse, 2018).
Throughout the last decade the theme of leadership has changed from a goal-oriented influence, telling employees what and when to do a certain task, to a more involving approach (Hickman, 2009; Stotz, 2007). This theme of leadership indicates that the leader not only affects the employees reporting to the leader. Moreover, the leader is equally affected by his or her subordinates (Northouse, 2018). The motivational and inspirational aspect of leadership as described by Northouse emphasise the importance of the fact that the leader and his or her team members together work towards a common goal. It is the role of each leader to inspire employees to come up with new and better ideas and to go the extra mile (Kouzes and Posner, 2012).

2.2.2.2 Social Exchange Theory and Employee Engagement

There are many factors which have an effect on the development of employee engagement within teams and organisations. Leadership is one of the factors with the most influence (Mester et al., 2003; Shuck and Herd, 2012). In other

words, leadership or the social exchange between line managers and their employees is one of the most influential and biggest factors having an influence and impact on employee engagement (Attridge, 2009; Macey and Schneider, 2008; Zhang et al., 2014). A leadership style, the pattern of behaviour displayed by a line manager towards their employees, is influential and very critical in terms of employee engagement (Attridge, 2009; Zhang et al., 2014). An employee's relationship with their line manager is one of the strongest influence factors in regards to employee engagement and therefore a critical element in effectively managing employees (Baumruk, 2006; Liu et al., 2003; Zhang et al., 2014). The leader or line manager has intentionally influence over a group of people or individual team members and upon their actions and behaviours (Yukl, 1998).
The social exchange between employees and their line managers is important in any company and a key aspect when it comes to employee engagement and relationship management in organisations. The initial development of the Social Exchange Theory was supported and further developed by Homans (1961), Blau (1964) and Emerson (1972). Homans viewed the behaviour that each party exhibits in an interaction as an exchange which is based on payoffs. This perspective had been criticised to undermine the interaction of institutional forces, social processes as well as existing structures (Higgins, 1961; Sawyer, 2001). Peter Blau (1964) took the study further and included the aspect of the social context, in which exchanges usually occur, in the analysis (Blau, 1964). His view is that power distribution and inequality are taking place in any social exchange in which one party is in control of a resource. As a consequence, the other party is under an obligation towards the party in control of the resource (Blau, 1964). On the contrary, Richard Emerson contends a social exchange includes shared dependence whereby the power of one party resides in the other person's dependence. Further, it is assumed that a balanced relationship would be one in which the power of one party is equal to the power of the other party (Emerson, 1972). A fundamental principle of the social exchange theory is that a relationship between people in general as well as between employees and their line manager grow and develop over time in a loyal, trusting and mutual commitment (Cropanzano and Mitchell, 2005). In addition, the relationship between an employee and their line manager is influenced by the motion and dynamics

of the social exchange in their specific organisation (Saks, 2006).
Saks (2006) has linked the social exchange theory with employee engagement. He states that employees pay back to their organisation by their individual level of engagement at work. This results in employees choosing to engage themselves to a certain extent and by responding to the changing resources they get from their organisations. For that reason, the extent of physical, emotional and cognitive resources that an employee is willing to demonstrate on the job is dependent on the socio-emotional and economic resources provided by the organisation (Saks, 2006).
Furthermore, employee engagement is a relationship between the employee and the employer or line manager. The actions of the employer lead to a reaction of the employee. This results in varying levels of employee engagement depending on the organisational resources available to the employee (Robinson et al., 2004; Saks, 2006). Leaders have an effect on the behaviours and attitudes of their employees. In line with this, "leaders make the difference between work as a mundane grind, devoid of meaning and purpose, and work as an enriching and fulfilling experience that provides an essential source of identity which infuses all aspects of being" (Bailey, 2014, p. 149).

2.3 Focal Theory

The literature review presented in the focal theory section includes the literature reviews based on the emerging themes from the data analysis phase. This literature review has been conducted during and after the data analysis by the researcher. Whereas the literature review presented in the background theory section was done mainly prior to and during the data collection period of the research project. During this phase of the literature review, the research question was finalised.
Figure 2 illustrates the relevant areas for the literature review of the focal theory.

FIGURE 2: FOCAL THEORY LITERATURE REVIEW (OWN ILLUSTRATION)

This section starts with presenting the main literature in regards to the personality and backgrounds of leaders and continues to take a close look at leadership theories with particular focus on transformational, situational, empowering and authentic leadership.

The second part of this chapter takes a look at the following topics in regards to leadership: culture, trust, constructive conflict and communication. Further, the literature review puts attention on leadership development and performance management. Finally, literature about talent development is presented.

The chapter concludes with a summary of the main features and arguments presented in this study as well as a justification for this study.

2.3.1 Leadership Qualities

The level of engagement, motivation and wellbeing of employees is highly dependent on the leaders of an organisation. In this regard, leaders have to be equipped with the right mindset and tools to become the best and most effective leaders possible (Yavuz, 2020). But the question remains, what makes great leaders?

It depends on the circumstances in which a leader is, the colleagues and most importantly who you are yourself in regards to what one can offer as a leader. Further, it depends on what is important to the person as well as how the world is seen by the leader (Pedler, 2010). Leaders are born and made at the same time; this is the argumentation of Conger (2004). According to him, there are many factors which play a significant role in the extent to which an individual employee eventually becomes a leader. Amongst those factors are the family environment as well as the genetic inclination and predisposition. Further, he sees the experiences at school, job experiences, experiences with one's own line managers as well as training and organisational motivators as influencing factors (Conger, 2004). This is in line with the view of Grout and Fisher (2007) who believe that the character as well as the personality, not just of leaders, but of people in general, are developed through early childhood experiences, influences and various opportunities. Especially, the influence of one's educational background, the influence of one's family background as well as through role models have an effect on how someone will lead others in future (Grout and Fisher, 2007).

On the contrary, there are scholars who say that leaders are not born, moreover, "they are created" (Dobrzanska, 2005, p. 22).

In addition, Whetstone (2003) has found out what comprises great leaders by taking a look at the characteristics of leaders from different perspectives. Some characteristics he has identified are honesty, respect, fairness, courage, hard work and trustworthiness. According to Whetstone, these are the qualities of good leaders (Whetstone, 2003). In addition, developing others, working collaboratively as well as integrity and honesty have been identified as the most important competencies of leaders (Gassman and Gleason, 2011).

Furthermore, Bennis (2007) sees resilience as well as "adaptive capacity" (p, 5) as the two most important qualities a leader can have (Bennis, 2007). Jackson (2011) on the other hand has the understanding that an effective leader needs to first of all know him- or herself very well (Jackson, 2011). Because a leader can only have an influence on others if he or she believes in what (s)he is doing. All of this starts with oneself, with learning about oneself. A leader needs to know who (s)he is, what drives him or her as well as to understand one's own values, beliefs, aspirations and purpose (Pedler, 2010). As Bennis and Nanus

(2003) have rightly acknowledged, one of the first tasks of any leader is to create and define a purpose and direction. The purpose of an individual person is essential. However, in organisations and teams a common purpose which is shared and ideally created by the entire team is much more powerful (Bennis and Nanus, 2003; Pedler, 2010).

In addition, the ability and competence to inspire, motivate and to lead are additional qualities which make an effective leader (Butler, 1999). A study conducted in 2012 is coming to a similar conclusion. This study asked individuals which personal traits, attributes and characteristics they are looking for in leaders they would gladly like to follow. This research concluded that employees are willing to follow leaders who are honest, forward-looking, competent and inspiring. The same study has been conducted in 1987, 1995, 2002 and 2007. Surprisingly, the four mentioned characteristics have always been top of the list of in total 20 characteristics a leader should have (Kouzes and Posner, 2012).

Furthermore, Allio (2009) has identified five ideas which in his view summarise how a leader needs to be nowadays. His ideas are the following: (1) good leaders need to be competent, ethical and need to have a good character; (2) today, there is not one way to lead successfully, moreover, leaders need to take into consideration regular changing situations which require multiple ways of leading; (3) collaboration is essential especially during decision making and conflict management; (4) leaders need to be adaptable to changing organisational demands and environments; and (5) leaders are shaped by their experiences. Leaders can learn and study leadership principles and theories, however, the own experiences shape a leader (Allio, 2009).

Further, Bennis (2007) has as well identified competencies of exemplary and excellent leaders. He highlighted in total six competencies a leader should strive for: (1) they should create a mission; (2) they should motivate their team members to join and follow that mission; (3) they should create an adaptable and flexible social structure for their team members; (4) they should generate an environment of openness and trust; (5) they should support the development of other leaders and (6) they should focus on getting results (Bennis, 2007).

Pace (2012) has conducted a study about which leadership qualities organisations are looking for when they are hiring young professionals on a leadership

track. Those were: discipline and self-motivation, learning agility, effective communication, ability to adapt and self-awareness (Pace, 2012).
However, in general, about 30% do not demonstrate the leadership qualities which are highlighted to be important (Bernthal and Wellins, 2006).
In order to conclude this section one can say that successful leaders have a variety of aspects and qualities in common. First, any successful leader has followers (Maccoby, 2007). Further, successful leaders have a common goal and vision and are either formally or informally developed (Bennis, 2007).
The findings of this research relating to the leadership qualities are described in section 4.4 starting on page 119.

2.3.2 Leadership Theories

A leader's style to lead others is shaped by the current and past environment of the leader and how much of an influence this environment had on the leader (Pedler, 2010).
Leadership styles vary, and there is a broad spectrum of leadership styles and leadership behaviour discussed in the academic literature (Avery, 2004; Zhang et al., 2014). Employees see good leadership as a relationship with high interaction based on support and trust between the employees and their leader. On the contrary, weak leadership is characterised by a lack of interaction, support and trust (Dienesch, 1986).
Past research has aimed to get a better understanding of what contributes to an effective leader (Eagly et al., 2003; Eagly, 2007; Holt et al., 2009). In order to reach organisational goals, motivation as well as enabling others have evolved as leadership traits which have a positive influence on the performance of employees (Caldwell and Dixon, 2010; House et al., 2004; Rosette and Tost, 2010).
During the last four decades extensive research has been conducted on leadership, varying approaches to leadership which are based on skills (Mumford et al., 2000), traits (Johnson et al., 1998; Zaccaro, 2007), behaviours (Davis and Luthans, 1979) as well as situations (Hersey and Blanchard, 1988).
As a consequence, the literature has identified different leadership types such

as transactional leadership, transformational leadership, authentic leadership, situational leadership, servant leadership, laissez-faire leadership, autocratic leadership (Northouse, 2018). These various styles of leadership overlap in certain areas, this study focuses its literature review on transactional and transformational leadership, situational leadership, empowering leadership, authentic leadership as well as leading with empathy due to its emergence in the data analysis phase of this research project.

Transactional and Transformational Leadership

Transactional and transformational leadership emerged in the late 1970s. James MacGregor Burns' transforming leadership has been one of the first approaches to end the unilateral or unidirectional leadership concepts (Burns, 1978). Burns, a political sociologist, distinguished leadership from control and power. In his view, follower's needs and leadership are inevitably intertwined. Burns developed a comprehensive and detailed theory which explains the behavioural differences between political leaders. He did this by using the terms "transactional" and "transformational". In contrary to transactional leadership which focuses on the exchange between followers and leader, the transformational leadership is a process of connection and engagement which increases the level of moral and motivation in both followers and leaders. In other words, it has an emphasis of the charismatic elements of any leader (Bass and Riggio, 2006; Northouse, 2018). Burns himself defined transactional leaders as people who put an emphasis on work standards and have task-oriented goals. Further, transactional leaders lead within the organisational boundaries and constraints and they comply to the existing regulations and rules. Power, control and authority are embedded in this behaviour due to the fact that organisational goals are achieved by disciplining or rewarding followers in line of an interaction. This reward-based interaction was intended to improve and influence the performance of the employees (Burns, 1978). Transformational leadership is associated with caring and nurturing. Typically, transformational leaders show consideration and develop their employees in order for them to achieve their greatest potential (Avolio, 1999; Burns, 1978; Burns, 1978; Zhu et al., 2009). Further, they have the courage to challenge the status quo and they take personal risks

to achieve the goals (Youssef-Morgan and Bockorny, 2013). Transactional leadership purely focuses on the exchange between followers and leaders; transformational leadership on the other hand puts the leader-follower relationship to another level which is sensitive to moral and motivation (Zhu et al., 2009).
In the mid 1980s, Bass used and applied the concept of transformational leadership to organisations and further expanded and refined it. Bass identified four transformational leadership factors: idealised influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individual consideration (Bass, 1985). Scholars believe that when leaders demonstrate the four leadership factors of transformational leadership altogether, the level of employee engagement is likely to increase (Raja, 2012).

Situational Leadership

A model of leadership developed in the late 1960s by Paul Hersey and Ken Blanchard that argues there is no best or perfect way to lead. In addition, Hersey and Blanchard claim that the most-effective leadership style highly depends on the nature of the situation, which includes both the people and the tasks involved. The leader should adapt to both the task and the employees and in particular to the developmental needs of the employees (Jeanes, 2019).
Hersey and Blanchard identified four leadership styles which relate to the relational and task dimensions of the situation. Special attention is paid to the readiness (commitment and ability) of the employees or as they called them 'followers' (ibid.).
The situational leadership model believes that leadership behaviour consists of a supportive and a directive dimension. The supportive leadership dimension means behaviours that are relationship oriented, for example facilitating interaction, sharing information as well as engaging in two-way communication. The directive leadership dimension on the other hand speaks about task-oriented behaviours such as one-way communication, setting timelines and goals as well as supervision. These two dimensions of the situational leadership style can be combined depending on the employee's developmental needs. As such, the leader needs to acknowledge the employee's levels of commitment and competence and match the leadership style accordingly (Northouse, 2018). The lead-

ership styles differentiate four developmental or maturity levels. These levels shift from supportive to directive behaviour. In particular, they include the following leadership behaviours: directing, coaching, supporting and delegating. The delegating style is most appropriate for employees who are the most capable, able and committed. The other three styles are most suitable for employees who are relatively less confident and able (Jeanes, 2019).

Over time, employees decrease and increase their maturity level in their current roles. Leaders need to acknowledge this and need to adapt their leadership style in regards to the developmental stage of the employee in order to demonstrate most-effective leadership behaviour. The model by Hersey and Blanchard is easy to apply and therefore quite appealing. However, the model does not explain it's own theoretical basis and premises. Further, the model does not distinguish between group leadership situations and one-on-one leadership. It does not provide any guidance or explanations on whether effective leaders should match their particular leadership style to the developmental level of individual team members or to the level of the entire team (Northouse, 2018).

Empowering Leadership

Empowering leadership is an active leadership style which provides employees with autonomy and has the goal to develop employees to be their own leaders (Ahearne et al., 2005; Vecchio et al., 2010). It derived from the socio-structural perspective and it is considered an effective way to release hidden human resources (Raub and Robert, 2010; Zhang and Bartol, 2010). This leadership style leaves a great degree of responsibility and decision making to the employees (Frischer, 2006). In other words, empowering leadership extends a leaders behaviour which involves employees in decision-making processes and through this decentralises power (Carless, 2004). Further, leaders are required to provide their employees with autonomy over their own tasks in order to show confidence in the employee's performance (Ahearne et al., 2005). In general, an empowering leadership style is closely linked to positive organisational and individual results, for example, a higher degree of perceived fairness (Keller and Dansereau, 1995), a higher degree of sharing knowledge as well as team efficiency (Srivastava et al., 2006), more creativity (Zhang and Bartol, 2010), as well as a better overall performance of the employee (Raub and Robert, 2010). Further, this leadership style develops the self-management skills of the employees by encouraging them to act independently (Pearce and Sims Jr., 2002; Vecchio et al., 2010). Employees, who are empowered, take control and ownership of their area of responsibility and through this are a driver to maximise the performance of their organisation (Bandura, 1986; Block, 1993).

Critics of an empowering leadership style argue that it could be seen as providing no or little guidance and as avoiding to take responsibility (Sosik et al., 2002). In addition, negative consequences of this leadership style are being more and more discussed (Wong and Giessner, 2018). For example, it could happen that leaders who encourage their employees to act independently could weaken the employee's connection and relatedness towards their own organisation and as a result it could decrease the employee's corporate citizenship behaviour (van Dijke et al., 2012). Furthermore, studies have showed that an empowering leadership style could lead to task uncertainty as well as to a poorer degree of performance in case a leader's monitoring or supervision is low (Wong and Giessner, 2018).

Authentic Leadership

Authenticity goes back to ancient Greek philosophy and is mirrored by the Greek aphorism "know thyself" which is explained in the Temple of Apollo at Delphi (White et al., 1959). Scholars are advocating the need for leaders to be their true selves, to be authentic. Further, they argue that authenticity of leaders is one of the demands of today's businesses (Leroy et al., 2012; Liedtka, 2008). A leadership style that is authentic and personal allows leaders to get close to their people and thereby support them to become more effective (Caldwell and Dixon, 2010). Authentic leadership is defined as "a pattern of leader behavior that draws upon and promotes both positive psychological capacities and a positive ethical climate, to foster greater self-awareness, an internalized moral perspective, balanced processing of information, and relational transparency on the part of leaders working with followers, fostering positive self-development" (Walumbwa et al., 2008, p. 94).

Further, authentic leaders show an awareness about their own values, beliefs, motives and are not shy to share them with others and to be open about them towards others (Wang et al., 2014). Leaders who are known to be authentic demonstrate that they are reliable, genuine and that they care about their employees strengths in order to create a working environment that is engaging (Avolio and Gardner, 2005; Rahimnia and Sharifirad, 2015). Furthermore, authentic leaders have an influence on their teams through passing on the responsibility to each team member in order for them to feel in charge to deliver the identified goals and outcomes together (George, 2003). In addition, leaders who lead authentically make use of their own personal resources in order to complement the available resources of their employees and through this ensuring an increased team performance. In other words, authentic leaders may choose to be a personal resource to the team members in order to increase their performance (Braun and Nieberle, 2017; Qu et al., 2019). Further, authentic leaders are known to create an environment of trust and to generate more trust in their employees as well as increased organisational commitment (Braun et al., 2013; Hirst et al., 2016). However, it is important to note that the impact an authentic leader has on his or her team members highly depends on the types of values the leader him- or herself holds (Qu et al., 2019).

Leading with Empathy

In recent years, empathy has been discussed broadly in business and leadership literature and it is very appropriate and required in order to comply with ethical business practices (Holt and Marques, 2012). *"Empathy and social skills involve one's ability to perceive others' emotions, feelings, and needs and help others to regulate their emotions to achieve desirable goals"* (Polychroniou, 2009, p. 345).

Empathy as well as ethical behaviour are critical for every leader and it requires continued effort (Mostovicz et al., 2009). In addition, leaders should apply empathy together with sensitivity, commitment, solidarity, physical presence as well as concern. And this is especially important during or after crises because leaders have the obligation to care for their team members (Ciulla, 2010).

A study by Schilling (2010) looks at great and famous leaders of the twentieth century, amongst them leaders such as Martin Luther King Jr., John F. Kennedy, Nelson Mandela, Mahatma Gandhi, and Mikhail Gorbachev. The study concluded, that although those leaders were often described as charismatic leaders, it was their levels of commitment, empathy, trustworthiness, emotional intelligence and motivation that made them the remarkable and outstanding leaders they are nowadays known to have been (Schilling, 2010). Further, empathy is seen as important because the behaviours leaders need to have in order to make an impact are not only the hard facts. Moreover, it is the ability to demonstrate behaviours such as influence, inspiration, interest in others, as well as teamwork. It is the soft facts and not the hard facts that make leaders successful. The most effective leader who will survive is not the one who is the toughest; it is the leader who is the nicest. Likewise, it is the soft behaviour of leaders which lead to hard facts and results in business (McDonald, 2008).

Donaldson (2008) supports McDonald's view as he underlines that there is a need for business leaders to expand their understanding of the constantly changing economical and societal environment. In his view, effective leaders in business need to be able to deal with increasing uncertainty, they need to be empathetic, they need to be open and prepared to admit mistakes and failures (Donaldson, 2008).

Unfortunately, social skills as well as empathy are not trained and developed well enough within organisations. This leads to leadership behaviour which does not focus on emotional intelligence and social skills. As a result, employees are more dissatisfied and less engaged (Karnes, 2009). In Chalmers Mill's (2010) view, leaders who demonstrate that they are creating an empowering and future oriented climate, create a well-performing, motivated and healthy workforce. Thereby, they have an impact on increased business results (Chalmers Mill, 2010).

A leader's focus on empathy can be trained, however, it takes some time. Organisations have identified the need to up-skill their leaders in order for them to engage in empathy-based leadership practices. This is an important aspect because empathy has become an essential leadership practice in the 21st century (Holt and Marques, 2012).

Leadership theories point out that leadership styles are changing completely at a very quick pace in order to balance out and to keep up with decreased organisational hierarchies and the globalisation (Jogulu, 2010). The previous paragraphs included the literature review of those leadership practices which had been identified during the data analysis phase of this research. Specifically, this section included the following leadership theories: transactional & transformational leadership, situational leadership, empowering leadership, authentic leadership as well as leading with empathy.

The research findings regarding leadership theories and leadership styles are presented in section 4.5 starting on page 126.

2.3.3 Additional Leadership Aspects Considered

The previous section contains the literature review of leadership theories relevant for this research according to the author of this research study. The following section takes a look at additional themes which have a very close connection to leadership theory but cannot be properly assigned to the leadership theories reviewed in the previous section. Specifically, in this section the following topics are considered: culture, trust, constructive conflict and communication.

Leadership and Culture

In times of increased speed of information exchange and globalisation, a lot of research was conducted in regards to different cultures (Hofstede et al., 2002).

Geert Hofstede has been the pioneer in researching national cultures within management disciplines. His publications in the 1980s have identified four, later five, culture dimensions: power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism vs. collectivism, masculinity vs. femininity, long-term orientation vs. short-term orientation (McSweeney, 2002). In addition to taking into consideration Hofstede's culture dimensions, multinational companies with an increased number of cross-cultural teams face many advantages as well as disadvantages (Cunha and Da Cunha, 2001). For example, conducting performance appraisals in a cross-cultural setting can potentially lead to misunderstandings between line manager and employee. As a result, cross-cultural misunderstandings often

lead to conflict and thus to lower employee morale and decreased performance of the team (Milliman et al., 2002). Organisations need more and more leaders that have the tools and skills available to lead successfully across geographic borders in order to manage, change and integrate organisational cultures and teams successfully as well as to manage cross-cultural misunderstanding or conflict (Milliman et al., 2002; Szumal, 2014).
Holt et al. (2009) conducted a study to explore whether people in different national settings and cultures have different views and expectations in regards to their leaders. Employees of 19 different backgrounds expressed their views. The study showed that the perception of the ideal leaders differs in regards to the respondents' age as well as their cultural and educational background but it does not differ in regards to gender (Holt et al., 2009). In general, a leader's effectiveness is determined partly by their impact on the behaviours of people around them as well as how often a leader uses specific leadership strategies or practices with those people. A study conducted by Szumal (2014) took a look at whether the impact of leaders change across different countries. The results of this study outline that regardless of the country in which a leader is based, the leaders consistently identify a constructive impact as important to increase individual performance of their teams. Constructive impact in this study refers to the focus of achievement, self-actualisation, encouraging and affiliative (Szumal, 2014).

Leadership and Trust

Leadership through trust is an element and antecedent for employee engagement at work. A feeling of trust mediates the connection and exchange between leadership behaviour and employee engagement (Macey and Schneider, 2008). Leaders who trust their employees to do their job well is a critical element in driving the value of their organisation and in supporting team members to perform at their very best (Caldwell and Dixon, 2010). An important aspect of emotional and social intelligence is the ability of leaders to resonate with their team members (Boyatzis et al., 2005; Goleman, 2007). Leaders who empower their team members to become their best see trust as an important foundation (Boyatzis et al., 2005).

Trust is widely recognised as an essential aspect of leadership in interpersonal as well as organisational relationships because trust empowers others. Through this, the leader signals that s(he) believes in the skills and abilities of others (Solomon and Flores, 2003). It is widely known that employees are more prepared to take risks when they have the feeling and they know that they can trust the leaders of their organisation and thereby this organisations achieve better outcomes and solutions (Baucus et al., 2008; Mayer et al., 1995).
According to Child and Rodrigues (2004) business leaders are viewed to be the least-trusted employee groups in today's society. Although it is known that trust is what it takes to hold (business) relationships together (Child and Rodrigues, 2004). In order to empower the workforce of organisations as well as to encourage extra ordinary behaviour of employees it is essential to build an organisation based on trust (Chan et al., 2008). Trust is often described as an attitude (McAllister, 1995), as a belief (Kramer, 1999) and as willingness (Mayer et al., 1995) and within an organisational context it is best described as a behaviour of people (Caldwell et al., 2009; Caldwell and Clapham, 2003). Trust is demonstrated by people's actions and by reflecting the values and beliefs of that person as well as someone's commitment towards something (Schein, 2016; Senge, 1990). Hosmer (1995) describes trust as a complex and critical element of the interaction between ethics and the overall economy (Hosmer, 1995). Further, Caldwell et al. (2009, p. 117) have defined trust as "the relinquishing of one's personal choice or power in the expectant hope that another party will honour the elements of the social contract between the parties."
Other scholars have talked about authentic trust which in their minds requires the element of betrayal in a (business) relationship (Solomon and Flores, 2003). The risk someone is taking when trusting others is described by Mayer et al. (1995) as essential because people have to take risks if they would like to get into a trusting relationship. Rebuilding this trust in case it has been destroyed needs care, time and healing as well as acknowledging imperfections to others (Caldwell and Dixon, 2010). Each leader has to be willing to forgive a violation of a trustful relationship in order to again gain the trust of the person who has violated that trustful business relationship (Caldwell et al., 2009).
If leaders create a culture of trust, they have a competitive advantage in regards

to other leadership models because they empower others and they enfold unknown capabilities as well as overcome distrust more easily (Bennis and Nanus, 2003; Kouzes and Posner, 1999).

Constructive Conflict

Conflicts at the workplace have been studied for more than 100 years since the early 1900s. Conflicts are dynamic processes in line with a wide range of organisational behaviours (Runde and Flanagan, 2006). These dynamic processes are shown in disagreement between or within at least two social parties about behaviours, goals, interest as well as needs. Such a conflict could be for example when one party has views, values, attitudes which are sticking out and are perceived to be restrictive and exclusive by the other party. In addition, conflicts could also arise when different behavioural preferences of the involved parties are seen in regards to joined actions (Afzalur Rahim, 2002).

Further, conflicts have been explained in multiple ways in order to understand the fundamental dynamics such as interpersonal, intra-personal as well as inter- and intra-organisational conflicts. More explicitly, it has been mainly studied in regards to the various types of conflict, how conflict is handled as well as how destructive or constructive conflict has an impact on organisational and business outcomes (van de Vliert and Euwema, 1994). Capobianco et al. (2005) describe conflict as a dynamic process which has a start, a middle and an end. At the beginning of a conflict, behaviours, decisions, thoughts as well as ideas could potentially lead to two forms of conflict: a functional or a dysfunctional form of conflict (Capobianco et al., 2005). Furthermore, it is important to acknowledge that there is a major difference between conflict management and conflict resolution when addressing a conflict (Afzalur Rahim, 2002; Robbins, 1978). In organisations, conflict management involves taking care of conflicts using effective strategies on a macro-level. Whereas conflict resolution aims to terminate or eliminate the conflict. In order to increase organisational effectiveness, these two strategies support the constructive element of a conflict (Afzalur Rahim, 2002).

In order for conflicts to be perceived as constructive, the outcome and the results need to be rewarding and positive to all or almost all persons involved in the conflict (Jordan and Troth, 2002). Conflicts can be a source for a positive and healthy relationship when addressing it constructively. However, this is not the case when using conflict avoidance strategies (Lencioni, 2002). Furthermore, constructive conflict on an individual level can foster employee well-being as well as the development of a trustful relationship (Afzalur Rahim, 2002; Tjosvold, 2008). In addition, teams, especially on top management level, who are able to manage and solve their conflicts in a cooperative way can maintain organisational advantages. Furthermore, if there is an open discussion environment and employees feel that they can express their opinions openly, organisation are more effective as well as more open to upcoming change (Jordan and Troth, 2002; Tjosvold, 2008). Jordan and Troth (2002) view that if constructive conflict is embedded in the company culture, the organisation tends to be more creative, has higher employee satisfaction and is quicker in responding to customer needs. In Lencioni's (2002) view, leaders need to be able to support their employees in developing coping strategies for handling conflicts themselves. The leaders need to be restrained when their teams engage into conflict. Moreover, the leaders should allow a natural resolution to the conflict. Even though this approach might be felt incorrect as the leader could think (s)he is not handling the situation well. However, teams that engage in constructive conflict "have lively, interesting meetings; extract and exploit the ideas of all team members; solve real problems quickly; minimise politics; put critical topics on the table for discussion" (Lencioni, 2002, p. 204). In addition, leaders need to create an environment which fosters collaboration, trust, safety and emotional intelligence in order to create a climate of positive and constructive conflict (Flanagan and Runde, 2009).

It is necessary and essential for leadership effectiveness to understand how to manage constructive conflict. Because leaders who are competent and able to manage conflict are expected to role model practices necessary to manage conflicts constructively (Runde and Flanagan, 2006; Schlaerth et al., 2013). Furthermore, constructive conflict management supports organisations to achieve an increased competitive advantage (Eisenhardt et al., 2009).

Leadership Communication

Very frequently communication is an area linked and associated to leadership (Ruben and Gigliotti, 2016). Looking at communication more broadly, it is a series of actions through which people use and create information in order to relate to one another and to the overall environment (Ruben and Stewart, 2019).

Further, social influence occurs through communication as well (Fairhurst and Putnam, 2004). In addition, leaders have the ability to shape the overall context of situations or events. Even though they might not be able to directly control them (Fairhurst, 2009). Often, leaders find themselves in uncertain situations and it is their task to influence how these uncertain situations are perceived by their team members (Fairhurst and Sarr, 1996).

A very important aspect in regards to leadership communication is sense-making. In particular, it is about how receivers of information interpret and give meaning to what gets communicated (Connaway et al., 2008). Through sense-making, people structure what they think is unknown and translate this into meaningful information and interpreting this information (Waterman, 1993; Weick, 1995). This is especially important for leaders and to understand the rationale behind a leader's actions and decisions (Fairhurst, 2009). Because it is through communication that a leader shares with the team what (s)he has made sense of. For a leader to be effective and successful in leadership communication (s)he needs to keep in mind the needs, wishes and requirements of the team members. All communication efforts of a leader are without effect, if they do not reach the team members (Ruben and Gigliotti, 2016).

Important to note, communication is not always verbal. Moreover, a leader transfers messages in a verbal and nonverbal way, as well as in a planned or planned manner. In addition, it is often the case that communication happens by chance in an informal rather than a formal way. This is what leaders need to keep in mind at all times (Ruben et al., 2016). Because it is the team who follows the leader who determines the outcome of effective leadership and leadership communication. Followership is inseparable to leadership because the outcome of effective leadership communication is not only defined by the leader. Moreover, it is defined be the team members; the followers (Ruben and Gigliotti, 2016).

Ruben and Gigliotti (2016, pp. 475) have summarised and highlighted eleven leadership communication principles and practices:

1. Leaders “cannot not communicate” (Watzlawick et al., 1968).
2. Leadership communication is a process that involves the negotiation of - rather than the transmission of - meaning.
3. Communication dynamics create a history that shapes and guides future influence efforts.
4. All leadership communication is intercultural.
5. Leadership communication always has both content and relational consequences.
6. Leadership functions occur in all social decision making.
7. Leadership opportunities are not something that one waits for; rather, they are situations leaders must create (Stone, 2015).
8. There is often a gap between what leaders know and intend, and how they behave and the impact of their actions.
9. If leaders want others to be committed to solutions, they need to engage those individuals in naming and framing the problem.
10. Initiating the learning process for the group builds stronger leader–follower collaboration than does simply describing the conclusion one has reached through their own learning process.
11. Leadership training and development efforts are subject to the same communication issues and challenges as leadership itself.

In conclusion, communication is known to be more than just a strategy or leadership instrument. Moreover, it is a view of the world, a sense of direction which puts its focus on understanding the social influence oneself has in a communication process (Ruben and Gigliotti, 2016). It is through the processing of information that a leader encourages others to take the appropriate actions (Mintzberg, 2011).

In addition, it is important for leaders to engage their employees through their style of communication. Nowadays, it is more important than even before that leaders communicate to their people not just the "what"; it is increasingly important for people to know the "why". In other words, leaders need to take the time and effort to openly communicate the reasons and rational behind information and through this creating trustful and open communication environments (Dolan, 2015).

At this stage, the researcher would like to point out that the following perspectives on leadership as well as aspects about leadership have consciously not been included in the previous sections:

- underrepresentation of women in leadership;
- critical feminist perspectives on leadership;
- race perspectives on leadership as well as
- sexual orientation.

In this case study, the interview sample of 17 leaders included 6 female leaders. During the analysis of the data no evidence emerged which would ask for an exploration of a possible underrepresentation of women in leadership. Further, critical feminist perspectives on leadership, race perspectives on leadership and sexual orientation did not emerge from the data analysis. Due to this fact, the researcher decided to exclude these perspectives in this study.

This section reviews the literature of the additional leadership aspects that came to the researcher's attention during the data analysis phase. Specifically, existing literature about the following topics was reviewed: leadership and culture, leadership and trust, constructive conflict as well as leadership communication. Further, it explains why certain perspectives on leadership have not been thematised. The findings relating to the presented literature review are presented in section 4.5 starting on page 126.

2.3.4 Leadership Development

Although there are many theories about leadership in general, theory about leadership development is not comprehensively available (Day et al., 2008).
Within the talent management and talent development framework of organisations, leaders need to be trained in order to pick the right people and develop

them to their fullest potential. For organisations, it is essential to hold a sustainable competitive advantage in the business through talent management and leadership development (Rothwell, 2012).

However, in the literature, there is a debate on whether leadership skills can be trained and learned or whether this is not possible. Some theorists claim that leadership is not learnable. Nevertheless, the majority of theorists argue differently and share the view that it is possible to learn leadership skills (Bass and Stogdill, 1990). Further, critics claim that there is disconnection between leadership theories and leadership development even though leadership theories should form and lay the basis for leadership development. Leadership development focuses on the development of skills and competencies required of a good leader (Hartley and Hinksman, 2003). Companies invest in leadership and people development in order to make their leaders and the entire organisation more effective (Beer et al., 2016).

In the past, scholars viewed leadership as mainly action-oriented and, therefore, had the assumption that leadership development or leadership training should focus on action and not on any theory (Bass and Stogdill, 1990). This attitude has changed over time. It is regarded as much more useful to link leadership development to leadership theories or underlying leadership concepts (Hartley and Hinksman, 2003).

The way in which leaders are developed varies. In its core there is the leader, the direct reports or the team of the leader and the overarching goal that they would like to achieve altogether (Bennis, 2007).

The focus of the majority of the literature regarding leadership development primarily focus on the behaviour, skills as well as personal characteristics of leaders (Schyns et al., 2011). However, leadership skills alone will not make a successful leader. In order to be a successful leader, it is important to develop the necessary leadership skills. Nevertheless, it is essential that the organisational culture, in which the leader is operating, supports good leadership as well as effective leaders (Caudron, 2002). In line with knowing the culture of an organisation, leaders should spend time first of all understanding oneself, what are the personal drivers and motivators before engaging in individual leadership development activities (Jackson, 2011).

Bernthal and Wellins (2006) acknowledged that special project assignments or other on-the-job development activities are most effective in regards to leadership development. However, still the most common leadership development activity are classical training formats (Bernthal and Wellins, 2006).
Mintzberg (2011) sees varying approaches to leadership development. Some approaches concentrate on on-the-job experiences whereas other approaches concentrate on the education of leaders through training or business school courses (Mintzberg, 2011).
A study conducted by Allen and Hartmann (2008) identified which leadership development activities and resources available developed the most successful leaders. Their finding was that development relationships were identified as the most-effective and beneficial leadership development activity (Allen and Hartman, 2008). This is in line with a study conducted in the '80s by Adler (1983) who found out the more employees perceive their line managers are competent and successful, the more likely it has been that they demonstrate the leadership style which they saw by their own line manager (Adler, 1983).
Further, Boehm and Staples (2006) examined what contributes to the development and advancement of successful leaders. They found out that it is not a specific training or development activity, moreover, it is a combination of facts such as the creation of a common vision for the team as well as "a reciprocal relationship" (Boehm and Staples, 2006, p. 77) with one's direct reports. Further, they identified that the mixture of formal and informal training and development activities is important for leadership development (Boehm and Staples, 2006).
It has been estimated that in 2015 for example, companies spent more than $356 billion on the development of their employees and leaders globally (Beer et al., 2016). This number shows the continuous importance of leadership development. However, training alone does not work if the context or the organisation, in which the learnings should be applied, make the application difficult. Therefore, it is important for organisations to focus on managerial processes and the organisational design before they spend huge amounts of money on leadership development. Leaders attending those leadership development programmes will make no difference in the long run, if the existing company culture

makes the application of the learnings for leaders difficult (Beer et al., 2016).
Further, Terrell and Rosenbusch (2013) conducted a study in order to find out which development activities are required for leaders to develop and to learn best. The study concluded that it is of utmost importance for leaders to develop the first-hand experience they have, coupled with their own cultural sensitivity and their ability to build up an own network and fostering relationships as well as the own eagerness to develop and learn. In other words, learning from experience is essential and key in regards to leadership development (Steven Terrell and Rosenbusch, 2013).
Through their day-to-day interactions with employees, leaders implement human resources practices and tools such as performance appraisals. Therefore, it is of utmost importance for all organisations to pay specific attention to successfully develop leaders to fulfil their leadership responsibilities as best as possible (Den Hartog and Boon, 2013).
The research findings relating to the reviewed literature about leadership development is discussed in section 4.6 starting on page 142.

2.3.5 Performance Management

Performance management is one of the central elements of human resources management which, broadly spoken, focuses on the processes as well as practices organisations use to motivate their employees (Doellgast and Marsden, 2019). Research about performance management started in the 1920s and increased significantly in the 1980s (DeNisi and Pritchard, 2006; Tweedie et al., 2019).
It is difficult finding one unique definition of performance management because it includes a broad variety of aspects and it is very depended on the organisation itself, its industry, its size as well as the organisation's culture and strategy (Ashdown, 2014).
One of the most frequent used definitions of performance management is by Armstrong and Baron (2000). They describe performance management as “a process that contributes to the effective management of individuals and teams

in order to achieve high levels of organizational performance" (p. 69). In this regard, performance management creates an understanding of what should be achieved, how it should be achieved and which development one needs. Further, Armstrong and Baron highlight performance management can only be effective, if it is viewed as part of an integrated people-management strategy (Armstrong and Baron, 2000).

From a classical perspective, performance is defined as a combination of ability, opportunity and motivation. Motivation in this context means the aspiration of an individual and it includes the wish to contribute strategically. Ability describes the overall capabilities of an employee. Lastly, opportunity refers to the individual's engagement to occupy or to reach a position of importance in the organisation (Collings and Mellahi, 2009).

The purpose and objective of performance management is to increase the levels of individual and organisational performance (Wigert and Harter, 2017).

Achieving those objectives are challenging, especially for multi-national companies who quite often develop performance management systems in the country of their headquarters. When those performance management systems are rolled-out in regional locations away from the headquarters, quite often the problems start (Budhwar et al., 2008). The concept of performance is considered to be multi-dimensional and "culture-bound" (Aycan, 2005; Rao, 2004). As a result, performance could be viewed and defined differently by managers and employees in different cultures. Organisations have to address this aspect by developing an approach to manage and evaluate performance which addresses the local context as well (Budhwar et al., 2008). A case study done by Doellgast and Marsden (2019) came to a similar conclusion: a trend towards more standardised and centralised performance management processes is visible. Precisely, the case study looked at four telecommunications in Europe and its performance management practices. The case study identified how collective bargaining institutions such as unions or works council have an influence on performance management practices. Firstly, those institutions restrict organisations in the use of "sanction-based" performance management practices. And secondly, those institutions increase the fairness and transparency of performance management systems (Doellgast and Marsden, 2019).

Further research on how performance management affects workers has been done by Tweedie et al. (2019). The research claims that workplace recognition as one part of the performance management process has a positive effect on employees' well-being.
Performance management as well as performance appraisals, which will be discussed in the next paragraph, are practices and policies which the Human Resources departments of organisations develop and which line managers need to implement in the organisation. As such, the line managers of organisations use these Human Resources tools in their day-to-day interaction with their team members. In other words, line managers play an integral part of using HR tools in the best possible way to influence team members' performance and attitudes positively (Den Hartog and Boon, 2013).

Performance Appraisal

Performance appraisal systems are an integral part of performance management and thus are amongst those human resource practices which are considered to be most important (Grund and Sliwka, 2009). They have a direct influence on employees within an organisation and are together with recruitment, development and training, important talent management practices (Glaister et al., 2018).
Research shows that for example about 80-90% of organisations in the United Kingdom and United States of America use appraisals to assess performance (Armstrong and Baron, 2005; Prowse and Prowse, 2009). Performance appraisals are evaluations of employees' performance which are connected and related to specific criteria as well as behaviours established by organisations. These appraisals usually take place as annual appraisal conversations between line manager and employee (Randell, 1994).
The documented use of performance appraisals goes back to the early 1800s (Prowse and Prowse, 2009). However, a more modern use of performance appraisals became known during World War I. At that time, the military started to identify those soldiers who lacked performance by using performance ratings. After World War II, performance appraisals become more popular in the industry sector and nonmilitary organisations. Further, in the 1960s and 1970s perfor-

mance appraisals developed into a tool to manage an organisations workforce using results-oriented approaches. In the 1990s, the performance appraisals started to connect individual performance to financial rewards (Prowse and Prowse, 2009; Wigert and Harter, 2017). These annual performance reviews use performance ratings as well as forced rankings in order to assess an employee's performance as well as the performance in comparison to the performance of team members (Wigert and Harter, 2017).

Critics of performance appraisals view that managers are often lacking objectivity when assessing the performance and providing a performance rating. Further, performance appraisers are often faced with a conscious or unconscious bias (Fletcher, 1999; Prowse and Prowse, 2009; Walker and Smither, 1999).

Research by Grund and Sliwka (2009) has explored the impact of performance appraisals on career prospects and pay for performance. Using a large German sample, the research found that the use of performance appraisals is often linked to promotion decisions and decisions about bonus payments to individual employees. In addition, the research found that the performance of women, older employees and employees with either very high or very low responsibilities was assessed less often (Grund and Sliwka, 2009).

