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The Relevance and Purpose of Including Personal Qualities in an Organization's Recruitment Process

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Abstract

The recruitment and selection process is based on finding the right candidate for a job in an organization. Deciding who is the right candidate means looking at an applicant's formal competencies and personal qualities, something often portrayed in the job ads issued by organizations. This thesis aims to investigate the relevance and purpose of the personal qualities that organizations choose to include in their job ads, and how they can affect a recruitment process. Through qualitative interviews with six recruiters, recruiting for different positions within their two different organizations, empirical material was collected. The interviews sought to find out how and why personal qualities are used during the recruitment process at the two companies, Volvo Car Group and SKF. The interviews showed that personal qualities do not seem to be vital for applying candidates in the first part of the process. The reason for including personal qualities is a means for the organization to both attract and deter potential candidates. It motivates the recruiter's decision for selecting certain applicants in front of others, while at the same time presenting the potential applicants with an impression of the company. The thesis suggests that including personal qualities in the recruitment process will stay a permanent feature, both on the behalf of the organization and its potential applicants to create a better match.

Keywords: personal qualities, recruitment process, selection

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1. INTRODUCTION

Acquiring the right personnel is one of the key aspects to be competent in a competitive business environment. The process of recruiting and selecting the right candidates involve finding personnel with the right experience, but also with the correct personal qualities for the job. Qualities such as ambitious, flexible and organized are widely sought out for in job ads. What the organizations designate with and the relevance of these expressions of personal qualities are what lie as the main focus of this research.

“You are a person who is meticulous and take pride in keeping a high standard in your work. You are good at planning and organizing your work, you are able to prioritize in an efficient way and you create and keep deadlines. You are outward going and socially active in work related circumstances and you like to build and develop relationships. Being a team player who relates to both colleagues and customers in an attentive and flexible manner comes naturally to you. You are a secure and stable person with the ability to see relations from their right perspective”.

- Job ad for a position as an accounting consultant (Academic Work, 2014)

As the quoted example presents, personal qualities might be a large part of a job ad. These skills are intangible and not easy to evaluate in the first stages of the recruitment process. They are also easy to state that you possess. Thus, we are questioning the necessity of including these particular skills in the job ad when issuing an opening while we at the same time are wondering if it really helps to make a successful hiring? Is it possible that the specific personal qualities have become an institutionalized requirement to gain legitimacy among applicants and other organizations? And what would happen if they were to be excluded altogether?

In this thesis we plan to investigate how personal qualities play a part when companies are recruiting and selecting candidates for open job positions. This will help broaden the understanding of these aspects from the organizational

participants view, whilst investigating how these qualities are used and applied when choosing candidates, it will also cover how it is decided which ones to include.

We believe that this is an important topic to investigate further to get a better grasp of why these personal qualities are important to include in the job ads issued by different organizations. Personal qualities are subjective traits that have different meaning for every individual, which makes it even more difficult and doubtful of what type of personal qualities are “right” to look for. One person might believe that being “attentive” as a secretary includes remembering the demands of specific customers, remembering the names of visiting business partners and always making sure that people visiting are given good service at the check-in. Others might portray the “attentiveness” of a good secretary to include interpreting the vibe of his/her boss for the day and thereby adopting his/her behavior to the boss’s current mood, remembering birthdays and other non-work related activities thus making the everyday life of the boss easier. With this said, these are just a few examples of how opinions vastly can differ, since you certainly can think of something more to include with an “attentive” secretary.

By questioning this chosen area, we will pursue questions like; who decides what “fits” in the frame of the personal qualities listed and why, also at what point in the recruitment process these qualities are noticeable.

1.2 Purpose

The thesis aims to investigate the relevance and purpose of the chosen qualities that are displayed in the job ads and how they can affect a recruitment process.

The thesis will also investigate if the recruiters included in the study believe that stating personal qualities in job ads is helpful for finding the right candidate.

The thesis will further consider what the recruiters themselves believe and foresee could be the result if this course of action would be altered or excluded.

The purpose will be investigated with two different research questions, which have influenced the whole research process.

1.3 Research Questions

- What is the purpose of including personal qualities in job ads?
- How can the personal qualities included in job ads affect SKF's and Volvo Car Group's recruitment and selection process?

1.4 Limitations

The aim of this thesis is not to focus on how the applicants themselves can display that they possess the personal qualities stated in the job ads, since this would have required a much more demanding research width and the interview objects would have been harder to define. This is based on the assumption that this would not give an understanding of why personal qualities are of importance, since it is in fact the companies that decide upon which ones to use as they are the ones issuing the actual jobs.

