

REFLECTION ON PROCES

This research has been my graduation project for the master Management in the Built Environment. It was the first time in my bachelor and master that I had to do such a big research all by myself. Which logically resulted in a more bumpy process rather than a smooth one.

One starting point was clear: I wanted to do something with leadership styles. But what would be a good research question? The demarcation of my research topic took quite some time. Firstly the contract types were included, which was an interesting addition because of the importance of that topic in this moment of time. However, still a too broad question lay on the table. Other questions arose: which project manager are we talking about? The one on the client side or the one on the contractor side? Which phases in the project are we talking about? My mind went through all options and back, discussed everything with my three different mentors and still could not figure out what I should do. Then the reasoning switched towards what I wanted to do, rather than what I thought I should do. This was a big leap forward in the process of developing my research question. If I would do it again this is what I would definitely keep in mind; you can only do a project for a whole year (or longer) if the theme really has your interest.

Deciding on the research method was another process, that partly took place besides the development of the research question. In first instance I planned on doing qualitative research, where I would look at a couple of projects with different contract types. However, it soon turned out that conclusions could better be drawn if quantitative research was done. This resulted in the search for a good questionnaire, which turned out to be harder than expected. The development of my own questionnaire is something that I did not think lightly about, but it was even more difficult than I anticipated on. Especially underpinning the choices I had to make in this process was harder than expected. And if I look back now, it is really a tricky part in my graduation. Even though I spend a lot of time in developing the questionnaire, the validity can still be questioned. Usually a questionnaire has to go through testing, which would take too long for the time frame of my graduation. However, I have learned a lot by going through this whole development process.

If I look back at this process I think I would spread my chances more and also prepare a qualitative part in my research. Maybe the question could also be answered if I interviewed professionals in the field that see the differences of leadership style in practice. This is also based on the answers given to the open question in my questionnaire, since apparently people have strong opinion about my research question. Interviews or focus groups would give insight in the opinion of the project managers that work in practice.

During the development of the questionnaire, I have also made the hypotheses. In the end these hypotheses might have been too difficult to accept or reject. They did give me insight in my own expectation of my research, but whether it was a good scientific step is questionable.

The gathering of responses, took more time and effort than I would expect. Through BOSS I had multiple contacts at various project management companies, but it still turned out to be difficult to obtain a large sample. This largely influenced my analysis, not only because I could start later than hoped, but also because of the lack of significance in the differences of the answers. It is a good lesson on how long it can take to get answers to such questions. In the future I would probably try different methods to gain the responses, for which face-to-face contact seems the best way in convincing people to participate.

At the start of this research I was of course hoping for clear differences between the contract types that were also significant, which probably was a very optimistic expectation. In the end it is unfortunate that the results do not show to be significant. However, I still think that the differences that are visible in the results do give an indication of applied leadership style on the contract types. Doing the research in this manner taught me a lot about statistics and quantitative research.

In the last phase of my graduation, where I looked back at all the work that I did, it was time to be more critical. Maybe even the base that I used for my research was not as good as I assumed. When looking back at

the LDQ and the conclusions that were drawn by Dulewicz and Higgs, it turned out that they also did not find large differences between the leadership styles. It would not make sense if the leadership styles indeed did not differ so much, since the descriptions are clearly distinctive. Therefore I think the use of competencies is, as I suggested in the discussion, not the best way to measure leadership style. If I would do the research again, I would try to find other ways of measuring leadership styles.

This also shows the lesson to be more critical to the literature that I read in general. At the beginning of the research I assumed the correctness of the LDQ method, since it was used by a lot of researchers. I did not give enough attention to the significance of the outcomes they presented. This is something that I would do differently in another research.

In general I can say that scientific research is not my favourite thing to do, but I did enjoy myself this year. Reaching goals within the research and finding positive outcomes of investigations that seemed to not yield anything were motivations for me this year. I learned a lot from writing the master thesis and I really liked the fact that it was very much related to practice. In my graduation company I now recognize certain behaviours from colleagues, which I can related to the seven competencies I investigated. I hope the end result is useful for theory and practice and that fellow students might find it interesting enough to continue with my research.