Furthermore, a study by Iqbal et al. (2015) has addressed, amongst other factors, the unconscious bias in performance appraisals. In general, performance appraisals have the objective to improve the performance of employees. However, the effectiveness of performance appraisals is widely debated (Iqbal et al., 2015) because they are viewed to be ineffective and cause employee performance to decrease rather than increase (Latham et al., 2005). Performance appraisals are viewed to be effective when employees who get rated feel the appraisal to be useful (Giles and Mossholder, 1990). Three aspects should be considered to establish effective performance appraisals: purposefulness, fairness and accuracy. In this regard, purposefulness is answering the question why a performance appraisal is taking place. Fairness means the practices and set of rules that should be applied to ensure a correct performance appraisal. Accuracy describes the removal of biases and rating mistakes. As such, performance appraisal which are viewed to be purposeful, accurate and fair are considered to lead to positive reactions of employees in regards to employee satisfaction as well as organisational commitment (Iqbal et al., 2015).

Shifting Paradigm

Past research indicates that traditional performance management and performance appraisals often fail to contribute to employee satisfaction and by this, they fail to contribute to increased organisational effectiveness (Iqbal et al., 2015; Taylor et al., 1995).

The traditional performance management systems are not state of the art anymore. Since many years organisations, leaders and employees have practiced the traditional performance reviews without seeing clear improvements in the organisational as well as individual performance of an employee. In fact, they have not been able to set clear expectations, to foster a culture of continuous improvement as well as to inspire and encourage employees to perform at their individual best. Further, the often-seen bias in performance ratings, the lack of high quality and frequent feedback as well as the employees' unfavourable reactions to the overall performance appraisal process tends to demotive employees. In addition, line managers often have difficulties to use the same framework to review the performance of each employee which then often leads to uninspiring appraisal conversations between line manager and employee (Wigert and Harter, 2017). Especially, the often-used forced rankings in traditional performance management processes, in which some employees are rewarded and some are devalued due to organisational views on market and business performance as well as organisational rules, are viewed critically (Dundon and Rafferty, 2018).

These are some of the reasons for many large-scale companies to consider launching new approaches to performance management (Wigert and Harter, 2017).

Line managers are critical elements in terms of employee engagement in rewarding and recognising employees for a job well done (Breevaart et al., 2014; Christian et al., 2011; Macey and Schneider, 2008). Therefore, it is important for line managers to provide feedback and appreciation in an individualised and authentic manner in order to acknowledge an employee's individual strengths and to hold the employee accountable. In order for a performance appraisal to be effective, line managers should provide feedback in a continuous manner which is constructive and fair. Doing this, line managers ensure that the employee is actively involved and empowered in his or her own performance. This leads to employees knowing at all times during the performance cycle not only what is expected from them but also how their performance is assessed and evaluated (Wigert and Harter, 2017).

The research findings regarding performance management are presented in section 4.6.1 starting on page 142.

2.3.6 Talent Development

Talent development has many different definitions within organisational development. Those definitions vary by industry, by culture and country as well as by those people who practice it in daily business. Some people see talent development as a critical instrument to unleash an individual's potential. Others see it as an important instrument to increase organisational effectiveness, productivity and performance by ensuring a framework that enables learning and development. The goal is to maximise an individual's performance by supporting leaders to identify the right and most appropriate development activities and thereby to increase the business outcomes (Galagan et al., 2019). In other words, building an organisation's sustainable capability through talent is what makes talent development important (Day and O'Connor, 2017). Further, Day and O'Connor (2017) see the focus of talent development in the development of capabilities through organisational processes, systems, practices, tools as well as the organisational culture.

In order to understand the early developments of talent development one needs to reflect on the nature vs. nurture distinction. In this context, nature is concerned with an individual's capabilities which are mostly inherited genetically. For example, personality. Nurture on the other hand refers to all factors which drive the development of a talent or a specific capability. Those factors could be for example practice or training. A contemporary understanding of this distinction is that talent needs both – nature and nurture – in order to develop (Meyers et al., 2013).

In addition, it is important to note in which organisational environment talent development takes place. Because, the way how one company deals with talent management and talent development might be completely different to how another company develops its employees (Day and O'Connor, 2017). This is also the case for the various assessment tools and processes used by organisations to identify their talent (Barney, 1991; Collings and Mellahi, 2009).

Companies face different reasons for investing in talent development. On the one hand, there is the organisation which needs to make advantage of its own talent in order to stay successful, to deliver results and to stay competitive. On the other hand, employees have the need and desire to further develop in order to advance in their careers (Gagné and Deci, 2005; Ryan and Deci, 2000).

Furthermore, Day and O'Connor (2017, p. 5) have identified three reasons for investing in talent development:

1. identifying high-potential executives with a capacity for greater responsibility in the organization,
2. building a pipeline of talented leaders committed to carrying on the organization's mission and values,
3. developing a greater sense of shared commitment in executives across different geographic regions.

In order for organisations to get the best return on their investments it is important that the talent development activities are aligned and connected to the overall company strategy (Collings and Mellahi, 2009). Further, one of the main tasks of organisational talent development is to decide who should get further developed. A well-recognised approach to identify talent is to take a look at the employees who perform well in their current roles and who have the potential to reach further strategic roles which are of importance to the organisation's success (Cappelli and Keller, 2014). In addition, it involves a succession planning for key roles in the organisation. It is important to assess which person is best suitable for a certain position in order to secure the organisational effectiveness in the future (Meyers et al., 2013). Once a person is identified for a certain future position, a targeted talent development takes place. This specific development is based on the development needs which should be addressed in order for the potential successor to be able to perform in the future role as well as to develop the team member's potential (Day and O'Connor, 2017).

However, talent development does not only target those employees with a high potential and who are able to reach senior executive roles. Moreover, organisations need to invest in those employees who perform well but who might not necessarily be the next senior executives; those who are demonstrating to perform well and who engage with others to reach the best outcome for the organisation (Kehoe et al., 2017). It is quite common in organisations that incumbents are responsible to identify and develop at least one successor. In order for this to be successful, the Human Resources departments should provide the framework for individual leaders to be able to identify and develop a potential successor (Day and O'Connor, 2017).

Moreover, the leader is the first person to develop a team member. It is his or her task to develop competencies, capabilities and confidence amongst the team members in order to enable them to act and to further develop (Kouzes and Posner, 2012). Therefore, management and leadership development should always be an integral part of talent development in every organisation. Only if this is the case organisations can ensure that their leaders pay attention to the development of their team members (Day and O'Connor, 2017; Pedler, 2010).

Organisations as well as leaders who put a focus on people, leader and talent development as well as on succession planning have a bigger pipeline of leadership talent (Fulmer and Conger, 2004). Further, the entire process of talent development should be part of an integrated talent management approach which is based on and aligned to the overall company strategy. Only then, the talent development initiatives will provide a significant return on invest (Rotolo, 2013). On the contrary, critics view talent management and talent development offerings as mainly driven by external market and competition criteria rather than putting the individual employee and his or her development needs in the focus of the discussion (Dundon and Rafferty, 2018).

The research findings regarding talent development are presented in section 4.6.2 starting on page 151.

2.4 Summary and Conclusion

This chapter has provided an overview of the literature relevant to the research topic. The author of this research has decided to divide the chapter into two parts in order to take into account the literature review that has been done prior to the data gathering and data analysis as well as the review of the literature of the emerging themes of the data analysis. This comprehensive approach allowed the researcher to discuss the data collected in a structured way and enabled her to develop a pre-understanding of the relation between employee engagement and leadership practices.

The background theory which was mainly researched prior to the data gathering and data analysis provides a review of employee engagement, leadership and the relationship between employee engagement and leadership. Employee engagement is the emotional commitment an employee has towards the organisation. This emotional obligation implies that engaged employees care about their work and their company (Jeung, 2011; Wiley, 2010a). The social exchange between line managers and their employees is one of the most influential and biggest factors having an influence and impact on employee engagement (Attridge, 2009; Macey and Schneider, 2008; Zhang et al., 2014).

The focal theory presented a review of the literature of the emerging themes of the data analysis. Specific focus is on leadership theories and practices, as well as leadership development, performance management and talent development.

Especially, performance management and talent development are important instruments to increase organisational effectiveness, productivity and performance (Galagan et al., 2019). The image called "Relevant areas for literature review" on page 10 illustrates the relevant areas for the literature review of this thesis.

Throughout the entire research and especially during the research of the focal theory, the researcher cared about the balance between the depth and breadth of the existing and relevant literature.

The topics of leadership as well as engagement and the factors leading to highly-engaged teams have been discussed in detail over the recent years. Howev-

er, the literature presented in this chapter demonstrates that there is a requirement for further research with regard to the research problem of this thesis.
In the view of the researcher, specifically, the topic around which specific leadership practices lead to highly-engaged teams in a particular organisation have not been researched in the past.
The author sees a limitation in this regard and chose to use the organisation in which she is working as a case in order to research which specific leadership practices lead to highly-engaged teams.
The researcher presented the core literature within this chapter, taking into consideration the case study approach within this grounded theory research.

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Introduction

Within social science research a broad collection of research methods is available and the selection of an appropriate research approach to the research topic requires to start with a detailed analysis of the epistemological frame in which the methodologies are grounded.

Methodology is the analysis of how each individual research should be conducted. It is a way of thinking and studying about a social phenomenon (Blaikie, 2007; Corbin and Strauss, 2015). In other words, methodology is concerned with the special logic of explaining and interpreting reality. Hence this deals with epistemology, which is the theory of any knowledge and its creation. In that regard, any theory of knowledge – any epistemology – presupposes knowledge of the circumstances in which the knowledge occurs (Blaikie, 2007; Johnson, 2000).

Methods, on the other hand, are the techniques and procedures used in order to first gather and secondly analyse the research data (Corbin and Strauss, 2015).

The task of this chapter is to explain the underlying philosophical assumptions by highlighting the ontological and epistemological position of the author. Further, this chapter describes the research design and research setting. Addressing the research objective and research question, this chapter explains the identified methodology, the rational of the interpretive paradigm as well as the qualitative method of grounded theory. In addition, the following chapter explains how the author has addressed research ethics and it talks in detail about the research design decision that the qualitative research strategy brings about. The decision about the research design followed a detailed analysis of methodological literature as well as previous research taken place in this area of interest. Furthermore, this chapter talks about the choice of using semi-structured interviews as the desired instrument to collect the data and describes the data analysis techniques used in this study. Further, the following chapter explains the description of the systematic coding procedure used for this study. The chapter concludes with a critical reflection on using the grounded theory approach in a case using semi-structured interviews.

3.2 Philosophical Stance

3.2.1 Theory of Knowledge

The Oxford English Dictionary defines theory in the following way:

> *"A scheme or system of ideas or statements held to explain a group of facts or phenomena; a statement of general laws, principles, or causes of something known or observed (McArthur et al., 2018)."*

Thomas Kuhn, an American historian and science historian, argues in his book "The Structure of Scientific Revolution" that all theories are provisional and therefore change. Thus, Kuhn says that theory has a big influence on and defines the outcome of any research one undertakes (Kuhn, 1970).

Organisation theory as well as management theory are amongst the important domains of theory. Organisation theory is the knowledge to which one has access to enhance the understanding, information and knowledge of an organisation (McAuley et al., 2007). The focus of this research is on management theory.

In particular, management theory is the study of theories about the purpose and nature of management. In general, theory influences all aspects of one's life and how one interprets and acts upon what happens. Further, theories heavily influence how one understands and thinks. In addition, theories provide helpful knowledge to explain what might be going to happen in the future. This results in the possibility to make predictions and to find interventions if needed. Furthermore, theories may provide one with control over aspects that affect societies (McAuley et al., 2007).

Especially the role of theory in any management research is highly important in understanding the different research approaches used by different management researchers. The decision on how to collect data leads to whether a researcher tests theory through observation or discovers theory through observation. The different theoretical goals highlight the philosophical assumptions of management researchers and explain their different deployment methods in management research (Gill and Johnson, 2010).

Management research is about addressing the presumed pragmatic concerns and presumed business needs of practicing managers (Easterby-Smith et al., 2015). In other words, management research supports managers to oversee more efficiently and effectively by improving the content of managerial practice based upon rigorous analysis by using social scientific theory rather than common sense (Fournier and Grey, 2000; Gill and Johnson, 2010). In addition, critical management studies aim to interpret and understand management, especially understanding and showing the weak points and shortcomings of management (Klikauer, 2015).

The selection of research tradition is essential for the research strategy which includes wording the research question and research objective, as well as the data collection and data analysis (Farquhar, 2012). The researchers values and beliefs about the world, the nature of knowledge, determine the methodology and method used (Mac Naughton et al., 2001). Therefore, researchers must reflect upon themselves by taking into consideration that the society as well as the research are one single unit which cannot be disconnected from life as a whole (Klikauer, 2015).

A researcher needs to make philosophical commitments when undertaking research. An issue which needs to be kept in mind is that the philosophical commitments are assumptions that the researcher makes about how the world is viewed and about the nature of truth. In order to be able to do that, a researcher needs to understand oneself and must engage in how one's own thinking and beliefs have an impact on the researcher's own engagement in the research area (Alvesson and Deetz, 2000; Gill and Johnson, 2010; Johnson and Duberley, 2003). Explicitly, as Gill and Johnson (2010) point out, the researcher needs to answer the following questions (Gill and Johnson, 2010):

– What is the research or study area (ontology)?
– How can the researcher have valid knowledge about the chosen field of study (epistemology)?

– Why is the researcher studying the chosen field of interest (axiology)?

A detailed explanation of the researcher's ontological and epistemological position is explained in the next section.

3.2.2 Ontology

From a very early stage in each research the foundations are determined. These foundations are built upon the philosophical assumptions of the researcher. It is how the researcher perceives the world that makes each research unique as every researcher has a different view of the world. Those various views of the world make each research incomparable as they have an effect on how arguments are formulated, interpreted and how each researcher conducts its research (Farquhar, 2012). Ontology is the study of what is in the world, how someone can understand the nature of reality and social reality. In other words, ontology describes the nature of existence. The term derived from the Greek words "Ontos", which refers to being, and "Logos", which means theory or knowledge. The nature of existing is an idea traceable to Aristotle (Gill and Johnson, 2010; Honderich, 2005). Asking about the ontological existence of something is often referred to asking whether or not something is real or elusive. Each person understands the world in a particular way. Ontological assumptions raise the questions regarding whether something the researcher is interested in is actually existing independently of the researcher's knowledge or perception (Fleetwood, 2005). It can be differentiated between realist and subjectivist assumptions about the essence of a research topic and their nature of existence (Gill and Johnson, 2010). The ontological realist assumptions are about the fact that essence, social and organisational reality exist independently of human consciousness and cognitions. The ontological subjectivist assumptions on the other hand consider that reality is simply a product of the researcher's mind. It is a product of one's consciousness and cognition with no independent status. What the researcher assumes to be existing has no real independent status separate from the act of knowing. In knowing the social world, the researcher creates it. The researcher creates the truth rather than discovering what is already existing (Blaikie, 2007; Burrell and Morgan, 2017).

By accepting one set of assumptions, the researcher and social scientist rejects the alternative (Johnson, 2000).
The assumptions of the world, the researcher's aspects of self and the experiences are brought to the research process and have therefore unconsciously an impact on how the researcher interprets and analyses the data (Corbin and Strauss, 2015).

3.2.3 Epistemological Position

Epistemology, a philosophical branch, is defined as the theory of knowledge, which describes the different kinds of knowledge and their legitimacy as well as a perception in science (Crotty, 1998; Flick, 2014). The word originates from the Greek words "episteme" which translates to "knowledge" and "logos" which translates to "information" or "theory". The translation highlights that epistemology is concerned with knowledge about knowledge (Johnson, 2000). The theory of knowledge goes back to the fifth century BC. It engages in the research of different sources of scientific knowledge, the various types of knowledge that human exploration are able to generate as well as the degree to which this is valid and trustworthy (Lamnek, 1988). The three questions epistemology is concerned with are: (1) What is knowing? (2) What is the known? (3) What is knowledge? These three questions are essential for any field of inquiry, including qualitative research and the beliefs about the social world (Given, 2008).
Both social science research and management research offer a wide range of methods (Morgan and Smircich, 1980). The selection of a particular approach to researching a subject or topic must begin with the reflection of the epistemological foundation in which the methodologies are embedded. Therefore, the epistemology describes how one can have warranted knowledge about the chosen field of study whereas ontology deals with the content of study (Hatch and Cunliffe, 2006). The epistemological selection is required by every management researcher in order to be aware of the philosophical commitments they make by choosing their methodological choices. The methodological choice has a big impact on what the researcher understands about what he or she is investigating

(Gill and Johnson, 2010).

An important aspect to mention is that there are no right or wrong, no adequate existing theories which objectively observe and analyse the social world. Because the logic of an existing theory is always affected by the researcher's own biases. And thereby the research output highly depends on the researcher itself (Crotty, 1998; O'Leary, 2004).

There are four different positions in sociology which are based on mutually exclusive thoughts and beliefs about the social world. Burrell and Morgan (2017) have identified four positions on sociological research: the interpretive, the functionalist, the radical structuralist and the radical humanist position. The goal of the functionalist is typified by exploration, the radical structuralist as well as the humanist position pursue change of the world. The interpretive position on the other hand seeks *"verstehen"* (Burrell and Morgan, 2017).

The following paragraph is limited to the discussion of the interpretive position which is quite prominent in the theoretical foundation of research methodology.

Interpretivism is a subjectivist ontology which seeks *"verstehen"* with a so-called theory-building approach. An analysis of a subjective account is usually done by getting inside a specific situation in order to understand how and why certain things happen. The empirical approaches are ethnographic studies and interviews. The explanations are gained through the development of an analytical understanding of a person's perspective. In other words, research is done with an interpretive and inductive approach (Gill and Johnson, 2010; Locke, 2000).

The interpretive paradigm can be traced back to the German idealist tradition in philosophy (Burrell and Morgan, 2017). However, other multiple schools of thought have added to its creation. Amongst them are the three main elements of the interpretive paradigm: hermeneutics, ordinary language philosophy and phenomenology (Lamnek, 1988). All three believe that the social reality is of subjective nature. The concern of language and meaning is essential to an interpretive understanding of the social world and is therefore shared by all three (Giddens, 1993). Hermeneutics is the interpretation of text. The hermeneutic thought implies that all texts are infused with subjective meaning, which is the case for all human products. However, by analysing the extrinsic attributes it is possible to reveal the subjective meaning (Giddens, 1993). The tradition around *"verstehen"* argues that the social and natural sciences are different disciplines because their subject matter differs (Burrell and Morgan, 2017). The *"verstehen"* tradition is considered to be the intellectual basis for the development of the interpretive approach to social sciences (Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias, 2000). The phenomenological movements aim is to understand the bottom line of things by asking questions and holding off theories of the world and assumptions (Giddens, 1993). The third element of thought, contributing strongly to the development of the interpretive paradigm, is the belief in the ordinary language. It emphasises that people use language differently because they are socialised in a way of life in which they become knowledgeable with a particular language (Giddens, 1993).

In conclusion, the interpretive paradigm has the assumption that social reality, the subject matter of social science, is a reality constructed through interpretations. It is the result of an interactive process of interpretation through individuals (Lamnek, 1988).

The author of this study believes that social reality does exist even though not all aspects, features or elements are observable at all times. Further, in the authors mind society is not only produced by its members, moreover society is reproduced by its members. Thus, the society is a reality and an outcome of the activities of its members (Blaikie, 2007). In other words, one phenomenon observed and interpreted by one member of society might be entirely different interpreted by another member of society. Social realities are interpretative and explanatory. Therefore, in order to access the social reality, it is required of the researcher to be transparent and careful in terms of the selected research methodology and research method. The philosophical assumptions have been explained by the author of this research. The author's view of the world as well as the understanding of the social reality have led her to conduct a qualitative research and thus to follow a grounded theory approach to a case using semi-structured interviews. The qualitative research allows the researcher to look for insights rather than to test hypothesis (Corbin and Strauss, 2015). In line with the grounded theory approach which the researcher followed, qualitative interviews allow to gather rich data of a phenomenon. In other words, the interpretive qualitative methods allow the researcher to enter the world of the research participant (Charmaz, 2014). By interpreting the qualitative interviews, the researcher will interpret and understand the social realities of the research participants. The detailed approach how the rich data was analysed is explained in section 3.7.1 starting on page 88.

3.2.4 Research Logic

There are many notions of research in general, research in business and management as well as research in social science. On the one hand it is believed that research is purely about numbers and statistics with no space for feelings and individual experiences. Other scholars believe that research should leave space for interpretation and imagination (Thorpe and Holt, 2007).

An early consideration in designing the foundation of this research has been whether to take an inductive or deductive approach. Interpretive research is done in an inductive way. Induction is the formulation of theories and explanations by using what has been observed. In other words, the researcher learns by reflecting upon past observations and experiences; by identifying patterns in order to produce theories and generalisations which explain the past and predict the future (Blackmon and Maylor, 2005; Gill and Johnson, 2010). Furthermore, induction is a research approach which generalises from a particular element to a broad statement to define a conceptional category. The research question points out the importance of a particular phenomenon and the absence of reasonable existing theory (Charmaz, 2014a; Eisenhardt and Graebner, 2007).

There is a long tradition of using qualitative data to develop grounded theory inductively in order to provide theoretical descriptions of the context in which a social phenomenon takes place (Glaser et al., 1968; Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Strauss and Corbin, 1998). Qualitative interviews are often used to explain a broad understanding of a particular case which is intended to apply beyond the sample size of the particular research. However, researchers must be cautious when conducting research based on an inductive approach, especially if generalisations beyond a specific case or setting are made (Gioia et al., 2013; Given, 2008). Critics view induction as risky because it is not sure whether recurring observation will occur in the future as well (Bendassolli, 2013; Charmaz, 2014a; Haig, 1995). Further, critics state that inductive research is relatively unstructured and therefore leads to unreliable findings because it is not easily replicable and so bias cannot be ruled out (Behling, 1980; Gill and Johnson, 2010). The problem of the validity of reasoning when conducting inductive research can be addressed by triangulation with other available data such as previous knowledge or previous data sources (Given, 2008).

The author of this research is following the inductive research approach. Simultaneously, the author acknowledges the limitations of this specific research approach. Nevertheless, by adhering to the grounded theory research methodology the researcher views induction as most appropriate to gather theory and knowledge which is grounded within the data.

3.3 Research Design

3.3.1 Qualitative Research

A phenomenon known as "pluralisation of life worlds" has led to an increased relevance of qualitative research while studying social science and social relations. In this context, pluralisation is described by Habermas as seeking to capture the increasing "individualisation of ways of living and biographical patterns" and thereby the development of new lifestyles, new subcultures and new ways of living (Beck, 1992; Flick, 2014; Habermas and Outhwaite, 1996). There are various definitions of qualitative research. This study uses the following definition as underlying meaning of qualitative research:

> *"A form of research in which a researcher collects and interprets data, making the researcher as much a part of the research process as participants and the data they provide"* (Corbin and Strauss, 2015, p. 3).

Qualitative research unlike quantitative research indicates an emphasis on procedures and meanings which are not thoroughly observed and examined, for example in terms of frequency or quantity (Gill and Johnson, 2010). Qualitative researchers are looking for insights and interpretation rather than testing a hypothesis (Corbin and Strauss, 2015). There has been and still is a debate on the appropriate research domain. Both domains – qualitative and quantitative – have developed multiple research practices, which researchers may use depending on their epistemology, research methodology, research design and research method. In addition, the general goal and aim of the research is an important indicator to the most appropriate research domain in that specific context (Becker, 1996; Flick, 2014). There are three main methods in qualitative research to collect data. First, the most commonly used method are in-depth interviews. Interviews can be structured, unstructured, semi-structured, narrative or episodic. The second method are so called focus groups. This method is used to ask questions or stimulate discussions in groups. The third method are observations. Observations may be realised with or without the researcher's involvement with the research field. Observations can be covered or open and they can take place in a natural situation or in an artificial situation (Flick, 2014; Kvale and Brinkmann, 2015). Resulting of the various qualitative research methods there are numerous data types and data formats such as texts from interviews or documents, audio or video data, pictures, websites and many more (Rädiker and Kuckartz, 2019).

The concerns of validity and reliability in all qualitative research are not as readily classified as has been done for any quantitative research. Critics of qualitative research describe the outcome as rather subjective. However, detailed qualitative research consists of various different attempts which are concerned with the objective study and analysis of realities and phenomena (Seale and Silverman, 1997; Silverman, 2013). In order to address the criticism, continuous and detailed attention has to be applied to the quality of any qualitative data and the way assumptions and conclusions are made by the researcher (Seale and Silverman, 1997). In addition, systematic coding schemes with the support of computer-based programmes as well as the use of the transcription techniques support the author of this study to overcome the above-mentioned criticism. The detailed description of the data analysis techniques is explained in chapter 3.7.1 on page 88.

As already mentioned, various types of qualitative research exist, each type with its own specific structure and purpose (Creswell, 1998). In regards to the research need and research question the author thinks a qualitative research approach is most appropriate. Therefore, qualitative research design is the chosen method for the upcoming research. Unlike quantitative research, qualitative research allows the researcher to gain a deeper and more detailed understanding of a social phenomenon than it would be possible using quantitative data (Attridge, 2009; Silverman, 2013). In line with the selected research domain the author of this study has used semi-structured interviews to collect the qualitative data. A detailed description and underlying rationale of using semi-structured interviews for this study is described in section 3.6.1.1 on page 76.

3.3.2 Grounded Theory

Qualitative researchers have the possibility to select from various theoretical and methodological concepts. A first starting point is the subjective viewpoint followed by seeking to reconstruct the social phenomena. Therefore, the goal for the qualitative researcher is not to test the already known but to discover, explore and explain new phenomena in order to develop empirical grounded theories (Flick, 2014). Creswell and Creswell, 2017 define grounded theory as a strategy of inquiry

> *"... in which the researcher attempts to derives a general, abstract theory of a process, action or interaction grounded in the views of participants in a study. This process involves using multiple stages of data collection and the refinement and interrelationship of categories of information." (Creswell and Cresswell, 2017, p. 14).*

Grounded theory is widely used in qualitative research to generate theory grounded from the existing data (Charmaz, 2014a; Given, 2008). Initially, grounded theory was developed by sociologists Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss in 1967 with the publication *"The Discovery of Grounded Theory"* (Bryant and Charmaz, 2010; Given, 2008; Glaser et al., 1968; Locke, 2000). Glaser and Strauss (Glaser et al., 1968) thought that theories should be developed by using comparative data analysis instead of reflective speculation. They argued that theory grounded in actual data is more realistic because they are much closer to reality and therefore much more useful to the researcher (Glaser et al., 1968). With the grounded theory approach Glaser and Strauss created a research strategy which is flexible in guiding the inquiry of qualitative data as they designed the first attempt to codify qualitative analysis (Charmaz, 2014a; Given, 2008). In its early stages, grounded theory requests any researcher to start data collection without having a prior knowledge. Therefore, without choosing any theoretical framework prior to data collection this ensures the highest level of objectivity for the researcher (Given, 2008; Glaser et al., 1968; Locke, 2000).

Since the beginning of grounded theory in the 1960s, Glaser and Strauss have developed different opinions regarding the approach to grounded theory. Glaser favoured a less systematic approach to utilise the extant literature than Strauss used. Strauss favoured a more systematic approach to grounded theory (Goulding, 2002). This resulted in the grounded theory approach by Strauss and Corbin in the initial text of the book *"Basics of Qualitative Research"* in 1990 (Corbin and Strauss, 2015). Strauss and Corbin's approach to grounded theory is much more open and receptive to use literature or existing theories before starting the data collection process. Therefore, this approach is viewed much more pragmatic as impartiality is hardly impossible due to perception of the real world (Truschkat et al., 2005). As a result, Strauss and Corbin's approach is more commonly used in business and management research (Goulding, 2002; Locke, 2000).

Strauss and Corbin (1990, p. 24) define the grounded theory approach as

> *“a qualitative research method that uses a systematic set of procedures to develop an inductively derived grounded theory about a phenomenon."*

The rationale behind the grounded theory approach is that new theories should be emerging from empirical material and the analysis of the gathered material. As such, the theories or gathered data should be "grounded" in the empirical material. In order to get the best possible outcome, grounded theory researchers use an open approach to their area of study. Ideally, the existing knowledge of researchers is not the starting point of the research (Flick, 2014). However, the Strauss and Corbin approach permits the researcher to have some initial understanding or idea about the research area. This is a tremendous help for each researcher in order to identify the research question before conducting the first interview (Goulding, 2002; Locke, 2000).

A third version of the grounded theory approach – constructivist grounded theory – by Charmaz has emerged as a third alternative since the original publication of *"The Discovery of Grounded Theory"* (Charmaz, 2000; Charmaz, 2014a; Given, 2008). The constructivist grounded theory approach believes that the studied world and the research process are socially constructed by way of actions. However, historical and social conditions constrain these actions (Given, 2008).

Critics of grounded theory see a shortcoming in the objectivity of the research results. Independent of the researcher or the person analysing the data the research results need to be the same. This is the quality criterion for good research. Critics see this as one of the main disadvantages of grounded theory. However, in order to address this aspect, grounded theorists use constant comparison, theoretical sampling, memo writing and the constant switch from data gathering to data analysis and back to data gathering to ensure the objectivity of the research findings (Strübing, 2009). Another issue raised concerning grounded theory is the culture in which the data gathering takes place. Cultures are mobile, multiple and increasingly dynamic (Aneas and Sandín, 2009). Therefore, the researcher needs to be aware of the cultural backgrounds of the interview partners in order to avoid any cultural misunderstandings when conducting and analysing interviews for example. Researchers are required to be precautious about this fact (Aneas and Sandín, 2009; Charmaz, 2014b). A third constrain highlighted in the literature is the issue of access to organisations as this could jeopardise the execution of the grounded theory approach. This is especially the case when researchers are gathering their data via interviews or observations. However, getting access to the research site is problematic for most researchers (Locke, 2000). The author of this study is a member of the organisation in which the research took place. Therefore, access to research participants was not an issue.

The researcher's view of the world has led to the conclusion of using the grounded theory as the underlying philosophical stance of this particular re-

search. Knowledge about the reality in the researcher's mind is gained through learning by reflecting upon past behaviour and formulating categories that classify the observed phenomenon (Gill and Johnson, 2010; Locke, 2000). Therefore, the decision was taken to conduct an inductive research approach. The Strauss and Corbin approach to grounded theory is used for this research because it is necessary for each doctoral student to review the extant literature in the area of research before starting the actual research design and data collection. In addition, completing the approval stage (DB2) of the research process as well as getting the ethical approval are indispensable without a first analysis of the extant literature. Furthermore, this variation of grounded theory has been used multiple times in management and business research due to the flexibility in its approach. Finally, the author of this study had an initial understanding of the topic and research area in the subject of leadership styles, leadership practices and its influence on employee engagement.
Table 1 illustrates the grounded theory approach used for this study.

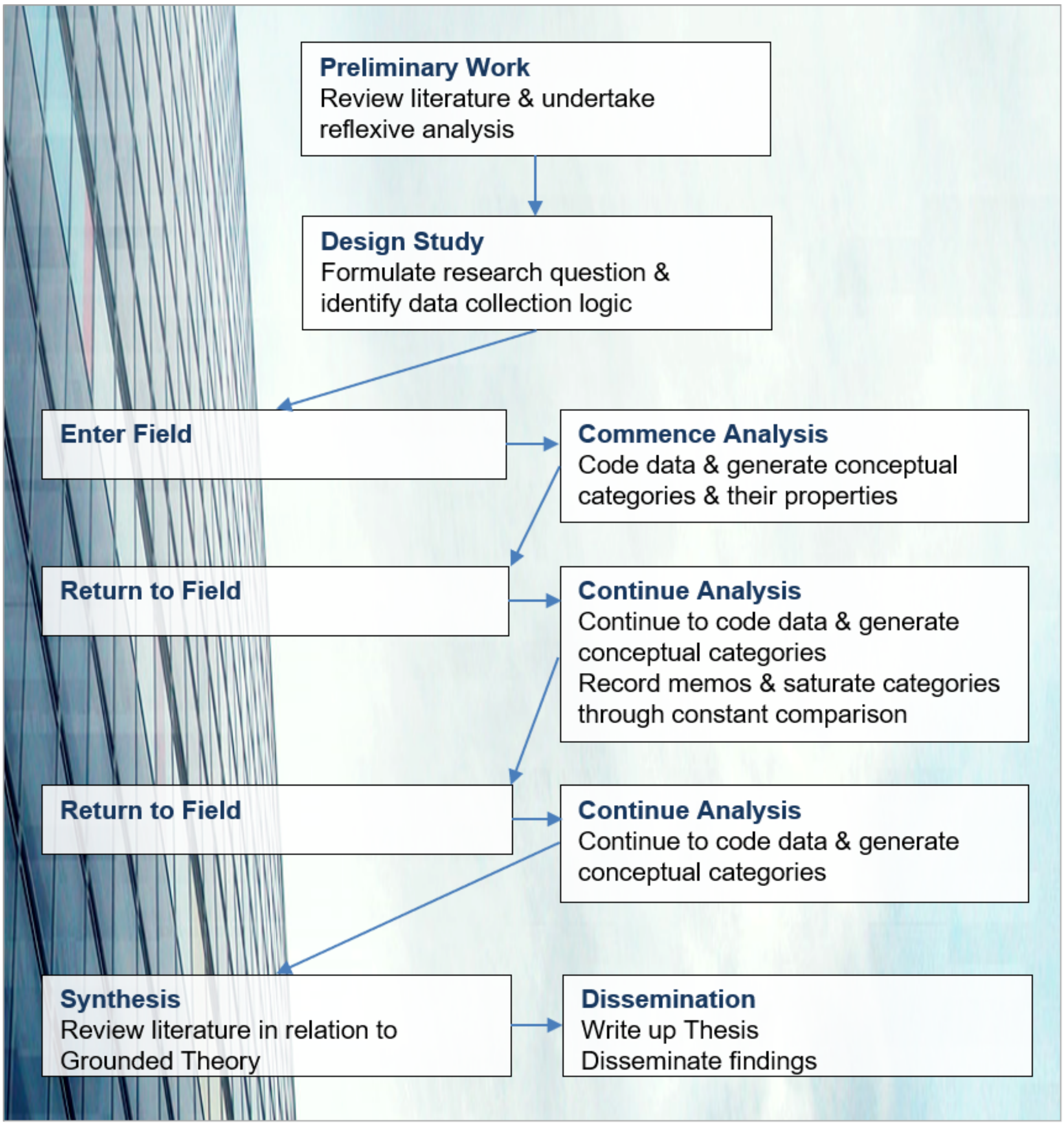

TABLE 1: GROUNDED THEORY APPROACH adapted from (Moore, 2010).

The researcher used the preliminary work to gather first information regarding the research field — the background theory as described in section 2.2 starting on page 10. After formulating the research question and research objectives the researcher entered the research field. After continuous data gathering and data analysis the researcher engaged in further literature review — the focal literature as indicated in the previous table.

This research approach does not generate a new theoretical concept and therefore does not follow a full grounded theory approach as highlighted by Corbin and Strauss (Corbin and Strauss, 2015; Glaser, 2016). Moreover, this research uses the results and findings from the identified literature gaps and omissions.

3.3.3 Case Study Research Approach

A case study is a significant methodological research approach in qualitative data analysis. Its importance is due to the fact that case studies allow very detailed and in-depth investigation into a real-life situation by delimiting the research area to a small number of parts or units (Farquhar, 2012). In business research, a case study refers to a particular organisation, setting or situation (Fulton et al., 2013). They focus on the exclusive, the unique (Simons, 2009). Case studies contain the examination of one or a small number of social entities on which data will be gathered and analysed within its real-life context (Yin, 2017).

A more detailed definition of case studies is defined as follows:

> *"A case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context; when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident; and in which multiple sources of evidence are used." (Yin, 2017, p. 18)*

Especially in business research, case studies are very common to gather in-depth and detailed qualitative data by collecting evidence relating to the research area (Farquhar, 2012; Patton, 1987). A case study of a single organisation will provide large qualitative data, offering difficult to access but detailed insights into the nature of a phenomenon (Easton, 2010; Patton, 1987), in which a case could be an institution, an enterprise, a single person or even a particular situation which focuses on specifics rather than on commonalities or generalities (Simons, 2009; Stake, 1995). Research methods used for data collection while doing case study research are most of the time interviews or surveys in order to fulfil its aim to look deep, look for explanations and get detailed understanding (Farquhar, 2012).

Case study data usually contains qualitative data gathering methods and differs in this regard to survey research and experimental research (Gomm et al., 2000). Table 2 illustrates the differences between case studies, experiments and surveys and how each compares to one another.

Experiment	Case Study	Survey
– Small number of units – Data collected and analysed about small number of predetermined features – Data usually quantified – Aim is to test theory or evaluation of an intervention	– Small number of units (sometimes one) – Data collected and analysed about large and often not predetermined features of each unit – Data can be quantitative, qualitative or both – Aim is to understand and theorize through enfolding the literature	– Lange number of units – Data collected and analysed about a small number of features of each case – Units selected to present characteristics of the study's population – Data usually quantified – Aim is to generalise findings from sample to population

TABLE 2: THE COMPARISON BETWEEN CASE STUDY RESEARCH, EXPERIMENTS AND SURVEYS (Gomm et al., 2000)

For business researchers the case study research has proven to have many advantages by investigating a phenomenon within its real location, organisation or industry. It unwinds complex situations, factors and relationships (Easton, 2010; Verschuren, 2003). However, there are disadvantages as well by investigating only a small sample of cases. Case study researchers usually will not be able to make assumptions about how the individual research may be expanded to a different company, different industry or different geography. However, this limitation is compensated by the knowledge and awareness the researcher gains on how the very detailed and in-depth understanding about the phenomenon may contribute to knowledge and expertise in business (Creswell, 1998; Farquhar, 2012).

In addition, critics of case study research see a low statistical representativeness and mention the lack of objectivity in the research due to the fact that there is less distance between researcher and the phenomenon of study than when using experiments or surveys. However, detailed and in-depth knowledge of the phenomenon in its context is the aim of using a case study research approach (Easton, 2010; Remenyi et al., 1998). Like many other research strategies, case study research is a research strategy which is influenced by the researcher's own beliefs, values and view of the world. They tend to follow an inductive approach in which theory is built rather than tested as in a deductive approach (Eisenhardt and Graebner, 2007; Farquhar, 2012).

This research follows the theory building overview by Eisenhardt, 1989. Table 3 exemplifies the theory building approach in case study research.

Step	Activity	Reason
Getting started	— Definition of research question — Neither theory nor hypotheses	— Focuses effort — Retains theoretical flexibility
Selecting cases	— Specified population — Theoretical sampling	— Constrains variation and sharpens validity
Entering the field	— Overlap data collection and analysis — Flexible and opportunistic data collection	— Speeds up analysis and reveals helpful adjustments to data collection — Allows investigation to take advantage of emergent themes and unique case features
Analysing data	— Within-case analysis	— Gains familiarity with data and preliminary theory generation
Enfolding the literature	— Comparison with conflicting literature — Comparison with similiar literature	— Builds internal validity, raises theoretical level and sharpens construct definition — Sharpens generalizability, improves construct definition and raises theoretical level

TABLE 3: THEORY BUILDING PROCESS IN CASE STUDY RESEARCH adapted from (Eisenhardt, 1989)

The researcher started with the formulation of the research question before engaging into the data collection. Selecting the case organisation was predefined right from the beginning of the research. Data analysis as well as data collection took place simultaneously. Unlike indicated in the previous table, the literature review did not take place at the end of the research process. Moreover, the researcher engaged in the detailed literature review during the time of the data collection and data analysis.

Case study research is particularly well suited for investigating research questions which are very closely linked to their natural setting, situation or context. Especially in business this is appealing. The research question could be explored from various perspectives, such as industry specific, type of business or

a specific location (Farquhar, 2012; Meredith, 1998).
This research has the objective to find the leadership style or leadership practices which results in highly-engaged teams. Therefore, to look at individuals – the interviewees – in the context of one organisation will enable the researcher to investigate leadership styles and leadership practices. The researcher considers her organisation – Linde Plc. – as a real-life phenomenon in a real-life context and has decided to use the case study approach to ensure contribution not only to knowledge but also to practice. The outcome of this study is intended to be used for any future analysis and design of internal leadership development programmes or the selection of external leadership development offerings for Linde Plc. Furthermore, an important success factor of a professional doctorate is its impact on professional practice. In order to ensure this, the researcher puts her focus on a real-life case – the company Linde Plc. In addition, the researcher addresses the criticism of case study research by continuously stating the research objectives and its suitability to case study research, adherence to the research protocol as well as following a transparent research method.

3.4 Research Setting

The qualitative data collection took place at Linde Plc. (Linde). Linde is a global gas and engineering company with a history of almost 140 years in the industrial gas business. In March 2019, the German based Linde AG and the American based Praxair Inc. merged to become Linde plc, the leading industrial gas and engineering company. Linde has more than 80,000 employees which work in over 100 countries in all key geographies. The company has a market capitalisation of approximately $90 billion and serves more than 2 million customers all around the world (Linde, 2019). Linde's global footprint is divided into three regional areas: (1) Americas: North, Central and South America; (2) EMEA: Europe, Middle East and Africa; and (3) APAC: Asia-Pacific. In addition, a global operating engineering business as well as other small non-core business activities are included in the company's global set-up. The gas division of Linde produces and distributes various kinds of industrial gas. The engineering business designs, plans and builds turnkey process plants for industrial users. The focus is on plants for the production of hydrogen and synthesis gas, oxygen and olefins as well as plants for natural gas treatment (Linde, 2019).

The operating model of Linde depicts a classical matrix structure. Regional business units have profit and loss responsibility and the global support functions (such as Human Resources, IT, Finance) are supporting the business to reach the highest standard in productivity and continuous improvement.

All aspects of how and what employees do at Linde is comprised in the *One Linde Philosophy*, the company's vision, mission and strategic direction (Linde, 2019).