The thesis will neither cover how a recruitment process "should" be done since the aim is only to investigate how personal qualities affect the recruitment process. Thus, we do not seek to find a "solution" to the situation since we are only examining an already established process within the two companies. We are simply investigating the reason for including them. Therefore, the sole focus of this thesis will be placed upon how personal qualities are able to influence and affect the recruitment process from the view of the organizational participants.

1.5 Disposition

We will begin by presenting a description of the methodological practices to explain how the research was performed and how the material was gathered. This part will provide the reader with an understanding of the relevance and reliability of the research practices used to avoid any contestations of the material.

Thereafter, relevant theories associated with the area will be presented. Firstly, a shorter summary of Human Resource Management (HRM) will be presented along with a deeper look into *recruitment* and *selection*, both of them being crucial parts included in the practice of HRM. Research about personality will also be covered since it includes relevant areas considering human qualities and personal traits that might prove useful in the examination of the research questions.

Then we will present our empirical findings. This part will first and foremost be constituted by a summary of the different interviews to provide the reader with an overview of what was discovered during the interview process. To follow up the results, an analysis will be presented whereas the facts from the interviews will be compared to the theory in previous parts.

Finally, we will discuss the research questions and make conclusions by comparing theory with the empirical findings. We will also present some suggestions for further research.

2. METHODOLOGY

In this part we will discuss the methodological approach we have chosen for this thesis. Firstly we will present the chosen method for the research. Secondly the research objects and interviewees will be presented. Further, we will describe how the interviews were constructed and performed. Lastly we explain how the gathered material was processed after the interviews were finished.

2.1 Selection of Research Methodology

The primary method that will be used in this thesis is a qualitative research method. The material will be gathered through interviews, which later will be connected and compared to the theoretical material to investigate if the study follows or derives from it. Secondary data has also been gathered to create a deeper understanding about theory considering recruitment, selection and personality. The secondary data also includes information about the two studied organizations and their job ads.

Qualitative research is used to create closeness to the objects in the research. A researcher will be more secure of achieving insight about the information given from the qualitative research than from quantitative methods, which generates statistical results. However, there must be a consciousness about our own influence on the process. A qualitative method tends to create an analytical distinction of the information that is based on values and the one that is based on fact. (Holme & Solvang, 1997) The purpose of a qualitative research method is to describe and understand the themes that are being investigated and recognize it from the interviewee's perspective. The point is to obtain descriptions of a subject that have not been interpreted before. As earlier stated, the personal qualities are subjective terms that can have different meanings depending on the person who is interpreting them (Kvale, 1997). Since a part of the purpose is to investigate the recruiters' beliefs of why personal qualities are included, a qualitative research method is well suited for this thesis.

The alternative to do a qualitative research is to perform a quantitative research. This was ruled out since the aim is to examine the company's own perception of

how they are working with the specific qualities that they are searching for, and to do that a method was chosen that allowed for a more in depth analysis about the subject. A quantitative study might provide answers from several companies, which may be needed to conclude how personal qualities are used in a more general perspective. However, a qualitative study of two companies would provide more accurate answers since more information could be provided to consider when making our interpretation of the results collected. The usage of a quantitative method could have examined *if* recruiters feel that personal qualities do affect the recruitment process. However, considering that the question of issue is to examine *how* they affect the process, it is crucial to understand what the interviewees explain about the subject, hence it is more relevant to use a qualitative method.

2.2 Selection of Interview Subjects

Empirical facts have been collected from six interviews that have been performed with recruiters from two large organizations, SKF and Volvo Car Group. We aspired to contact two large organizations with their head offices in the Gothenburg region because this was where we were located. We also wanted the two research objects to be somewhat similar concerning the business area they figure in. Even if one of the organizations produces cars and the other one ball bearings, they are both a part of the production industry. Another aspect that affected our preferences was to choose as large companies as possible, since they are more likely to recruit personnel for various positions and have a high, *personnel turnover* (the rate at which employees leaves a job position and gets replaced with another new hire). Investigating two companies that perform recruitment of blue-collar, white-collar and specialist employees and managers, gave us a broader outlook if the process will vary depending on what kind of employees that are recruited.