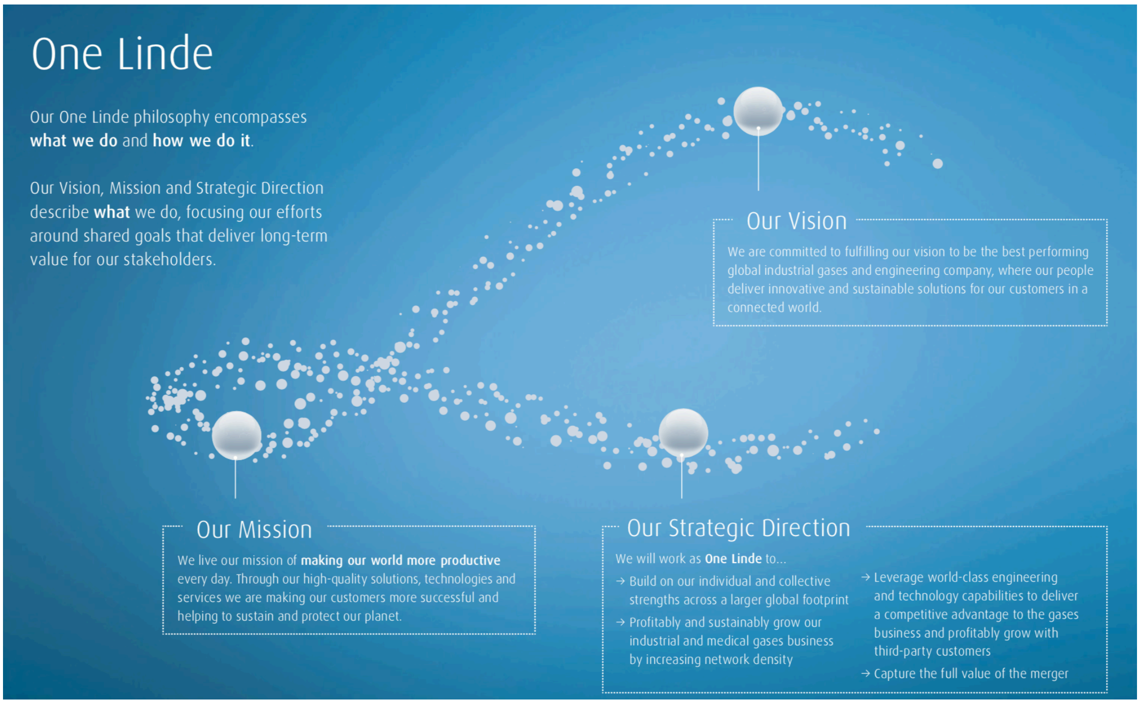

FIGURE 3: ONE LINDE PHILOSOPHY (LINDE, 2019)

In March 2019, the merger of the two companies was completed. Linde and Praxair have become Linde plc. The merger of two very strong companies had been prepared for more than two years (Linde, 2019). The data collection for this study took place when uncertainty and change at Linde evolved due to the upcoming merger. All interviewee respondents had been either directly or indirectly engaged in the pre-merger work streams or activities. Overall, the time of the data collection has been a difficult one in terms of the company culture and overall company atmosphere.

3.5 Research Ethics

3.5.1 Introduction

Ethical issues have to be addressed throughout the entire research process. Research ethics is concerned with the appropriate conduct within the research project. Normative ethics or so-called moral theories are most common in research practice. They form a kind of guideline or framework to decide what is preferred amongst various options. Thereby it is an essential aspect of the decision-making process in any qualitative and quantitative research. Each research project serves a moral intent, the research design is required to have integrity and most important research conduct is a prerequisite to any research project. An advantage for a researcher conducting a case study research could be the close connection to the organisation in which the research is being conducted. This may help to ensure the understanding of the organisation as well as allowing the researcher to get to know the context of the research to a better extant (Given, 2008; Kvale and Brinkmann, 2015).

Furthermore, conducting qualitative research comprises the contact with human beings. Therefore, arising ethical problems could become an issue in any qualitative research design and research analysis (Silverman, 2013). Not causing harm to any research participant is central and of utmost importance to ethical research (Given, 2008).

In general, every university research undergoes ethical examination to guarantee that it is conducted to the highest ethical standards and to protect the integrity of any research. Sheffield Hallam University has a dedicated research ethics policy in order to ensure that the ethical principles are met at all times.

The most important and commonly known principles are:

- Voluntary participation and the right to withdraw from the research
- Overall protection of research participants
- Open communication of the assessment of possible benefits and risks to the research participants
- Retrieving informed permission of all parties involved
- Avoiding, provoking or encompassing any harm (Silverman, 2013).

In addition, the Research Ethics Framework provided by the British Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) has stated another important aspect of research ethics regarding confidentiality. In other words, the anonymity of participants and information supplied by research participants must be respected at all times (ESRC-funded & Information 2015).
The research for this DBA thesis followed the ESRC ethics framework as well as the Sheffield Hallam University's research ethics policy PRME (Principles of Responsible Management Education). This ensures that the research participants' interests are put first at all times and that the researcher does everything possible to fully advise participants who are involved in the research.
Negotiating access to the research area was not an issue for the author of this study. The author is an employee of the organisation and therefore had access to internal data as well as access to the research participants. Being an employee of the company also meant that the researcher needed to critically reflect on the ethical issues concerned with conducting and evaluating qualitative research. Being an insider could potentially lead to issues in power relations and the way how the data is presented (Kirkebæk, 2020). At the time of conducting the interviews, the researcher was an employee without managerial experience. From a hierarchical standpoint, the researcher was in an individual contributor role and therefore the issue of power relation was not an issue.

3.5.2 Obtaining Consent

Obtaining consent from the involved parties for the anticipated research is highly important for its success. A missing consent could jeopardize the success of the entire research (Silverman, 2013). Informed consent encompasses educating and informing the research participants about all relevant information about the research: the purpose, the features of the research design, possible risks as well as benefits from taking part in the research (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2015). The following paragraph outlines the author's actions obtaining the research participants' consent.
First of all, it is of utmost importance to be as open and transparent as possible

with all research participants about the research. Throughout the entire research process the researcher followed an honest and transparent approach to the data collection. Prior to setting up the date for the research interview a participant information sheet was sent to the research participants upon inviting them to take part in the research study and again prior to their interview. The information sheet described the research purpose, the research methodology, who has access to the research data and how the research outcome will be intended to be used in the future. Appendix 1: Participant Information Sheet shows the participant information sheet used for this research. Research participants were asked to sign the participant information sheet in order to provide their consent to take part in the study (see Appendix 2: Interview Consent Form). In addition, research participants were informed that they could withdraw their consent at any time during the research. None of the research participants withdrew their approval nor withdrew altogether from the research. At the start of each interview the author informed the research participants once more about the reasons for this research, the role of the research participant in the overall research and what will be done with the research results. This was done to provide the interviewees the chance to think about their research participation once more.

Finally, an essential point made by the author to get consent was to address the fact that the author is acting as a researcher and, therefore, the research participants should not see the author in the role of a colleague within the organisation during the interview. The researcher role, which the author was taking on during the interview, needed to be clear in order to avoid any concerns or misunderstandings. As suggested by Collins and McNulty (2020), the researcher made the positionality explicit throughout the interview process.

The researcher tried to minimise the effects of her presence and the knowledge that the respondents had on the research participants. This potential limitation to the research is explored in detail in section 3.6.4 on page 86.

In addition, the SHUREC2a form (ethics approval) was handed to the Sheffield Hallam University and received approval. It is a common and well-received practice in research to inform research participants upfront about the approval from the university's research ethics committee. This has been done for this study as well. Research participants knew from the start of their research involvement that the university had given their ethical approval.

3.5.3 Contribution to Research Ethics

The following paragraph outlines the author's contribution to research ethics and the Principles of Responsible Management Education (PRME) by Sheffield Hallam University. The PRME consists of six areas: Purpose, Values, Method, Research, Partnership and Dialogue. Contribution to PRME:

Purpose	Goal of the thesis is to influence managers positively in order to be a role model in today's global economy.
Values	Adherence to global social responsibility by conducting confidential and voluntary data research.
Method & Research	Case study approach entitles the researcher to gain a detailed and confidential set of in-house data.
Partnership & Dialogue	Interviews allow the researcher to gain in-depth knowledge of all managerial challenges. Information regarding confidentiality was mentioned continuously.

Furthermore, the author used coded transcripts without destroying the usefulness and integrity of the research in order to ensure anonymity and confidentiality. Names and details of the research participants have been removed or been replaced by pseudonyms. All data concerned with the research participant is stored in a secured file and laptop outside of the organisation. Back-up files, interview recordings as well as all other relevant data for this research was separated from the personal information of the research participant and kept secure at all times. Throughout the entire research process the author ensured to be very discrete about the research and its participants in any conversation about the research.

Research participants always had the possibility to look at the transcripts, comment the transcript or to be informed about the analysis of the findings. However, at no point the interviewees asked to be involved in the development of the program nor wanted to see the actual transcripts of the interviews.

3.6 Empirical Research Process

3.6.1 Data Collection Methods

There are no right or wrong research methods when it comes to gathering data. In this context it is important to choose a research method that is appropriate to the research topic (Silverman, 2013). Qualitative research contains a variety of different research methods. Amongst them are texts and documents, observations and interviews. In other words, any kind of research that produces findings not by statistical analysis nor by quantification (Gephart, 2004; Morgan and Smircich, 1980).

The following research study is a grounded theory approach to a case using semi-structured interviews. The rationale using semi-structured interviews for this study is explained in detail in the next section. An overview of other data collection methods considered is included as well.

3.6.1.1 Semi-structured Interviews

The researcher's selection of the appropriate data collection method was based on the prior analysed information that would be collected during the research process to address the research question.

In the case of this research the author chose to conduct in-depth interviews to gather data. Interviews are very common to reveal the story behind a research participant's experience and understanding. The range of interview formats include structured, unstructured and semi-structured interviews (Doody and Noonan, 2013; Holloway and Wheeler, 1995). In this particular research, semi-structured interviews were used in order to gain in-depth knowledge of the link between leadership style and high levels of engagement at Linde. This research technique has been chosen because it provides a way to explore, reveal, examine, analyse and understand the underlying points (Ryan et al., 2009). Semi-structured interviews are amongst the few options to gather rich data, including individual perceptions and thoughts (Gill and Johnson, 2010). The unique advantage of using semi-structured interviews as a research method is that it provides a certain degree of using standardised questions without losing the ability to be flexible and open to react upon interviewee's responses (Bridges et al., 2008; Holloway and Wheeler, 1995). In addition, this method provides room for the interviewee to elaborate on certain aspects. Further, it offers the opportunity for new insights to emerge which may not have been thought about upfront (Gray, 2004). The researcher considered using unstructured interviews as well. However, she decided against it because she felt that her lack of prior experience in conducting interviews would limit her to focus precisely on what is been said and rather thinking too hard of suitable follow up questions. Another reason is that she feared that it would spoil the outcome of the limited amount of interviews in case the unstructured method would go badly.

Knowledge gathering through interviews is socially constructed between the interviewee and the interviewer. The knowledge is actively created through the interviewer's questions and the answers of the interviewee. This knowledge production process is continued through the transcription and the data analysis. Further, the knowledge created during these interviews is both inter-subjective and inter-relational. Each interview takes place in an interpersonal context. As a result, the meaning of the interview statements or interview phrases relate to the specific context in which the interview takes place (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2015).

In business and management researching smaller groups of informants are selected based on their personal insights or experience in the research topic (Farquhar, 2012). In this particular research project, the interviewees have been selected based on their employee engagement scores from previous employee surveys which took place at Linde.

As previously mentioned, employees who feel a high degree of engagement are more effective and support the organisation to achieve higher business results than employees who work for organisations and leaders with lower levels of employee engagement (Carasco-Saul et al., 2015; Shuck and Herd, 2012; Wiley, 2010a). This is the reason why the researcher decided to conduct interviews only with leaders of highly engaged teams.

Linde has a tradition of conducting global employee surveys. One important aspect of the survey is the employee engagement dimension. Research highlights the importance of employee engagement in regards to business success. High employee engagement is positively correlated with customer engagement and loyalty, higher productivity as well as higher profitability (Zhang et al., 2014).
All interviewees have had an employee engagement score of 75% favourable or higher. In particular, a highly engaged team is a team which scored 75% favourable or higher on the following four questions which compile the engagement dimensions:
(1) I am proud to work for Linde.
(2) I would recommend Linde as a great place to work.
(3) I rarely think about looking for a new job with another company.
(4) Overall, I am extremely satisfied with Linde as a great place to work (Linde, 2014).

The sample had been chosen in line with the aim of the work to research which leadership behaviours or leadership styles lead to highly-engaged teams. The researcher had access to all previous engagement scores of all leaders from the past employee surveys that took place between 2010 and 2014. Based on this data, the researcher created an Excel spreadsheet including the names of the leaders which had highly engaged teams at the time of the previous engagement surveys (from 2010 to 2014). From that list, the researcher selected randomly the leaders whom she would contact to be interviewed for her research. The research process started in 2015 with the start of the DBA studies. However, the first interviews did not take place before autumn 2017.
In summary, the researcher selected randomly leaders which had highly engaged teams in the engagement surveys conducted at Linde between 2010 and 2014. The researcher specifically decided against interviewing leaders with low engagement scores because she felt that the interview output would not support answering her research question.
The researcher conducted the interviews at the same time as she analysed the interviews. After analysing the 12th interview, the researcher started to see repetitions in the data. Once she finalised the analysis of the 16th interview she re-

alised that no new data was emerging from the interviews. She decided to conduct one more interview to ensure that the point of data saturation had been reached. After analysing the 17th interview the author of this study was sure that she reached the point of data saturation. No new data would emerge if she would continue with the data collection. In the end, 17 senior leaders of Linde Plc. were interviewed for the research of this study.

In total, 35% of the interviewees were female. This is in line with the overall female rate at Linde which is currently at 32% in total. Interviewees were from Germany, Great Britain, the United States of America, Romania, the Ukraine, Estonia, Argentina and Italy. All interviewees have studied at a university. More than 50% of the interviewees' highest degree is a MBA degree (Master of Business Administration). About 70% of the interviewees have worked internationally. In this context, it means that they have worked outside of their home country for some time. The age distribution ranges from 36 to 62 years. All interview partners have been more than 5 years in a leadership position. A leadership position at Linde is a second line manager position in which the leader leads at least one level of other leaders and does not lead employees without managerial responsibility. Typically, a leadership position is graded at Hay Grade 19 and above (Linde, 2019). Further and more details about the interviewee's demographic information is described in section 4.2 on page 100.

The overall time frame for conducting the interviews was about one year. The author used the time between the interviews to analyse the data. The data collection journey started for the author of this study with two interviews to test the research approach and to test the interview questions which were prepared as the approach was to conduct semi-structured interviews.

Early on and before conducting the test interviews the researcher decided to conduct all interviews face to face. This has been a conscious decision to make use of the benefits of interpersonal interaction with the research participants. Face-to-face interaction enforces more non-verbal communication, small talk and people in general feel more comfortable. In addition, for the research interviewees visual signals by the researcher are very important to encourage the interview participant to clarify or to elaborate on what has been said (Irvine et al., 2013; Shuy, 2003). Furthermore, the voice, the intonation and body language of the interviewee provides the researcher additional valuable information which could be added to the overall data analysis. This additional information would not be possible to gather by conducting telephone interviews (Opdenakker, 2006). Another important advantage of conducting face-to-face interviews is for the researcher to be able to see and react immediately to signs of confusion, stress or discomfort by the research participant (Gillham, 2005; Rubin and Rubin, 2011). Lastly, in face-to-face interviews the non-verbal signs and clues play a much larger role than one might anticipate in actually guiding and shaping the interviews (Stephens, 2007).

A distraction in the interviewer's focus is caused when detailed notes are taken during the interview. This is due to the fact that on the one hand the interviewer writes down notes and on the other hand the interviewer listens to what is been said. This conflict can be resolved using a voice recorder to capture the words that are being spoken (Hahn, 2008). In order to handle this conflict as well as to address the researcher's lack of interview experience the researcher decided to use technical equipment to record the interviews. Before starting the first interviews the researcher thought about the approach of being as professional as possible when conducting the interviews. In addition to the lack of interview experience of the researcher the situation of the researcher to conduct the research in the own company made it even more important to come across as a professional who is aware that she is interviewing senior leaders of the organisation. Rather than using a normal smart phone the researcher decided to use a professional voice recorder to record the interviews. This is not only essential to work with the data after the interview. In the researcher's mind it also conveyed the message of being a professional researcher and not doing the interview just for fun. In addition, the researcher believes that a professional voice recorder transforms the notion of confidentiality much more than a business or even a private smart phone. In addition, the digital recordings can be filed easily and backed-up electronically in order to avoid interview data being lost (Hahn, 2008).

Approaching the research participants directly was not very hard for the author. Reaching out via email or phone to ask whether the person would participate in the study was easier due to the fact that the researcher was part of the organi-

sation. Further, obtaining the consent was not an issue as described in section 3.5.2 "Obtaining Consent" on page 73. In general, close personal contact to the research field offers researchers an easier approach to the interviewees. However, this could potentially jeopardise the impartiality in terms of the research (Truschkat et al., 2005). This point has been addressed by the author and written about in section 3.6.4 "Limitations of Research Approach" on page 86 .
The choice of semi-structured interviews as the instrument of data collection has been taken into consideration of the alternative data collection methods. A short overview of alternative data collection methods considered can be found in the next section.
The wording of the questions considered were carefully examined by the researcher in terms of their clarity and unambiguity as well as avoidance of multi-dimensional questions. In regards to the sequence of the questions, the interview started off with general, impersonal and insensitive questions in order to open the interview and to generate a comfortable atmosphere. The personal and sensitive questions were asked towards the end of the interview. The types of questions considered included main questions, probes as well as follow-up questions (Rubin and Rubin, 2011). The interview questions, intended to provide the main information, were tentative and provided the interviewer only reference points. However, the main purpose was to keep the interview as open as possible in order to account for the emergence of new and unexpected data or themes. Follow-up questions were asked to explore a theme in more detail and to request further information. During the interview notes were taken on important key facts as well as to document follow-up questions in order to address these questions in an appropriate way without interrupting the interviewee. The semi-structured interview guide used for this research can be found in Appendix 3: Interview Guide.

3.6.1.2 Alternative Methods Considered

Alternative data collection methods have been considered but have not been selected. Amongst the alternatives have been observations, surveys as well as focus groups.

In addition to listening and speaking during observations the researcher makes use of all of the senses: hearing, feeling, seeing and smelling. The researcher enters the research field by observing the research participant and research situation (Flick, 2014). This method has not been selected due to the nature of the research question and the lack of suitability to gather data using observation. In addition, the time constrain has been a factor as well to decide against using observations as the data collection method. The second method considered was a survey. Surveys allow to gather big amounts of data. The selected methodology and qualitative research approach however are not in line with conducting surveys. In the researcher's mind surveys do not generate the detailed data that would be required to address the research question appropriately. The third and last method considered were focus groups. Focus groups are group discussions on a specific topic in which the researcher actively encourages the group interaction (Kitzinger, 1999). In the researcher's mind focus groups are not the appropriate method to gather data on leadership behaviour. This is due to the fact that the topic is sensitive and people tend to be more reserved to express and talk about their actual thinking than in a secure and private one-on-one conversation.

In line with the discussion of available data collection methods and their purpose, semi-structured and therefore in-depth interviewing has been identified as the most suitable data collection method for researching leadership behaviours and leadership styles which lead to highly-engaged teams. As Kvale (2015) explains the semi-structured interviews leave room for the ad hoc changes that a researcher needs to make while conducting the interviews, such as following up new, emerging leads in the interview or taking an entire new aspect into consideration (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2015). In addition, in the researcher's mind semi-structured interviews match the research topic as well as the research interest most adequately.

3.6.1.3 Data Collection

The interviews for this study were conducted over a span of about 15 months. At the start of the actual interview the researcher thanked the research participants for their participation, explained in detail the research rationale as well as the research method. Further, the researcher stressed the point of confidentiality and the confidential treatment of the data. Then, the researcher asked for permission to use the voice recorder. In order to address constraints in regards to the voice recorder the researcher explained the reasons behind using this instrument and highlighted the lack of accurate representation of the interviewee's views without the usage of the voice recorder. In addition, the researcher mentioned that she would be the only person working with the recordings. With the exception of one person, all research participants accepted the use of the voice recorder. In the case of the exception, the researcher made very detailed notes on the interviewee's views. However, this proved not to be ideal as the main focus of the researcher was on taking detailed notes and not on asking follow-up questions and engaging into the emerging data. In addition, the researcher compensated not using the voice recording by transcribing and analysing the interview immediately after the interview was finished and still fresh on the researcher's mind. For all other interviews, the voice recorder was not an issue and all interviewees spoke freely and openly without getting distracted by the voice recorder.

Before posing the first question, the researcher explained the overall structure of the interview and mentioned that they could ask any questions which they might have to clarify the interview question. This helped to provide the overall framework of the research interview to the interviewees. In addition, the researcher mentioned that she would take notes during the interview in order to highlight key aspects and potential follow-up questions. Once the interviews started and the researcher got more used to the interview situation, she limited the note-taking to a minimum as she realised that constant eye contact felt more natural and the research participants were more focused. After the first two to three interviews the researcher was able to focus entirely on the interview conversation, taking notes only occasionally. Follow-up questions were only asked upon completion of the interviewee's accounts in order to maintain an uninterrupted interview. In case no follow-up questions were required the researcher continued with questions from the interview guide. Depending on the interviewee's focus the researcher changed the sequence of the questions. In order to keep track on the interview themes the researcher carried a printed version of the interview guide with her to ensure all topics were addressed during all interviews. Upon completion of the interview the researcher thanked the interviewees for their active participation in the research process, highlighted the relevance of each interviewee's contribution and mentioned once more the confidential treatment of the data. Furthermore, the researcher promised to share the results of the study with each research participant.

3.6.2 Required Competencies

Doing research in general as well as conducting and analysing semi-structured interviews, both require a set of core competencies of the researcher (Corbin and Strauss, 2015). The following paragraph provides a list of the most prominent competencies. In addition, the author outlines a short explanation of each competency in the context of this research.

- Strategic and conceptual thinking. This competency includes planning the required resources, anticipating factors and trends that could affect the research (Moon, 2013). A research journey as such requires very detailed future-oriented planning. The researcher's main goal in terms of the strategic and conceptual thinking was to be organised on the one hand and to be flexible on the other hand. The strategic direction of the research journey has been identified at a very early stage of the research. However, changing direction and external influences, which had an impact on the organisation at which the research took place, had to be taken into account at all times.
- Analytical thinking. This competency involves taking apart a problem or issue, looking at the reasons why something happens, and evaluating a problem, situation or a project (Kao, 2014). In the researcher's view, leadership behaviour as well as employee engagement are two topics which have a very broad spectrum of available data, available analytics as well as available sub themes. Hence, the researcher's main task was to filter out those themes which had the highest impact on this research. In addition, looking at the research findings from different angles has been an important aspect. In addition, another important aspect for the researcher was to keep an ob-

jective view during the analytical tasks.

- Planning and organising. The entire part-time DBA journey requires a lot of detailed planning and organising to cope with the daily work on top of the research project. The researcher not only had to plan working sessions to complete the research project. Moreover, the researcher had to integrate business trips, periods of heavy business workload as well as private obligations into the project schedule. Again, this meant being flexible and not to get overwhelmed by the massive amount of work – business related as well as research related.
- Project management. Project management skills are required to execute the research in the provided time frame and expected quality. Project management includes the tools, knowledge and techniques for leading, planning, organizing, controlling, and closing any kind of project (Kliem et al., 1997). In addition to planning and organising the research journey the researcher had to investigate technologies, software and other tools to be fully equipped to undertake this research journey.
- Being compliant to confidentiality by following the standards of ethical research at all times (Silverman, 2013). This very important aspect is essential to any research and is therefore explained in detail in section 3.3.5 "Research Ethics" on page 72.
- Cultural sensitivity. Researchers who demonstrate cultural sensitivity deal delicately with all forms of diversity and receptive alternative viewpoints. Further, they recognise participants' cultural backgrounds (Roegman et al., 2016). For this study interviews have been conducted with research participants having diverse cultural backgrounds. Specifically, the aspect of confidentiality needed more and detailed explanation for some of the interviewees than for others. Taken this into account the researcher spent more time explaining and ensuring certain aspects to research participants from the Eastern European geography.

3.6.3 Data Handling and Storage

Data management includes each aspect on what data needs to be managed as well as how this data needs to be managed (Given, 2008). For any research it is necessary to have a personalised data management and data storage which supports the researcher to store, to analyse as well as to retrieve the data at any given point in time (Flick, 2014). An identification system has been used for all interviewees. The initial "I" followed by the number 1-17 was used for all interviewees. The numbers were in chronological order of the actual data collection. "I5" is therefore the interviewee who took part in the study as the 5th research participant. This identification code was used for the voice recordings as well as for the interview notes in order to ensure the identification of data sources at any time. The interview recordings, field notes as well as the interview transcripts were stored password protected on the researcher's private computer. All printed documents were stored in locked cabinets. A list of the actual names of the research participants was password protected and stored securely on a researcher's private USB stick which was bit-locked and password protected. Copies of the transcriptions used for data analysis with the data analysis software MAXQDA were password protected and labelled with the identification initials as well. Back-up copies were stored on regular intervals to avoid any loss or damage of the data. These back-up copies were stored on the researcher's private external storage hardware which was password protected. For the researcher it has been of utmost importance to ensure that all gathered data is securely kept and confidentially treated at all times. Nobody except the researcher had access to the personal computer, external hard drives or locked cabinet.

3.6.4 Limitations of Research Approach

Generally, qualitative researchers often face the issue that the research output is perceived as uncertain, unpredictable and, therefore, could lack credibility. Unlike with quantitative data, qualitative data puts an emphasis on subjectivity and authenticity of people's opinions and experiences (Corbin and Strauss, 2015). Consequently, there are limitations in regards to interviewing and qualitative content analysis (Alvesson, 2003; Qu and Dumay, 2011).

Regarding the specific research topic and methodology, the following paragraph outlines the anticipated difficulties the author considered before entering the research field:

Firstly, the selection of interview partners (Alvesson, 2003): Selecting the most appropriate interview partners based on their previous employee engagement scores for this study. This proved not to be an issue as the researcher used the existing employee engagement scores and selected a sample of senior leaders with high or very high engagement scores.

Secondly, getting honest answers which are not biased (McCutcheon and Meredith, 1993): The researcher addressed this point by ensuring the confidential treatment of all data as well as by informing the research participants multiple times of her role in this particular research. The role of the researcher during the interview was not her role at Linde, being the Talent Manager for one of the regional business units. Moreover, her role was the role of a credible researcher. This was accepted by all research participants.

Thirdly, individual interviews could lead to an individualistic view: Critics view that individual interviews disregard the interviewee's involvement in society or groups as well as in social interactions (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2015). The researcher could have decided to use focus groups instead of individual interviews to overcome this concern. On purpose the researcher decided against using focus groups as she views that more open and honest conversations are taking place in an individual interview situation, especially in regards to this specific research topic.

For the author, a concern taken into consideration was the notion of power and risk in research situations in which the researcher is conducting research in the own organisation. Creswell and Creswell (2017) have explained that power can be unevenly distributed if the researcher is in a more senior, more powerful position than the research participant. Further, Creswell and Creswell (2017) see a risk that the relationship between researcher and research participant can be eroded if a research participant opts out of the research. Both concerns were

balanced out by the researcher. The research participants were all more senior than the researcher herself. In addition, the researcher was constantly considering the harm or downsides for the research participants and stated clearly multiple times during the research process that research participants could opt out of the research project at any point in time.
An issue the researcher had been concerned with initially was the question of objectivity as a researcher in an organisation in which the researcher also works. Here the author researched Henry Mintzberg's publications. In 1973, Mintzberg published his work *"The Nature of Managerial Work"*, based on his doctoral dissertation. Mintzberg himself was an internal observer for one week observing and collecting field data. He observed the everyday activities of senior managers and offered conclusions based on his observations and compared to the existing knowledge at that time (Mintzberg, 1973). In a more recent study (2011), Mintzberg again participated as an internal observer, observing 29 senior managers each for one day. In his book *"Managing"* he claims that personal relationships were not an obstacle to the objectivity of the research, however, he did mention that his presence sometimes made a difference but not a significant one. Further, he states that it did not interfere with the basic purpose of his research (Mintzberg, 2011). Studying Mintzberg's work as well as following the good practice in conducting field research the author of this study was able to address and decrease these initial concerns.

3.7 Analytical Research Process

3.7.1 Data Analysis Techniques

The data analysis should already be considered when the researcher thinks about how and when to collect the data (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2015). The data analysis itself starts with the actual collection of the very first pieces and fragments of data. In a qualitative research study there are multiple ways and different levels to analyse the data. The range of the different levels of data analysis can be from very superficial to in-depth (Corbin and Strauss, 2015; Kvale and

Brinkmann, 2015). Generally, qualitative research involves coding and looking for patterns and relationships in the data (Charmaz, 2014a; Star, 1998). The issue of validity and reliability in qualitative research is much more common and discussed than in quantitative research (Seale and Silverman, 1997). Reliability is relevant to the trustworthiness and consistency of the research findings. Validity refers to the correctness, the truth and the overall strength of an argument (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2015).

The analysis of this study followed the procedures of the grounded theory data analysis in regards to the interpretation of the collected qualitative data. The grounded theory data analysis process was used for all data applicable for this study: the interview transcripts, the field notes, memos as well as company documents. The in-depth analysis of this study began with the completion of the very first interview and continued throughout the research process. The change between data collection and data analysis allows the researchers to identify concepts, to validate these concepts and to further explore them in the further interviews (Corbin and Strauss, 2015). At the time of the data collection the analysis concentrated on the identification of issues and new questions which emerged from the data. However, these new questions had not been included in the interview guide. The emerging questions had been documented in the field notes and memos and had been addressed during the upcoming interviews.

The data analysis techniques used for this study are described in the following sections in detail and it is highlighted how the outlined methods improve the rigour of this qualitative study.

3.7.1.1 Transcription

For this study, all research interviews were audio recorded with a voice recorder. Audio recordings offer a very accurate summary of the interviewee's accounts which is essential for any qualitative research analysis (Given, 2008). The interview recordings have been fully transcribed by the author of this study. The transcription is necessary to ensure written accounts of the interviews. In addition, they provide a record of all existing interactions (Fuß, 2014; Seale and Silverman, 1997). The researcher had initially tried to produce the transcription of the interview without any transcription software. This proved to be very time consuming and not very efficient as the researcher was not familiar with transcribing interviews. She then decided to research available transcription software to support and to speed up the transcription process. The software the researcher decided to use was F5 which turned out to be very helpful and an easy-to-use software. At the very beginning of transcribing the first interviews the researcher thought about asking a transcription provider to do the actual transcription for her. After careful consideration the author decided not to involve an external provider to do the transcription work. This decision was triggered by the fact that the researcher used the transcription time to start with the actual data analysis. Emerging themes as well as accounts of the interview situation came to the researcher's mind while transcribing the interview recordings. In addition, the researcher was able to reflect on the actual interview situation and interview atmosphere while listening and transcribing the interview. The researcher was then able to make additional written accounts in the interview memos. The first couple of interview transcriptions were especially very time-consuming due to the fact that the researcher was not used to transcribing interviews. At certain points in time this felt unproductive in the researcher's mind. However, reflecting now on the full text transcription process it feels like a meaningful time in the researcher's view. In addition, the researcher feels confident about the accuracy of the transcription and was able to compile valuable information for the data analysis.

After finalising the transcription of each interview, the researcher took the time to listen to the interview recording and to read the interview recording once more. Again, ideas and analytical concepts which came to the researcher's mind while reading the transcript and listening to the interview were documented in the research memos. This process was followed for all 17 interviews. The interview with the interview participant which did not allow the use of the voice recorder was transcribed selectively, based on the researcher's detailed notes which were taken during the interview. For the researcher, this overall transcription and analysis process provided a step-by-step possibility to get familiar with the actual data.

3.7.1.2 Theoretical Sampling

Theoretical sampling is a data collection method which is based on concepts emerged from data. The purpose of theoretical sampling is defined in the following way:

> *"...to collect data from places, people, and events that will maximise opportunities to develop concepts in terms of their properties and dimensions, uncover variations, and identify relationships between concepts." (Corbin and Strauss, 2015, p. 134)*

Grounded theory research as well as case study research pursue the principle or the assumption of theoretical or purposeful sampling which is inevitably with the data collection and the emerging theory (Corbin and Strauss, 2015; Glaser et al., 1968; Glaser, 2016; Goulding, 2002).

In the very first stage of data collection, it is not possible for sampling to be purely guided by emerging themes. At this stage, the sampling is open due to the missing emerging theory at the very beginning of the data collection phase. In order to overcome this challenge, the researcher followed the approach advocated by Corbin and Strauss (2015) to use the existing literature. Theoretical sampling is very theoretically driven as the analysis starts immediately after the initial data has been collected. The data collection is than followed by the data analysis. Further, the data analysis is followed by the generation of concepts which consequently lead to further questions and therefore further data collection until the researcher has reached a point of saturation. Saturation is the point in time of any research when no new themes and no new major concepts emerge (Corbin and Strauss, 2015; Locke, 2000).

The author of this study sampled interview participants based on their previous employee engagement scores. An excel application was used to randomly select research participants that were in scope of this research (those who had high or very high engagement scores). Due to the fact that this research follows a case study approach the interview participants were all from the company in which the research took place. The researcher chose this sampling approach on purpose to keep the flexibility required when conducting grounded theory research. During the data collection period the researcher was, in most of the cases, able to analyse the collected data immediately after each interview. In two or three cases the researcher had to conduct more than one interview during the week which led to the fact that the data were only looked at high level before the next interview and analysed in detail after the next interview took place. This was unavoidable for the researcher to keep the overall timeline and to align with the interviewees' time schedule. The theoretical sampling had been done until the researcher was not able to add any further information to the emerged categories in terms of their variation and density. The interview guide created for this study is not very relevant for theoretical sampling. Nevertheless, the researcher used the interview guide as a reference or starting point during each interview.

3.7.1.3 Constant Comparison

Comparative analysis is one feature of social science research amongst many which is built into the research project design when following a grounded theory approach. Comparative methods are used to establish and demonstrate analytical differentiations and by making comparisons at each level of the analytical work (Charmaz, 2014a; Glaser et al., 1968). Further, constant comparison addresses the social construction of validity and the concerns of validating the knowledge gained in interviews (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2015).

Constant comparison is defined as

> *"...the act of taking one piece of datum and examining it against another piece of datum both within and between documents in order to determine if the two data are conceptually the same or different". (Corbin and Strauss, 2015, p. 93)*

An initial step is to compare data to data in order to find differences and similarities (Charmaz, 2014a). For this study the researcher started to compare interview statements to one another and within the same interview. Data which seem to be conceptually similar are grouped together and conceptually labelled in the same way. This way of comparing data is important to all analysis due to the fact that these comparisons allow the researcher to minimise data to concepts, to further develop concepts in regards to their features, characteristics and dimensions as well as to differentiate one concept to another (Corbin and Strauss, 2015).

While using constant comparison the researcher demonstrates how reflective and analytical thinking can enhance the research process. Constantly, the researcher is obliged to think about and to reflect how the existing knowledge as well as the gathered data might be incorporated into the evolving grounded theory (Dunne, 2011).

The aim of the researcher was to follow the constant comparison as much as possible in order to identify the similarities of the interview statements as well as the differences. A first comparison of statements within the interview was done as part of the initial and immediate analysis after each interview had taken place. A comparison of statements in different interviews was done as a second step. This happened in a sequential way. As a final step the researcher compared the interview statements from the very first interviews conducted during the data collection phase to those interviews conducted at the end of the data collection period. This process was very time consuming but enabled the researcher to a great extent to get very familiar with the data and to dig deep and detailed into the data. Furthermore, this process helped the researcher to understand the exact meaning of the data and to stimulate further thinking about the properties and dimensions of the emerging themes. An example memo can be found in Appendix 4: Example Memos.

3.7.1.4 Memo Writing

Writing memos is an act of recording or writing down reflective notes about what the researcher is learning from the data (Given, 2008). The process of writing memos is an essential part of grounded theory research. It is based on reflective thinking. Memos take account of the researcher's thoughts and internal dialogue at a specific moment in the research process (Dunne, 2011; McGhee et al., 2007). Memos are the starting point of any data analysis. They are notes or information written by the researcher for herself. At the beginning of the data analysis memos are written ideas of concepts or emerging themes. Throughout the analysis they are accumulated and ideally one memo exists for one idea or concept. Within grounded theory memos contribute to the credibility and trustworthiness of the research process and the research findings. In addition, memos are used to provide the researcher with the required distance to the raw data which is collected (Charmaz, 2014a; Corbin and Strauss, 2015; Given, 2008). The author of this study started writing memos already in the early and initial stage of the literature review before the actual data collection took place. In the author's mind this supported the idea of applying reflexivity. This is of utmost importance addressing the concern of conducting an early literature review while following a grounded theory research approach. During the actual data collection, the researcher jotted down ideas, concepts, as well as conceptual highlights that came to mind in a kind of research diary or notes sheet. During the interview this was the only way for the researcher to jot her memory on certain quotes or key ideas. After each interview the researcher created a brief memo on the interview itself. Taking notes of the atmosphere, thoughts that came to mind, ideas for further research investigations or possible topic deep dives for future interviews. Whilst conducting the research analysis the researcher wrote down memos about each category and emerging themes. This was done continuously adding to the description or highlighting additional points. The author used the data analysis software MAXQDA to record her memos during the data analysis phase. The software allowed an easy search and find functionality as well as referencing memos to data and interviews as well as referencing memos to other related memos. Each memo contained a date, so the researcher was able to see how the analysis evolved over time while working with each memo. During the entire data analysis period the memos were reviewed periodically, re-organised or summarised to reflect the data analysis process and progress continuously. The memos provided the initial basis of the final content and structure of this thesis.

3.7.2 Systematic Coding Procedure

During the data analysis period the collected data was structured by the researcher in order to conceptually classify variations in the data in terms of the witnessed patterns (Rand, 2013). This process is called coding. Coding is used to identify differences and similarities in the data. This allows the researcher to define emerging classifications (Holton, 2010). The aim of coding is to develop a scheme of saturated categories that are comprehensive of all available data (Silverman, 2013). Codes crystallize the knowledge while studying the collected data (Glaser, 2016). At a very high level the coding procedure is usually done in the following way: the data is screened and statements are identified which describe the relationship between categories or emerging themes. In further rounds of screening, redundant information is removed in order to retain the essence of the important and relevant information in regards to the research study (Corbin and Strauss, 2015; Holton, 2010). Once the coding is finalised the researcher looks for patterns in the data that suggest relationships between the different categories. This is done multiple times until all the collected data are explained by the emergent theory (Gill and Johnson, 2010).

In order to ensure the rigour in qualitative research the author of this study has decided to use a computer-based programme to code and analyse the enormous amount of generated data. As already mentioned in the previous section the software used was MAXQDA. Corbin and Strauss (2015) have acknowledged the fact that using computer-based programmes for qualitative analysis leaves "the researcher freer to do the thinking necessary to do "quality" analysis" (p. 203). Initially, the author tried pencil coding to analyse the data. This was done for the first two interviews. However, the author realised that pencil coding without the use of a software makes the overall data analysis much more complicated and difficult in terms of time and in terms of connecting emerging themes and codes to one another. This was the reason why the author decided to use a qualitative data analysis software.

The data analysis of this research advanced over the three stages of open, axial and selective coding. This coding procedure was selected by the author to increase the levels of abstraction and analytical depth. The detailed coding process used for this research is explained in the following sections.

3.7.2.1 Open Coding

The first step within grounded theory is the open coding procedure. In this step the attention is purely on the data itself (Truschkat et al., 2005). Open coding is a process of examining, breaking down, conceptualising, comparing as well as putting data into categories (Corbin and Strauss, 2015). In grounded theory extensive theoretical coverage can be achieved through analysing the interview transcripts line-by-line (Corbin and Strauss, 2015; Truschkat et al., 2005).

The open coding started for the author of this research with reading the interview transcripts and corresponding interview memos carefully. In a second step, the author re-read the transcripts and started with the line-by-line coding. This initial line-by-line coding evolved very soon into a sentence-by-sentence coding rather than a line-by-line coding. In very few cases the coding was done for an entire paragraph. Codes used by the author were either *In-vivo Codes* (codes using the language used by the interviewee) (Charmaz, 2014a) or a short description sentence or descriptive words were used as the open code. Throughout the entire open coding process the sentences or paragraphs were compared to each other to identify differences or similarities in the coding. This ensured that not the same open code was given for a different theme. In some rare cases entire paragraphs were highlighted in different colours to show their importance to the researcher when coming back to the data at a later stage in the process. At the end of the open coding period the author re-read all open codes, added comments or further descriptions to the codes in order to make the analysis more accurate. For some of the open codes, memos were written to reflect upon the specific code in further detail. All open coding was done using the MAXQDA qualitative analysis software.

3.7.2.2 Axial Coding

The second step of the coding process is the axial coding which starts after the initial open coding is finalised. The aim of axial coding is to elaborate on the first concepts, to identify the main categories and to arrange the emerging themes in a structural and conceptual order (Miles et al., 1994). The process of axial coding is a constant comparison. The data is used again but put together in different ways. By this, connections are made between the categories and relationships between the data can be identified by the researcher. The name *axial coding* derived from the fact that the researchers code around the "axis" of an emerging category (Corbin and Strauss, 2015; Given, 2008). The researcher of this study followed the grounded theory approach to axial coding by which she determined how the categories vary between each other and in terms of their dimensions. As the major categories started to emerge the researcher asked questions in regards to the categories in order to explore them further. This process is referred to as paradigm and it leads the researcher to pay specific attention to the context, the conditions and the outcomes which are related to the identified category (Given, 2008). Once the researcher had generated a couple of axial codes, she compared the remaining codes to one another and to the newly created axial codes. This supported the researcher in identifying new axial codes, to change or adapt the existing axial codes, or to combine current axial codes. At the end of the axial coding phase the concepts and categories had all been combined and consolidated. Thereby, the researcher ensured that the empirical evidence had been positioned in the data from beginning to end. This had been an important aspect for the researcher to support the data analysis.

3.7.2.3 Selective Coding

The final stage of the coding process is the selective coding analysis. The aim of the selective coding is to incorporate all identified categories into a so-called core category. The core category represents the phenomenon central for the research project (Corbin and Strauss, 2015). Strauss and Corbin (1990, p. 116) define selective coding as

> *"the process of selecting the core category, systematically relating it to other categories, validating those relationships, and filling in categories that need further refinement and development."*

The researcher of this study analysed the main findings and their relationships to one another and to the core categories. Thereby, the researcher achieved an integrated analysis. This analysis took quite some time and the researcher looked into alternatives to further explore and examine them against the data in order to verify and confirm them. At the end of this process the researcher identified four core themes. Mind maps and other visualisations were created by the researcher to accomplish analytical focus. The final structure of the analytical analysis is the foundation for the presentation of the findings of this study which are explained and discussed in chapter 4.