The recruiters who were interviewed work with hiring new personnel but they do it for different types of positions. Since there are two large organizations that are included in the study, the opportunity was given to compare the processes within the companies to see if they differ, and if there is a specific way that the

companies work with the personal qualities, or if that depends solely on the recruiter. Thus, the decision was made to only include two organizations as research objects. Attention can then be given to how these companies with many different employees establish and prove that individuals have the right personal qualities that are suited for the job position and the respective company's values. Since time was somewhat scarce the thesis would benefit the most from giving more focus to two organizations instead of chasing more opportunities. This decision enabled the preparations to give more attention to creating a better starting point. This meant that more information and previous research could be gathered, both considering *how* to be better prepared to conduct a successful interview and *what* to ask for.

2.3 Presentation of Interviewees

2.3.1 Volvo Car Group

From Volvo Car Group the interviewees consisted of one man and two women. The male interviewee (interviewee A) was the only one employed specifically by Volvo Car Group. The two women work for their respective employment agency company; interviewee B with Randstad, and interviewee C with Lernia.

Interviewee A has been working at Volvo Car Group since the end of 2001, starting out his career there as an HR Manager with one of the specific departments. Since then he has been working at different departments within the company with the same responsibilities, but in 2007 when the recruitment process changed and became centralized to one department he wished to continue his career there instead. He is now one of the two people within the company that works with the assessment of candidates for more advanced positions, e.g. managers, specialists, and project managers. Thus, he makes an assessment of the final two or three candidates which are presented in front of the recruiting manager in question, but he may not decide which one to hire.

Interviewee B has been working at Randstad for about two years time as a recruitment specialist, and she has worked the project manager of the

cooperation with Volvo Car Group for one year. She is a part of a group within the company called Recruitment Process Outsourcing (RPO) which handles the external recruitment of officials for Volvo Car Group. Her role is to cooperate and help the recruiting managers at Volvo Car Group when they have a vacancy, which includes e.g. creating the demand profile, creating the job ad, interviewing etc. Although, she does not have the authority to make the decision of hiring someone.

Interviewee C is working as a staffing coordinator and has been the one responsible for the recruitment of blue-collar workers to Volvo Car Group for about one year. She is responsible for contacting the recruiting managers at Volvo Car Group when they are hiring new personnel, and her tasks consists of e.g. creating the demand profile, creating the job ad, interviewing etc. Precisely as with the other two interviewees associated with Volvo Car Group she does not have the authority to make the decision of whom shall be hired.

2.3.2 SKF

From SKF the interviewees consisted of three women, all of them employees of the organization.

Interviewee D has been working as a recruitment specialist with the company since the end of 2013. She manages the recruitment of more advanced positions in different countries, e.g. managers, specialists etc. She is the one with the responsibility to e.g. help the recruiting manager to create the demand profile, create the job ad, interview, and be an advisor during the process. She does not have any authority to hire someone.

Interviewee E has been working with recruitment for another company about four years before she got hired by SKF as a recruitment specialist earlier this spring. She is primarily responsible for locally based recruitment of officials within SKF Sverige AB in Gothenburg. Her job consists of assisting the HR-business partners and recruiting managers throughout the different departments within the organization with e.g. creating a demand profile, create

the job ad, interviewing etc. Precisely like interviewee D, she does not have the authority to decide what candidate to hire.

Interviewee F started her career at SKF as a HR-business partner, but in 2010 she switched to the position as the HR-specialist responsible for the inflow of personnel in the production department. She manages the first step in this recruitment process which involves e.g. creating the demand profile, creating the job ad, interviewing etc. before sending them through for a second interview with the recruiting manager of the respective department. As for the other two interviewees at the company, she does not have the authority to make the final hiring decision.

2.3.3 Presentation Chart of Interviews

	Company	Position within company	Type of interview	Date	Transcription
Interviewee A	Volvo Car Group	Recruitment specialist (managers, specialists)	In person	2014-05-06	8 pages
Interviewee B	Randstad	Recruitment specialist (white-collar workers)	In person	2014-05-13	7 pages
Interviewee C	Lernia	Staffing coordinator (blue-collar workers)	In person	2014-05-16	10 pages
Interviewee D	SKF	Recruitment specialist (managers, specialists)	In person	2014-05-13	7 pages
Interviewee E	SKF	Recruitment specialist (white-collar workers)	In person	2014-05-12	9 pages
Interviewee F	SKF	Recruitment specialist (blue-collar workers)	In person	2014-05-16	7 pages

Chart 1. Presentation chart of interviewees

2.4 Preparation of Interview Questions

The planning of the interview questions were made according to a suggested method by Ekholm and Fransson (2002), which includes:

1. Problem Analysis
2. Clarification and Prioritization of Problem Areas
3. Preparation of Operational Plan and Detailed Outline
4. Critical Review of the Interview Plan
5. Review of the Interview Plan

The *first* stage includes questions like why, for whom and to what purpose, and what type of questions the interviews wish to answer, or at least get a better understanding about. This part was partly influenced by the gathering of previous research and information about recruitment, selection and personality, which worked as a basis. Therefore, the focus in the first stage was mainly put on giving additional “real-world” information considering these areas when interviewing the companies. The goal with the interviews was to get more so-called “in depth” answers, which would allow the interviewees to answer more freely whilst not being “tied up” by our questions. The interviews were therefore decided to be semi-structured. Too shallow questions with only “yes” or “no” answers were not sufficient since that would not give the preferred information for the analysis. More “interrogative” questions and a semi-structured approach gave the interviewees the possibility to express their own opinions.

The *second* stage includes what areas that should be given most focus and time on, considering how much time and what resources that were available. With this in mind, the questions were created in a manner that gave attention to e.g. how the recruiters felt that they influenced the hiring process and what their opinion was about including personal qualities in the job ads. Although since the aim was to perform more in depth interviews, all of the questions could not be constructed beforehand, because new insights and “better” follow-up questions can be created during the interview itself. Thus, many methodological decisions may have to be made “on spot”. (Kvale, 1997) We used this approach by asking

those kinds of follow-up questions when only yes or no answers were given, or when the interviewees did not understand the questions.

The *third* stage includes the systematic planning of how the interviews will be executed. Factors such as location of the interview, if there would be one or two interviewers, and how long the interview should be, are discussed. The purpose of having this decided helped avoiding disturbances during the interviews so that as much valid and useful information as possible could be gathered. Thus, all the interviewees were informed about the premises of the interview beforehand. E.g. the purpose of the interview and the research questions of the thesis, the duration of the interview and how it was to be conducted. None of the interview questions were sent beforehand since we did not want to allow the interview subjects to make any specific preparations, to receive more spontaneous answers.

In stages *four* and *five* consideration was made about how to make the interviews more efficient. In accordance with these last stages, all the questions were reviewed together and possible outcomes were considered to make us as prepared as possible, keeping previously mentioned problems in mind. E.g. removing language that might feel too “scientific” or changing the order of the questions because the aim was to let the interviewees make statements throughout the interview and in the end create scenarios which allowed for a contestation of some of them, meaning that answers were not accepted at once but needed to be proven or exemplified. For instance, questions were repeated but formulated differently, questions that felt more important were given more attention, some questions were created as an overall theme with possible subcategories within them. This review and analysis of how the execution of the interviews was performed created a base for making an analysis of what happened during the interviews after they were performed.

2.5 Realization of Interview Material

The first contact with the organizations was made via e-mail with their respective HR-departments or communication departments. In the e-mail, we introduced to the project and the aim of the thesis, trying to catch their initial

interest. The potential interviewees first had to confirm with upper-level management before giving a final decision. After agreeing to participate, direct contact with the interviewee was established and appointments for interviews were scheduled at each company's respective office.

All of the interviews were held in conference rooms to avoid any disturbances or interruptions. Before each interview began, all the interviewees were first presented more thoroughly with the purpose of the thesis and how the interviews were to be conducted. Permission to record the interviews was granted and no one wished to be anonymous. The interviews lasted between 30-60 minutes, with one of the researchers acting as the one leading the interview (although the other interviewer could also ask questions) while the other one was taking notes.

The final impression from all the interviews is that all of the interviewees felt comfortable in the situation.

2.6 Processing of Interview Material

All of the interviews were recorded to make it easier to analyze and to certify that nothing was forgotten or left out due to bad memory or insufficient notes. (Ekholm & Fransson, 2002) One of the interviewers was taking notes during the interviews to avoid any misfortunes concerning poor recording of the conversation and to stand a better chance to catch what seemed really important to the interviewee at that time. Thereafter, it allowed comparing certain statements once again and seeing if they really provided what seemed relevant at that time. (Ekholm & Fransson, 2002) Even if all the interviews was both recorded and noted, immediate impressions were noted down individually after the interviews were completed to allow for later comparison and to not allow for time to create any disillusion. (Ekholm & Fransson, 2002)

The interviews were transcribed immediately after they were finished to create a clear overview of the answers from the interviewees. Transcribing them directly after they were performed helped understand what was constructed

during the interviews which would later be used for the analysis of the material. Having the interviews in the form of a text made it easier to compare them with each other rather than having to listen through the recordings. This also aided the analysis since it allowed for the construction of key areas to consider when presenting the material. Exact quotes from the interviewees could also be gathered. A summary of what, at the time of each interview, seemed to be important areas was also summarized in text and discussed more in depth between the authors.