3.8 Conclusion and Critical Reflection

The previous chapter on the research methodology highlighted the researcher's view of the world and her epistemological position. Further, the research approach, the research design as well as the reason behind using a grounded theory approach were explained in detail. The researcher took an inductive research approach to provide theoretical descriptions using qualitative interviews to collect the data. An inductive research approach is very common in grounded theory research which seeks to develop theory from emerging data. However, this is restricted to the limited generalisation beyond the particular case of this research. The grounded theory findings are emerging findings which are developed by the systematic, continuous and repetitive process of data collection and data analysis.

In addition, the data analysis techniques used for this study have been described. Validity and reliability are important aspects of any research. The author addressed these aspects in the previous chapter as well. However, not all of the explained data analysis techniques in section 3.7.1 will be able to solve the issue of validity and reliability completely. However, they play an important role in mitigating some of the constraints and highlight the importance to pay particular attention to the quality of qualitative data and the judgements and conclusions that are made of the data (Seale and Silverman, 1997).

The researcher's own experience in the area of leadership behaviour and leadership development informed the initial research question. However, the researcher ensured that this would not shape the field research. A priori questions were not as commonly used as would be in a pure grounded theory approach. Moreover, the researcher used semi-structured interviews in which she asked semi-open questions. After each interview the researcher analysed the data and validated it with existing literature.

A valid concern for the researcher was one's own objectivity being a researcher within the own organisation. She studied Henri Mintzberg's work from 1973

"The Nature of Managerial Work" as well as the more recent study he did in 2011 *"Managing"*. In both studies Mintzberg conducted the research within his own organisation. In chapter 3.6.4 the researcher explains in detail how she addressed this aspect.

4. Research Findings and Analysis

4.1 Introduction

This chapter provides the findings and perspectives of the case study conducted for this research project. Further, it discusses the findings based on the emerging themes of the data analysis.

In particular, the chapter starts with an overview of the data used for this study. It shows the demographics of the research participants as well as a list of the emerging themes and corresponding codes.

The second part of this chapter presents the findings and different perspectives of the research participants regarding the employee engagement. Specifically, it shows the various understandings of what employee engagement means in general to the research participants and it presents the view of the research participants that employee engagement is a leadership responsibility.

The third part of this chapter presents the perspectives and findings of the research participants regarding whether a leader's background and personality have a positive influence on the engagement levels of teams.

The fourth part of this chapter presents the findings and perspectives of the research participants in relation to which leadership practices have a positive influence on employee engagement.

The next part of this chapter shows the findings and perspectives of the research participants regarding how their focus on talent management has a positive influence on employee engagement.

The chapter closes with a short summary and conclusion.

4.2 Data Overview

This chapter provides an overview of all data used for this study as well as the data resulting from the analysis of the qualitative interview. This includes demographic information of the research participants, explanations of emerging themes, codes as well as categories.

In total, 17 interviews have been conducted with full-time employees of Linde. All interviews were conducted in the English language. The researcher, as being a native German speaker, had very rarely translated certain words into the English language. However, conducting the interviews in the English language had not been a problem because English is the main company language at Linde. Further, all research participants who are non-English native speakers speak English every day at work.

The following table illustrates the personal information of the interview participants.

Interview #	Age	Gender	Nationality	Highest Degree
I1	40	Female	German	Master
I2	38	Male	Romanian	Bachelor
I3	36	Male	Ukrainian	Bachelor
I4	50	Male	British	Bachelor
I5	36	Female	German	Master
I6	50	Female	Estonian	Bachelor
I7	50	Male	German	Master
I8	54	Female	German	Diploma
I9	42	Male	Ukrainian	Master
I10	62	Male	German	Master
I11	50	Male	German	Diplom
I12	51	Male	Argentinian	Master
I13	54	Male	German	Diplom
I14	40	Female	German	Diplom
I15	53	Female	German	Master
I16	47	Male	Italian	Master
I17	61	Male	American	Master

TABLE 4: INTERVIEWEE OVERVIEW - PERSONAL INFORMATION

As shown in table 4, the research participants age ranges from 36 years to 62 years. Approximately, 35% of the research participants (6) are female and 65% are male (11). This represents and is in line with the overall gender distribution at Linde (Linde, 2019). About half of the interviewees are from Germany, with four male and 5 female German research participants. The origin of the other half of the interviewees is distributed as follows: one person each from the United States of America, Argentina, Great Britain, Estonia, Italy and Romania. Two interview participants are from Ukraine. Except for one research participant (I4) all other research participants are currently living and working for Linde in Germany.

Generally, and in order to maintain confidentiality, the researcher uses the following logic when referencing interviewee responses or referring to a specific interviewee: when a reference is made to a research participant or a response of an interviewee is referenced the interviewee number will be used (I1 - I17). When a specific and important quote is used the reference will include the interview number as well as the business area of the interviewee (e.g. I2, Operations).

All research participants have engaged in university studies and have a university degree. About 50% of the research participants have a Master degree and 1/4 has either a Bachelor degree or a Diploma.

Table 5 below illustrates the business information of each research participant. Specifically, the business area, tenure (length of service at Linde), seniority level (management level) as well as the international experience is shown in the table below.

Interview #	**Business Area**	**Tenure**	**Seniority Level**	**Intern. Work Experience**
I1	Global Legal	9 yrs	Executive	Yes
I2	Operations	16 yrs	First Line Manager	Yes
I3	Healthcare	13 yrs	First Line Manager	Yes
I4	MD Middle East	28 yrs	Middle Manager	Yes
I5	Finance	13 yrs	Middle Manager	No
I6	Information Technology	17 yrs	Middle Manager	Yes
I7	Finance	17 yrs	Executive	Yes
I8	Global HR	28 yrs	First Line Manager	Yes
I9	Strategy	8 yrs	Second Line Manager	Yes

I10	CHRO - Chief HR Officer	12 yrs	Executive	No
I11	Operations	20 yrs	Second Line Manager	No
I12	Compensation & Benefits	18 yrs	Middle Manager	Yes
I13	COO - Chief Operations Officer	15 yrs	Executive	Yes
I14	Regional HR	15 yrs	Second Line Manager	No
I15	Talent Management	11 yrs	First Line Manager	No
I16	Regional Legal	7 yrs	Second Line Manager	Yes
I17	Talent Management	38 yrs	Middle Manager	Yes

TABLE 5: INTERVIEWEE OVERVIEW - BUSINESS INFORMATION

In total, 11 research participants belong to the so-called Support Functions and 6 research participants to Business Functions. In this case, the Support Functions are Human Resources, Finance, Information Technology as well as Legal Services. The specific business area is shown in the table above.

The tenure or length of service of the interviewees ranges from 7 years to 38 years. The management level or seniority level is divided into four categories by the researcher: Executives (4 interviewees), Middle Managers (5 interviewees), Second Line Managers (4 interviewees) and First Line Managers (4 interviewees). This categorisation is in line with the terminology used at Linde for the various managerial levels. At Linde, the following definitions apply to the management levels (Linde, 2019):

Executives	Employees on the Executive Board or Board -1 level
Middle Managers	Managers of Business Units usually at Board -2 level
Second Line Managers	Managers of managers
First Line Managers	Managers of employees with no managerial responsibility

Each seniority level is represented by at least one female interview participant. On the first and middle manager level were two female interview participants taking part in this research. The age distribution amongst the seniority levels shows that two interviewees are amongst the Executive or Middle Manager population with an age of 40 years or younger. The same applies to the second and first line manager population: in each population, one research participant

is 40 years or younger.
About 75 per cent of all research participants have international working experience. In this context this means they have either lived abroad for a certain period of time or they are currently working in Germany on an international assignment. Only a third of the interviewee population has not been working abroad. However, all research participants have been on multiple international business trips.

All interview participants were willing and open to answer all questions addressed to them. As previously mentioned, conducting the interviews in the English language was not an issue, not even for the non-native English-speaking research participants. Interview content such as comments or side conversation that was not in scope of the research project is not part of this research report.

At this point, the researcher would like to remind the reader of the research questions and the research objectives before the findings and analysis will be discussed. Please see a visual illustrating the link between the research questions and research objectives on the next page.

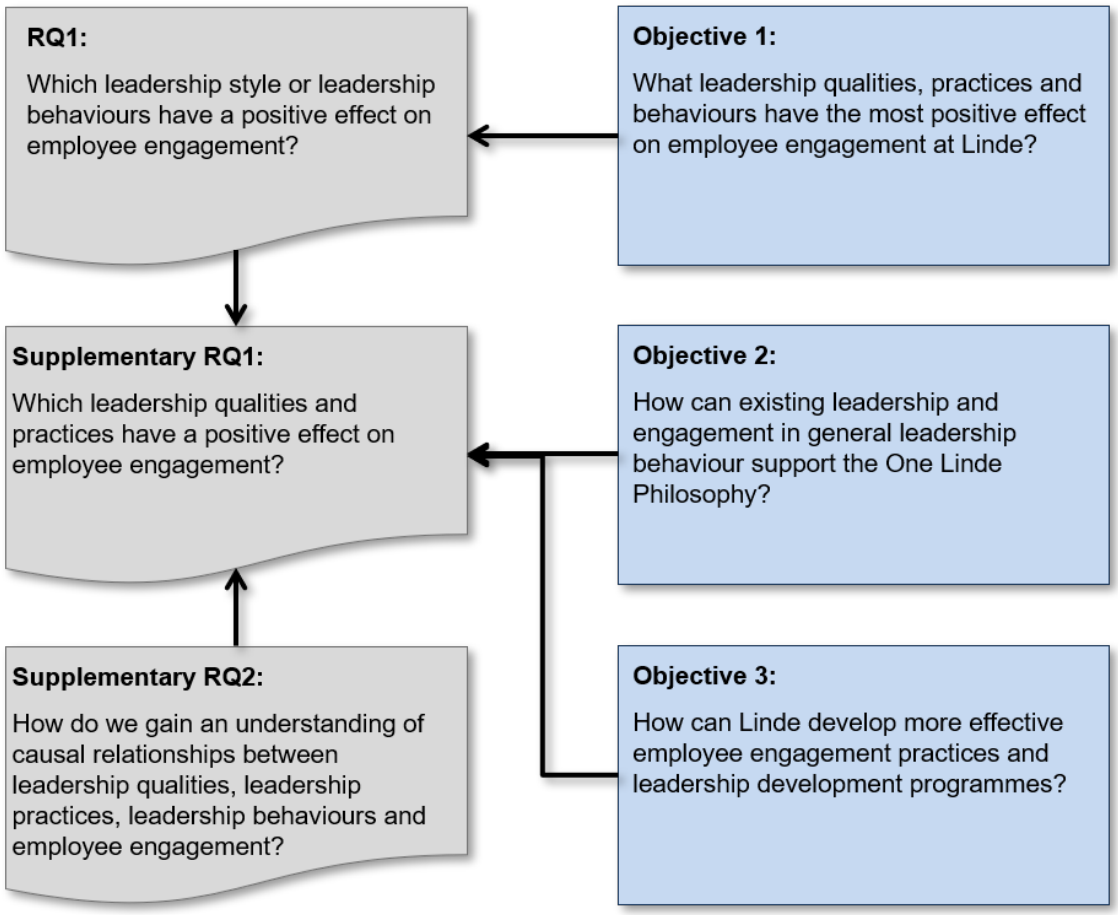

FIGURE 4: RESEARCH QUESTIONS & RESEARCH OBJECTIVES (OWN ILLUSTRATION)

As previously described in section 3.7.2 on page 94 the researcher conducted a systematic coding procedure. Initially the researcher intended to do the entire thematic analysis with paper and pencil. However, after starting to use this practice for the analysis of the first interview, she realised very quickly that detailed analysis and combining data would be very hard to do and very time consuming. Therefore, the researcher has decided to use the computer software MAXQDA to analyse the data. Today, the use of computer-based programmes in qualitative data analysis is considered to be standard (Corbin and Strauss, 2015). The use of the software allowed the researcher to code and analyse the enormous amount of generated data in a systematic way.
As well, this process has been described in detail in section 3.7.2 on page 94. An example screenshot of the interview analysis using the MAXQDA software is included in Appendix 5: Interview Analysis Example. In addition, Appendix 6: Code Interview Matrix illustrates a screenshot of a Code Interview Matrix. The

Code Interview Matrix allowed the researcher to visualise the codes applied in each interview transcript.

The coding allowed the researcher to define emerging classifications (Holton, 2010). In line with the aim of coding, to develop a scheme of saturated categories (Silverman, 2013), the researcher looked for patterns in the data, compared the data and identified emerging themes. As a result of this extensive analysis the very first round of analysis led to the identification of 25 categories, 160 codes and 1,450 sub-codes. After various rounds of working with the data, analysing the data and combining important aspects, the analysis resulted in four themes, eleven categories, 110 codes and 1,302 sub-codes.

A final analysis resulted in eight categories, 24 primary codes and 70 supplementary codes within the following four themes:

Theme 1: A leader's understanding of employee engagement

Theme 2: A leader's personality and background have a positive influence on employee engagement

Theme 3: A leader's behaviour and leadership style have a positive influence on employee engagement

Theme 4: A leader's focus on talent management has a positive influence on employee engagement

The visual on the next page, illustrates the four themes and the corresponding categories, primary codes and supplementary codes.

The four themes are presented in the following way in Figure 5 on the next page: **Primary Codes [In Bold]**/Supplementary Codes. Each primary code is visualised in an individual green text box. Supplementary codes are included in the text box of the corresponding primary codes, in case supplementary codes have been assigned. A supplementary code has not been assigned for each primary code.

An example of Theme 1: "Importance of Engagement" as well as "How to engage employees?" are **Primary Codes [In Bold]**; "Going the extra mile" is a supplementary code of the primary code "Importance of Engagement". The primary code "How to engage employees" has no supplementary code assigned. This logic is used for the visualisation and presentation of all four themes on the following pages.

	Category	Primary Codes [In Bold] Supplementary Codes			
Theme 1: A leader's understanding of employee engagement	Employee engagement	**Importance of engagement** – Going the extra mile	**How to engage employees?**		
Theme 2: A leader's personality and background have a positive influence on employee engagement	Personality of the leader	**Personality of the leader** – Achievement oriented – Behavioural attributes – Being patient – Calm – Decision maker – Driving – being in charge – Empathy – Harmony – Influencing skills	**Self awareness** – Like what you do – Personal limits – Personal values – Thinking and reflecting	**Authenticity**	**Work-life balance**
	Personal and educational background of the leader	**Influenced by own education and background** – Background of the leader – Cultural background – Degree – Educational background – International work experience	**Leadership experience** – Being a mentee – Career change – Career progression – Leadership journey – Leadership training – Learning preferences of the leader – Young leader	**Being a female leader and mother** – Part-time manager	
Theme 3: A leader's behaviour and leadership style have a positive influence on employee engagement	Leadership behaviour	**How is their own manager perceived?** – Leader as a role model – Visible leadership	**Caring about people** – Active listening – Devote time to people – Holding people accountable – Know your people – Leader as back-up for team – People oriented	**Visionary** – Leadership is changing	
		Situational management – Authoritative – Effective leadership – Leadership style – Solution oriented	**Empowerment** – Delegation – Execution focus – Strength-based leadership – Team involvement	**Conflict management**	
	Communication	**Communication** – Delivered message vs. received message – Face-to-face meetings – Informal communication – One-on-one meetings – Open and sharing/transparency – Open door policy – Team meetings – Video conferences – Virtual leader			
	Trust	**Trust** – Lack of trust – Required leadership skills and capabilities			
Theme 4: A leader's focus on talent management has a positive influence on employee engagement	Performance management	**Performance management** – Employee's performance – Global standards – Leader as Coach – Managing low performers – Target setting – Setting priorities	**Recognition** – Celebrating success – Providing team members a stage to shine – Personal interest	**Motivation**	
	Talent Development	**People development** – Pushing employees out of their comfort zone – Career discussions – Opportunities for personal development – Individual development plans	**Feedback** – Feedback for development – Providing feedback	**Mentoring**	**Succession planning**

FIGURE 5: ILLUSTRATED THEMES, CATEGORIES AND CODES (OWN ILLUSTRATION)

As previously described in detail in section 3.7.2 on page 94, the final stage of the coding process is the selective coding analysis. The result of the selective coding are core categories or categories. The categories represent the phenomenon central for the research project (Corbin and Strauss, 2015). In total, 8 categories within four themes have been identified by the researcher.

The figures and tables on the following pages present the four themes with their associated categories and codes, including a description of the category and an example code. The four figures should remind the reader of each theme and the corresponding categories and codes.

Theme 1: A leader's understanding of employee engagement

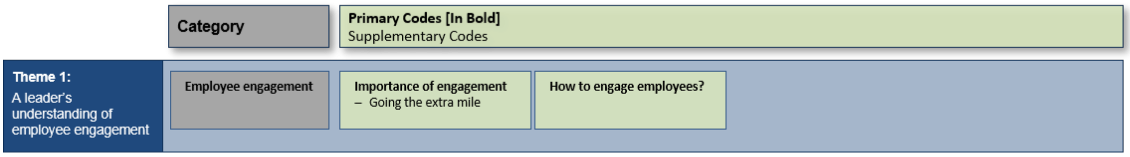

FIGURE 6: ILLUSTRATED THEME 1, CATEGORY AND CODES (OWN ILLUSTRATION)

The logic of presenting the Primary Codes and Supplementary Code in Figure 6 is the same as in Figure 5 on page 107. The same applies to Figures 7, 8 and 9.

Table 6 shows Theme 1, its category as well as the category description and an example code.

Theme 1: A leader's understanding of employee engagement		
Category	**Category Description**	**Example Code**
Employee Engagement	Understanding of employee engagement; behaviours an engaged employee demonstrates as well as what leaders view as important and necessary to engage employees	Primary code: Importance of engagement "Employee engagement is if employees are working for more than just their own daily tasks, if they see the bigger picture, if they see how their work is connected with other people, with other departments." (I14)

TABLE 6: THEME 1 "EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT", CATEGORY DESCRIPTION & EXAMPLE CODE

Theme 2: A leader's personality and background have a positive influence on employee engagement

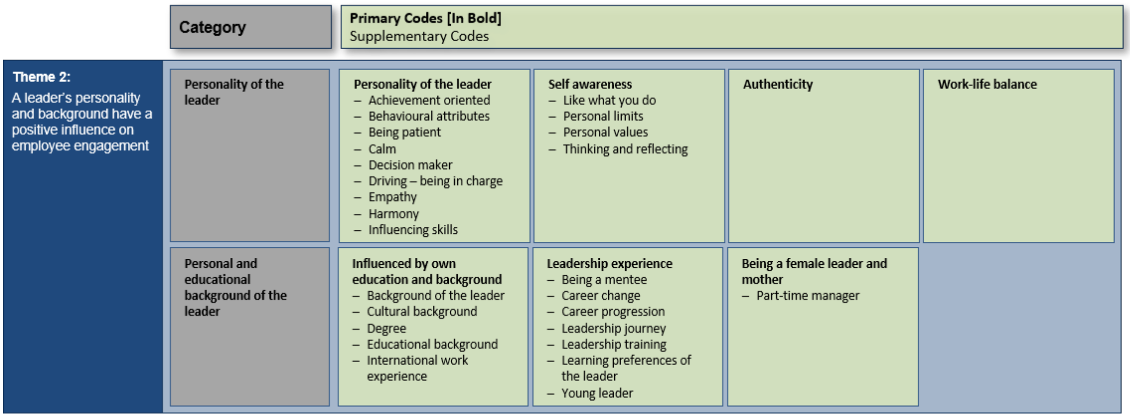

FIGURE 7: ILLUSTRATED THEME 2, CATEGORIES AND CODES (OWN ILLUSTRATION)

Table 7 shows Theme 2, its two categories as well as the category descriptions and an example code for each category.

Theme 2: A leader's personality and background have a positive influence on employee engagement		
Category	**Category Description**	**Example Code**
Personality of the leader	Description of leader's own personality; how the leader describes him-or herself; the effect the personality has on the own style of leading people	Primary code: Personality of the leader "I genuinely, and I know this is unusual and people don't believe me when I say this, I genuinely don't view things in terms of success and failure. I view things maybe in terms of positive and negative." (I16)
Personal and educational background of the leader	Personal and educational background of the interviewed leaders; i.e. degree, where the person has been growing up, international living and working experience as well as the leadership experience	Primary code: Influenced by own education and background Supplementary code: Background of the leader "I think one of my major triggers is I grew up in a big family on the country side with four elder brothers. So, I had the trigger to play with them and to compete with them, to bulk with them. So, I always had you know this feeling that there is a natural distance between me and my brothers and I always wanted to catch up." (I5)

TABLE 7: THEME 2 "A LEADER'S PERSONALITY AND BACKGROUND HAVE A POSITIVE INFLUENCE ON EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT", CATEGORY DESCRIPTION & EXAMPLE CODE

An example visual illustrating Theme 2 and its corresponding categories and linked codes is included in Appendix 7: Visualisation of Theme 2.

Theme 3: A leader's behaviour and leadership style have a positive influence on employee engagement

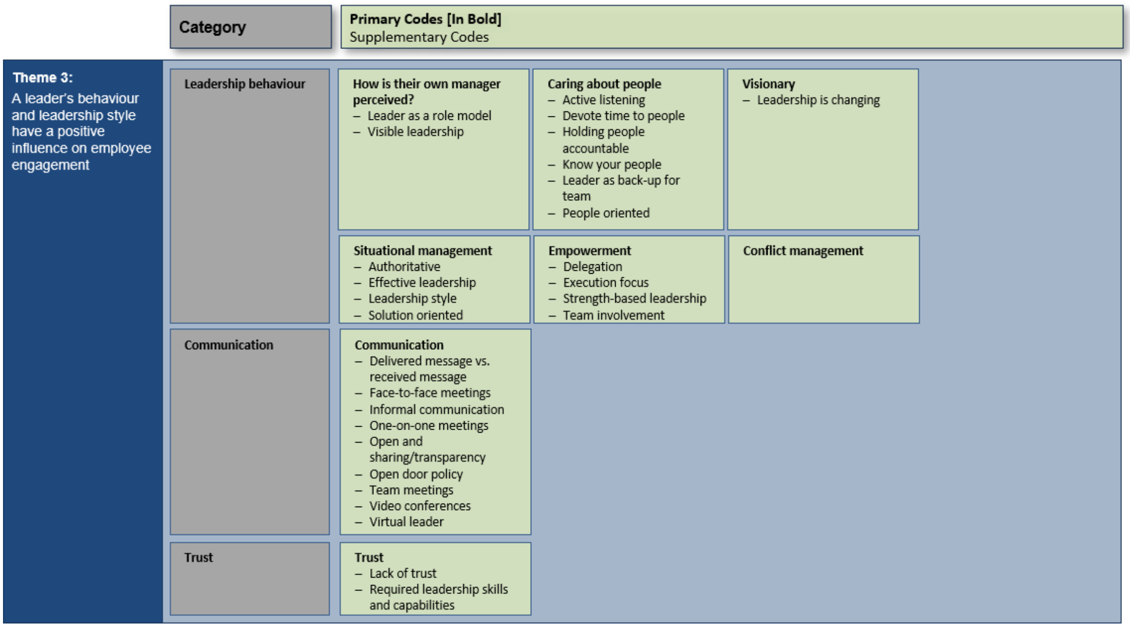

FIGURE 8: ILLUSTRATED THEME 3, CATEGORIES AND CODES (OWN ILLUSTRATION)

Table 8 below shows Theme 3, its three categories as well as the category descriptions and an example code for each category.

Theme 3: A leader's behaviour and leadership style have a positive influence on employee engagement		
Category	**Category Description**	**Example Code**
Leadership behaviour	There are many leadership styles displayed consciously and unconsciously by leaders; specific styles and behaviours displayed by leaders lead to highly-engaged teams	Primary code: Visionary "Leadership is more about where to get and not how and why doing something. Being able to bring the vision for your team and also being able to inspire." (I9)

Theme 3: A leader's behaviour and leadership style have a positive influence on employee engagement		
Communi-cation	For effective communication people need to be open and honest; this goes two ways: leader to employee and employee to leader	Primary code: Communication Supplementary code: Open door policy "I think it is very important to sit together with your team regularly. Which I did a lot and for some that was fine to have a jour fixe every week; which we had and not only me talking but I always collected topics and we discussed it there. And on the other hand, I was always available. So, my door was open when I was not in any conversation and was reachable." (I8)
Trust	Trust as the foundation of success; getting things done without trust is impossible; trusting employees follow their leader; volatile working environments require trust; it is hard and takes a long time to build trust and it is very easy to lose trust	Primary code: Trust "With each individual over time you find opportunities to demonstrate that you are trustworthy. You find something that matters to that individual, you promise them something and you deliver on it. And then on a basic transactional level you start to build trust and then there comes situations with everybody were something really difficult happens for them, they have a disaster, a family issue, they have something where you need to flex the rules to help them. And it is those moments you really build trust." (I4)

TABLE 8: THEME 3 "A LEADER'S BEHAVIOUR AND LEADERSHIP STYLE HAVE A POSITIVE INFLUENCE ON EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT", CATEGORY DESCRIPTION & EXAMPLE CODE

Theme 4: A leader's focus on talent management has a positive influence on employee engagement

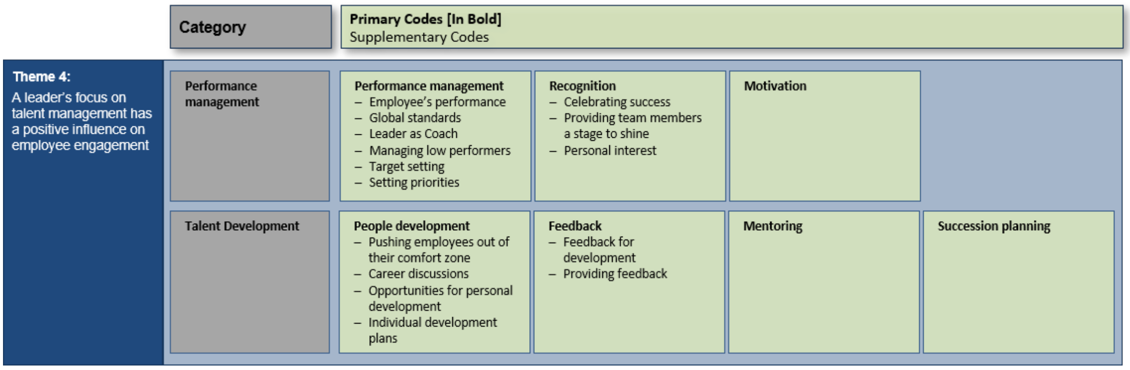

FIGURE 9: ILLUSTRATED THEME 4, CATEGORIES AND CODES (OWN ILLUSTRATION)

Table 9 is the last table in this section, illustrating Theme 4 and its two categories, the category descriptions as well as an example code for each category.

Theme 4: A leader's focus on talent management has a positive influence on employee engagement		
Category	**Category Description**	**Example Code**
Performance Management	The way how leaders manage the performance of their employees as well as which tools and processes leaders use in regards to performance management.	Primary code: Performance management Supplementary code: Employee's performance "I manage performance through an engagement and trust matrix. You can manage performance by hard targets, (...) but I find no pleasure in that at all. Find it tedious and unfortunate (...) so I manage performance from the other end. Which is on engagement, positivity can-do basis. I want your ideas, I give you the space and you pay me back in the results that will come and I trust you to do that." (I4)

Theme 4: A leader's focus on talent management has a positive influence on employee engagement		
Talent Development	Talent development has many aspects and is key to have an engaged work force; i.e. finding the right people development opportunities; providing feedback and mentoring opportunities as well as following a sustainable succession planning process.	Primary code: People development Supplementary code: Opportunities for personal development "I like to develop my employees through experience. What do I mean by that? I mean putting them in roles that, as they go into the role, they know why they are going that road and it is more than doing a job. It is taking them somewhere in their career. Giving them projects." (I4)

TABLE 9: THEME 4 "A LEADER'S FOCUS ON TALENT MANAGEMENT HAS A POSITIVE INFLUENCE ON EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT", CATEGORY DESCRIPTION & EXAMPLE CODE

The four outlined themes emerged from the detailed data analysis and the research question. The themes will now be presented and discussed in the following sections using references and quotes from the research participants. In order to ensure confidentiality, the interview number is used to reference an interviewee, e.g. ("I3" stands for Interviewee 3; "I9" stands for Interviewee 9). In case a particular quote is used from an interviewee, the person will be referenced by using their interview number as well as their business area, e.g. (I8, Global HR). Some of the codes within the identified themes and corresponding categories are more powerful than others: the primary codes. The author would like to mention that not all supplementary codes are used for the analysis.

4.3 Theme 1: A Leader's Understanding of Employee Engagement

4.3.1 Category: Employee Engagement

The following paragraph describes the category "employee engagement" of theme 1 with its primary code "the importance of engagement" which is supported by the supplementary code "going the extra mile". The second primary code within theme 1 "how to engage employees" will be discussed in the next section.

The interview respondents had a clear understanding of employee engagement. Those understandings ranged from very broad definitions such as "employee engagements means people are happy to come and do their best" (I3) or "your personal energy that you are willing to put into your job; with other words, what makes you get up every day" (I15) to more detailed descriptions such as

> *"Engagement means someone feels happy in the place where he or she is. Feels that it is a sustainable situation, feels challenged but calm. Not always feeling that you will lose the job tomorrow. Not always feeling that someone is being micromanaged and not liked by others. So, being comfortable like when you are in the house with your parents or with your partner. You are relaxed. You are sitting on the couch, you really don't expect someone from behind you to make something nasty. So, that's engagement" (I12, Compensation & Benefits).*

Further, the interviewees highlighted the "commitment towards the company" (I2), the "pro-active participation in the life of the company" (I16) as well as the motivation "to find ways to improve the company" (I4) as descriptors of employee engagement. I7 adds to the motivational aspect the element of loyalty and "how happy you are with what you are doing all day". I6 describes engagement as "...making sure the people want to be here and when they are here they actually bring the energy and their full brainpower with them". In the mind of I6 truly engaged people "bring in their soul and energy into the work".

I13 highlighted the importance of feeling connected to the company and its products:

> *"Employee engagement is when employees feel attached to their company and feel proud to work for their company. When they are able to identify with the products and the culture of the company" (I13, COO).*

Seeing the "bigger picture" and how one's own work "is connected with other people or departments", as well as "access to information" are the views of I14 and I16.

Furthermore, it is the understanding of I17 that people need to feel "empowered at work", they need to feel that they are "growing" and are "given challenges"; further, employees need to feel like they are "making a difference". I11 adds to that by asking "How can you engage when you are not empowered?".

In addition, employee engagement is seen as something "internal or personal"

(I9) and something that people "are born with" (I2). Interestingly, I2 states that for him employee engagement is about compensation and how well the company compensates the employee's daily efforts. In I2's mind either an employee is engaged or not, it cannot change.

A very interesting anecdote was given by I12, who compared the concept of employee engagement literally to getting married. He stated:

> *"Engagement is a beautiful word. Because you know when you are about to be married you are engaged. That is much more than being committed. Because committed is "I give my word and I will do this", but maybe I don't want it. My heart is not there but "I am committed and I will do it". Being engaged is a commitment that your heart wants and your belly wants and your brain wants and you don't want it never to end. That's why people get engaged before they get married. So, employee engagement is all together in a professional situation, in a company, ideally with everything" (I12, Compensation & Benefits).*

Lastly, I4 described very well that a company has engaged teams when "you start to get that buzz in an organisation and people trying to improve things without being asked".

There was a clear understanding of employee engagement amongst the research respondents. Further, employee engagement is viewed as very important or even "top important" (I11) by all research participants. "People are ready to go for the extra mile" (I12). Further, I12 states "the most engaged teams get the best team results and the more engaged teams we have in our company the better the company results will be". I14 stresses the importance of high employee engagement even further by saying "would there be any situation in which I don't need high engaged employees? No, I don't think there is".

In case the employee engagement is low it is important for each line manager to "identify, to understand the root causes" (I9) and to act upon that. Finally, if employee engagement is low, "the productivity and success of the company is at high danger" (I10). Even more drastically, I8 states "if you don't have engagement in a way that they are willing to invest time and energy then you are lost".

4.3.2 Primary Code: How to Engage Employees

This chapter discusses the primary code "how to engage employees?" of theme 1.

The interview participants acknowledged the fact that they play a very important part in engaging their employees. Respondent I17 compared employee engagement to one of the hygiene factors that need to be in place such as feeling safe at work or feeling respected. In his view employees "have to feel that someone is really caring about them and listening to them". Additionally, I17 also emphasised the fact that employee engagement is "the responsibility of each individual line manager; the minute you take on the role of leading other people in your first leadership role".

Furthermore, I4 states "to get engagement you have to give them a hand in the game". The importance was further highlighted by I5 who said:

> *"It is up to us in the leadership team to make a difference and even if it is small things. We should all have a portfolio of small things that in total can help us through tough times" (I5, Finance).*

I8 builds on that thought by mentioning that it is highly dependent on the line manager, "I think if you have a good manager, even in a generally bad environment, people are willing to invest much more time even in a good company in which the micro cosmos of the team is not working well".

There are various views on how to engage employees. The views range from focusing on the compensation of the employees and handing over small presents from site visits (I2) to trying to give the employees the feeling that the manager tries to make the people happy every day a little more (I5).

Respondents I1, I2 and I9 view that employee engagement is within each person. The line manager can only indirectly encourage the employees or "try to find it within them by asking, what do you like most?" (I1) or by "doing his normal operations properly" (I9). Respondent I4 on the other hand invented "continuous improvement programmes to get the people engaged", to "give them a stake in the business" as well as "to celebrate successes". Celebrating success and people's involvement in the business and in decision-making process was highlighted by I3 as well.

In addition, employee engagement being very personal within the employee was addressed by I11 who cited an old saying "you cannot light the fire in others, if the flame is not burning inside yourself". In I11's mind, line managers have to find "their personal motivation" in order to "share this motivation and your enthusiasm with others".
Furthermore, I9 acknowledged the importance of employee development and supporting employees in "growing personally" and in linking the employees' daily tasks to the "company's success". The aspect of helping employees to grow was mentioned by I15 as well who said that she would engage in regular discussions with her employees to ask "how can I help you as an employee to grow?" Furthermore, having regular personal discussions with employees was mentioned by I6 as an instrument to increase employee engagement. Specifically, by openly stating "I trust you" and "I want your opinion", I6 tries to improve the engagement level in her team.
Engaging employees is a line manager responsibility. This was clearly stated by all research interview participants. However, one interviewee (I17) mentioned how hard it is to achieve and no matter how mature a line manager is, the manager's task to increase employee engagement "is hard" and "it continues to be difficult" (I17).

4.3.3 Summary and Discussion of Theme 1

The starting point for this research was the interest of the researcher in the topic of employee engagement and the influence leaders have on it. Employee engagement is known to have a positive effect on business outcome and productivity (Macey and Schneider, 2008). There are several well-known influence factors which have a direct impact on the engagement level of teams (Saks and Gruman, 2014). One of the main drivers of employee engagement is the direct line manager of an employee (Arnold, 2018; Nink, 2014).
This research project explored the views of the research participants regarding the understanding of employee engagement and the responsibility of leaders in regards to having a high-engaged team member and entire team.
The findings of the research suggest that employee engagement is of utmost importance and that it is every line manager's responsibility to drive the engage-

ment level in the team. The literature supports the importance of engagement. Many studies showed the link between high employee engagement and positive business performance due to increased levels of productivity (Salanova et al., 2005; Zhang et al., 2014). In addition, the literature acknowledges the research finding regarding the role of the individual line manager. Line managers have often the most influence, in an unconscious or in a conscious way, on the engagement level and the motivation of their team members (Nink, 2014). The literature confirms the research findings that leaders are viewed to be the main driver for employee engagement (Arnold, 2018). In that regard, the research findings are opposing critics who see employee engagement not contributing to job satisfaction or increased commitment (Harrison et al., 2006; Newman et al., 2011).

As the findings indicate, the understanding of employee engagement has been in line with the overall understanding of employee engagement presented in the literature review chapter. Specifically, acknowledging the fact, that there is not one consistently used definition of employee engagement (Macey and Schneider, 2008). The literature is supporting the research findings in this regard as there has also not been one overall precise understanding or definition. However, one interviewee (I2) expressed the view that the engagement level of an employee is something "internal" and cannot be changed by the line manager. This view is supported by critics who view that employee engagement levels are about how individuals see their role (Maslach et al., 2001).

Further, the research findings suggest ways to engage team members or entire teams. The findings ranged from providing monetary incentives to employees to giving opportunities for personal development as well as accountability and responsibility. The literature supports the aspect of talent management in regards to driving employee engagement (Arnold, 2018). Especially, the involvement in decision-making processes, recognition, regular feedback as well as the personal interest of the line manager of the employee (Bryson, 2017; Nink, 2014), are in line with the research findings. In addition, the literature also supports the research finding that line managers who actively support their employees' development, experience higher employee engagement levels (Nink, 2014).

Furthermore, the findings of the research indicate that it is not an easy task for line managers to keep their employees engaged. This finding is supported by research with states that employee engagement is a construct which needs continuous exploration (Saks, 2006).

4.4 Theme 2: A Leader's Background and Personality have a Positive Influence on Employee Engagement

4.4.1 Category: Personality of the Leader

Personality is viewed by the research participants to have a significant impact on how someone leads. It is in everyone's "DNA" (I17) and it is hard or rather almost impossible to work against your own personality in private as well as in business life (I15). An example statement:

> *"My view on that topic (personality) is that there are certain core aspects of your personality that even if you try to hide them at work or change them at work are not gonna change" (I16, Regional Legal).*

Personality shapes part of your own leadership style; however, the reason why someone leads the way he or she does comes from one's personal background, personal values, the way how one got socialised as well as how someone grew up (I5, I10). The research participants commenting on their personality described themselves as "reliable" (I1), "critical positive" (I5), "continuously improving and never satisfied" (I6), "analytical" (I6, I7) and someone who likes to take fast decisions (I7), "engaging" and "motivating" (I12, I14). Being in the company of others, working with people and enjoying high-performing teams was specifically mentioned (I14, I16). Another interesting aspect has been that research participants particularly mentioned not being keen and liking "political games" (I7, I16). The personality is viewed to be adapting over time and being influenced by the different roles leaders have throughout their careers (I12).

Self-awareness plays a major role for the research participants. I5 for example is very critical about her own performance and reflects regularly what she likes and does not like of her own style of leading her team. Further, I7 demonstrates a high level of self-awareness by stating that his style of leading which was successful in the last almost two decades most likely will not be the way to lead successfully in the future. It is viewed to be important that leaders can judge themselves with their strengths and weaknesses (I10, I11, I17) and know what they want (I12). An example of self-awareness was from I11:

> *"Everything starts with yourself. You have to find your way through and your motivation and then you can share your motivation and your enthusiasm with others" (I11, Operations).*

Furthermore, it is viewed that leaders have to bring all aspects of themselves to work in order to be authentic (I7). Leaders should be as authentic as they can be (I17), not copy anybody (I8). Being authentic triggers trust and respect in leaders (I12). Respondent I17 additionally explained that only if a leader is self-aware of what he or she is great and not great at can one be an authentic leader. In addition, finding enjoyment in your role as a leader and liking what you do has an effect on the way you lead (I5, I7, I8, I13, I15, I27). An example statement by I15:

> *"It is yourself running the show and having fun in what you do. Like what you do is important" (I15, Talent Management).*

Reflecting regularly on "personal values, personal motivation, personal drivers" (I5, I11) is a common aspect mentioned by the research participants during the interview (I6, I9). Moreover, the interviewees mentioned that they like to build in buffer times throughout their schedules to think about tasks, to prepare decisions or to reflect on the own leadership behaviour (I7, I8, I16). I15, who said "I am in a constant dialogue with myself", likes to sleep over things, to reflect business topics away from work.

Additional personality traits that have been mentioned are "achievement oriented" (I1, I3, I5, I12, I15); "driving - being in charge" (I5; I9, I10); "emphatic" (I3, I9, I17); "influential" (I6, I9); "calm" (I10); "decision maker" (I10); "being patient" (I3); liking "harmony" (I17).

Balancing work and private life is especially important for I1 and I7. Respondent I7 for example said "you need to think about what you are willing to do vs. to give up" in order to maintain a healthy balance between work and private life.

In summary, the personality of each leader is viewed to have an effect on how one leads and ultimately, in how engaging a leader is. Self-awareness as well as authenticity are the most common personality traits of the research participants. Self-awareness as well as being authentic are viewed to be a foundation of great leadership behaviour.

4.4.2 Category: Personal and Educational Background of the Leader

At the beginning of each interview the researcher asked all research participants about their personal and educational background. This was not only done to get a smooth start into the interview, moreover, it was intentionally asked by the researcher to find out whether there are common aspects mentioned which had an influence on the future leadership career of the research participants.

The research participants have in total eight different nationalities: American, Argentinian, British, Estonian, German, Italian, Romanian and Ukrainian. As an answer to the question whether an international background has an effect on how people lead, for example I8 answered "Yes, absolutely". The family values in which a person is raised was mentioned specifically by I12 who said "I grew up in this family with strong values related to honesty, effort and persistence".

As already illustrated in table 4 on page 101 all research participants have a university degree. The degrees range from "law" (I1, I16); "electronics and electrical engineering" (I4); "business and chemistry" (I5, I11); "computer science" (I9); "communications" (I15) to the classical "business administration" (I6, I10); "economics" (I8) and "MBAs" (I7, I12, I17). Two interviewees did not follow the typical business and engineering studies. I14 studied "culture" and I8 studied "music" before she decided to study "economics".

On the question whether or not international working experience has an effect on how managers lead, I8 answered "Yeah, yeah absolutely". The majority of the interview participants spent either a couple of years abroad such as I4 who said "I did have a life around the world. I was born in Berlin, lived in Singapore and the UK and worked in Ireland, South Africa and Middle East". Another example is I9 who worked in "Ukraine, Kazakhstan, UAE and Turkey". Respondent I6 highlighted the impression the researcher got from all interviews by saying "I am very happy working with people from different backgrounds". Besides working longer periods of time abroad it was highlighted, for example by I17 that "extended business trips of 6 weeks to 2 months" were very common across the interview group. Further, I17 highlighted the international work experience by stating "from a very early point in my career I spent a long time outside of my home country". Respondent I11 mentions the fact of intensive business travelling as well and builds on it by saying "I have seen more or less all airports in the world".