When all of the interviews were completed a comparison was made between all of them. The purpose of this was to try to find if there existed any similarities between them, or themes that seemed to depart from what the others had provided. This allowed for a creation of key aspects that we implemented in the review of the interview material presented in the thesis, where all of the interviewees' answers were summarized and compared.

3. THEORY

3.1 An Introduction

All humans may in a sense be defined by their personality. Established personality types as outgoing are often associated with *extroversion*, while a timid person may be classified as an *introvert*. (Costa & McCrae, 1992) During many occasions it is in fact an individuals specific personal qualities that people identifies one by and make their first judgment about someone. However, if this is a good or a bad approach, to automatically categorize people, will certainly vary if you would ask someone about it, probably just as much as different personalities will.

Since personal qualities first and foremost are associated with the human being and the recruitment process itself comprises a meeting between two of these, it is obvious that different “traits” of different humans will come in contact (Matthews, Deary & Whiteman, 2003). An organization wants to attract the right employees, and in many cases that means they want people that fit their frame of preference considering certain qualities. Thus, it is of importance to determine whom they are planning on hiring to make them fit and feel comfortable in the “mold” that the organization is striving for. (Casper, Wayne & Manegold, 2013)

To initiate this process of hiring someone, an organization must take actions that allows for this to happen. This requires a meeting between two actors, the organization and the possible candidate. “Structured recruitment policies and retention strategies are crucial in order to select and keep the most talented individuals in your company”, states Pollitt (2007). Human Resource Management is an established theory that involves this process. (Pollitt, 2007)

3.2 Human Resource Management

“Human Resources Management (HRM) is not an unambiguous concept but it is often interpreted as a strategic view on personnel management”, states Eriksson-Zetterquist *et al.* (2011) when discussing HRM’s intended purpose for

organizations. HRM is not only a single theory practiced in one “best” way. It is in fact a set of different constantly evolving theories and today it is often a crucial part of almost every company’s goals and concerns. (Pinnington & Edwards, 2000)

One might claim that the *managing* of employees does not start until a person is actually a part of the organization, meaning after they have been hired. Although, the recruiters that are evaluating and assessing the applying candidates *are* a part of it, thus it is relevant to take a deeper look on common practices within this area. The “practitioners” within the Human Resources (HR) departments in bigger organizations are the ones assigned with the task of making hiring decisions (Langhammer, 2013). Langhammer (2013) makes three distinctions of what constitutes the main tasks of an HR-professional: they are to assist hiring managers and make *hiring recommendations*, compared to the hiring manager the HR-professional’s main work task might be the *selection* of employees, and that one has to *distinguish between professionals* hired by the hiring organization and the ones supplied by another organization or other so called *third-parties*.

Some management practices are adopted by organizations due to outside organizational pressure and to gain legitimacy (Røvik, 2008). The size of the companies seem to be of matter when it comes to what kind of hiring practices to adopt, since organizations of the same size often apply the same kind of procedures (Langehammer, 2013).

Since the theories behind HRM make out such a wide array of areas, this thesis will focus only on the parts considering the *inflow* of personnel. The inflow’s main concerns are the recruitment and selection of employees. These two personnel practices make out separate processes of the inflow, but one must acknowledge that they have a lot in common and are truly interlinked. *Employee resourcing* conducted as an HR-policy, has the main goal of supplying the own organization with personnel of the right quality (competent) and of the correct amount. (Pinnington & Edwards, 2000). To get a better grasp of the employee

resourcing and the process of personnel inflow, a deeper insight into the processes' of recruitment and selection will be presented.

3.3 Recruitment

An organization's sources for recruiting can consist of advertising, using recruitment agencies, job fairs, word of mouth etc. For more senior positions, headhunting is an attractive alternative. (Cook, 2009). The process requires being able to attract candidates (Pinnington & Edwards, 2000) and collect relevant data about them to make a decision if they are suited for the job. Furthermore the process is about prioritizing if one person is a better fit than the other for the position. Recruitment is a practice that matches the needs and interests of the individual and the organization. Evident to this procedure is to know that not only do organizations choose individuals but individuals also choose the organization (Bergström, 1998). To make this match between organization and individual, there must exist accurate information in the ads that are supposed to attract the candidates that could be right.