The leadership experience and leadership journey of the interview participants have been evaluated in order for the researcher to get an overview of the personal and educational background in its entirety. The majority of the interviewed leaders were "quite young" (I1) or "very young" (I12) when they took over their first managerial position. More specifically, aged around "32" (I1, I2) or in their "early thirties" (I7, I8, I11, I14, I15, I17). A few were even in their late twenties (I3; I12). Respondent I5 for example was "29" when she became a member "of the regional leadership team". Respondent I4 was even younger. He got into his first managerial position at the age of "23". Respondent I2 acknowledged the fact that it is not easy to become the leader at a very young age because "for some it was hard to accept that a younger person is leading them or defines the strategy and they should follow". Respondent I14 was in a similar situation because all of his "direct reports were older and more experienced than me" (I14). Respondent I1 was even confronted with astonished faces when she got into her first managerial role. "People look at you and you see in their faces they are calculating *how old can she be?*" (I1). When asked about the age at which his leadership journey started I10 answered "the first employee I had asked to leave was when I was 25".

The leadership journey and experiences of the interviewed leaders varies. Respondent I4 who has more than 27 years of experience said "leadership doesn't come from a book. It comes from your experience and the people you work with". Furthermore, respondent I4 commented on becoming a leader by saying:

> *"You don't become a leader when you are appointed into a position. You become a manager of a bigger team. You become a leader by the way you do it and you will know you have become a leader when somebody tells you" (I4, MD Middle East).*

The learning experience of becoming a leader is viewed as very significant by five research participants (I6, I8, I11, I12, I17). "The experiences tell you something or give you much more perspective" (I11) because one adapts his or her "leadership style based on experiences"(I12); it is a "personal journey" (I17). Part of the personal leadership journey could be to step back from a managerial role back into an individual contributor role as has been the case for one of the research participants. Respondent I17 found it to be "a relief" to be in a non-managerial position for a while because he "could focus on learning about HR and becoming competent in that area" after switching departments. The leadership journey was reflected by I8 as well who said "when I first got my very first real team lead I was so naive thinking that everybody would be happy for me and would follow me without saying" (I8). Such a journey is viewed to be never without problems, mistakes and even failures (I4, I8, I11, I13). Making mistakes is part of the journey, "as you develop sometimes there are things that go well and sometimes things that do not go well" (I13). I8 emphasised this point by saying "I did also wrong things. When I got team lead everyone thought I had to know everything, I had to decide everything and I made a lot of mistakes". This way of learning by doing was talked about by I6 as well who said "my development has been that I tested what works and what doesn't work" (I6). Respondent I17 underlines that mistakes are important for the development of leadership skills, "I had to make some big mistakes and I had to learn from those mistakes and also go through hard times to be a better leader" (I17).

One research participant summed up the value of the experience gained over time in a leadership position by saying:

> *"When one jumps into a first leadership role one needs to know that 10, 15, 20 years later one will be a completely different leader" (I12, Compensation & Benefits).*

The most common learning preferences of the interviewed leader in regards to leadership practice is learning from experience; "I had to learn what it means to be a leader" (I3) and never shying away from the unknown; "if you are scared to do something you have to try more and once you try more you learn something new" (I9). Growing to be a leader does not start once one gets the title "leader", "growing as a leader starts when you are growing up" (I16).

Some of the interviewed women mentioned the fact of being "a mother" (I5, I8)

and working "part-time" (I8) as a leader at least for a certain period of time to be influential on their own leadership journey and their personal style of leading others.
Leadership training, as part of the educational background, was only mentioned by a few interviewed leaders on what shaped their own leadership journey (I4, I6, I8, I11). Surprisingly, the fact of being a mentee themselves and its influence on their own leadership experience was only mentioned by three interviewed leaders (I8, I11, I12). Interviewee 11 said "I had the possibility to discuss and learn from senior managers which I recognise that they have a great style and a great personality where I can learn and that helped me a lot in my career" (I11).
In summary, the research participants believe that the educational and cultural background has a big influence on how one leads. In addition, the experience gained throughout a leadership career has a big impact on the own leadership behaviour. This leadership experience of the interviewed leaders was mostly gained through trial and error and on the job development.

4.4.3 Summary and Discussion of Theme 2

The success or failure of a company is mostly depending on its leaders. The better a leader becomes throughout his or her career the better for the company's success. Most of the time leaders are self-developed in a way that they continuously grow, learn and get more competent over time (Tracy, 2010).

The research findings are in line with the above statement. The findings indicate that the educational and personal background has a significant impact on how leaders have individually developed. The literature supports that there are various factors in the extent to which an individual develops as a leader. Amongst those facts are the family environment, the experiences at school, experiences one has gained with the own line manager as well as development and training opportunities one has gained (Conger, 2004).
Specifically, the research findings indicates that family values, the educational path that had been followed as well as the international (working) experience is viewed to be most influential on how a leader leads his or her team. Grout and Fisher (2007) support that argument by saying that the character of leaders is

shaped through childhood experiences as well as the educational and family background. This is acknowledged by Conger (2004) as well who says that leaders are made and born at the same time (Conger, 2004).
In addition, the literature supports the research findings in regards to the fact that international (working) experience has an influence on how one leads. Mobley et al., 2012 acknowledge this by saying that successful global leaders must be performing at their best in various different cultural settings. International work experience is viewed to be a powerful tool to develop these leaders (Mobley et al., 2012).
As previously mentioned, amongst the research findings, it has been identified that the educational path has an influence on how one leads. This is supported by the literature in the sense that the professional development should be viewed as an important aspect by leaders (Cardno, 2005). Interestingly, when asked about their own leadership journey and corresponding learning curve the interviewees mentioned that learning through experience was quite significant in their own leadership development. Further, the research findings did not include that traditional leadership training is seen to have played a major role in what shaped the research participant's leadership style. The literature supports that aspect by saying that leaders are shaped by their experiences and not only through studying leadership principles and theories (Allio, 2009).

Furthermore, the research findings suggest that the personality of leaders is viewed to have a major impact on how one leads and engages team members. The personal values as well as how a person was socialised was mentioned by the research participants. The literature is in line with what the findings indicate: the personal values guide leaders in what they do and how they do it. They create a leader's "bottom line" and they aid as advice to action (Kouzes and Posner, 2012). Pedler (2010) supports the argument by saying that it is important for every leader to know and understand one's own values.
In addition, the research findings suggest that leaders who are self-aware, who know and acknowledge their strengths and weaknesses and who are seen to be authentic are viewed to be more engaging than leaders who are missing this personality trade. Jackson (2011) underlines this aspect by stating that a leader

firstly needs to understand him or herself before developing others and in order to be an engaging leader (Jackson, 2011). Pedler (2010) adds to that argument, that a leader needs to know him or herself; needs to know what drives him or her; what the own values and aspirations are and how the world is seen by the individual leader.

Furthermore, the findings indicate that leaders who themselves take time to reflect and those who like what they do, are viewed to be effective in leading highly-engaged teams. The literature adds that leaders need to be equipped with the right mindset to become the most effective leaders (Yavuz, 2020).

Although there is no common definition on what an effective leader characterises (Latham, 2014), the research findings show multiple suggestions as outlined in the previous paragraphs.

4.5 Theme 3: A Leader's Behaviour and Leadership Style have a Positive Influence on Employee Engagement

> *"Being a manager [leader] is achieving results through others. Not through yourself. Always through others including yourself. Therefore, the effective leadership is crucial for success" (I12, Compensation & Benefits).*

At the first glance a supposedly simplistic statement. However, what does effective leadership really mean for a leader? The following sections explore what it needs to be an effective leader based on the views of the research participants:

> *"With effective leadership one can really achieve unbelievable things because when one deploys an effective leadership style the team feels so inspired" (I12, Compensation & Benefits).*

4.5.1 Category: Leadership Style

Primary code: How is their own manager perceived?

Six interviewees mentioned that their own manager played an important role in how their own leadership evolved (I5, I6, I8, I10, I12, I14). Respondents I5, I10, I11 as well as I14 specifically chose their line managers because they felt that they could learn from them in general; see which mistakes they made which should not be repeated (I6) and learn how they motivate their team members (I5). I5 highlighted:

> *"Copy good managers. Copy with pride from what you have seen from others who you really liked to work for, very motivated and highly engaged. Reflect about what have they done and what of that specifically is something you want to keep doing" (I5; Finance).*

Respondent I14 has acknowledged this point as well and further pointed out the value of watching other leaders act or react in certain situations, in certain "political games", and learning from that or even copying some of the behaviour (I14).

Furthermore, it is important to reflect on the experience one has made especially when transitioning into a first managerial role. Being a leader also means that one has to want to be a leader. An example statement by I8:

> *"If you are a leader or want to become a leader you have to know that you are not the expert anymore. I have a lot of discussions, problems, aha-experiences with people leading. When you are leading real teams than you lead those people and it is people work. It is not engineering anymore, details, etc. and you have to ask yourself if you want that" (I8, Global Human Resources).*

Respondent I6 acknowledges the fact that her leadership style has developed over time based on her experience (I7).

Primary code: Caring about people

Leaders can lead their teams successfully in a strict and hierarchical system, however, this is not "where you get the hearts and the brains of the people" (I11) nor how one gets an engaged team. Respondent I17 stated:

> *"Keeping your team engaged is your responsibility"* (I17, Global Talent Management).

Caring for others also means listening to your employees, however, "a lot of managers have the problem not to be able to listen carefully" (I3). Respondent I9 specifically mentioned how important it is for managers to "listen actively to the employees" in order to provide the opportunity for that employee "to express his personal feelings" (I9) and what is motivating this person. Caring for others also means taking time for your team members. Respondent I5, for example, tries to devote about 50 per cent of her time to lead her team (I5); I7 and I3 mentioned that they are even trying to dedicate 70% of their time to their people, "however, this is often difficult" (I3). Respondent I5 highlights the challenge, stating:

> *"I try to have time and make time for people. I think that is important but that's also part of my values, to respect others and also to make them feel appreciated and acknowledged. I definitely take a lot of time in my calendar talking to my team. Also making sure we have alignments, we have regular updates and team engagement" (I5, Finance).*

Another important statement was made by respondent I12:

> *"When you are the leader you should spend 80% of your time in the shop-floor and 20 per cent of your time in your office alone. Shop-floor means in the production facility, so where your team is. You have to spend time with them. A leader is there to lead the team. And to bring results with that team" (I12, Compensation & Benefits).*

Furthermore, "showing that you care" (I11), "getting close to them" (I17), taking time for people, understanding their needs by knowing where they come from was mentioned by respondents I1 and I13.

Respondent I1 further elaborated on the importance to take your employees "serious and to listen to their demands" (I1). When I1 took over the team she "had serious and depth conversation with everyone" (I1).

Respondent I4 adds to the importance of people orientation by saying:

> *"When people say to me how big is your business? I often then can't tell you that. I should be able to but it isn't my number one motivator. But my people and how effective the team is do really interest me" (I4, MD Middle East).*

Knowing your people's skills, capabilities, their aspirations and expectations was mentioned specifically by respondents I9 and I17. Furthermore, it was mentioned that a leader needs a personal interest in his or her team members. This interest includes knowing what is going on in the person's private life as well as what is going on at work (I14).

Knowing what your team members interests are does not come instinctively and it does take time (I17). A statement by I17 which highlights the importance to care for others and to devote time to your team members:

> *"You have to get close to them. You don't get that in a jour fixe. You get that over a period of time. And you know today I could sit down and for people particularly who report directly to me, I could write down what really motivates them and then I try to make sure that I am providing that and in shifting the way that I work with everyone" (I17, Global Talent Management).*

I12 even added to the importance of being close to your people by saying "being a good leader means to love people" (I12) as well as to protect your team members (I8). Other respondents mentioned the aspect of being the back-up for the team without interfering too much as well (I1, I10). An example statement to support this added:

> *"Number 1: back them. If it turns out to be wrong I am still backing them but I still hold them accountable. But I won't shame them in-front of the wider audience outside of the team. I would say: "yes, we got that wrong". Even if I was not involved in the decision. And this is how we are going to ensure that it doesn't happen again" (I4, MD Middle East).*

The above statements underline that caring leaders are as much capable as other leadership models to be committed to the organisational excellence in one's own area of responsibility (Covey, 2004).

Primary code: Visionary

Having a team vision and strategic direction for the team was mentioned by the interviewees as an important leadership practice. Respondent I9's point of view is that a leader needs to be "able to bring the vision for your team and also being able to inspire". Furthermore, I7 adds to the point by stating:

> *"Clear managerial guidance and direction for the team. So that they know what they should work against and what their targets are and what their vision is and what the strategy is either of the company or of the team or both" (I7, Finance).*

Another important aspect mentioned regarding future orientation is the fact that leadership and the way leaders used to lead has to change in the future (I7). I7 explained it in the following way:

> *"I think it is through this whole digitalisation topic the world is drastically changing and so I think the recipe of experienced and good leadership of the last 50, 60, 70 years after World War II will come completely obsolete within the next 10 years. We need to adapt or kind of anticipate what's happening. So, I think you need to have a complete new generation of managers or adapt drastically or try to bring in new ideas from outside to do that. All I want to say is that should probably be considered that the current leadership and looking back, people that are already in the business for 10, 15, 20 years which are currently in manager positions are probably not the right people to succeed over the next 20 years" (I7, Finance).*

Furthermore, respondent I7 explained that he sees the trend in "less hierarchical, less organisation set-up more cross-functional teams" (I7). Building on his view towards the future I7 made it very clear that he needs to change his leadership style and he is ready to do so.

Primary code: Situational Management

In line with the situational leadership theory developed in the late 1960s by Paul Hersey and Ken Blanchard (Jeanes, 2019), the majority of the interview participants has mentioned the importance to adapt the way of leading and communicating to their team members (I2, I4, I5, I6, I7, I8, I9, I10, I11, I12, I14, I17). An example statement:

> *"One approach which you use for a certain person in your team may not work for others" (I9, Strategy).*

Everybody who is led by an "effective leader is pointing in the same direction and the ways you get that to happen is very individual" (I4). Furthermore, I2 believes "with each individual you will have a different management style because each person is different" (I2); "needs different things" (I14); "is more or less senior" (I12); "needs more or less freedom" (I11) and one has to "adapt to the situation" (I9). In addition, I2 mentioned in order to approach each team member you have to know them. The cultural aspect of leading people differently was raised by I4 who said:

> *"Leadership can be situational in my experience. So, how you lead equally qualified and experienced people in one*

> *country is different to another country with the history behind them as well. You have to be quite adaptable. And being prepared to be adaptable is a key to success" (I4, MD Middle East).*

Respondent I5 builds on the thought by mentioning the importance of finding individual ways to motivate each team member. I17 adds to that by saying:

> *"There is no golden rule; everyone is an individual and the way you motivate individuals depends on what drives them" (I17, Global Talent Management).*

Furthermore, I1 adds to that thought by saying:

> *"I very much believe that everybody is strongest in what he or she likes most. So, I am not treating everybody the same way with the tasks because I think there are people who prefer this kind of work. So, and then they are also better in that. So, I am encouraging them to do what they can do best and what they like" (I1, Global Legal).*

It is not only important to adapt to the different demands of the people but also to the team situation (I6, I9). Respondent I9 highlighted the different approaches a leader needs when faced with people who have "high skill and low will or vice versa" (I9). Furthermore, I6 for example sees a difference between working in groups and within one-on-one-interactions with team members. Specifically, I6 said:

> *"When you are working in groups then you need to be more authoritative, more a strong leader, but when you work one by one or three together then you have a different style" (I6, Information Technology).*

The interview participants acknowledged the fact that each of their employees is different (I10) and one needs to adapt. However, it is also mentioned that this is not always easy. An example statement:

> *"It is important to give the team the feeling that you are fair but you can't treat everybody the same. And that is really difficult. That's hard" (I8, Global Human Resources).*

Primary code: Empowerment

"People have to feel that they are empowered at work and in their job" (I17). Involving and empowering team members is mentioned by the majority of the research participants as effective leadership practice and to gain the motivation of the team members (I2, I3, I5, I6, I7, I8, I9, I10, I11, I12, I13, I15, I16, I17). Three example statements:

> *"Involving the people is one aspect of getting people's motivation" (I3, Healthcare).*
>
> *"You know, I like what I do and I could never get it done if I was not doing it with everybody" (I17, Global Talent Management).*
>
> *"Empowerment has a lot to do with engagement at the end of the day. Because how can you engage if you are not empowered?" (I11, Operations).*

Providing the employees a stage to shine is an additional fact highlighted in regards to the empowerment and team involvement discussion during the interviews. One interviewee stated that he ensures that "the organisation knows that the work is not only from me but also from the team" (I8). Further, I15 said that it is important for her to "put someone in the first row; stepping back personally and trying to help the individual or the team member to get ready for the next step" (I15).

Empowering team members means enabling them to take decisions (I2, I9, I13), backing them up in case something goes wrong (I4) as well as "letting them know that I expect a certain level of commitment" (I5). An example statement:

> *"Empowerment says you are more than somebody to carry out my orders. Empowerment says you are involved in the decision making process. The gift bag for that is that you have to contribute your thinking and knowledge to that to me. But it also means I get better buy-in. And empowerment also means "I trust you". So, if I give you the ability to make decisions they know you don't need to bring it to my door. It gives me an opportunity to just show "I trust that individual". By doing that they again get ownership" (I4, MD Middle East).*

Respondents I10 and I11 specifically mentioned that it is important to give team members the freedom to act within their own area of responsibility and not interfere with their tasks (I8). However, it is important to hold people accountable as well (I12) and to make sure that team members know when "they should come back and align" (I13). Building on this aspect I5 said "we need to make sure we have the environment and the culture that allows empowerment" (I5). However, I4 critically stated, specifically in terms of the empowerment to take decisions, that this freedom is decreasing rapidly. I4 said:

> *"Fighting for your team to give them decision making authority for sensible things has to happen a lot in our corporation. Because over the last ten years I have seen empowerment which is in our corporation sinking dramatically. So, even though I have been promoted many, many times, my decision making authority I don't think is growing at all. In fact, I think it is less than it is ever been" (I4, MD Middle East).*

An important aspect mentioned by the research participants has been delegation. Delegation goes along with empowerment and entrusting others. Delegation is described by I12 in the following way:

> *"Delegation means that you assign the process or a task or something to a person in your team but with the right things that will allow that person to perform well" (I12, Compensation & Benefits).*

Furthermore, I12 acknowledged the fact that "delegation is very important and the higher up you are in an organisation the more important it is" (I12). I3 adds to that by saying:

> *"The more complex the organisation the more important is delegation. Trust is required for that" (I3, Healthcare).*

The interviewees varied regarding how much should be delegated. I1 said that she is not delegating "each and every topic" (I1) whereas I7 "likes to delegate as much as possible" and I16 goes a step further by saying "I delegate everything except that which is HR related or strategic" (I16). This statement is in line with I17 who said that he "likes to delegate as much as possible so that people basically can grow and develop" (I17). Respondent I10 pointed out that delegation does not only mean to delegate tasks. Moreover, it means delegating a task along with the responsibility and accountability. In addition, delegation is seen as a tool to develop employees. Two examples are:

> *"I rather grow the people then sticking on to too many things on my own" (I7, Finance).*
>
> *"I am more there as a sparring partner. People know that I am there, I support them if they need something but it is their project" (I1, Global Legal).*

Excellent leaders empower their teams and employees as well as build confidence within them in order to seek new and better ways of accomplishing things

(Bennis and Nanus, 2003). In summary, the research participants view the involvement of team members in decision making, the overall empowerment as well as the delegation of important tasks and projects as leadership practices which have a positive effect on the motivation and engagement level of teams and individual team members.

Primary code: Conflict Management

One cannot talk about leadership practices without mentioning conflict management. This has been the case for the research participants of this study as well. The topic of conflict management and how leaders deal with conflicts did not come up in every interview. However, in those interviews in which the topic was addressed the interviewees talked about how they deal with conflicts. Many interviewees avoid reacting immediately (I4, I5, I7, I15, I17). They like to think and reflect about it first before reacting. An example statement:

> *"So, first of all I sleep over things. I need a night so to speak to sort myself and to help myself to see the topic as it is without emotions and out of that moment. Getting out of that moment and I agree with the conflict person I would like to follow up the next day. Not to leave the situation and not having aligned on the next step and then the next morning I can come with my view and I seek the dialogue to sort that out" (I15, Global Talent Management).*

Respondent I17 follows the same approach by first starting "to detect that there is a problem" and then "worry about it" (I17). However, only for a few days:

> *"I have an unwritten rule that I don't worry about it for more than a day or two or a weekend before I take action (I17, Global Talent Management).*

Respondent I4 acknowledged that conflict is often a "mis-interpretation" (I4). Therefore, it is important for him as well as for other research participants to seek the conversation in person, if possible (I1, I2, I5, I7). When team members have an interpersonal conflict amongst each other the preferred way to handle it is to talk to the conflicting parties either one-to-one or all together and asking them to solve the conflict between them. The leader in that conflict situation is only a facilitator of the discussion (I5, I7, I14) who tries to "de-emotionalise" the situation (I5). An additional aspect was brought up by I10 who said that he is not resentful. He addresses conflicts but then forgets about them and moves on. In his view this is important to keep a healthy relationship with your team members (I10).

4.5.2 Category: Communication

There is no single right way to communicate. There are many different ways: "adjusted for the purpose and the team" (I5) for example or for the target group. Leaders have to be able to "communicate in all directions" (I7). Effective communication is when "people know what is expected from them" (I5), when communication is "crystal clear" (I10) and when the leader knows that the team did understand the message. If this is not the case one has to adapt or change the way he or she communicates and which channels are used for the communication (I9). It is often viewed that managers think they have communicated well however nothing has arrived at the people. An example statement:

> *"Communication is not what you mean to do, it is what arrives" (I15, Global Talent Management).*

Clear, transparent and honest communication is viewed critically about what a leader knows and what he or she does not know as well as what can be shared at the time present (I1, I3, I7, I10, I11, I12, I14). In addition, research participants see that communication always needs to come with "honesty as much as possible" (I15) and it is viewed to be "a matter of trust and to explain why you do something" (I8). An example statement which highlights the importance of open communication:

> *"The way I was dealing with this since the beginning is to be as open as I can be about what we know and what we don't know and to tell them by when what will be decided and communicated" (I7, Finance).*

Furthermore, the research participants see the need for different ways to communicate depending on the cultural setting the leader is in. Body language as well as the spoken word have to be adapted to the cultural setting. I4 for example states:

> *"As a leader if you are sensitive enough to that and have present of mind enough for that you can get a much nicer*

conversation and more effective results because people like working with you" (I4, MD Middle East).

Furthermore, I4 shared an example when he was crossing his leg while being in a conversation and the person opposite to him thought that he was upset with him due to the crossed legs. The "breath of acceptable communication and the ability to offend people" (I4) has to be kept in mind when people in general, and not only leaders, engage into a conversation.

Open and honest discussions are viewed critically when you are in a virtual setting with your team members. An example statement:

"People usually can register when you are disappointed about something which you can't convey virtually. And I think as a leader when you are dealing with uncertain times or difficult topics it is good to use the whole range, you try to use as much of your ability to communicate emotionally to help people through something. And that is cut off virtually" (I17, Global Talent Management).

I9 nicely summarised the importance of open and transparent communication by stating that "you have to explain more in order to bring your team behind you". Adding to that point I6 as well as I12 underlined the importance of sharing the same information with all team members. Moreover, I15 states that only when people know the context and the information between the lines then they can "act much more strong and much more concrete because they know how to better navigate" (I15). Another interesting aspect regarding communication has been stated by I16 who said that he likes very much talking to people because he sees it as "a new window on (his) own personality" (I16).

When asked about the preferred way of communicating to their employees the majority of the interview participants value one-to-one meetings with their direct reports which take place about every two weeks in person or via video conference (I1, I2, I5, I6, I7, I8, I9, I14). It is viewed that during these personal one-on-one meetings the leader has more time to directly deal with the concerns or needs of an employee (I1, I14). Furthermore, I17 values the personal meetings because "when you are face-to-face you can use a lot of non-verbal techniques to convey messages that if you just put into words would be difficult for people" (I17).

In addition, the research participants view it highly important to conduct at least once a year a face-to-face team meeting to discuss where the team stands, what the priorities are and in which direction they want to go as a team (I2, I11, I17). An example statement:

> *"The meetings I think are best when the subject is something that everyone feels that they can contribute to or the majority of people. And people are open and sharing" (I17, Global Talent Management).*

Respondent I5 adds a very interesting aspect to these face-to-face meetings which for her are not only about the business topics. Moreover, she likes to include a topic about leadership in these meetings stating:

> *"And I always bring a topic about leadership with me. The last time I also talked about what are my expectations towards leadership. So that they know what is important for me and that they know that people are one of the most important topics. I think by just repeating and not always talking about content in those meetings but also take time to talk about the softer things I hope it makes sense to them" (I5, Finance).*

The open and honest communication is possible because the research participants view a so-called "open door policy" as essential (I1, I10, I11, I12). The use of an "open door" in this context means that people can talk to the leader about anything at any time as long as the leader's door is open.

In summary, the research participants view an open and honest as well as transparent communication as essential in order to lead effectively. Taking time for their direct reports in individual meetings and regular face-to-face team meetings are the preferred communication channels by the interviewed leaders. The leaders acknowledge the fact that one needs to adapt the way of communication depending on the cultural setting and situation in which a discussion or meeting takes place.

4.5.3 Category: Trust

As a leader one needs to be someone that team members trust (I17) and leaders need to build that level of trust (I3). "If you don't trust (as a leader) you can't be honest" (I15) - a very drastic view by one of the interviewees who views trust as one of the main success factors to create highly effective teams.

Trust is viewed as the baseline for everything a leader does (I5, I7, I10, I12, I14, I17), like "the holy grail" (I17) and "it is very easy to lose the trust of your team" (I17).

However, trust needs to be looked at from two perspectives: the trust a leader has in his or her team members as well as the trust the leader gets from his or her team members. It is viewed that if a leader gives trust "he usually gets trust back" (I13). An example statement:

> *"Managers need to create a trustful environment from two angles: one is that people trust the manager. You can do this by being authentic, being transparent, being respectful, being caring, and things like that. In addition, as a manager, especially a manager of managers, if you have a chain of managers reporting to you, the top manager is responsible to create a trustful environment among others" (I12, Compensation & Benefits).*

Furthermore, in order to build trust the interviewees followed different approaches. Respondent I1 for example builds trust by "listening to their (her direct reports) needs and by taking them seriously" (I1) as well as by treating every team member the same. Respondent I2 states that he starts to build trust by knowing his people and by approaching each person differently, depending on the person's needs. I9 follows the same approach by following different approaches to build trust depending on the person. "Leading by example" (I12) and that team members "trust you not only as a person but people trust you that you will bring them to a good world" (I12) is mentioned as a way to build trust. Empowering team members as a way to build trust was mentioned by I4 and I13 whose view is that "empowerment means I trust you" (I4) and that team members get motivated when they are given a "certain room for their decisions" (I13).

Respondents included transparency practices as essential and practice includes: "No finger pointing, claiming results as your own and not blaming people" (I3); "explaining why you do something" (I8); being "trustworthy and transparent" (I14) are additional aspects mentioned how a leader can build trust. In addition, trust is very much linked to the leader's own personal values. Respondent I5 commented on this aspect by stating:

> *"If people don't believe your framework of values then they can't trust you" (I5, Finance).*

A more critical reflection of trust were done by I6, I9 as well as I17, who said the word "trust" is misused nowadays when people say that you need to have trust in order to be successful. You can still be successful. However, only the teams who have trustful relationships amongst colleagues and towards their leader "over-perform compared to other teams" (I9).
Respondent I17 summarised the importance of trust succinctly by saying:

> *"If you can build trust and maintain that, you get typically in my experience your team to do anything. Essentially, they will follow you. And I think more and more when agendas are shifting so quickly and nothing is stable like it used to be, that's very important that they have the trust" (I17, Global Talent Management).*

It is of utmost importance to build trust between leaders and their teams and direct reports. Because people who follow their leaders highly depend upon the leader's ability to combine competence, empathy and character to support a trustful environment (Covey, 2004; Goleman, 2007).

4.5.4 Summary and Discussion of Theme 3

James Kouzes and Barry Posner (2012) have investigated over many years what constitutes a good leader and what makes people willing to follow a leader. People follow willingly leaders who are honest, forward-looking, competent as well as inspiring (Kouzes and Posner, 2012).
Respondent I17 summarised the conversation succinctly about leadership practices by stating:

> *"Keeping your team engaged is your responsibility. You know as long as I have been a manager people have talked about how hard that is. And I think it continues to be difficult" (I17, Global Talent Management).*

The findings of the research suggest various leadership practices and behaviours that have a positive influence on employee engagement. The literature supports the view that there is a wealth of factors which have an effect on the overall engagement scores of employees. Leadership as such is the factor which has the most influence (Mester et al., 2003; Shuck and Herd, 2012).
The findings indicate that learning from experience regarding how the own line manager was perceived and what one could copy with pride or avoid doing has

an effect on how someone leads a team. This aspect is underlined by a study conducted in the 1980s: the more a line manager perceives his or her line manager as competent, the more likely it is that they would demonstrate the same leadership behaviour (Adler, 1983). However, classical leadership development training formats are still considered to be one of the most common leadership development activities (Bernthal and Wellins, 2006). Further, it is known that leaders need to develop their leadership skills over time (Caudron, 2002). This has been acknowledged by the research findings as well. The own experiences gained throughout the leadership journey has been mentioned as an important aspect to reflect upon continuously.

Further, taking time for the team members and caring for others has been an outcome of the research analysis. Especially during times of crisis leaders have the duty to care for their team (Ciulla, 2010).

Furthermore, getting close to your people and knowing what is important to them in business as well as in private life has been a finding from the research analysis. In addition, the research participants shared how much time they usually spend together with their team or on team topics. The literature describes this as empathy which is critical and requires continuous effort and the ability to demonstrate inspiration as well as interest in others (McDonald, 2008; Mostovicz et al., 2009).

An important task and one of the first tasks of leaders is to create and define the purpose and direction of the team in order to provide a future direction (Bennis and Nanus, 2003; Pedler, 2010). Envisioning and acknowledging the future has been indicated by the research findings in two ways as well. On the one hand it is important to envision a future for the team and being clear on the future direction of the team and the overall company. And on the other hand to acknowledge the fact that the traditional and common leadership styles or leadership practices may not be those which will be successful in the future. The literature confirms that the theme of leadership has changed. More and more it can be seen that an employee involving approach rather than a goal-oriented approach is more popular (Hickman, 2009; Stotz, 2007).

The literature views that those leaders who are able to switch between their leadership styles are viewed to be most effective (Avolio et al., 2009). The findings of the research support this aspect as well. Being able to handle different situations and different circumstances and to manage situationally as a leader, is viewed to be important.

Further, the findings of the research suggest that people should not only feel included and part of a team, moreover, they should be empowered and entrusted to act. In fact, an empowering leadership style does not only link to positive organisational results, it is also linked to higher employee performance as well (Keller and Dansereau, 1995; Raub and Robert, 2010).

In order to do that the research findings emphasised that leaders need to delegate as well as empower their team members by holding them accountable at the same time.

In addition, the research findings indicate that managing conflict and dealing with conflict constructively is important to maintain a healthy team atmosphere and to grow together as a team. The research data revealed that addressing a conflict but not reacting immediately is the way how leaders deal with conflict in general. The literature adds, conflict in organisations can be a source of positive and healthy relationships when addressed in a constructive way (Lencioni, 2002). Conflict management as well as conflict resolution strategies need to be applied by leaders in order to eliminate conflict (Afzalur Rahim, 2002).

Furthermore, fostering a climate of open and honest communication has been identified by the research analysis as well. This is again two-folded: a leader has to communicate as openly as possible towards the team. However, the team members should do this as well towards the leader and peers. In fact, the literature supports that communication is an area closely associated to leadership (Ruben and Gigliotti, 2016). It is through communication that the leaders shape the overall context of a situation (Fairhurst, 2009). However, a leader is only effective in communication when (s)he knows the needs of the team and if the team receives the intended communication through verbal and non-verbal communication (Ruben et al., 2016; Ruben and Gigliotti, 2016).

Lastly, the findings of the research suggest that creating an environment of trust is a significant driver of highly-engaged teams. Trust in this regard has to be looked at from two dimensions: (1) the trust a leader has in his or her team and (2) the trust the team has towards its leader. The literature acknowledges that leadership through trust is an important element for employee engagement (Macey and Schneider, 2008). It is widely known that leaders who trust their employees to do their job well are motivating their employees to perform at their best (Caldwell and Dixon, 2010). Further, it is known that employees are more willing to take risks when they know that they can trust their leaders and this will have a positive influence on the organisation's success (Baucus et al., 2008; Mayer et al., 1995).

4.6 Theme 4: A Leader's Focus on Talent Management has a Positive Influence on Employee Engagement

The following chapter discusses different aspects of talent management and what the interviewed leaders view as important and necessary regarding performance management and talent development which are the key pillars of an integrated talent management process.

4.6.1 Category: Performance Management

Primary code: Performance management

Performance management plays a major role regarding the interviewed leader's focus on talent management. The research participants shared their views on how they manage the performance of their employees, how they set targets, view progress as well as how they recognise good performance and how they manage under-performers.

The majority of the research participants mentioned the use of the internal performance management system (Linde uses an SAP platform) in regards to how they do performance management with their teams (I2, I3, I5, I6, I7, I9, I10, I11, I17) and how the leaders are able to "better manage the performance excellence of their teams" (I9). An example statement:

> *"I try to follow that global process as much as possible. So, we focus the discussion at the beginning of the year on what are the priorities for the department and which are the projects and the work that we should set as our targets. The first three months of the year there are a number of discus-*

sions around what are going to be our priorities and then how do we turn that into project work packages. And then I also try to have a discussion around which are the projects that stretch you or help you grow. So, I try to bring the whole kind of personal development angle to it as well. Not just this work has to get done but how can we actually use the work as an opportunity to develop and grow. And we do mid-year check-ins and we would do end of the year reviews. Those formal meetings tend to be focussed primarily on the achievement of targets that we set. I think that the process helps people see what they are doing connects into what the big priorities are." (I17, Global Talent Management)

"Clear managerial guidance and direction for the team as well as the line manager's expectations" (I7) in order for them to know what the overall direction of the company is and it is clear to everyone "what they need to do" (I17). This structured process contains "official milestones" (I9); however, interviewee 9 still tries to keep the overall team situation in mind when conducting the annual performance management cycle. Research participants I6 and I11 shared a little different approach to performance management. For example, interviewee I11 has created a habit to conduct a team meeting to discuss "where are we standing?; what is the overall direction? and where do we want to go? and by this setting the scene for the year" (I11). Research participant I6 on the other hand has a completely different approach to manage performance in addition to using the official tool. Specifically, I6 said:

"I think that this comes back to that somewhere in myself I do it naturally in my weekly course with the people. I don't think now there is a process performance management. I don't. When you ask me the question "how do I manage it?" I don't. I just work with them on a weekly basis. I don't even think that this is performance management. However, we always define where we need to go for the year." (I6, Information Technology)

Part of the global performance management process is the performance management dialogue which should take place at least two times a year. Unlike the career or development discussions the performance dialogue focuses purely on the performance of an employee. An example statement how research participant I5 uses the performance management dialogues:

"We have actually quite a good framework from the Group (Linde) which is at least making sure that you have two dia-

logues, one in the mid of the year and one in the beginning of the year. And that is of course the minimum I follow." (I5, Finance)

Interviewee I9 uses the performance dialogue to "listen actively to the employee" (I9) and to provide a regular platform for the employee to "see the reflection of the persons' understanding what the company targets are and how they translate into own personal, individual performance measures or targets" (I9). In I4's view, this discussion should not be "managed by a spreadsheet" (I4). Further, I9 acknowledged the fact that these dialogues are more an "official way of communicating with the employees" (I9), "bringing some kind of discipline for the team" (I9). In respondent I9's view this helps the employees to understand that there is a certain time during the year at which the line manager sits individually together with his or her direct reports to review what has gone good and what needs to improve in regards to the performance of an employee. I7 added to that by saying that he focuses these discussions around "the strengths, weaknesses and development requirements" (I7). In addition, I8 uses the regular performance management dialogue to check in with the employee "where they have their interests" (I8) and whether their current role is still what they would like to do or whether "they want to perceive other challenges outside of their role" (I8). In a way, I8 mixes the performance management dialogue with a development discussion. Respondent I7 sees these dialogues as "a feedback loop" (I7) and to act upon that by giving the right "training or some coaching" (I7). The importance to prepare for the performance management dialogues was specifically highlighted by I5 who said:

"Make sure that you have high quality of those dialogues. Because you can have ones were you just scribble five sentences five minutes before you start the meeting. Or you know you prepare at minimum for the same time as the meeting endures. So, at minimum one hour and that sounds little but if you have ten direct reports it is at least ten hours you are investing". (I5, Finance)

In addition, I5 mentioned the importance to gather feedback by "the dotted line managers" before one engages in a performance dialogue. This is especially important when you are working in a matrix organisational set-up with solid and many dotted line reports.

Furthermore, I1 and I14 made it clear that they do not only use the performance dialogues to provide feedback to their employees. Moreover, I14 for example "would mention the more general topics but would try to give that feedback on performance directly after something happened" (I14). So does I1, who "does not collect those things (feedback) and just say it in the annual performance review" (I1).

Another topic concerning performance management mentioned by some of the research participants was the topic of managing under-performance (I7, I9, I10). It is important to react and come up with a performance improvement plan (I10) and to understand "what happens and to have regular and flexible" (I9) discussions with that particular employee. An example statement how I7 deals with under-performance:

> *"I think the worst you can do is try to kind of neglect it because I think at the end the performance of a company or a team is only as good as everybody in the team is and if you have two or three people not performing that can drag down the entire team. Also from a motivational perspective. I think the other performers also expect the signals to the lower performers and to either exchange them or give them the right training and development because otherwise, you have only some people working for the whole team while others are not supporting sufficiently." (I7, Finance)*

An integral part of the performance management cycle is the target setting (I10, I11). It is important to set the targets for the year to ensure that the "right priorities" (I14) are set. Those targets need to be "stretched and clearly communicated" (I9). In I12's view, it is important to align five to six targets with variable pay because in his view "what gets paid gets done" (I12). An example statement:

> *"If you as a manager want something to be achieved and you have the luck to be in a company which provides variable pay put this as an objective to your team. Because that will be achieved." (I12, Compensation & Benefits)*

How to align those targets is done differently. I11 for example uses team meetings in order to operationalise the targets and "to be clear how to measure it and identify what the impact is" (I11). "A clear target system" (I11) with "KPIs which are measurable in order to see if something is achieved or not" (I9) are key elements to research participant I9 and I11.

Primary code: Recognition

Furthermore, recognition is an important element of performance management and should not be mistaken by general feedback. Many of the interviewed leaders have acknowledged the power of recognition (I1, I2, I3, I4, I5, I8, I10, I11, I13, I15, I16, I17). "Giving recognition and getting recognition is obviously a fine thing. It is what makes us work" (I11). In respondent I3's view, it is important to "appreciate good performance" (I3) because by giving "credit and respect to people" (I3) leaders trigger the employee's "motivation through appreciation" (I3). An example what recognition means to a research participant:

> *"Recognition means appraising my team's success. And I think the cliché is actually very useful that you praise people publicly and you critic privately. Further, it means celebrating successes, certainly bi-laterally and as much as possible publicly." (I16, Regional Legal)*

In respondent I1's point of view, it is important to "not doing empty praise" that is why she "only uses this appraisal when it is really something outstanding" (I1). That was a learning for I1 who "praised people too much" (I1) at the beginning of her career and that led to people not taking the recognition "seriously anymore" (I1). Respondent I2 acknowledged the fact that by providing recognition the team members "feel valued or valuable for the team and for the company" (I2). A very interesting view was shared by research participant I4:

> *"I let them (the team) have the line when other leaders would jump in and take the credits. So, I think you have to take a step back sometimes as a leader. There is a famous military saying that "the leader eats last"; from the battlefield. You can imagine from the history when this was important. There is no food left. The leader can't survive without food. The guys need the food to carry on fighting. And I think, there is a little bit of that culture required to be a successful leader in business too. It includes things like sitting in the canteen with the guys, sharing a lunch with them. They know that you have other things but the sitting, listening, having your sandwich together counts for them." (I4, MD Middle East)*

Further, I5 mentioned that she does not "do enough of it" (I5) and that she "could recognise even more" (I5). The reactions of the people when they get recognised is what motivates research participant I8 to recognise her team members regularly.

There are many ways to recognise an employee. In I15's view, "money is one thing but that's not all" (I15). Furthermore, she sees "recognition in terms of increasing someone's area of responsibility" (I15) as another great way to recognise a team member. In the research participants' views, celebrating successes (I4, I11, I13, I15) as well as providing team members a stage to shine is another way of recognition (I7, I8, I15). Celebrating success is done differently by the research participants. Respondent I11 for example "shares with the whole team" (I11) when something extraordinary happened. Whereas, I13 writes an email to the "whole Executive Board" (I13). Respondent I15 on the other hand "loves to celebrate success in different meanings" (I15). Specifically, I15 said:

> *"This can be having a dinner together or telling teams around yourself, people that you work with, interfaces that this success has happened and how the process or how the journey was." (I15, Global Talent Management)*

Providing a stage to shine can look differently in the minds of the research participants. It could be to take team members "to a meeting and make them visible that they did the work and it was not only the leader's signature" (I8). This approach was also shared by I7 and I15 who make their employees present their work themselves "in front of the stakeholder, the business, the whatever we have to help them on the journey" (I15).

With all of the above-mentioned different aspects of recognition research participant I4 summed it up quite significantly by saying:

> *"The other thing I like to do with recognition is find opportunities unique to that individual. So, spot them when they are not expecting it. And say "what do you do? You worked so hard." It depends on the individual that matters. I do not like cash recognition. I think it is very ineffective and derisive. But in most of the cultures I find that personal link, face-to-face and something relevant to them, a gift that matters to them, an event that matters to them, that you know that says something personal is really powerful." (I4, MD Middle East)*

Primary code: Motivation

Regarding performance management the research participants talked about motivation in general and how they keep their direct reports and teams motivated. The way the interviewed leaders motivate their employees is similar to what has been discussed in the previous part of this section regarding how performance is managed. However, during the interview the distinction was made by the interviewees, therefore, the researcher decided to include this aspect separately as well.

It has been acknowledged that there is "no golden rule" (I17) when it comes to motivating employees because "everyone is an individual and the way you motivate individuals depends on what drives them" (I17). An example statement:

> *"It is individual for each person. So, one approach which you use for a certain person in your team may not work for others. You have to be able to assess the type of the team member. How he contributes, what are his personal internal motivators and what is his background. What is the cultural background as well. So, a lot of things which you can use to find the right way to motivate the person." (I9, Strategy)*

Respondent I17 adds to that by saying he "could write down what really motivates" (I17) the team members and then to try to "make sure that (he) is providing that and in shifting the way that I (he) works with everyone" (I17). A couple of interviewees shared the opinion that leaders need to create a vision for everyone to follow and to align with in order to get the motivation of their people (I11, I12, I16). An example of this is respondent I11:

> *"Show what is the future, what are the possibilities to look on the bright side; what do we want to achieve and what we can do as a team. And, if you can light this fire then things are happening and then you do not need to do that much more if you can show the vision." (I11, Operations)*

Further, I11 shared a short quote to underline his opinion:

> *"If you want to build a boat and start a journey with a team; it is not about explaining them exactly how they need to nail the wooden things together and create a boat. It is more about to make them think about what could be on the other side about beaches and sunshine and this is guiding and this is starting the motivation." (I11, Operations)*

In other words, it is really the line managers themselves who need to "find their own motivation and then share this motivation with others" (I11). This is in line with I12's view who stated:

"As managers, we cannot motivate people. But we can create conditions that people are extremely motivated. But that does not mean that we will motivate everyone." (I12, Compensation & Benefits)

Nevertheless, some interviewees mentioned clear examples how they motivate their employees. Motivation through challenges (I17) and through tasks is one way to motivate in the minds of I1, I2, I5, I15. For example:

"I motivate by giving challenging tasks. So, I think everyone gets bored if he is repeatedly doing something. So, people need change, they need always at least a certain percentage of thrill in their lives. I always try to put some stretched assignments at least for those who are eager and who want to do that. So, stretch people and allow them to grow. I think that motivates a lot of them but then of course recognition is part of the motivation as well." (I5, Finance)

Appreciation as a tool to motivate team members were specifically mentioned by I2, I7 and I12. I7 said "by showing them regularly that you appreciate their work and understand what kind of commitment they show" (I7). In addition to showing appreciation, I2 admits that he sometimes "approves (business) trips which are not 100% needed" (I2). He does that because he knows that this will be acknowledged positively by his employees.

Involving the employees in important tasks or decision-making processes (I3) as well as providing them with their own area of responsibility (I8) was further mentioned. An example statement:

"I come back to that topic of trust. Trust motivates; giving people a certain room for their decisions. I think it gives employees a lot of motivation if they are allowed to decide. It gives them this feeling "I have developed it, I am in control" and that is very motivational for people. I hope by this to create the environment in which people motivate themselves." (I13, COO)

Furthermore, a couple of research participants view money as a way to motivate their employees (I1, I2) even if it is just "short term" (I16). However, I8 raised her concern on that by saying:

"Sometimes you motivate people with bigger responsibility, with projects. I think money is a strange, really strange animal to motivate. Because I had already discussions where I was happy to get the budget and people were not happy because they wanted a project, they want more responsibility

or team lead or whatever. Not money." (I8, Global Human Resources)

An interesting view in respect of motivation was shared by research participant I6 who said she motivated her employees by "always respecting the private life". Furthermore, she stated:

"So, when somebody needs to go to the doctor or somebody needs to take care of their wife or mother or whatever it is, that goes first. Because I know I get it back doubled. Whenever that storm is over privately they will be here to focus. Grateful, that they could do that when it was important to them." (I6, Information Technology)

This chapter highlighted the views of the research participants in terms of which tools they use to manage the performance of their teams. Specifically talked about in detail, has been the overall performance management process including the regular performance dialogues and the target setting. An important aspect is the topic around recognition and more precisely how the interviewed leaders motivate their employees and how they celebrate successes with their teams. How the research participants deal with under-performance as a part of the overall performance management process was highlighted as well.

Interviewees I9 and I17 add to the entire discussion around performance and motivation at work by pointing out the importance of so-called hygiene factors. An example statement:

"I think there are all these hygiene factors. So, people have to feel safe at work. They have to feel that they are respected. And, I think they have to feel that someone is really caring about them and listen to them. People perform best when they have a lot of those factors in place." (I17, Global Talent Management)

The previous quote provides a nice summary regarding all the different tools mentioned by the research participants to manage performance. In the end, it is all about feeling secure and for managers to provide this environment to their employees (I16).

4.6.2 Category: Talent Development

The research participants view talent development and more specifically people development as "crucial" (I8) and "an important part of leadership" (I11) in order to find out in which "way to develop a person" (I14) and to see "people taking over next level positions" (I11) because of one's development actions. An example statement by respondent I7 on what talent development means to her:

> *"Developing the people on the team and really enabling them to grow on their own and bring in their ideas" (I7, Finance).*

Primary code: People development

People development has many facets. Those highlighted by the interviewees will be described in this section.

Putting someone out of his or her comfort zone in order to learn practical and theoretical things (I15) is described as people development as well as to be up to date on the latest developments in one's own area of responsibility, such as latest trends, tool and process developments as well as latest research. An example statement:

> *"People development for me is also to make sure that they keep up to date, that they keep an interest in what's going on in their function; what's the best in class processes, practices, things like that." (I14, Regional HR).*

Furthermore, interviewee 6 rightly said "development doesn't have to be training" (I6). Moreover, it is important to find ways to "make the next career steps" (I9) or to give them other tasks, depending on their knowledge and skills (I10). People development in I7's view is "a combination of first of all finding and developing the right people in the team and really enabling them to grow" (I7).

Career discussions, for example, are an important way to identify development needs of an employee. Interviewee 1 conducts career discussions "at least once or twice a year" (I1). An ongoing approach concerning career and development discussions is important for I16. An example of this stated:

> *"It is critical and I do it on a rolling basis. I am constantly checking with them and saying "you are doing this or you are doing that or this would be good for your career or this wouldn't be good for your career or have you thought about this or have you thought about that?" Yeah, I don't do it just*

in the first three or four months of every year. I am constantly talking to them." (I16, Regional Legal)

Furthermore, I1 sees these discussions as important to "help them and to develop them" as well as to foster an open communication regarding the career aspirations of the employee. A quote by I1:

"We have a much more open relationship if they tell me "you know, I am going to do this for one or two more years but not longer"; I mean I think it is better for everybody if this can be communicated openly." (I1, Global Legal)

In order to merge the "personal expectations and aspirations with the company and the team targets" (I9) is a reason for I9 to conduct career and development discussions with his direct reports. Whereas I4 uses these discussions "to set quite strong expectations" (I4) and I8 to identify the interests of the employee and whether or not they would like to move on "to perceive other challenges out of their role and how to get there" (I8). In addition, these discussions are viewed as a platform for the leader to get an understanding of what he or she could do in order to "have everything in place" (I11) which helps the employee to get where he or she wants to be.

Of utmost importance for people development is that the employee feels he or she is advancing. Respondent I17 argued:

"I also belief most people have to feel that they are growing. So, that they are either stretching themselves based on what they currently know or they are given challenges so that they can learn." (I17, Global Talent Management)

However, I9 rightly said that the development discussions do not work for everyone. Some people are happy where they are and they view it as a burden to discuss next career opportunities. An example statement:

"When I was facing the first meeting with my team members and I was asking "What are your career expectations? What do you want to do? What is driving you?", I have seen in the eyes of the person that he is scared. And later on, this person was saying "Initially, when you asked me I was really, really thinking whether, if I am not answering correct, then the manager will fire me because I don't have expectations to grow. I like what I am doing and I was not sure to tell you." (I9, Strategy)

Interviewee 17 builds on this topic by stating:

> *"Everyone has a different tolerance and you can't find that out through structured, once a year development discussions. You find that out, in my experience, through getting close to somebody." (I17, Global Talent Management)*

Furthermore, I17 shared that he does not use the regular scheduled review meetings to discuss development or career aspirations. Moreover, he says:

> *"My development discussions and career discussions with people often take place at cafe's or at lunch or in not typical settings. Because for me that's where I can get people to open up and also I can provide my expertise." (I17, Global Talent Management)*

A structured way to record these development or career discussions is a so-called Individual Development Plan (IDP). An IDP is a plan which can be on paper or electronic, which includes short term development actions of an employee. These development actions are agreed between the line manager and the employee and are typically covering a time frame of 12 to 18 months. The development actions identified in the IDP could be anything from on-the-job development opportunities to attending special training or engaging in a mentoring or coaching relationship. The IDP provides a structured frame for line managers and employees to record the development actions, to keep track of the development actions and to identify possible roadblocks or further resources that might be required to reach a specified career or development goal in the short-term perspective. Five of the respondents said that they have developed an IDP with their employees (I1, I11, I9, I15, I17). Respondent I9 for example, uses the IDP to record where a person has strong skills, in which areas he would like to "achieve more" (I9) or where someone has a passion but low skills. In addition, I11 uses the IDP to "work on strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of a person" (I11) and recording the findings in the IDP.

However, leaders have to be careful that these discussions are not only a "paper exercise" (I15). In I15's experience, creating an IDP "is difficult for a lot of managers" (I15). She overcomes this difficulty by not putting "in a concrete next role" (I15). Moreover, she describes "the empowerment" (I15) she would like to achieve for her employee in the IDP. A similar experience was shared by I17:

> *"I used to do it very much by the book, where everyone had a documented development plan. But what I now do is if someone wants to work with me on their development plan then we do that. But I don't force everyone. So, some people may feel that they don't want to have some type of formal process of writing down the plan and doing regular check-in. Other people do. It used to be that I always did it the same way. And now, I let the person drive that. But I always know pretty much for everyone (...), I know where they are in terms of what their core strengths are and areas that they might want to be working on. Even though in some cases I won't find it in a detailed documentation." (I17, Global Talent Management)*

Talking about how to develop their employees the research participants came up with a range of different things which they do or support in terms of the development of their employees.

Attending a training course was mentioned by two interviewed leaders (I2, I4). In I2's view sending an employee to a training course "gets him crazily engaged because he feels you are investing money in him" (I2). Respondent I4 was even more precise by saying that he sends his team members to "leadership and competency trainings" (I4). More leaders acknowledged the power of on-the-job-development activities (I2; I7; I17) which I7 does "mostly" when developing his employees. "Learning by doing; gaining experience and sharing the experience" (I2) is what I2 thinks is important in terms of on-the-job development. Research participant I17 adds to that point by saying:

> *"I also try to have a discussion around which are the projects that stretch you or help you grow. Not just this work has to get done, but how can we actually use the work as an opportunity to develop and grow." (I17, Global Talent Management)*

On-the-job development does also mean to step outside of one's comfort zone because "this is how people grow" (I17). Getting out of one's comfort zone does also mean to change roles on a regular basis. For example, I5 wants "people to change at minimum after three or four years" (I5) and if it is "not a complete different role than at least a massively different responsibility within the role" (I5).

Primary code: Feedback

One of the "strongest and most valuable tool" (I9) for people development is feedback. Providing feedback for development purposes or performance purposes was mentioned by almost all research participants (I1, I2, I3, I4, I7, I8, I9, I11, I14, I15, I16, I17). For example, I9 uses feedback "as much as possible"; I15 tries to give "constant feedback (I15), so does I16, and I1 gives feedback "very much ad hoc" (I1); so does I14. This is in line with the view of I4 who feels the sooner you provide feedback the better. The general view is that giving feedback is important. However, leaders need to be "brave enough to give negative feedback as well" (I8) and it is important for line managers to "learn how to provide feedback" (I15). Two example statements:

> *"Only giving positive feedback or just saying something in order to have said something is not helpful at all and can cause the opposite reaction. So, I think learning feedback or teaching feedback and then using it adequately is very powerful." (I15, Global Talent Management)*

> *"One of the biggest challenges is to learn how to provide and seek feedback from your direct reports. Because that's a really tricky situation where you need to really be fair and also be able to distinguish or split different types of feedback you provide to your team members. So, if it is a praise then you should be really focussed and it depends on your team structure whether it should be done in-front of the whole team or it should be done one-to-one." (I9, Strategy)*

Respondent I4 adds to that fact by saying that development feedback is useful because it gets both the employee and the leader out of a comfort zone.

The cultural aspect of giving feedback was mentioned by I17 who acknowledged the fact that the way he is giving feedback changed depending on the cultural setting he was in. An example statement:

> *"I used to think I was really good at giving feedback. But I learned from my time here in Germany that I give feedback like a typical American. I was taught that the positive reinforcement is more effective than constructive or negative feedback. Usually, I would give constructive or negative feedback sandwiched between very positive messages. And I found that that was not being heard. So, lately, what I tried to do is being really direct when I give constructive feedback around something that needs to change. But I think it is in*

my DNA to focus on the positive. So, I try to find every opportunity to let someone know that they have done a really good job and how can we do that next time." (I17, Global Talent Management)

Primary code: Mentoring

Another tool highlighted as practice by the research participants regarding people development is mentoring. Mentoring is an evolving relationship between a more experienced person (mentor) and a less-experienced person (mentee) (Block and Florczak, 2017). The mentor shares his or her knowledge with the mentee. Most often mentees share their concerns or aspirations in terms of their career or professional goals (Sharma and Freeman, 2014). Seven of the interviewees engage themselves in mentoring relationships as a mentor or very much foster that their employees engage in mentoring relationships as mentees (I4, I7, I8, I10, I11, I12, I16). For example, I4 "positively enjoys mentoring" (I4) as well as I7 who has "always one mentee" (I7) and who likes "the discussions" (I7). An example statement:

> *"I mean the main purpose of mentoring is not that the person has a new job after the one year but it is really to help a little bit in which direction to develop, how to improve the working style, how to resolve critical issues, or if someone is new in a leadership role, what can she or he do to fix certain team problems and so on." (I7, Finance)*

Mentoring does not need to take place in an official mentoring programme. I8 for example engaged a "lot in unofficial mentoring" (I8) and "invested a lot of time" (I8) mentoring mentees. She enjoyed the experience very much because she reflected a lot on these discussions and it helped her "doing a better job" (I8) herself. Respondent I16 went even further by saying "mentoring is not limited to business", moreover "it is part of life" (I16) in general. The great value of mentoring was shared by I17 who said that he feels proud to see that some people he mentored throughout his career "went a lot further then (he) did at some point" (I17).

Primary code: Succession planning

Another important aspect concerning talent development is succession planning and "structurally developing people into next roles" (I7). In I11's view, it is important "to develop people and to bring people into important roles in the company" (I11). An example statement by I9 who constantly asked himself:

> *"Who could be my potential successor? I like to grow up someone who would be able to take over my role when I will make the next move. So, that's basically a long journey. In a couple of cases I spend three or four years building up or developing the individual plans for certain team members who I identified as a potential candidate for replacing me." (I9, Strategy)*

This section outlined areas of people development and talent development which the interview participants feel are valuable. The research participants shared their views on people and talent development. Further, the various tools of people and talent development have been highlighted such as training, on-the-job development, career and development discussions, individual development plans, feedback as well as mentoring and building up a robust succession candidate slate for one's own role.

4.6.3 Summary and Discussion of Theme 4

The previous sections of this chapter illustrated the findings of the research in terms of talent management practices and a leader's role in regards to those practices. In particular, the research findings indicate two facets of talent management: performance management as well as talent development.

The research findings suggest the need for a standardised performance management process with clear guidance and milestone such as target setting exercises, the mid-year review and the year-end appraisals. In the literature, performance management is as well seen as an instrument for organisations to motivate their employees (Doellgast and Marsden, 2019). In addition, the literature supports the research findings by saying that performance management creates an understanding for employees what should be achieved, in which ways something should be achieved and which development opportunities need to be addressed (Armstrong and Baron, 2000).

In line with that, the research findings acknowledge that the performance dialogue is a very important aspect of the overall performance management process and should be taken seriously. The literature supports that by recognising that performance appraisals, such as performance dialogues, are an integral and important part within performance management (Grund and Sliwka, 2009). In addition, the literature adds that performance dialogues are an important talent management practice because it has direct influence on employees (Glaister et al., 2018).

As the research findings indicate, some interviewees mentioned that they do not only follow the standard process. However, especially when it comes to the performance dialogue, the research findings indicate that those line managers try to engage in regular and sometimes informal discussions with their direct reports in order to manage their performance. This is in line with the literature which acknowledges the fact that organisations need to develop individual approaches to manage performance which is in line with local requirements (Budhwar et al., 2008). Further, the literature opposes that line manager are often lacking objectivity when engaging in performance dialogues and that they could be biased (Fletcher, 1999; Prowse and Prowse, 2009; Walker and Smither, 1999).

Another aspect indicated by the research findings is the topic around recognition and how the research participants motivate their employees. The findings of the research highlight that recognition and motivation is something very different from person to person and that a leader him- or herself can only provide the vision and environment in which people feel acknowledged and motivated. The literature supports that by claiming that recognition has a positive effect on an employee's well-being at the workplace (Tweedie et al., 2019). In addition, the literature underlines that line managers should see recognition as an important tool to increase employee engagement (Breevaart et al., 2014; Macey and Schneider, 2008). Furthermore, the literature acknowledges that traditional performance management approaches are often failing to contribute to increased organisational performance (Iqbal et al., 2015; Taylor et al., 1995).

Further, the findings of the research indicate that talent and people development are viewed as critical. The findings suggest that leaders need to ensure that they focus on the individual needs and requirements of their employees in order to keep them engaged. This is supported by the literature who views talent development as an important instrument to unleash employees potential as well as to increase business outcomes (Galagan et al., 2019) and to build an organisation's continuous capability (Day and O'Connor, 2017).

Furthermore, the findings of the research suggest that regular career discussions as well as individual development plans play an important role in regards to people development. Further, the research indicates that a leader should have these career discussions for each of his or her direct reports. This finding is supported by the literature who sees the line manager as the first person to develop an employee's capabilities, competencies and confidence (Kouzes and Posner, 2012). In addition, the literature confirms that individual development plans support an employees targeted development based on the development needs identified during a career discussion (Day and O'Connor, 2017).

In addition, the research findings highlight that engaging in regular and on-the-spot feedback conversations are important aspects in regards to people development. The literature confirms this by saying that continuous feedback fosters a culture of continuous improvement when it is provided in an individual, authentic, constructive and fair manner (Wigert and Harter, 2017).

Furthermore, the findings of the research illustrate that identifying training needs, opportunities for personal development and opportunities for on-the-job development activities are key talent management elements for the leaders in regards to people development. The literature acknowledges this by stating that organisations need to invest in talent development through building a pipeline of talented employees who have the desire to further advance in their careers (Day and O'Connor, 2017; Gagné and Deci, 2005).

Finally, the research findings indicate that mentoring as well as a sustainable succession planning is critical in regards to talent development. The literature supports the argument that succession planning is important for an organisation's success (Cappelli and Keller, 2014). Further, the literature adds that organisations who engage in succession planning will see a bigger pipeline of leadership talent as well as of employees who are best suitable for a specific role (Fulmer and Conger, 2004; Meyers et al., 2013).

4.7 Conclusion

This chapter presented the perspectives of the research participants regarding what leads to highly-engaged teams. The overall starting point of this research has been the question of the researcher which leadership practices and personality traits have a positive influence on the engagement levels of teams. The researcher used a case study approach to gather the data. All research participants had high employee engagement scores in the employee engagement surveys conducted at Linde in the previous years.

All research participants were asked to voice their general understanding of employee engagement and whose responsibility it is to engage employees.

The research participants view this as the main leadership responsibility to engage their teams. Furthermore, the research participants were asked to elaborate on their personal and educational backgrounds. This exploration led to the theme that a leader's personal and educational background have a positive influence on the engagement levels of their teams.

Furthermore, the research participants' view on how they lead their teams led to the leadership practices presented within this chapter which lead to highly-engaged teams.

The view of the research participants concerning how they manage the performance of their employees as well as how they develop their teams has led to the emerging theme that a leader's focus on talent management has a positive influence on the engagement levels of their teams.

According to the aforementioned results of this research study, the factors leading to highly-engaged teams are manifold.

Based on the emerging data of this research study, the analysis and discussion of the research findings as well as the literature review, the researcher took the time to reflect on the existing data and has come up with recommendations. These recommendations are presented in the next chapter.

5. Recommendations

5.1 Introduction

The aim of this research is to develop recommendations for the future development of leaders in organisations and, specifically, for the leadership development of the organisation in which this case study was conducted.

The previous chapter has presented the findings and the supporting data which emerged from the data analysis. In this chapter, the researcher will introduce the recommendations which have emerged from the analysis of the literature and the interview data.

The recommendations are the result as well as the conclusion of the previously presented findings which are specifically bound to the context in which they were found. The researcher acknowledges that her epistemological and ontological position have an influence on the proposed recommendations.

The recommendations presented in the following sections are based on the research questions of this study. At this point, the researcher would like to remind the reader of the research questions as well as the research objectives as discussed in section 1.2 as well as in section 4.2.

> *Research Question RQ:*
>
> *Which leadership style or leadership behaviour have a positive effect on employee engagement?*
>
> *Objective 1:*
>
> *What leadership qualities, practices and behaviours have the most positive effect on employee engagement at Linde?*
>
> *Supplementary RQ1:*
>
> *Which leadership qualities and practices have a positive effect on employee engagement?*
>
> *Objective 2:*
>
> *How can existing leadership and engagement in general leadership behaviour support to the One Linde Philosophy?*

Supplementary RQ2:

How do we gain an understanding of causal relationships between leadership qualities, leadership practices, leadership behaviours and employee engagement?

Objective 3:

How can Linde develop more effective employee engagement practices and leadership development programmes?

The research questions and objectives have previously been visualised in Figure 4 on page 105.

The recommendations are closely linked to the overall themes presented in chapter 4, which are:

- Recommendation #1: Conduct continuous engagement check-ins
- Recommendation #2: Establish a leadership development framework
- Recommendation #3: Review current leadership development offerings
- Recommendation #4: Introduce a new approach to performance management
- Recommendation #5: Introduce an integrated employee talent review and succession planning process
- Recommendation #6: Introduce the concept manager as coach

Figure 10 on the next page visualises how each presented theme in chapter 4 links to each recommendation.

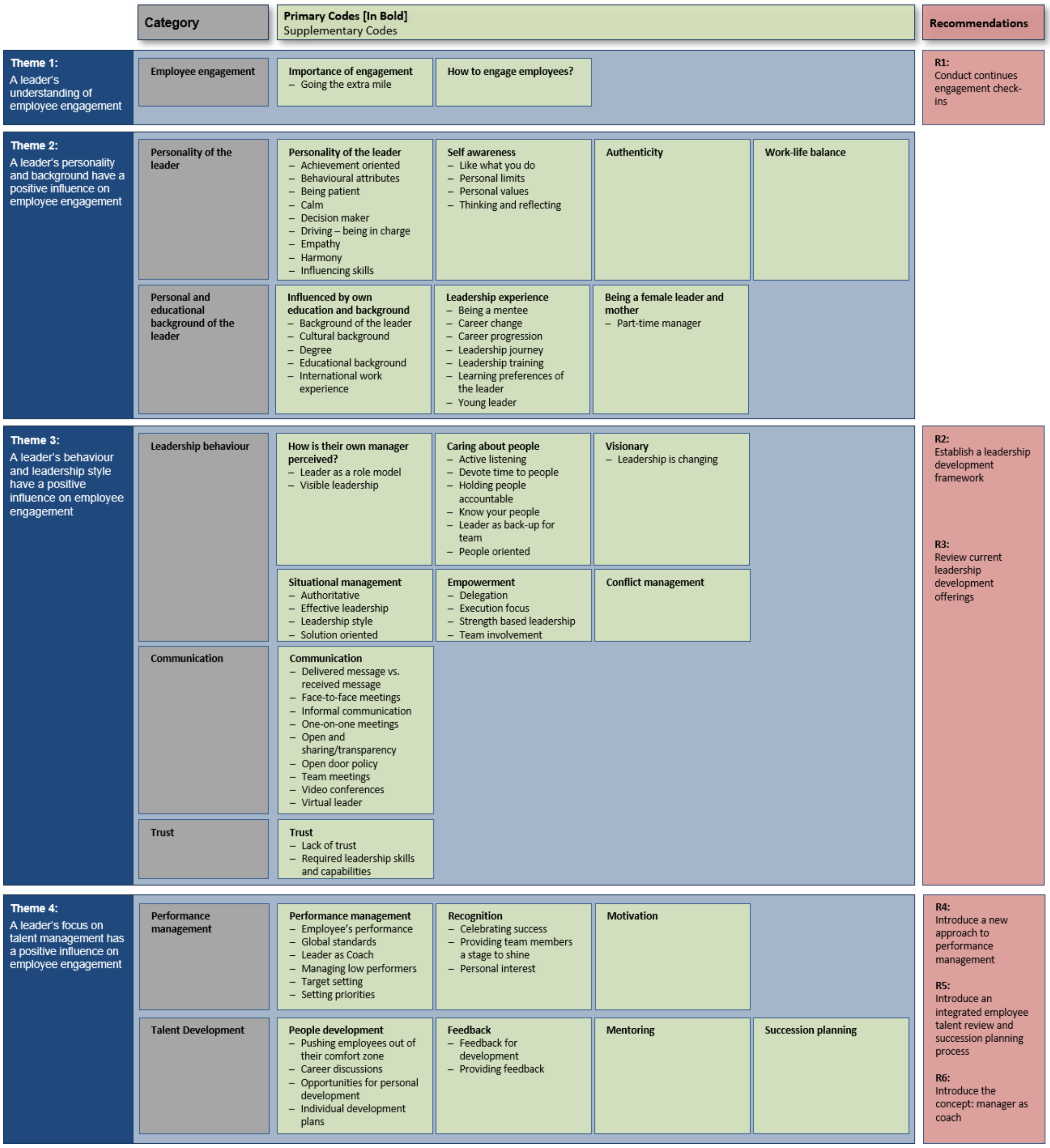

FIGURE 10: ILLUSTRATED THEMES, CATEGORIES, CODES AND CORRESPONDING RECOMMENDATIONS (OWN ILLUSTRATION)

In the mind of the researcher, the recommendations are especially important in regards to a successful post-merger integration. As described in section 3.4 on page 70, the case study organisation was in the middle of a merger of two global gas players at the time of the research.

In this chapter, each sub-chapter presents a recommendation by the researcher. In the first part of each sub-chapter the researcher presents the rec-

ommendation in relation to the literature analysis and in relation to the analysis of the research findings. Further, the researcher explains how the recommendation could be implemented in the context of this case study. In addition, the researcher highlights possible implementation constraints such as budget, stakeholder involvement or time constraints.
The chapter ends with a summary and conclusion of the recommendations.

5.2 Recommendation #1: Conduct Continuous Engagement Check-ins

Evidence emerged through the literature review as well as through the analysis of the interview data that leadership and employee engagement are closely linked. The relationship between leaders and their team members is highly influential and a major motive of employee engagement (Attridge, 2009; Macey and Schneider, 2008; Zhang et al., 2014). In order to measure the levels of employee engagement, organisations conduct employee surveys (Sindhar, 2018), because employee surveys are considered to be an effective vehicle to understand the drivers of employee engagement and employee motivation (Levenson, 2014).
The data analysis for this research lead to theme 1 "A leader's understanding of employee engagement" with the first primary code "Importance of engagement" and its supplementary code "Going the extra mile" and the second primary code "How to engage employees?" (section 4.3 on page 113). The data analysis as described in section 4.3 shows that the concept of employee engagement is a well-known concept to the research participants. Further, the research participants acknowledged the importance of having an engaged team. However, the data did not show any evidence of structurally assessed employee engagement levels in the recent past. In the researcher's view, especially after the successful merger of Linde AG and Praxair Inc., it is important to know the employee engagement levels in the organisation.
Thus, the researcher would recommend conducting continuous Engagement

Check-ins in order to evaluate how employee engagement levels are changing over time.
In the past, Linde Plc has conducted employee surveys every two years from 2010 to 2014. Since 2014, no further employee survey was conducted. Another survey was planned for 2016, however, at that time the organisation went through a massive re-structuring and therefore it was decided not to conduct a survey. After the re-structuring took place, the pre-merger discussions and work streams have started and it was again decided non to conduct a global employee survey.
In the employee surveys from 2010 to 2014, employee engagement has been only one out of ten other dimensions included in the employee survey. The other dimensions have been: strategy, ability to execute, people excellence, process excellence, customer focus, safety and quality, visible leadership, culture and integrity.
Survey results have been made available to the entire organisation and each department with more than five responses received a survey results report. Five responses were required due to confidentiality reasons. Once the survey results have been published, departments and line managers were asked to share the results with their team members and to come up with an action plan (Linde, 2014).
Instead of conducting lengthy employee surveys only every two years the researcher would recommend conducting short Check-ins specifically evaluating the engagement levels of the overall organisation each quarter. These Engagement Check-ins should be very short – only four to six questions – and easy to access for all employees.
The researcher sees quarterly check-ins as a tool which allows the Human Resources and Talent Management departments to continuously evaluate and build up organisational effectiveness as well as leadership development.
In the researcher's view, it is important to get the sponsorship of the Executive Board for these Check-ins in order to demonstrate to the entire organisation that such an Engagement Check-in is not just another HR tool. Furthermore, especially in Germany, it is of utmost importance to get the buy-in and support by the works council. At Linde Plc, the works council is a well-acknowledged commit-

tee which consists of opinion leaders who are powerful in transferring messages and commitment throughout the entire organisation.

The researcher recommends that the organisational and administrative effort to conduct the Engagement Check-ins should be with the Human Resources department, more precisely with the Talent Management department. Regarding the overall communication of the Engagement Check-in, the researcher would further recommend a very close collaboration between the Talent Management and Communications department. In order to position the Pulse Check-in in the best way, the researcher sees it as important to develop a communication campaign highlighting the goals of the initiative, the sponsorship by the Executive Board as well as the sponsorship by the works council. This communication campaign should be targeted to all employees.

Once an Engagement Check-in took place, the researcher recommends the organisation to be very transparent about the results. The results should be cascaded from top to bottom and line managers should use individual department meetings to discuss the team results. In order to get a broader understanding of the results, the researcher recommends the Talent Management department to conduct a handful of focus groups to get an understanding of the reasons behind the Engagement Check-in results. The output of these focus groups should be communicated to all employees transparently. This rhythm of continuous Engagement Check-ins, corresponding communication campaigns and focus group discussions about the Engagement Check-in results should be repeated at least every quarter.

Furthermore, the researcher recommends the Engagement Check-in should be established as a valuable component of the overall leadership development framework because the researcher sees it as an important aspect of leadership development to know at all times how the engagement levels are evolving in the organisation. The recommendation of a leadership development framework will be explored in the next chapter.

Furthermore, the feedback generated through the Engagement Check-in is valuable for the Talent Management department to continuously evaluate the effectiveness of the leadership development training opportunities.

The researcher acknowledges the fact that budget needs to be made available in order to implement the Engagement Check-in. Specifically, budget for internal resources of the Talent Management and Communications department will be required. Costs regarding the use of a survey tool will not be applicable due to an internal survey tool used at Linde Plc. which is well established and compliant in respect to privacy and data protection regulations.

In conclusion, the researcher recommends establishing quarterly Engagement Check-ins in order to get an understanding of the employee engagement level in the organisation. Knowing the engagement levels of employees provides the Talent Management department a feedback on the existing leadership development opportunities and their effectiveness. In the researcher's mind, this information should be used by the Talent Management department to assess whether the existing leadership development opportunities are effective.

Based on the recommendations explained in this chapter the following action points have emerged (action points 1 to 8):

Action point 1: the Talent Management department is in charge to conduct continuous engagement check-ins every quarter in order to evaluate the changing engagement levels over time

Action point 2: the sponsorship of the Executive Board for the engagement check-ins has to be ensured

Action point 3: the buy-in and support of the works council needs to be gained

Action point 4: a communications campaign for the launch of the engagement check-ins has to be developed

Action point 5: the results of the engagement check-ins have to be communicated transparently

Action point 6: focus groups have to be conducted once the results of the engagement survey are published

Action point 7: the engagement scores should be used to continuously evaluate the effectiveness of the leadership development training opportunities

Action point 8: budget needs to be gathered in terms of money and time

The practical application of the recommendations as well as the associated action points are summarised in section 6.4.1 on page 200.

5.3 Recommendation #2: Establish a Leadership Development Framework

According to Beer et al. (2016) organisations invest in leadership development in order to make their leaders more effective. However, the way in which leaders are supported in order to develop, varies from organisation to organisation (Bennis, 2007). The most common leadership development activity is the classical leadership training (Bernthal and Wellins, 2006). However, on-the-job experiences, business school courses (Mintzberg, 2011) as well as gaining experience through development relationships (Allen and Hartman, 2008) are amongst the common leadership development offerings. Successful leadership development offerings are aligned to the overall strategic goals, the purpose and values of an organisation (Berke et al., 2008).

The data analysis of this study lead to theme 3 "A leader's behaviour and leadership style have a positive influence on employee engagement" with the first category "Leadership behaviour" and the corresponding primary codes "How is their own manager perceived?"; "Caring about people", "Visionary"; "Situational management"; "Empowerment" as well as "Conflict management" (section 4.5 on page 126).

Furthermore, theme 3 includes the following additional primary codes: "Communication" and "Trust". Please see Figure 10 on page 163 for an overview of the primary codes and its corresponding supplementary codes.

Through the data analysis in chapter 4, evidence emerged that leaders view the leadership development they received in the past or which they are still receiving as an important factor in order to be a successful leader who is able to engage their team. However, the findings indicate that an integrated leadership development framework does not exist yet.

Building on theme 3 and based on the previous data analysis the researcher recommends creating a leadership development framework which addresses leadership development topics important to leaders throughout their entire leadership cycle. This leadership cycle starts when one gets ready to take over the

first managerial position. It continues when the leader is leading individual employees; it further continues when leaders lead other leaders and when leaders lead businesses.
In order to establish an effective leadership development framework, the researcher recommends to form a steering committee or steering council in order to get involvement and buy-in from all relevant stakeholders. The members of the steering committee should be a mixture of senior business executives from different business and support functions, one or two line managers as well as Human Resources and Talent Management experts. In total, the steering committee should have eight to ten members.
The primary function of the steering committee should be to sign off the various leadership development offerings which would be integrated in the leadership development framework. Furthermore, the steering committee should promote the leadership development framework and its offerings because the researcher views the members of the steering committee as opinion leaders.
In terms of the content of the leadership development framework the researcher recommends a mixture of classical classroom training opportunities, mentoring and coaching offerings as well as on-the-job experiences. In the researcher's view, the mixture of offerings is necessary in order to address the changing development needs regarding the leadership cycle. For example, a newly appointed manager needs much more guidance, best practice and practical tips concerning leadership than a well-established business leader. Therefore, the leadership development framework needs to cover all significant aspects in terms of leadership. Evidence emerged through the data analysis that for example trust, communication as well as authenticity play a major role in leading employees. Therefore, the researcher recommends adding learning and experience content for leaders which target those specific topics. In order to get the most up-to-date and state-of-the-art leadership development content, which is in line with the organisational requirements and gaps that have been identified through the Engagement Survey for example, the researcher recommends engaging a leadership development consultant to review the leadership development framework. The researcher sees this as an important aspect because the Talent Management department, who would be in charge of the development of

this framework as well as the steering committee, could be biased due to an internally focused view and mindset. The researcher thinks that a "fresh pair of eyes" would see any missing aspects of the leadership development framework more easily.
Furthermore, the researcher recommends getting the buy-in of the works council early on in the development phase of the leadership development framework. The involvement of the works council is necessary in order to get their opinions included. Furthermore, the works council is an excellent force to promote the leadership development framework once it is ready to be launched.
In addition, the researcher advices to develop a detailed and global communication campaign which promotes the launch of the leadership development framework. The communication campaign should be a mixture of a top-down and bottom-up approach. The researcher recommends starting the communication campaign top-down. This could be done for example with a launch email sent from the Executive Board to all employees of Linde Plc. The target audience of the communication campaign should include all employees and not only the leadership population. In the researcher's view it is essential to be transparent in terms of the leadership development offerings to all employees in order to get acceptance and to be fully transparent. The researcher envisions a bottom-up communication campaign could be very successful once the leadership development framework is launched and a couple of line managers have already participated in some of the offerings. The bottom-up communication could be for example an experience report or a first line manager sharing the learnings.
In order to have "one source of truth" regarding the overall communication, the researcher recommends building an intranet page or a SharePoint site to which all employees have access. This takes the aspect of transparency into consideration and allows each employee to be up to date on the current leadership development offerings included in the framework.
Furthermore, the researcher suggests a continuous review of the content and offerings of the leadership development framework in order to consider the latest developments in the area of leadership development as well as the changing internal focus areas. In the view of the researcher, the Talent Management department is in charge of the continuous review. In the next chapter, the re-

searcher will explain how such a continuous review of the leadership development framework and offerings could look like.

Furthermore, the researcher advices that the leadership development offerings are continuously updated and/or changed based on the findings of the continuous reviews.

The researcher acknowledges that budget would need to be made available for the development of the leadership development framework. The budget is not only money related, moreover, time investments are required as well.

The time investment would be significant for the Talent Management department. Further, the members of the steering committee would need to invest their time as well, especially at the beginning of the development of the framework due to multiple discussion rounds which might be required. The researcher thinks that the time investment of the members of the steering committee will decrease once the leadership development framework is established.

In addition, budget would need to be made available for the creation of new leadership development content or for hiring external training providers. In addition, budget would be required for the involvement of an external leadership development consultant during the design phase of developing the leadership development framework.

In conclusion, the researcher recommends creating and establishing a framework which comprises all elements related to leadership development. Such a framework would provide Linde Plc. a structured approach to leadership development at any point in time of the leadership cycle. A continuous review of the leadership development framework ensures an up-to-date and state-of-the-art leadership development curriculum which supports all line managers in leading their teams as effectively as possible and by this having a positive indirect effect on the employee engagement levels.

Based on the recommendations explained in this chapter the following action points have emerged (action points 9 to 16):

Action point 9: a leadership development framework which addresses the leadership development topics has to be implemented

Action point 10: a steering committee or steering council needs to be established in order to get involvement and buy-in from all relevant stakeholders

Action point 11: a mixture of classical classroom training opportunities, coaching and mentoring offerings need to be implemented

Action point 12: a leadership development consultant should be hired to review the leadership development framework

Action point 13: the buy-in and support of the works council needs to be gained

Action point 14: a detailed global communication campaign which promotes the launch of the leadership development framework needs to be initiated; including building an intranet site

Action point 15: a continuous review of the content and offerings of the leadership development framework needs to be ensured

Action point 16: budget needs to be gathered in terms of money and time

The practical application of the recommendations as well as the associated action points are summarised in section 6.4.1 on page 200.

5.4 Recommendation #3: Review Current Leadership Development Offerings

The focus of the majority of the literature regarding leadership development primarily focuses on the behaviour, skills as well as personal characteristics of leaders (Schyns et al., 2011). In addition, knowing the organisational culture (Caudron, 2002) as well as knowing oneself in terms of drivers and motivators are essential aspects regarding leadership development (Jackson, 2011).

In addition, it is well known that business needs, business issues or requirements drive the desire for people and leadership development. In order to know which kind of leadership development is required, organisations need to identify the challenges which leaders are faced with. In order to know whether an existing leadership development programme is addressing the identified gaps, organisations need to review their development offerings in order to know whether their investments are paying off (Berke et al., 2008).

Furthermore, evidence emerged through the data analysis that a range of specific leadership practices as well as focus areas have a positive influence on employee engagement.

In the previous chapter, the researcher recommends to establish a leadership development framework at Linde. This recommendation is based on the research analysis as well as the creation of theme 3 "A leader's behaviour and leadership style have a positive influence on employee engagement". In order to establish such a leadership development framework, the current status in regards to leadership development at Linde has to be analysed.

Therefore, the researcher recommends reviewing all current leadership development offerings in the context of the identified best practice as described in the "Findings" chapter of this dissertation. This recommendation is based on theme 3 as well, as has been the case for the previous recommendation (for details about theme 3 please see section 4.5 on page 126).

The researcher believes that the categories of this theme "Leadership behaviour", "Communication" as well as "Trust" and its corresponding primary and supplementary codes build the foundation for the recommendation to review the current leadership development offerings. The topics highlighted by the identification of categories in theme 3 (leadership behaviour; communication and trust) and the corresponding primary and supplementary codes should be considered when reviewing the current leadership development offerings. Because the analysis of the research showed that these topics are viewed to have a positive influence on the employee engagement levels.

In the view of the researcher, the creation of the leadership development framework, as described in the previous chapter, is an excellent starting point for the review of the current leadership development offerings at Linde Plc.

The researcher recommends a structured approach to review the current leadership development offerings. In order to be able to do a detailed analysis the researcher suggests conducting a short survey with a representative sample of the leadership population at Linde Plc. The survey questions should be targeted to find out whether the existing leadership development offerings are meeting the leaders' development requirements. In addition, the researcher recommends conducting detailed interviews with experts from the Talent Management department to evaluate whether the current leadership development offerings meet the requirements of the organisation and are in line with the latest state-of-the-art leadership development offerings. Further, the experts should assess whether the current offerings are focusing on those leadership practices which have emerged from the data analysis of this research.

In addition, the researcher recommends establishing a couple of focus groups with employees in order to assess the effectiveness of the current leadership development offerings from the perspective of employees.

In the researcher's view, this part of the revision includes the main stakeholders of leadership development: line managers, employees and the Talent Management department.

Further, the researcher recommends reviewing not only the content of the current leadership development offerings. Moreover, the content delivery method should be reviewed as well. Specifically, traditional one or two days of classroom trainings could be assessed in terms of their effectiveness. For example, the researcher would recommend establishing continuous learning opportunities for line managers which can be easily integrated into a normal working day.

In addition, using e-learning tools such as Zoom or Microsoft Teams should be explored further in order to take into account the significant increase of virtual training and working habits due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Furthermore, the researcher recommends the Talent Management department to engage in a best practice analysis in terms of the leadership development offerings. Nowadays, it is very easy to connect via platforms such as LinkedIn with Talent Management experts. The researcher recommends engaging in these external peer review discussions in order to not only get the external view but moreover, to learn what went well and which leadership development offerings did not work well in other organisations. In the researcher's view it is important to identify a company for best practice sharing which is operating in the same or similar industry and geography as Linde Plc. does.

Such a review should be done now in order to best address the requirements as well as gaps which the leadership development framework needs to address. Further, the researcher recommends a regular rhythm of reviewing the leadership development offerings once the leadership development framework is launched. This review could be done building on the Engagement Check-Ins described earlier in section 5.2 on page 164.

In conclusion, the researcher recommends conducting a detailed review and analysis of the current leadership development offerings including the main stakeholders. This detailed review should be done as soon as possible. In addition, the researcher suggests establishing a continuous review of the leadership development offerings once the leadership development framework is fully implemented in the organisation.

Based on the recommendations explained in this chapter the following action points have emerged (action points 17 to 24):

Action point 17: review all current leadership development offerings in the context of the identified best practices of this research in a structured approach

Action point 18: conduct a short survey with a representative sample of Linde's leadership population to find out whether the existing leadership development offerings are meeting leader's development needs

Action point 19: conduct detailed interviews with experts from the Talent Management department to evaluate whether the existing leadership development offerings are meeting the requirements of the organisations and are state of the art

Action point 20: based on these interviews, the talent management experts need to assess whether the current offerings are state of the art or need further development

Action point 21: conduct employee focus groups to assess the effectiveness of current leadership development offerings from the employee perspective

Action point 22: critically review the content deliver method of leadership development offerings

Action point 23: the talent management team should engage in external best practice sharing in terms of leadership development offerings, including external peer review discussions

Action point 24: establish a regular rhythm of reviewing leadership development offerings once the new leadership development framework is implemented

The practical application of the recommendations as well as the associated action points are summarised in section 6.4.1 on page 200.

5.5 Recommendation #4: Introduce a New Approach to Performance Management

Many line managers face challenges with engaging their employees when emphasis is only put on engagement as a whole. However, line managers should put their focus on those engagement aspects which are most important to performance expectations and performance goals (Wigert and Harter, 2017).
Performance management as such can only be effective if it is viewed as part of an integrated people management strategy (Armstrong and Baron, 2000). However, research suggests that the traditional performance management systems are not state of the art anymore and do not inspire and encourage employees to perform at their individual best. Many large-scale organisations have acknowledged this fact and consider launching new approaches to performance management (Wigert and Harter, 2017).
Evidence emerged through the data analysis that performance management is viewed to be a very important aspect not only of managing the performance of employees. Moreover, performance management is seen as an important framework for motivation and recognition. Through the interview data analysis evidence emerged that the regular performance management system is followed by the research participants. In particular, the rhythm of the traditional approach is followed. This specifically means: setting targets at the beginning of the year; reviewing progress during a mid-year review discussion and conducting a year-end appraisal conversation. However, this is a static approach and research evidence indicate that more regular discussions are required between leader and employee.
The findings of the research lead to theme 4 "A leader's focus on talent man-

agement has a positive influence on employee engagement" (section 4.6 on page 142). One of the categories of Theme 4 is "Performance Management" with its primary codes "Performance Management" and "Recognition" and "Motivation". Theme 4 and the primary code "performance management" is the source of thought for the researcher's recommendation to introduce a new approach to performance management.

In order to address the shifting approach to performance management, the researcher recommends introducing a more flexible and on-going approach to performance management. Evidence in the data analysis suggest that open and honest discussions are viewed as significant. Further, research acknowledged that open and honest communication leads to higher levels of trust within the team (Dolan, 2015). Therefore, the researcher recommends establishing more frequent performance discussion – performance check-ins – to be more flexible and agile in addressing the constant shifting priorities as well as to provide leaders and employees a framework for continuous performance discussion. The researcher recommends that leaders and employees sit together at least once a quarter, even better, every six weeks to discuss how the projects are developing, how the identified goals for the year may need to be adjusted and most important, which additional development the employee needs in order to advance. In contrast to the traditional performance management approach, the researcher recommends adding the behaviour of an employee to the overall performance discussion and to put the discussion around the employee's development as a continuous focus area of the performance check-in. This approach allows Linde Plc. to link the company's values to the behaviour of all employees. Further, it embeds Linde Plc's values into the employees' everyday actions. In the view of the researcher, this new approach puts the employee's development needs and the displayed behaviour much more into the focus of the discussion than the actual goal or target achievement. In addition, the researcher recommends eliminating the use of performance ratings which are currently used at Linde Plc. In the researcher's view, the new approach to performance management can only work successfully if the focus is not so much on the goal achievement but moreover on how goals or targets are achieved and which development aspects may be required. This new approach would allow leaders much more to connect projects or goals for the year to the development of their team members. Because by setting stretched targets or goals and reviewing the progress with the focus on the demonstrated behaviour and not with the focus on the goal achievement, a paradigm shift will be achieved.

For Linde Plc., this would mean an entire new approach to performance management which requires a big change and management effort.

In this regard, the researcher recommends creating a project group which focusses its work entirely on developing and launching the new performance management process. This project group should consist of employees from Human Resources and the Talent Management department as well as employees from the business. Once the entire process is well thought through the project group needs to get the buy-in from the Executive Board as well as the works council. The researcher acknowledges the fact that the process of getting the buy-in will be a lengthy one. Multiple discussion and amendment rounds will most likely be required on a global level. Further, local requirements have to be taken into consideration as well because each country has different laws and regulations and it is impossible to get every country on board at the same time. Therefore, the researcher suggests starting the roll-out of the new performance management process with the executive staff because works council regulations do not apply.

Furthermore, the researcher recommends developing a global communications campaign. The communications campaign does not only need to inform the employees; moreover, it needs to provide a detailed plan to up-skill all employees within Human Resources as well as all leaders and employees of the organisation. In this regard, the researcher recommends a step-by-step webinar concept which inform and train the Human Resources and Talent Management department and separately the leaders of the organisation. The webinar concept for the Human Resources department should follow a train-the-trainer approach. This allows the project team to focus on the first training wave, whereas the local Human Resources and Talent Management teams would be in charge of the local communication and training. These kind of global webinar training concepts have been tested and proved successfully in the past at Linde.

The researcher acknowledges that this is a major change for the organisation and a burden especially for the Human Resources and Talent Management department. Because both departments would need to roll-out a new performance management system to parts of the organisation while maintaining the old performance management system until all details are cleared with the unions and works councils in every country. Further, it is an additional burden for those line managers who have executive employees who would be in scope for the new performance management process as well as non-executive employees who are still in scope of the traditional performance management process. However, in the view of the researcher this would only apply in the first year of the roll-out until all employees are cleared by the unions and works council to take part in the new process.

The researcher anticipates that there will be budget and time constraints. Designing and rolling out a new performance management process will be a full-time role for the project group members. Further, cost thereby incurred will be mainly for upgrading the current SAP system from an IT perspective.

In conclusion, the researcher recommends introducing a modern approach to performance management which focuses on regular performance check-ins, which eliminates performance ratings and which puts the employee's behaviour and development requirements into the focus of the regular performance discussions. The researcher believes that the new approach to performance management would boost the levels of employee engagement.

This new approach would need a detailed communication and training campaign to up-skill all employees regarding the new performance management process.

Based on the recommendations explained in this chapter the following action points have emerged (action points 25 to 34):

Action point 25: introduce a more flexible approach to performance management, including performance check-ins at least every quarter

Action point 26: add the expected behaviour of an employee to the overall performance discussion

Action point 27: eliminate the use of performance ratings

Action point 28: create a project group which is in charge of the development and launch of the new performance management process

Action point 29: the buy-in and support of the works council needs to be gained

Action point 30: the buy-in and support of the Executive Board needs to be gained

Action point 31: ensure the roll-out of the new performance management follows a top-down approach, starting with the Executive staff

Action point 32: develop a global communications campaign

Action point 33: develop a global training campaign, including webinars for employees and members of the Human Resources department

Action point 34: get approval of the required budget in terms of money and time for the implementation

The practical application of the recommendations as well as the associated action points are summarised in section 6.4.1 on page 200.

5.6 Recommendation #5: Introduce an Integrated Employee Talent Review & Succession Planning Process

According to Day and O'Connor (2017), organisations have different reasons why they invest in talent development. The reasons range from the identification of employees who have the potential to take over more responsibility in the organisation, to building a pipeline of talented leaders who share the organisations' mission and values (Day and O'Connor, 2017). In order to assess employees' potential and career perspectives as well as to ensure a robust succession bench strength, organisations use different assessment tools and processes (Barney, 1991; Collings and Mellahi, 2009).

Usually, this involves not only a succession planning for key roles in the organisation. Moreover, it includes the assessment of those employees who are most suitable for a certain position in order to secure the organisational effectiveness in the future and the individual development of that person (Meyers et al., 2013). Through the data analysis of this study, evidence emerged that identifying talent, succession candidates and developing employees into next roles is viewed highly important by the research respondents. This finding led to the creation of the primary code "Succession planning" within the category "Talent development" of theme 4 "A leader's focus on talent management has a positive influence on employee engagement" (section 4.6 on page 142). The findings indicate succession planning plays an important role within Linde's talent development.

Therefore, the researcher recommends the introduction of an integrated employee talent review and succession planning process at Linde Plc. in which all line managers are actively involved. Such a process would address the needs of the organisations as well as the expectations which employees usually have. Organisations as well as all line managers need a clear understanding of the critical roles, they need transparency on the succession bench strength for the critical roles and they need a clear understanding of the talent pipeline and people being critical to retain. Employees on the other hand usually have the expectation to be in the driver seat of their own career, they want a fair evaluation of their potential and performance and they expect transparency on career opportunities and corresponding learning and development opportunities.

The researcher recommends a process in which line managers need to engage in a talent review and succession planning discussion at least once a year. Unlike the performance management discussions, the talent review discussions should be done with representatives of the Human Resources department, for example talent managers. In other words, performance management discussions are between line manager and employee. Talent review discussions on the other hand are between line manager and HR.

However, in order to properly assess an employee's potential, the line manager needs to engage in regular discussions about the employee's career expectations and development requirements. Here, the researcher sees a clear link to the performance management process and the regular check-in discussions between line manager and employee as described in section 5.5.5 on page 176. The researcher recommends line managers to assess the following dimensions of each employee regarding the talent review and succession planning process:

– Level of "Potential";
– Concept of "Employee critical to retain";

- Concept of "risk of leaving the role";
- Concept of "urgency of a move";
- Concept of "readiness".

In the next paragraph, each dimension will be explained in detail by the researcher.

The researcher recommends using a simple three-stage approach to assess an employee's potential: (1) high potential, (2) potential and (3) lateral potential.

In the researcher's view, employees considered to be high potentials should have the potential to stretch into several, highly-challenging positions above the current role. Further, they should have skills and competencies exceeding by far the requirements of the current role. Employees to be considered to have potential, the researcher views that those employees should have the potential to advance to a position above the current role with higher complexity and a broader responsibility. The skills and competencies either match or exceed the requirements of the current role. Lastly, the researcher views that employees with a lateral potential have the skills and competencies fully utilised in the current role. However, a lateral move to a role with similar demands appears plausible.

The concept "employee critical to retain" allows line managers to identify employees who are absolutely required to advance the organisation's success. For example, those employees could have special knowledge, expertise or skills. Further, they could have special relationships to customers, suppliers or authorities. Furthermore, those employees could be influential opinion leaders and role models with impact on wider employee morale. The researcher envisions that employees marked as "critical to retain" are under specific focus in the succession planning process because targeted retention measures are likely to be required.

The concept "risk of leaving the role" allows line managers to identify employees who have an increased risk of leaving their current role. In the researcher's view, employees marked as "critical to retain" and "high potential" with a "high risk" of leaving should be under specific focus in the succession planning process. In addition, targeted retention measures or preparing their succession might be required for the line manager. The researcher recommends providing an assessment of "high risk" for employees who are moving into their next role within the organisation in the next 12-18 months; employees who will retire within 12-18 months as well as employees who are likely to look for a new role outside of the company.

The concept "urgency of a move" allows line managers to estimate whether an employee needs a role change for engagement or development purposes. In the researcher's mind, it is important to include this concept because the researcher's assumption is that an employee's learning curve flattens and productivity declines when employees are in the same job for too long. The researcher sees three levels in view of the role change: (1) currently no move, (2) within the next 12-24 months, (3) within the next 12 months. In the researcher's view, employees who need no move are typically new in their role, still learning or consider no move for private circumstances for example. Those employees would not be the focus of the talent review discussions with HR because no immediate action is required by the line manager.

Employees who would need a move within the next 12-24 months are considered for potential role opportunities and first ideas about a possible next role should be discussed during the talent review meeting with HR. Employees who need a move within the next 12 months should have the full focus of the line manager and HR in order to identify and establish possible next steps.

The concept of "readiness" allows line managers to estimate the employee's time needed to develop the competencies required to fulfil a specific role. The "readiness" assessment is a role-specific assessment in the succession planning discussion. This means, an employee can have several "readiness" ratings if nominated on several succession plans by the line manager. The researcher views three readiness levels: (1) now-short term, (2) two to three years, (3) three to five years.

Employees ready "now to short term" are able to take over a new role or within the next 12 months. The existing skills, competencies and experiences of the employee match the role requirements. Employees who are rated with a readiness of "two to three years" are able to take over the role in two to three years. Some skills, competencies and experiences are yet still missing. An intermediate development step such as a formal training or a project assignment is necessary. Line managers should record the required development steps in the individual development plan (IDP); this could include specific training which is required for example language training or an intercultural training for potential positions outside the home country. Lastly, employees with a readiness assessment of "three to five years" have significant skill gaps to fulfil the potential role. As such, the role is considered as a development perspective because another role as an intermediate development step might be needed.

The researcher acknowledges the fact that there are national gender equality regulations in some of the countries in which Linde Plc is operating. Those regulations could potentially have an impact on the succession planning discussions and as such, the local Human Resources departments need to address this aspect while engaging in succession planning discussions with the individual line managers.

In summary, line managers would have to answer the following questions for each of their direct reports:

- what is the employee's potential? Levels: High potential, potential or lateral potential
- is the employee critical to retain? Levels: Yes or no
- what is the employee's risk of leaving the role? Levels: low, medium, high
- what is the employee's urgency for a role change? Levels: currently no role change, within the next 12-24 months, within the next 12 months.
- what is the employee's readiness? Levels: now-short term, two to three years, three to five years.

Figure 11 illustrates on which employees line managers should focus their talent management efforts.

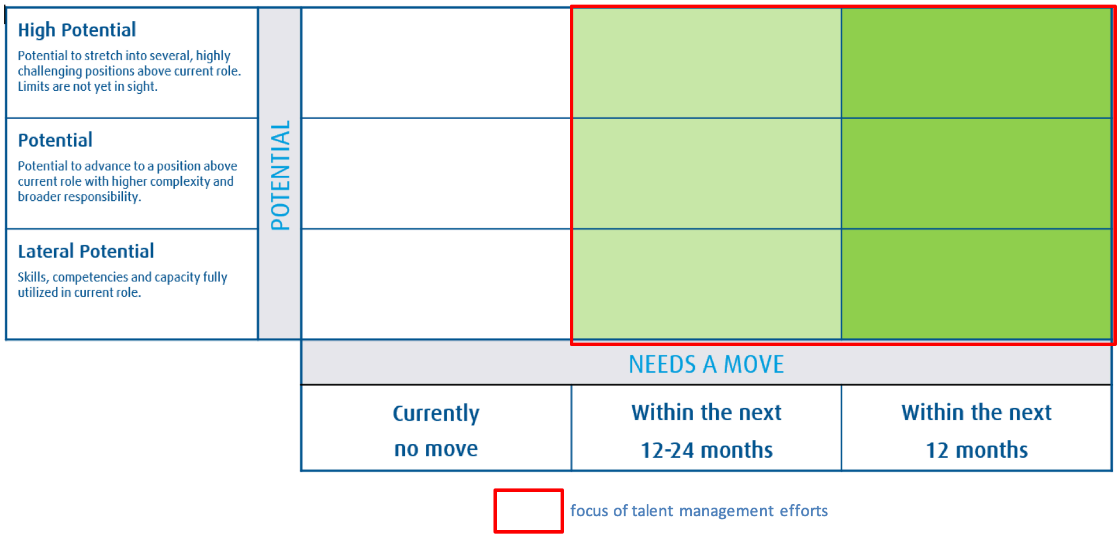

FIGURE 11: POTENTIAL & NEEDS A MOVE GRID (OWN ILLUSTRATION)

The researcher sees the following advantages of the integrated employee talent review and succession planning process for line managers and employees. First, robust and realistic succession plans through the involvement of line managers and employees as well as through the calibration discussions. Secondly, an established discipline in identifying development activities through a clear focus on specific employee groups, identified talents with a need for a move within the next year, for example. Thirdly, an efficient process through the link to the continuous performance management discussions between line manager and employee. Lastly, an active role for employees in their own career development.

In order to establish the employee talent review and succession planning process the researcher recommends creating a communications campaign to get the buy-in of all main stakeholders, including the works council, as well as to inform line managers and employees in the Human Resources department about the process. Budget constraints should be considered as well due to the time investment especially of employees from the talent management department to up-skill all line managers on the process and to conduct the regular review discussions together with the line manager.

In conclusion, the researcher recommends introducing and implementing an employee talent review and succession planning process. This process allows line managers to systematically review and calibrate the potential of employees, criticality of employees, employees' risk of leaving, employees' urgency of a move as well as the readiness of an employee for potential next roles. The proposed process addresses the need identified in the literature and by the research respondents to pay specific focus on identifying talent in a fair and transparent way.

Based on the recommendations explained in this chapter the following action points have emerged (action points 35 to 39):

Action point 35: introduce and implement an integrated employee talent review and succession planning process which is repeated once a year

Action point 36: introduce the following dimensions as part of the talent review and succession planning process: level of "potential"; concept of "employee critical to retain"; concept of "risk of leaving the role"; concept of "urgency of a move" and concept of "readiness"

Action point 37: the buy-in and support of the main stakeholders, including the works council needs to be gained

Action point 38: develop a global communications campaign

Action point 39: get approval of the required budget in terms of time for the implementation

The practical application of the recommendations as well as the associated action points are summarised in section 6.4.1 on page 200.

5.7 Recommendation #6: Introduce the Concept: Manager as Coach

A consistent theme emerging from the data is the importance which leaders put on performance management and talent development, specifically, the active support leaders provide to their employees in terms of the employees' development. Further, evidence emerged that constant discussions between leader and employee not only build trust, moreover, the leader engages the employee by being an active supporter of the employee's professional development. As previously described, research provides evidence that the traditional performance management approaches are no longer motivating employees. Moreover, employees expect clear expectations, ongoing feedback and coaching from their line managers (Wigert and Harter, 2017). As such, organisations should address this aspect by developing an approach to manage and evaluate performance which is in line with employee expectations (Budhwar et al., 2008).

The literature acknowledges that line managers play an integral part of using HR frameworks – such as performance management systems – in the best possible way to influence team members' performance and attitudes positively (Den Hartog and Boon, 2013).

The findings of the research has led the researcher to the creation of the supplementary code "Leader as coach" within the primary code "Performance management" in theme 4 "A leader's focus on talent management has a positive influence on employee engagement" (section 4.6 on page 142).

Resulting from the findings and the research analysis, the researcher recommends that leaders at Linde Plc. should think in new ways: leaders should see themselves as coach and not as "boss". In the researcher's mind establishing a culture in which leaders see themselves as coach is building on the recommendation introduced in section 5.5.5 on page 176, which introduces the concept of a new performance management process.

Coaching is defined as the support in regards to the development, learning and performance of a person. As such, the coach is concerned with the improvement of the performance and further development of the coachee - the person being coached (Downey and Downey, 1999; Parsloe, 1995). Coaching should unlock a person's potential and increase a person's performance by supporting people to learn rather than to teach and tell them what to do (Law, 2013).

In the researcher's view, regular and continuous coaching supports line managers and employees to engage in ongoing discussions about individual development needs, performance as well as behavioural expectations.

At Linde Plc., coaching is currently not understood as a leader's on-going task regarding people development. Moreover, coaching is understood as a development instrument which is used when a performance or development gap is identified. However, in the researcher's view, coaching is part of every leader's daily business and should therefore be put much more into focus. Further, the researcher recommends establishing coaching as an ongoing development tool which is addressing performance development and not performance management. This new approach is in line with the recommendation to establish a new approach to performance management. By this, every employee will benefit from continuous coaching discussions.

In order to up-skill all leaders, the leadership development offerings need to be updated and aligned towards the new focus. A specific leadership development programme which puts coaching into the focus needs to be introduced. In the researcher's view, the Talent Management department should design and implement a specific training offering for all line managers.

However, the researcher acknowledges that the continuous coaching by line managers does not replace coaching with a professional, external coach. These external coaches are a very important development tool which is used when there is a specific development need that needs experts with specific knowledge and experience.

As previously mentioned, the topic of coaching needs to be included in the leadership development framework. The researcher recommends establishing a stand-alone briefing or insight session which can be delivered virtually by the Talent Management department. The target group for such a roll-out would be those line managers, who have gone through the existing leadership development offerings. In addition, the concept "leader as coach" should be included in all existing leadership development offerings in order to ensure that all newly-trained leaders will get to know the content as well.

Offering coaching as an ongoing development for employees would be a paradigm shift for Linde Plc. Therefore, the researcher recommends supporting this new initiative with a communications campaign targeted to all employees. The communications campaign on the one hand ensures that all employees know what is meant with the new coaching concept and the employees know the difference to the traditional coaching concept. On the other hand, employees know that they have the right to actively ask for these coaching discussions with their line manager.

Furthermore, the researcher recommends linking the coaching communications campaign to the communications campaign regarding the new performance management process. Because the continuous performance and development check-ins are exactly in line with the coaching discussions recommended in this chapter. The researcher thinks that this would put leaders at ease when they first hear about the new performance management process because they simultaneously are informed about the requirements of the individual discussions.

The researcher acknowledges that there are leaders who do this already, who embed coaching elements into their day-to-day interactions with their team members. However, evidence emerged through this research showed that many leaders still provide feedback and development recommendations only during the mid-year review or year-end appraisal.

The researcher recognises that there is a budget required in terms of costs and time. Time is needed on the one hand for the development of the coaching content for the leadership development training offerings. This time investment lies with the Talent Management department. On the other hand, time is required of all leaders who need to be trained accordingly.

There will be no cost associated with external training providers because the concept of coaching is known to the Talent Management department. Therefore, the training can be delivered internally.

In conclusion, the researcher recommends establishing a concept of ongoing coaching discussions between employees and line managers. The aim for this initiative is a paradigm shift from performance management towards a culture which focuses on performance development. These ongoing discussions between employee and line manager should be part of the continuous performance check-ins. Further, they should support all employees to own their performance and to increase their professional and career development.

Based on the recommendations explained in this chapter the following action points have emerged (action points 40 to 44):

Action point 40: establish a leadership culture in which leaders see themselves as coach rather than as managers

Action point 41: establish coaching as an ongoing development tool which address performance development rather than performance management

Action point 42: the talent management department should design and implement a specific leadership development programme for coaching which should be included in the overall leadership development framework

Action point 43: develop a global communications campaign which links to the communications campaign suggested for the introduction of the new performance management approach

Action point 44: get approval of the required budget in terms of time for the implementation

The practical application of the recommendations as well as the associated action points are summarised in section 6.4.1 on page 200.

5.8 Conclusion

The main objective of this research was to identify the leadership practices, leadership qualities and leadership behaviours which tend to entail the highest degree of employee engagement at Linde Plc. Based on the findings of this study, the researcher's aim is to validate the existing Talent Management portfolio and leadership programmes in order to equip line managers with tools and techniques within the Talent Management environment which brings about the most engaged employees within their teams.

In order to achieve this, the researcher has developed recommendations for the future development of leaders in organisations and specifically, for the leadership development of the organisation in which this case study was conducted. The researcher has accomplished this aim by presenting six recommendations in this chapter.

The presented recommendations are the result of the previously presented findings which are specifically bound to the context in which they were found as well as the interaction between researcher and research respondents.

Further, the researcher acknowledges that her epistemological and ontological position have had an influence on the presented recommendations. In addition, the researcher acknowledges that the presented recommendations and corresponding action points may not all be suitable to implement in other organisations. However, the researcher believes that the recommendations contain aspects which are applicable for all organisations, such as an evaluation of the current leadership development offerings.

In conclusion, the researcher made six recommendations to the case study organisation based on the findings and the themes identified in this research.

The first recommendation is to conduct continuous engagement check-ins in order to get an understanding of the engagement level in the case study organisation. This allows the case study organisation to assess whether the leadership development offerings have a positive effect on the engagement levels of employees.

The second recommendation is to establish a leadership development framework in the case study organisation. This framework would provide the case study organisation a structured approach to leadership development at any point in time of the leadership cycle.

In addition, the third recommendation is to continuously review the leadership development framework in order to ensure an up-to-date and state-of-the-art leadership development curriculum.

The fourth recommendation is to introduce a new approach to performance management in the case study organisation. This new approach would focus on regular performance check-ins, which eliminates performance ratings and which puts the employees' behaviour and development requirements into the focus of the regular performance discussions.

The fifth recommendation is to introduce an integrated employee talent review and succession planning process. The new process would allow line managers to systematically review and calibrate the potential of employees, criticality of employees, employee's risk of leaving, employee's urgency of a move as well as the readiness of an employee for potential next roles.

The sixth and last recommendation is to introduce the concept leader as coach in order to increase employee's performance and further support the employee's development. This concept would put the focus on coaching elements rather than teaching elements within the interaction between line manager and employee.

Figure 12 visualises how each recommendation corresponds to one or more themes identified in this research.

Recommendations	Themes: A leader's understanding of Employee Engagement	A leader's personality and background have a positive influence on Employee Engagement	A leader's behaviour and leadership style have a positive influence on Employee Engagement	A leader's focus on Talent Management has a positive influence on Employee Engagement
Conduct continuous employee engagement check-ins	✓			
Establish a leadership development framework			✓	
Review current leadership development offerings			✓	
Introduce a new approach to performance management				✓
Introduce an integrated employee talent review & succession planning process				✓
Introduce the concept: manager as coach				✓

FIGURE 12: THEMES AND CORRESPONDING RECOMMENDATIONS (OWN ILLUSTRATION)

In addition to presenting each recommendation, the researcher explored how the recommendation could be implemented in the case study organisation as well as which implementation constraints should be considered.

For each recommendation the researcher has identified action points which need to be followed in order to implement the suggested recommendations.

An overview of the action points corresponding to each recommendation can be found in Figure 13 on the next page.

Recommendations & Action Points

R1: Conduct continuous employee engagement check-ins

1. the Talent Management department is in charge to conduct continuous engagement check-ins every quarter in order to evaluate the changing engagement levels over time
2. the sponsorship of the Executive Board for the engagement check-ins has to be ensured
3. the buy-in and support of the works council needs to be gained
4. a communications campaign for the launch of the engagement check-ins has to be developed
5. the results of the engagement check-ins have to be communicated transparently
6. focus groups have to be conducted once the results of the engagement survey are published
7. the engagement scores should be used to continuously evaluate the effectiveness of the leadership development training opportunities
8. budget needs to be gathered in terms of money and time

R2: Establish a leadership development framework

9. a leadership development framework which addresses the leadership development topics has to be implemented
10. a steering committee or steering council needs to be established in order to get involvement and buy-in from all relevant stakeholders
11. a mixture of classical classroom training opportunities, coaching and mentoring offerings need to be implemented
12. a leadership development consultant should be hired to review the leadership development framework
13. the buy-in and support of the works council needs to be gained
14. a detailed global communication campaign which promotes the launch of the leadership development framework needs to be initiated; including building an intranet site
15. a continuous review of the content and offerings of the leadership development framework needs to be ensured
16. budget needs to be gathered in terms of money and time

R3: Review current leadership development offerings

17. review all current leadership development offerings in the context of the identified best practices of this research in a structured approach
18. conduct a short survey with a representative sample of Linde's leadership population to find out whether the existing leadership development offerings are meeting leader's development needs
19. conduct detailed interviews with experts from the Talent Management department to evaluate whether the existing leadership development offerings are meeting the requirements of the organisations and are state of the art
20. based on these interviews, the talent management experts need to assess whether the current offerings are state of the art or need further development
21. conduct employee focus groups to assess the effectiveness of current leadership development offerings from the employee perspective
22. critically review the content deliver method of leadership development offerings
23. the talent management team should engage in external best practice sharing in terms of leadership development offerings, including external peer review discussions
24. establish a regular rhythm of reviewing leadership development offerings once the new leadership development framework is implemented

R4: Introduce a new approach to performance management

25. introduce a more flexible approach to performance management, including performance check-ins at least every quarter
26. add the expected behaviour of an employee to the overall performance discussion
27. eliminate the use of performance ratings
28. create a project group which is in charge of the development and launch of the new performance management process
29. the buy-in and support of the works council needs to be gained
30. the buy-in and support of the Executive Board needs to be gained
31. Ensure the roll-out of the new performance management follows a top-down approach, starting with the Executive staff
32. develop a global communications campaign
33. develop a global training campaign, including webinars for employees and members of the Human Resources department
34. get approval of the required budget in terms of money and time for the implementation

R5: Introduce an integrated employee talent review & succession planning process

35. introduce and implement an integrated employee talent review and succession planning process which is repeated once a year
36. introduce the following dimensions as part of the talent review and succession planning process: level of "potential"; concept of "employee critical to retain"; concept of "risk of leaving the role"; concept of "urgency of a move" and concept of "readiness"
37. the buy-in and support of the main stakeholders, including the works council needs to be gained
38. develop a global communications campaign
39. get approval of the required budget in terms of time for the implementation

R6: Introduce the concept: manager as coach

40. establish a leadership culture in which leaders see themselves as coach rather than as managers
41. establish coaching as an ongoing development tool which address performance development rather than performance management
42. the talent management department should design and implement a specific leadership development programme for coaching which should be included in the overall leadership development framework
43. develop a global communications campaign which links to the communications campaign suggested for the introduction of the new performance management approach
44. get approval of the required budget in terms of time for the implementation

FIGURE 13: RECOMMENDATIONS AND ACTION POINTS (OWN ILLUSTRATION)

The recommendations enable the case study organisation to make a positive impact on the engagement levels of teams by implementing and focusing the leadership development activities on those recommended activities which this research has highlighted to have a positive influence on the engagement level of teams. The researcher believes that following the recommendations and practical action points will have a positive effect on the overall engagement levels within Linde. All recommendations play a part on the journey to increase the engagement levels within the organisation. In the view of the researcher implementing the proposed processes, training frameworks as well as continuous engagement check-ins will have an effect on how leaders at Linde will lead their teams in the future. Because the research has shown that these topics are viewed to be critical in order to raise the engagement levels within the organisation.

The effectiveness of the proposed recommendations can only be measured over time once all recommendations and action plans have been implemented. The scores of the regular engagement check-ins will be the proof on whether the actions have been successful. This will be the case if the engagement levels continue to be on a high level or even increase further.

The next and final chapter will conclude this thesis. A personal reflection, summary of the research findings as well as the contribution of the research is presented.

6. Conclusion

6.1 Introduction

This chapter concludes this research study. The researcher's personal reflection on the research journey, the problems which arose during the research journey as well as the personal development of the researcher is reflected upon.
Further, this chapter includes a summary of the main research findings based on the research objectives included in section 1.2 on page 2. In addition, a summary of the main research findings is included. Furthermore, this chapter includes the contribution to business practice which also highlights the recommendations based upon the research findings. Hereafter, the contributions to knowledge are presented. The quality of this grounded theory research has been evaluated in detail in this chapter as well.
As is the case with many scholarly work, this thesis contains certain limitations which will also be discussed in this chapter. The thesis concludes with a section about the recommendations for further research.

6.2 Personal Reflection

Now, that the writing of my thesis has almost come to an end I would like to reflect upon my research journey.
At Linde, my work area is in Talent Management and Leadership Development and, therefore, the topics of employee engagement, leadership development, leadership behaviour as well as leadership styles are very close to my heart. It has always been a dream of myself to engage in doctoral research about employee engagement, leadership and leadership development. Specifically, I have always been interested in which leadership styles or leadership behaviour lead to high employee engagement at Linde. Many books, articles and studies exist about employee engagement, leadership styles and leadership behaviour. However, I wanted to know how the situations looks like at Linde – the company

I work for since 15 years. That is why I was particularly interested in conducting a case study. I did not only want to research what leads to highly-engaged teams. My intention is to implement all recommendations and action points into practice and by that continuously increasing the levels of employee engagement at Linde. I am very happy that I am in a position which allows me to drive that continuous improvement.

In addition to my daily tasks and business-related projects on the job, I had been involved in further development throughout my career. I studied for my Masters part-time in order to be able to work full-time. For me, it was an unique opportunity to apply the learning immediately into my workplace. In addition, I was able to broaden my horizon because I was constantly learning new things. As a result, I decided to pursue a part-time DBA which allowed myself to gather new knowledge whilst still being able to work and applying additional knowledge into my workplace.

I personally believe that learning is a lifelong process and each day people learn something new, whether they are keen to do so or not. The DBA course has taught me that knowledge alone is not enough. The experience and implementation of the new learning into the workplace are essential.

As with so many things in life, problems emerged throughout the research journey. At the start of the DBA, I encountered several challenges during the data collection and data analysis phases. The most significant challenge was starting a new position shortly after getting the approval of the research topic. This meant that from the start of the data collection phase my role in the organisation changed and the amount of business trips and days spend abroad increased significantly. The increasing travelling schedules resulted in a serious time constraint for the DBA schedule. The overall time anticipated for conducting the research interviews took much longer than originally planned and scheduled. As a result, the entire research schedule and time plan was delayed.

A further challenge was my inexperience in conducting semi-structured interviews. The first interviews I conducted could have been more targeted and clearer on the research topics, but in the first interviews I spent more time on the topics which were not primarily important for the study. However, reflecting back upon the time I am very grateful. Grateful because I went through this learning curve and felt much better prepared and knowledgeable after conducting several interviews. For me, this was a great learning experience.

The Covid-19 situation throughout the last year had a significant impact on my business situation. All business travels were cancelled which was very positive for me since it resulted in more writing time for my DBA thesis. This made a great difference in regard to the process I made finalising the thesis.

All in all, I found that the research in most of the cases was fun, accompanied with a lot of hard work, headaches, sleepless nights and a tremendous amount of personal learning and development.

Throughout the entire research journey, I have not only learned about the research topic. In addition, I have learned a lot more about myself, my strengths, my weaknesses as well as new skills and capabilities.

The personal network, which I was able to build upon conducting face-to-face interviews with senior executives from Linde Plc., is an important asset to build upon for possible future career advancements.

Now, I anticipate that the recommendations and action points derived from this study will help and aspire not only organisations in advancing their leadership development offerings. Despite the limitations of this research, I would like to disseminate this study to inspire leaders in my organisation to reflect upon their leadership behaviour and what they can personally do to increase the level of employee engagement in their teams.

The research journey has been a long journey for me and I am grateful for all the experiences and knowledge gained throughout that time. The experiences and knowledge gained in this research study have made me a better professional in the area of Talent Management and Leadership Development. In addition, the insights gained will have developed me to become a better und hopefully an inspiring leader myself.

6.3 Summary of the Research Findings

The researcher would like to review the research question as well as the research objective as previously discussed in section 1.2 as well as in section 4.2.

Research Question:

Which leadership style or leadership behaviour have a positive effect on employee engagement?

Research Objective:

What leadership qualities, practices and behaviours have the most positive effect on employee engagement at Linde?

The supplementary research questions and corresponding research objectives are visualised in Figure 4 on page 105.

The outcome of this study aims to provide an understanding of the leadership styles and leadership behaviours which contribute to the highest degree of employee engagement at Linde Plc. Furthermore, the literature review conducted for this study identified a gap in existing knowledge of which leadership behaviour or leadership practice seems to have the most positive effect on the level of employee engagement within a team. In fact, the literature research has identified a further requirement to investigate the link between effective leadership behaviours and its effects on employee engagement (Howell, 2017; Stoyanova and Iliev, 2017; Yıldız et al., 2016). This research study has endeavoured to address this knowledge gap in order to enable the Talent Management teams to know what exactly drives employee engagement within Linde Plc. and, by this to customize existing leadership programmes accordingly.

The data analysis of the 17 semi-structured research interviews have led to the following findings regarding the previously mentioned research question and research objective:

- A leader's understanding of the concept of employee engagement is important to apply effective leadership behaviour. Leaders need to be aware of their actions and interactions with their team in order to engage them. Because leaders are the main influence factors in driving high engagement levels.
- A leader's background and personality have a positive influence on employee engagement. Leaders believe that their educational and personal background has a significant impact on how they have individually developed as a leader. Specifically, family values, the educational path that had been followed as well as the international (working) experience is viewed to be most

influential on how a leader leads his or her team. In addition, leaders find their own leadership journey as more valuable in becoming a better leader than classical leadership development trainings. Furthermore, the personality of leaders is viewed to have a major impact on how one leads and engages team members.

– Eight leadership practices have been identified which have a positive influence on employee engagement. Those eight leadership practices are: learn from experience; care for others; envision and acknowledge; adjust to the situation; empower and entrust to act; deal with conflict constructively; create an environment of trust; foster a climate of open and honest communication.
– A leader's focus on talent management has a positive influence on employee engagement. Especially, how leaders manage the performance of their employees as well as how they develop their teams are viewed to be employee engagement drivers.

In summary, the data analysis identified how leadership behaviour has an impact on employee engagement. In particular, evidence emerged that a leader's understanding of employee engagement, a leader's personality and background, certain leadership practices as well as a leader's focus on talent management have a positive effect on employee engagement.

The findings presented have been identified through a grounded theory research approach for which 17 leaders of the case study organisation have been interviewed. The grounded theory presented in this study contribute to business practice as well as knowledge and are presented in the next section.

6.4 Contribution of the Research

The research undertaken and corresponding findings are viewed to be of value for the academic as well as the business community. It adds value to the existing body of knowledge and it offers insights for researchers and practitioners. The following sections talk about the specific contribution to business practice and knowledge.

6.4.1 Contribution to Business Practice

The previous section highlighted the research findings identified throughout the analysis of the research data. It has been acknowledged that there are many factors that leaders can influence in regards to establishing a highly-engaged team.

The researcher was in the unique position to gather internal up-to-date knowledge, looking from inside rather than from outside at the case study data. As previously described in chapter 4 starting on page 100, the research led to the findings that focus on the following leads to high engaged teams: a leader's understanding of employee engagement, a leader's personality and background; certain leadership practices as well as a leader's focus on talent management.

In accordance with the research findings the researcher has identified six recommendations for organisations and leaders which contain practical suggestions and are therefore most meaningful for the case study organisation (cf. chapter 5). However, the developed recommendations and action points are not just limited to the case study organisation. Rather, the results of the thesis can help to inform practice in other organisations to increase their leadership effectiveness and also increase the levels of employee engagement within the company.

The researcher would like to point out that the findings are professionally generalisable within the case study organisation. The findings can be rolled-out globally keeping in mind cultural differences which need to be handled cautiously within the case study organisation. However, it is not generalisable towards other organisations. Although, in the long-term best practice could be shared with other organisations. Academically, the findings are not generalisable due to the fact that many aspects are different to the case study organisation. Those aspects are but are not limited to different industries, different cultural settings, different organisational cultures, different work force as well as different leadership culture.

It is recommended for the case study organisation to apply the suggested recommendations and action points. The researcher acknowledges that the maturity levels of other organisations will be different and therefore the suggested rec-

ommendations and action points may be more or less applicable once best practice is shared in the long-term.
In the researcher's view, the contribution to business practice is manifold. Implementing the recommendations and identified action items will enable the case study organisation to not only gain a regular understanding of the engagement levels within the organisation, moreover, it will enable the organisations to focus its leadership development offerings to those items which have been identified as the most-effective drivers of high employee engagement.
The following paragraphs summarise the recommendations and action points.

(1) Conduct continuous engagement check-ins

The researcher recommends to establish quarterly engagement check-ins in order to get an understanding of the employee engagement level in the organisation. Knowing the engagement levels of employees provides the Talent Management department a feedback on the existing leadership development opportunities and their effectiveness. Further, it enables the Talent Management department to evaluate and improve the organisational effectiveness.
The quarterly engagement check-ins should be done including the entire employee work force and the pulse survey should use the same set of four to six questions, in order to be able to compare recent and previous data easily.
The researcher recommends to gain the sponsorship by the Executive Board as well as the buy-in from the works council. A global communications campaign should be started before the pulse survey takes place as well as once the results are published. The campaign should include all employees and should be transparent and honest about the results. The results should be evaluated and discussed using focus groups.
This recommendation will have an influence on the engagement levels because the case study organisation has a quarterly up-to-date overview of the engagement levels and can assess whether the used leadership practices as well as leadership development offerings are positively influencing the engagement levels.
The detailed description of this recommendation and action points can be found in section 5.2 starting on page 164.

(2) Establish a leadership development framework

The researcher recommends to create and establish a framework which comprises all elements related to leadership development. Such a framework would provide Linde Plc. a structured approach to leadership development at any point in time of the leadership cycle. The framework should include specific development offerings for newly-appointed first line managers as well as for established business leaders.

A continuous review of the leadership development framework ensures an up-to-date and state-of-the-art leadership development curriculum. The leadership development curriculum will have a positive indirect effect on the employee engagement levels of the case study organisation and any other organisation who will implement this recommendation. Because the research data of this study has revealed that leadership development is an important factor in building a leadership pipeline which is able to engage employees.

In order to get the buy-in and sponsorship for the leadership development framework the researcher recommends to form a steering committee and to involve the works council early on in the process. In terms of the content of the leadership development framework, the researcher recommends to offer a mixture of traditional classroom trainings as well as mentoring and coaching and on-the-job experiences. The training delivery method should be done using a blended learning approach. Due to the limited availability of classroom trainings, virtual training delivery methods using tools such as Zoom, Microsoft Teams or other delivery tools need to be explored and used.

The mix of training opportunities will address the changing development needs regarding the leadership cycle. The data has shown that trust, communication as well as authenticity play a major role in how successful leaders lead their teams. Therefore, the researcher recommends to include these aspects as important pillars of the leadership development framework. Furthermore, a detailed and global communications campaign which is targeted to all employees should promote the launch of the leadership development framework. In order to ensure that the latest state-of-the-art leadership development offerings and trainings are part of the leadership development framework, a continuous re-

view of the content needs to be ensured.
The researcher believes that following this recommendation will support organisations to focus on those leadership development offerings, which we know from the data analysis have a positive effect on the employee engagement levels. If organisations follow this structured approach, they will more likely offer those leadership development activities in a structured way as well and by this influencing indirectly the engagement levels within the organisation.
The detailed description of this recommendation and action points can be found in section 5.3 starting on page 168.

(3) Review current leadership development offerings

Evidence has emerged that a range of specific leadership behaviour and leadership styles have a positive influence in employee engagement (cf. section 4.5). Based on this finding, the researcher recommends to conduct a detailed review and analysis of the current leadership development offerings including the main stakeholders. Further, the researcher recommends that the topics "leadership behaviour", "communication" as well as "trust" need to be included as important topics regarding the leadership development offerings. Because the data of this research has shown that these aspects have a positive influence on the employee engagement levels. In order to increase the engagement levels of the organisation, the focus should be put on these aspects.
In order to review the current leadership development offerings, the researcher suggests to follow a structured approach which should consist of a short survey with a representative sample of the leadership population of the case study organisation; it should include detailed interviews with internal Talent Management experts and it should include external peer review conversations with external best practice companies.
In addition, the researcher suggests to establish a continuous review of the leadership development offerings once the leadership development framework is fully implemented in the organisation. Further, the effectiveness of the leadership development offerings should not only be assessed using the regular engagement check-ins, moreover, regular focus group discussions with employees should assess the effectiveness of the leadership offerings as well.

The researcher recommends that following this recommendation will help the case study organisation as well as any other organisation who applies the recommendation, to continuously assess the effectiveness of the leadership offerings. By doing this, the organisation ensures that employee engagement is put at the heart of the leadership development framework and is reconsidered, in case the engagement levels are decreasing over time. Furthermore, the researcher found that focusing on developing those leadership styles in Linde Plc, which are known to have a positive effect on the employee engagement levels (cf. section 4.5.1), will increase the overall engagement levels of the organisation. The continuous engagement check-ins will also act as the measurement tool for the effectiveness of the identified leadership styles.
The detailed description of this recommendation and action points can be found in section 5.4 starting on page 172.

(4) Introduce a new approach to performance management

The researcher recommends introducing a new approach to performance management which focuses on regular performance check-ins, which eliminates performance ratings and which puts the employees' behaviours and development requirements into the focus of the regular performance discussions.
Evidence in the data emerged that performance management processes are viewed to be important and more regular discussions between line manager and employee should take place. Therefore, the researcher recommends to introduce "performance check-ins" which ideally take place every six to eight weeks in order to offer a more flexible and ongoing approach to performance management. The focus of the "performance check-ins" should be on how goals are achieved and which development is required rather than which goals are achieved. By introducing the "performance check-ins", the researcher further recommends to eliminate the use of performance ratings.
A project group should be formed which is in charge of designing and implementing the new performance management process as well as to ensure the buy-in of the Executive Board as well as the works council. Furthermore, the project group should be in charge of creating a communications and trainings campaign to inform and up-skill all stakeholders of the new performance man-

agement process.

Through the evidence emerged from the data analysis, the researcher knows that performance management and, moreover the regular performance discussions between line manager and employee have a positive influence on the engagement level. Therefore, the researcher strongly believes in the power of more regular performance check-ins to continue to increase the levels of engagement – in combination with the additional recommendations to increase the engagement levels.

The regular engagement check-ins, as recommended in section 5.2, will provide evidence whether the regular performance check-ins and the new approach to performance management will have an effect on the overall engagement level of the case study organisation.

The detailed description of this recommendation and action points can be found in section 5.5 starting on page 176.

(5) Introduce an integrated talent review and succession planning process

During the data analysis, evidence emerged that identifying talent and succession candidates as well as developing employees into next roles is viewed highly important (cf. section 4.6.2).

Therefore, the researcher recommends introduction and implementation of an integrated employee talent review and succession planning process in the case study organisation. This process allows leaders to systematically review and calibrate the potential of employees, criticality of employees, employee's risk of leaving, employee's urgency of a move as well as the readiness of an employee for potential next roles. The researcher recommends that all leaders should be actively involved in order to ensure a clear understanding of the critical roles within the organisation, transparency about the existing talent and succession bench strength as well as knowledge of employees viewed to be critical to be retained. The talent review and succession planning discussion should take place at least once a year between a line manager and the Talent Management department.

In addition to the recommendation of implementing continuous performance check-ins (cf. section 5.5), the recommendation to conduct at least once a year

a talent and succession planning meeting will ensure that employees play an active role in their career development, which in return will lead to higher engagement levels.
The researcher recommends to create a communications campaign to get the buy-in of all relevant stakeholder, especially the Executive Board and the works council.
The evidence of the data analysis has shown that a focus on succession planning is important in regards to employee engagement. The case study organisation can influence the engagement levels when establishing the proposed systematic approach to identify potential talent and succession candidates.
The detailed description of this recommendation and action points can be found in section 5.6 starting on page 180.

(6) Introduce the concept: manager as coach

The data emerged through this research shows evidence that constant discussions between leaders and employees build trust and support the development of employees. Research also shows that employees expect ongoing feedback and coaching from their line managers (Wigert and Harter, 2017).
Building on this knowledge, the researcher recommends to introduce the concept "manager as coach". Coaching supports the development of employees as well as increases employees' performance through supporting discussions rather than through teaching or instructing. The researcher believes that conducting these regular coaching discussions as part of the continuous performance check- ins – as described in section 5.5 – will result in employees feeling more engaged. As such, the researcher recommends to establish coaching as an ongoing tool for development which is included in the leadership development offerings and is therefore part of the overall leadership development framework. Further, the researcher suggests that this new emphasis on coaching is broadly communicated to all relevant stakeholders using a global communications campaign. In the researchers view, this communications campaign can be easily combined with the communications campaign for the introduction of the new performance management approach (cf. section 5.5) because the recommended regular performance check-ins are in line with the recommended

approach to coaching. The researcher acknowledges that such a focus on coaching as part of the performance management is a paradigm shift for the case study organisation. It enables to build a culture which focuses on performance development rather than performance management.
The detailed description of this recommendation and action points can be found in section 5.7 starting on page 186.

This chapter contains the summarised recommendations and contributions to business practice for the case study organisation as well as for any other organisation who wishes to implement the recommendations. The researcher acknowledges that the recommendations may be more or less significant for other organisations based on the individual maturity levels regarding the discussed topics.
For the case study organisations, the described recommendations will help foster a culture that focuses on high employee engagement. The recommendations will provide the basis not only to find out about the latest engagement levels, moreover, it provides clear guidance and action points for leaders as well as for the entire organisation to focus upon in order to continue to establish high employee engagement levels.
Finally, the researcher would like to re-emphasise that the recommendations need to be reviewed and measured continuously in regard to their effectiveness. The recommended engagement check-ins (cf. section 5.2) will be the basis for this measurement. However, only when this is done in combination to focus group discussions based on the engagement scores, the case study organisation will find out which recommendations and action points proved to be more or less effective.

In addition to the presented contribution to business practice, the researcher presents the contribution to knowledge in the next chapter.

6.4.2 Contribution to Knowledge

As described in the literature review in chapter 2 starting on page 9, there is a tremendous amount of professional and scholarly sources examining many aspects relevant for this research study. Based on this literature analysis, it became apparent to the researcher that in leadership and HRM literature examination in practice, specific leadership styles or leadership behaviours which lead to highly-engaged teams in a particular organisation have not been researched.

The researcher's choice was the use of the grounded theory approach by Corbin and Strauss (2015) to close this research gap. During the research, the researcher identified important aspects which are relevant for the 17 interviewed leaders in the case study organisation to be as effective as possible and to lead a team of highly-engaged employees.

The result of this analysis is the contribution to business practice as described in section 6.4.1 on page 200. New knowledge was created through the detailed interview analysis. The researcher was able to challenge the people involved in this study during the research interview because the research took place in the organisation in which the researcher herself is employed. Furthermore, it appears to the researcher that the significant literature regarding employee engagement, talent management as well as leadership development is focusing on American and British business culture. However, this primary research gathered data from leaders working all in the same global company, leaders who are part of the same leadership culture, leaders who have a diverse cultural background and who themselves have had various leadership experiences (cf. section 4.2). This unique knowledge gathered led to the creation of the recommendations and action points as described in chapters 5 and 6.4.1. In addition, this research has contributed to knowledge on global organisations for readers particularly interested in employee engagement, leadership development, leadership styles and leadership behaviour, performance management as well as talent management. It showed how leaders can have a positive influence on the employee engagement levels of their teams by demonstrating certain leadership styles as well as by focusing on leadership development activities. Furthermore, it informed how focusing on performance management by using performance check-in`s, for example, effect positively employee engagement.

The research presented the views of the research participants regarding the mentioned topics. Being a member of the case study organisation, the researcher had access to confidential and sensitive data which was used for this research and which adds to the available research around the topics of employee engagement, leadership development, performance management, talent review and succession planning and talent management.

Furthermore, the research contributes to knowledge, which should be viewed in the context of the differentiation between theory and description of a phenomena highlighted by Corbin and Strauss (2015). In Corbin and Strauss's (2015) view, descriptions as such are not a theory. However, they do serve as a foundation or a basis for the formation of theory (Corbin and Strauss, 2015). Theories are based on well-developed and systematic categories, whose dimensions and aspects have been considered in order to create a theoretical framework which supports the description of a specific phenomenon (Corbin and Strauss, 2015).

The results of the research analysis make specific contributions to the knowledge of state-of-the-art performance management processes as well as to the existing knowledge on talent review and succession planning processes. Further contributions to knowledge have been identified in the exploration of the dimensions which form a talent review and succession planning process, such as the dimension "employee needs a move" explained in section 5.6 starting on page 180. As previously mentioned, academically, the findings are not generalisable due to the fact that many aspects could be different in other organisations or other industries.

Furthermore, the quality validation criteria for grounded theory studies by Corbin and Strauss (2015) have been adhered to during the entire research project. These are explained in more detail in the next chapter.

In the researcher's view, the results of this research make significant contribution to knowledge by closing the identified research gap and as a result make significant contribution to the business knowledge.

6.5 Evaluating Quality of Grounded Theory

There are many perspectives in regards to validating and evaluating the quality of research projects (Creswell and Creswell, 2017). This research study followed the grounded theory approach by Corbin and Strauss (2015). In order to offer criteria to evaluate the quality of grounded theory studies, Corbin and Strauss (2015) have developed checkpoints to validate the consistency, the quality and applicability of grounded theory studies. The following table highlights the checkpoints regarding the methodological consistency of this study.
A short description by the researcher about each checkpoint is included in Table 10 as well.

Checkpoints to evaluate the methodological consistency, according to Corbin and Strauss (2015, p. 350)		
#	**Checkpoint**	**Description by the researcher**
1	What was the target sample population? How was the original sample selected?	The target sample consisted of 17 leaders of the case study organisation. The sample was selected randomly based on a list of leaders which had high engagement scores in the previous employee engagement survey conducted at the case study organisation. The sample contained leaders with different levels of leadership experience, with different leadership seniority levels and different cultural backgrounds.
2	How did sampling proceed? What kinds of data were collected? Were there multiple sources of data and multiple comparative groups?	The data collection was done through semi-structured interviews with the research participants. All research participants are leaders in the sample organisation with different personal, professional, educational and cultural backgrounds.
3	Did data collection alternate with analysis?	Yes, after each interview, the researcher did an initial first analysis of the interview data. After a couple of interviews had been conducted a more detailed analysis took place.

Checkpoints to evaluate the methodological consistency, according to Corbin and Strauss (2015, p. 350)		
4	Were ethical considerations taken into account in both data collection and analysis?	Yes, all research participants received a research information sheet prior to the research interview. This research information sheet included an overview of the study as well as a consent sheet which each research participant was asked to sign. Please see Appendix 1: Participant Information Sheet as well as Appendix 2: Interview Consent Form. At the beginning of the interview, the researcher mentioned once more that the interview is confidential and that the research participant could withdraw from the study at any point in time. The anonymity of research participants was ensured using acronyms in the recording and data transcription. The data was stored securely.
5	Were the concepts driving the data collection arrived at through analysis (based on theoretical sampling), or were concepts derived from literature and established before the data were collected (not true theoretical sampling)?	The concepts derived after the data collection took place. After the first couple of interviews had been analysed a broad idea of concepts emerged. However, the use within this case sampling had an iterative or "rolling" qualitative sample in waves of the study progression.
6	Was theoretical sampling used, and was there a description of how it proceeded?	Yes, the very first interviews were considered to be pilot interviews which the researcher used to modify the interview questions and to get into the rhythm of conducting interviews. The analysis of the interviews gave the researcher an indication of further research areas or topics to explore in future interviews.
7	Did the researcher demonstrate sensitivity to the participants and to the data?	Yes, the researcher tried to create an environment of trust during the interview and tried to ask the question without any positive or negative connotation. One research participant for example did not want to have their voice recorded. This was of course respected by the researcher.
8	Is there evidence or examples of memos?	Yes, please see Appendix 4: Example Memos.
9	At what point did data collection end or a discussion of saturation end?	The data collection ended after the 17th interview took place. The researcher realised that no new themes or topics were emerging from the data and that the interview content was repeating. The researcher acknowledged that she had sufficient data saturation due to the emerging repetitive data.

Checkpoints to evaluate the methodological consistency, according to Corbin and Strauss (2015, p. 350)		
10	Is there a description of how coding proceeded along with examples of theoretical sampling, concepts, categories, and statements of relationship? What were some of the events, incidents, or actions (indicators) that pointed to some of these major categories?	As a result of the extensive analysis the very first round of analysis led to the identification of 25 categories, 160 codes and 1,450 sub-codes. After various rounds of working with the data, it was analysing the data and combining important aspects, the analysis resulted in 4 themes, 11 categories, 111 codes and 1,302 sub-codes. Please see section 4.2 on page 100 for a detailed explanation.
11	Is there a core category, and is there a description of how that core category was arrived at?	The analysis resulted in four themes. These four themes represent the key elements. First, it emphasises the importance of employee engagement. Further, it explains a leader's personality and its influence on employee engagement. Furthermore, it describes leader's behaviour and leadership style and lastly it puts an emphasis on a leader's focus on talent management.
12	Were there changes in design as the research went along based on the findings?	No.
13	Did the researcher encounter any problems while doing the research? Is there any mention of a negative case, and how was that data handled?	Only during one interview the researcher faced the issue that the interview respondent did not want to be recorded. The researcher respected that and had to make even more detailed notes during the interview. Writing detailed notes while thinking about the next questions which builds on the last message of the interview respondent was very challenging for the researcher.
14	Are methodological decisions made clear so that the readers can judge their appropriateness for gathering data (theoretical sampling) and doing analysis?	Yes, the research methodology including the rationale for the research design and analytical research process is described in detail in chapter 3 starting on page 52.
15	Was there feedback on the findings from other professionals and from participants? And were changes made in the theory based on this feedback?	There was no feedback from the research participants.
16	Did the researcher keep a research journal or notebook?	Yes, the researcher used a notebook to keep track of the thoughts that came to mind while working with the data and were used as marginal notes as a coding aid.

TABLE 10: METHODOLOGICAL CONSISTENCY (own creation, adapted from Corbin and Strauss (2015, p. 350)

The checkpoints in regards to the quality and applicability of this study as well as a short description by the researcher is included in Appendix 8.

In conclusion, the quality of the presented grounded theory has been challenged and evaluated using the checkpoints introduced by Corbin and Strauss (2015). Specifically, the previous chapter described the researcher's strategy in evaluating the methodological consistency as well as the quality and applicability (cf. Appendix 8) of the grounded theory presented in this research.

6.6 Limitations of the Research

Whilst this research has contributed to business practice and knowledge, it has limitations which will be covered in this section.
The initial limitation is that this research has only been conducted in one organisation. This case study approach limits the possibility to generalise the research findings because additional studies in other organisations could result in different findings and therefore different recommendations.
A further limitation is the fact that the researcher did the research work in the organisation in which she works. This could potentially lead to a lack of objectivity. However, the researcher addressed this limitation by following the good practice in conducting qualitative research and as well as studying Mintzberg's work as described in section 3.6.4.
This limitation as well as other restrictive elements in regards to the grounded theory approach of this study have been discussed in section 3.6.4 on page 86.
The following aspects could have potentially limiting effects in regards to the data collection of this research:

– The sample size of the data collection with 17 research participants from one organisation may be subject to restrictions due to the limitations of generalisability.
– The semi-structured interviews have all been conducted in English language. This could have limited the use of distinct vocabulary for those research participants who are non-native English speakers.

- The data was collected at a time when the former Linde Group and Praxair Inc. merged into one company. The research participants as well as all other employees had to deal with a lot of uncertainty which may cause limitations. However, the research participants reflected upon their past behaviour and experiences and not only on the present time.
- The interview sample included leaders only which may be subject to limitations of generalisability.

The following aspects could have potentially limiting effects in regards to the data analysis:

- Prior to conducting the research interviews, a literature review was required to pass the DB2 phase of the doctoral study programme. As a result, the researcher's grounded theory position was limited.
- The analysis of the data was influenced by the researcher's professional background and knowledge and therefore could have limiting effects in regards to the subjectivity of the analysis. In order to overcome this possible limitation the researcher used constant comparison and theoretical sampling.
- The use of a computer-based programme to support the data analysis could have limiting effects because it could imply that such a programme would lead the researcher step-by-step through the analysis process rather than the researcher following her own intrinsic analysis (Corbin and Strauss, 2015). However, in the researcher's view she was able to use the programme qualitative software to analyse the data without jeopardising the credibility and quality of the research.

This research has been the first large-scale academic research for the researcher. Although, the researcher was supported by university supervisors, the little research experience, especially in regards to the data collection and data analysis, is a limitation of this research study. Further, the generalisability and representativeness due to the case study approach could be increased, although the quality criteria highlighted by Corbin and Strauss (2015) in regards to consistency, quality and applicability of a grounded theory study have been met. Recommendations for further research will be explored in the next section 6.7.

6.7 Recommendations for Further Research

The thesis provides an overview of the perspectives of leaders of the case study organisation in regards to leadership practices and leadership behaviour that contribute to highly-engaged teams.

Although this research has contributed to business practice and knowledge, the researcher sees opportunities for further research.

A comparative analysis should be conducted in order to address the lack of generalisability especially in the academic.

Additional insights into the research field could be gained when the group of interview respondents would be broadened to include employees in the sample group as well. The employee sample group could be used to test the findings based on the leader's view.

In addition, it would be interesting to extend the research outside of the case study organisation. For this study, leaders of only one organisation have been interviewed. However, the researcher envisions that more insights could be gained if the research would be done in an entire industry or in a particular geography, for example.

Further, the researcher would see a benefit in applying the identified recommendations in other organisations and other industries as well. The researcher's goal was to specifically identify recommendations applicable for the case study organisation. However, applying the recommendations outside the case study organisation could determine whether the recommendations are generalisable in an even broader sense.

During the time of the research the topic around gender equality in organisations became more and more important. The researcher acknowledges that regulations in terms of gender equality quotas could have an effect on the proposed recommendation to implement a new talent review and succession planning process. Therefore, the researcher recommends to focus future research on how such regulations have an effect on the overall succession planning and talent management processes.

Furthermore, using a different research methodology might lead to additional insights. The researcher followed the grounded theory methodology by Corbin and Strauss (2015). Nonetheless, the use of a different research methodology or data collection process might lead to different research outcomes.

In addition, expanding the research to include the leadership perspectives that have been consciously excluded in this research could potentially lead to different findings and recommendations. Consciously excluded perspectives on leadership have been the following:

- underrepresentation of women in leadership;
- critical feminist perspectives on leadership;
- race perspectives on leadership as well as
- sexual orientation.

Finally, a further research recommendation would be to conduct this research in the case study organisation once the identified recommendations and action points have been rolled-out and implemented. The researcher thinks that this time, using a research sample of leaders and employees would provide insights regarding the effectiveness of the identified recommendations. Further, the research could prove that the identified recommendations and action points have been effective.

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Appendix 1: Participant Information Sheet

THE LINDE GROUP

Doctoral Research Project

Research Information

Proposed research project title: ***How Leadership Styles affect Employee Engagement – A perspective of The Linde Group managers***

Research investigator: Marie-Kristin Hahn

Objective of the Research

The objective of the theoretical analysis is to gain an understanding of a possible causal relationship between leadership style(s), behaviour of leaders and employee engagement.

Further, the study aims to get a realistic view on the leadership behaviours within The Linde Group by conducting semi-structured interviews with managers who have high and medium engaged teams.

The outcome of the research should provide an understanding of those leadership styles and behaviours which tend to entail the highest degree of employee engagement at The Linde Group.

Research Method

The researcher uses semi-structured interviews to gain in-depth knowledge of the link between leadership style and high levels of engagement in teams at Linde.

This research technique has been chosen because it provides a way to explore, reveal, examine, analyse and understand the underlying points of engagement levels in combination with a manager's leadership style as well as leadership behaviour. Semi-structured interviews are the only way to gather rich data including individual perceptions and thoughts. The unique advantage of using semi-structured interviews as a research method is that it provides a certain degree of using standardized questions without losing the ability to be flexible and open to react upon interviewee's responses.

Information Collection and Analysis

The information collection comprises two aspects: 1.) Using existing engagement scores relevant to the research study and 2.) Collecting interview data regarding manager's leadership styles and leadership behaviour.

Research participants with high and medium engaged teams will be asked to participate in this research. Existing engagement scores of Linde's Global Employee Survey and Pulse Surveys will be used to identify the research participants.

The interviews will be recorded and conducted either face-to-face or via telephone.

The interview recordings will be fully transcribed and coded. Afterwards, the data will be screened, and relevant statements will be identified. In further rounds of screening redundant information will be removed to retain the essence of the important and relevant information regarding the research study.

Appendix 2: Interview Consent Form

THE LINDE GROUP

Doctoral Research Project

Interview Consent Form

Research project title: ***How Leadership Styles affect Employee Engagement – A perspective of The Linde Group managers***

Research Investigator: Marie-Kristin Hahn

Research Participants Name: ...

The interview will take approx. 45 minutes. I don't anticipate that there are any risks associated with your participation, but you have the right to stop the interview or withdraw from the research at any time.

Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed as part of the above research project. Ethical procedures for academic research undertaken from UK institutions require that interviewees explicitly agree to being interviewed and how the information contained in their interview will be used.
This consent form is necessary for me to ensure that you understand the purpose of your involvement and that you agree to the conditions of your participation.

Would you therefore read the accompanying **information sheet** and then sign this form to certify that you approve the following:

- The interview will be recorded, and a transcript will be produced
- The transcript of the interview will be analysed by Marie-Kristin Hahn as research investigator
- Access to the interview transcript will be limited to Marie-Kristin Hahn and academic colleagues
- Any summary interview content, or direct quotations from the interview, that are made available through academic publication or other academic outlets will be anonymized so that you cannot be identified, and care will be taken to ensure that other information in the interview that could identify yourself is not revealed
- The actual recording will be destroyed once the research project is finalised
- The research investigator may use direct quotes which will be anonymized

All or part of the content of your interview may be used;

- In academic papers, policy papers or news articles
- In spoken presentations

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By signing this form, I agree that;

1. I am voluntarily taking part in this project. I understand that I don't have to take part, and I can stop the interview at any time;
2. The transcribed interview or extracts from it may be used as described above;
3. I have read the Information sheet;
4. I don't expect to receive any benefit or payment for my participation;
5. I can request a copy of the transcript of my interview and may make edits I feel necessary to ensure the effectiveness of any agreement made about confidentiality;
6. I have been able to ask any questions I might have, and I understand that I am free to contact the researcher with any questions I may have in the future.

Participants Signature	**Date**
Researchers Signature	**Date**

This research has been reviewed and approved by the Sheffield Hallam University's Research Ethics Board.
If you have any further questions or concerns about this study, please contact:

Prof. Paul Allan
E-Mail: paul.allan@shu.ac.uk

Appendix 3: Interview Guide

THE LINDE GROUP

How Leadership Styles affect Employee Engagement – A perspective of The Linde Group Managers

DBA Thesis | Interview Guide

Personal Details (incl. gender, age)
1. Could you kindly introduce yourself?
    a. Your educational background?
    b. How long have you been with Linde?
    c. How long have you been in a managerial position?
    d. Do you have any international working experience?

Leadership
2. What is your understanding of effective leadership behaviour as a manager?
3. Which behaviours do you think makes a great leader? Why?
4. How would you describe your leadership style?
    a. How would others describe your leadership style?
5. Think about a difficult situation in your team/department:
    a. What was the situation and how did you handle the situation as a manager?

Engagement
6. Please outline your understanding of employee engagement!
7. How important is employee engagement to you as a manager?
8. How important is employee engagement to your team?
9. How important is employee engagement as a strategy for Linde?

Performance Management
10. Please define the performance appraisal process you use in your team as a manager!
11. How do you use regular feedback as a manager?
    a. How regular do you use feedback in your role as a manager?
12. How comfortable are you in giving difficult or constructive feedback as a manager?

Trust
13. Please describe how you created an environment where people collaborate, stay motivated and engaged?

Target Setting
14. How do you ensure that your direct reports see a clear link between their own work and the company's targets?

Career & Development
15. How many people do you appraise and feedback?
16. Do you create individual development plans with your team members?
    a. If yes, how do you do that?
17. How do you support your team members in reaching their targets?

THE LINDE GROUP

18. Please share a success story in how you developed a team member in your role as a manager?

Communication
19. What is your understanding of effective communication within your team as a manager?
20. Which communication channels do you use with your team members?

What was your biggest leadership challenge?

Piece of advice which you would give to a newly appointed line manager?

Last questions
21. How do you motivate your team members?

End of Interview
Time should be allocated for interviewees to add topics that are important to them.
Is there anything else you would like to say?

Appendix 4: Example Memos

2 October 2017: Memo about an interview

"This was my first interview which I conducted in regards to the DBA research. The plan was to test my interview techniques as well as to see whether the semi-structured interview process worked well. The topic trust came up quite a lot. In addition, it was interesting that he stressed the point that he had to gain trust when he moved from USA to Germany. That seems odd as he was working for many years with most of his team members virtually in the past.
The topic of authenticity came up quite a lot as well. How being an authentic leader vs. a leader plays only a role."

12 September 2018: Memo about interview transcription

"A big piece of work doing qualitative data analysis is handling the actual data. Conducting interviews meant for me to transcribe the interviews before working with the actual data. An alternative to spending hours and hours transcribing the interviews would have been to outsource this piece of work and ask an external person to do the transcription. However, I decided to do it on my own for various reasons. First, I wanted to get the experience to do the transcription first hand. This is an essential part of my doctoral research journey and I did not want to miss that. Secondly, I was not sure whether the quality of the transcription would be good. I did not really trust that I would save some time in the end if I need to check whether the text has been transcribed correctly. Third and most important aspect was that I wanted to use the time transcribing the text to think about the interview, to start with the analysis while typing the text, to really get back in the interview situation and to write down the thoughts and ideas that came to my mind about each particular interview."

11 July 2018: Memo about the code "personal development"

"Personal development has many aspects and is key to have an engaged work force. Getting people out of their comfort zone. Continuous career development discussions rather than one stand-alone discussion. Potential validation via observation."

14 October 2018: Memo about an Interview

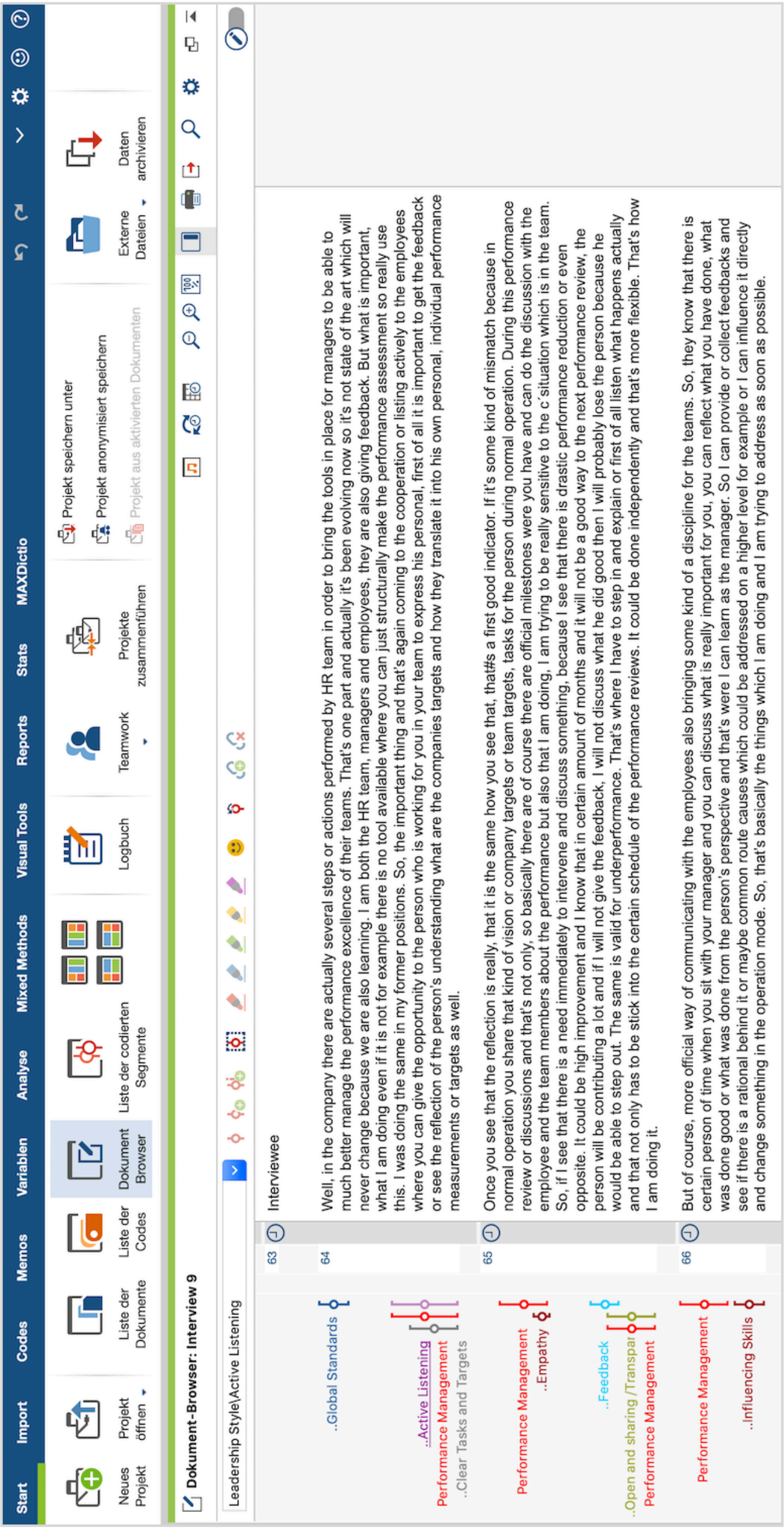
"This interviewee has been with Linde for a couple of years.

Interesting about her: she calls her direct reports "colleagues". She did that while talking, it did not seem to me that she did that on purpose. This just shows how she sees her direct reports: as equal co-workers.

She is also one of the youngest in her team and when she took over the team she was the youngest."

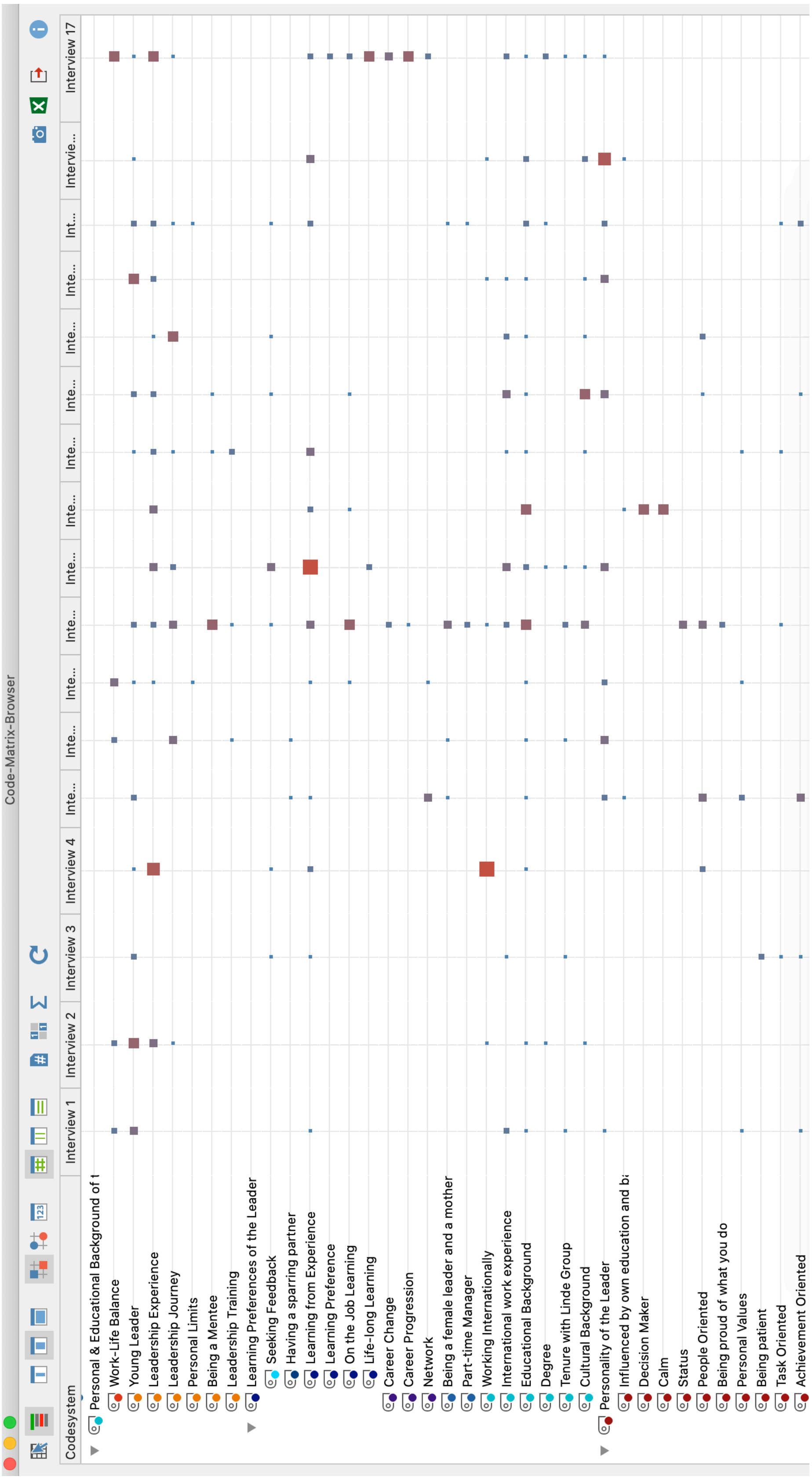
Appendix 5: Interview Analysis Example

Screenshot of a coded interview using MAXQDA software



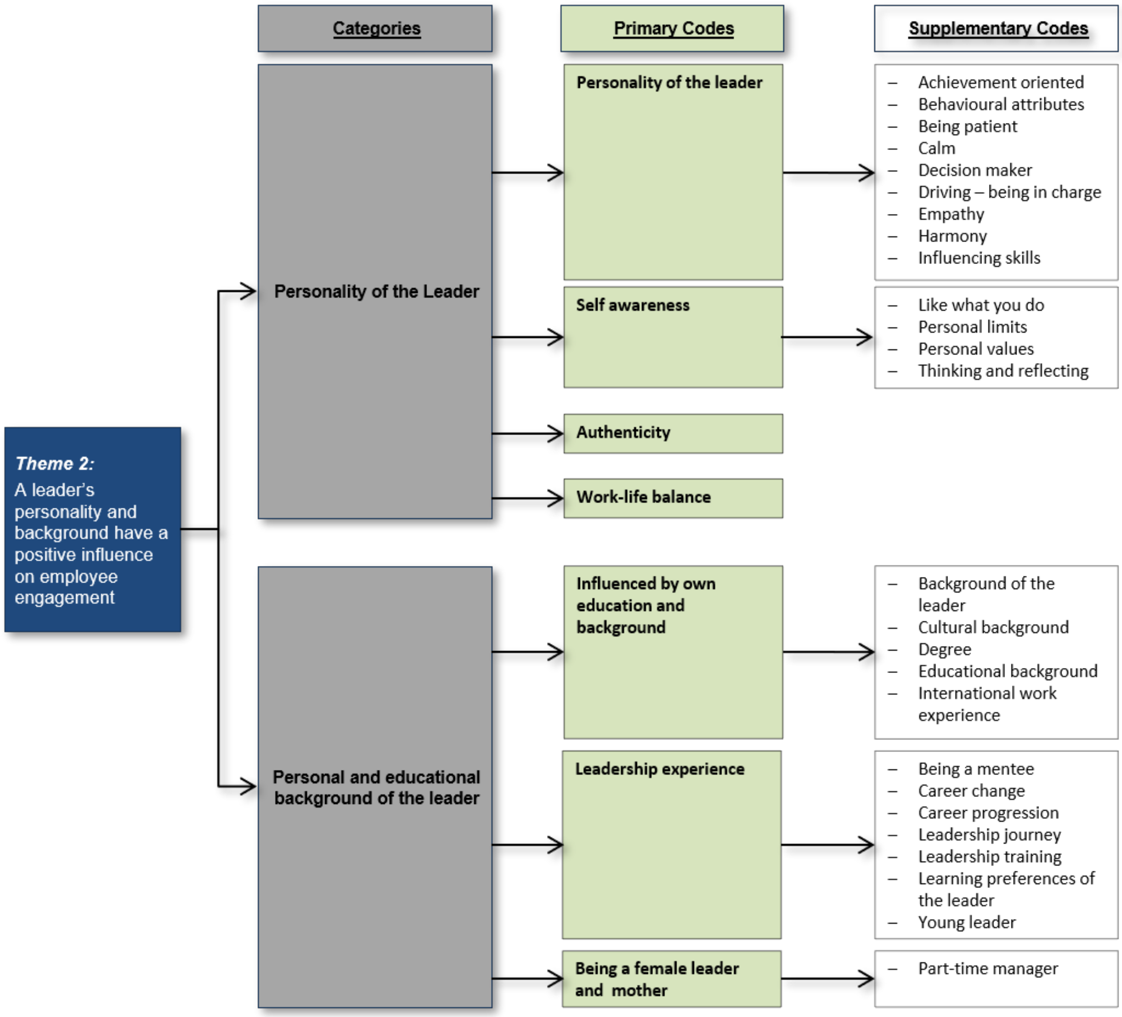
Appendix 6: Code Interview Matrix

Screenshot of the Code Interview Matrix using MAXQDA software



Appendix 7: Visualisation of Theme 2

A visualisation illustrating Theme 2 with its two categories and corresponding primary codes as well as supplementary codes



Appendix 8: Checkpoints to Evaluate the Quality and Applicability

A visualisation illustrating the checkpoints in regards to the quality and applicability of this study as well as a short description by the researcher (own creation, adapted from Corbin and Strauss (2015, p. 351).

Checkpoints to evaluate the quality and applicability, according to Corbin and Strauss (2015, p. 351)		
#	**Checkpoint**	**Description by the researcher**
1	What is the core category, and how do the major categories relate to it?	The analysis resulted in four themes. These four themes represent the key elements. Firstly, it emphasises the importance of employee engagement. Secondly, it explains a leader's personality and its influence upon employee engagement. Thirdly, it describes leader's behaviour and leadership style and fourthly, it puts an emphasis on a leader's focus on talent management.
2	Is the core category sufficiently broad so that it can be used to study other populations and similar situations beyond this setting?	Yes, the four themes are broad enough in order to be applied in different settings or different situations.
3	Are each of the categories developed in terms of their properties and dimensions so that they show depth, breadth, and variation?	Yes, during the data analysis, the researcher analysed all categories in detail. The contextual dimensions as well as the relationships of the categories have been analysed in order to meet the demands of depth, breadth and variation.
4	Is there descriptive data given under each category that brings the theory to life so that it provides understanding and can be used in a variety of situations?	Yes, each of the categories and codes contain a detailed description about their meaning. These description have been supported by an example quote given by the research respondents. The details can be found in section 4.2 starting on page 100.
5	Has context been identified and integrated into the theory?	The context has been identified. For example the personal and professional background as been talked about in each research interview.
6	Has process been incorporated into the theory in the form of changes in action-interaction in relationship to changes in conditions?	The research respondents have similar personality traits and focus areas in terms of talent management which relate to the categories and identified themes. Further research in this regards is proposed by the researcher in section 6.6 on page 213.

Checkpoints to evaluate the quality and applicability, according to Corbin and Strauss (2015, p. 351)		
7	How is data saturation explained, and when and how was it determined that categories were saturated?	Data saturation was achieved for the purpose of this research study. After conducting 17 interviews the researcher found that no new data emerged and that the information and codes emerged were repeating each other.
8	Do the findings resonate or fit with the experience of both the professionals for whom the research ended and the participants who took part in the study?	Some of the findings have been adapted by some of the research participants after discussing first findings after the very first data analysis. In addition, the findings have already been applied by the researcher herself in regards to leading her team.
9	Are there gaps, or missing links, in the theory, leaving the reader confused and with a sense that something is missing?	For further studies the researcher recommends to extend and include the data collection for employees as well. This way, additional insights could be found while having an additional perspective. Further details can be found in section 6.7 on page 215.
10	Is there an account of extremes or negative cases from respondent interviews?	The study did not identify any extremes or contradictory findings. However, further research could generate such cases.
11	Is variation build into the theory?	The variation was built into the theory, for example through interviewing leaders from different professional and cultural backgrounds as well as with different leadership experiences.
12	Are the findings presented in a creative and innovative manner? Does the research say something new or put old ideas together in new ways	Yes, the research findings are presented in an appropriate way in order to meet the expectations of business applicability as well as knowledge contribution to business practice (cf. section 6.4 on page 199). The findings as well as the related recommendations are intended to be practical and easy to implement for both leaders and organisations. Further information on the findings can be found in chapter 4 starting on page 100.
13	Do findings give insights into situations and provide knowledge that can be applied to develop policy, change practice, and add to the knowledge base of a profession?	Yes, the overall intention of the research was to identify findings which are easy to implement for organisations and leaders. In addition, the findings have added to the existing knowledge base of leadership and leadership development. Further details can be found in section 6.4 starting on page 199.

Checkpoints to evaluate the quality and applicability, according to Corbin and Strauss (2015, p. 351)		
14	Do the theoretical findings seem significant, and to what extend?	In the researcher's view the findings are significant especially for organisations who are able to target their leadership development offerings in a more focused way. In fact, the researcher herself will implement the recommendations based on the research findings in the research organisation. It is the researcher's aim to offer a better and more applicable leadership development framework.
15	Do the findings have potential to become part of the discussions and ideas exchanged among relevant social and professional groups?	Yes, in the researcher's view the findings have the potential to be of interest for relevant professional and social groups. The researcher believes that the findings trigger exchange and debate about the findings and corresponding recommendations.
16	Are the limitations of the study clearly spelled out?	Yes, the limitations of the study have been clearly described in section 6.6 on page 213.
17	Are there suggestions for practice, policy, teaching, and application of the research?	Yes, the researcher included recommendations which are applicable not only for practice but also for teaching and other related purposes. The recommendations can be found in chapter 5 starting on page 161 as well as in section 6.4 on page 199.