The point of making successful recruitments to an organization is to be cost effective. Try to avoid costs that can arise due to wrong people being placed at jobs they do not have the ability to perform correctly. You might have come across organizations stating that "our employees are our most valuable resource", which is a valid statement. An incorrect recruitment is not as easily solved as an administrative mistake, and might in fact bring severe consequences for the recruiter, the other employees and the organization as a whole (Lundén, 2000). Studies have shown that adding personal attributes when advertising jobs helps attract the correct applicants to apply for the job, meaning that unnecessary screening among applicants is avoided to some level. However, one problem can be if they are not represented in a structured and sophisticated way in the ad. Instead they are more scattered throughout the text (Mathews & Redman, 1996).

The recruiter is supposed to make a hiring decision based on that candidates do possess the specific qualities that are required for the position; hence it is

essential that the decision is made from objective aspects. The decisions are based upon an assessment over the candidates' *competencies*. However, it is acknowledged that an interviewer cannot be objective in his or hers assessment but is affected by their subjective impressions. Social and interpersonal attractiveness means that people like others who are similar to oneself, mutual attraction can therefore create a false impression of a match between the individual and the company's interests (Bergström, 1998). Targeted recruitment is an approach that might be used to attract applicants possessing any attribute that may support a company's strategy or that one may seem fit in the company's labour pool (Casper, Wayne & Manegold, 2013).

The recruitment process is affected by the recruiter's individual and subjective valuation of how well a candidate is suited for the position (Littorin, 1994), thus it is of relevance to understand how the personal qualities are judged to be right or wrong for something. The thesis aims to investigate the relevance of the chosen qualities that are displayed in the job ad since the qualities are subjective while as well as the recruiter's reasoning about them is subjective. Moreover it is important to understand why the ad is constructed in a particular way and what the company's intentions are with that structure. It is stated that personal qualities are flawed by subjective interpretations from the people deciding how they are defined. Hence, it is important that it is discussed what the specific qualities mean for people involved and affected in the recruitment, which includes the recruiter, the new employee's manager, co-workers, union etc. Since personal qualities are not general it needs to be decided by the organization which ones are crucial attributes to hold to reach the goals and demands that are included in the position (Littorin, 1994). A list of preferred personal qualities can be very long, but the list of how the individual him-/herself uses them can be made even longer. (Littorin, 1994)

If the employer and the employees have an applicant pool with individuals whose values match those of the firm, they have a strategic advantage for the organization (Casper, Wayne & Manegold, 2013). Recruiting like-minded people is considered a way of strengthening a company's culture and reduces the risk

for unwanted behaviour among the employees. (Bergström, 1998) This is one reason for including personal values and qualities that are sought for in job ads. If the candidates' personalities are similar to the values and policies of a company it holds the purpose of creating an environment that is coherent and strong. Although, one must be aware that a candidate might withhold important information or even give false statements about themselves (Cook, 2009).

Having presented some of the possible biases in the recruitment process, it is important to continue even deeper into the process of the selection of new personnel for a better understanding of what kind of factors that might be at play.

3.4 Selection

When the candidates have been gathered it is time to select the right person for the job. Once that process is over it is time to compare candidates against each other to choose the best one from the acquired pool of candidates (Pinnington & Edwards, 2000). The *competencies* that are possessed by the different candidates can be defined as “an observable skill or ability to complete a managerial task successfully” (Cook, 2009), and it is from this set of aspects many selection decisions are made. However, it is more effective to first rate each candidate individually against the required competencies and after that rate them against other candidates (Young, 2011).

The interview is often a permanent feature when conducting the selection process. It is a chance for the recruiters to meet the applicants face-to-face; it is flexible and uses fewer resources than many other assessment methods (Pinnington & Edwards, 2000). Nevertheless, it is important to remember that humans are flawed decision makers; we will not base our decisions on solely what is on paper. E.g. we tend to remember the candidates that were interviewed first and last more than the ones in the middle (Young, 2011). The issue a recruiter may have to deal with can be that candidates have similar scores, having an average score on most competencies or have both high and low scores on some of them. To solve this problem it is helpful to consider which

competencies are more important and if a candidate has weaknesses around a certain competency (Young, 2011). Although, studies have shown that people often seem to be attracted by others that they feel are like themselves, thus for a recruiter this might end in him/her choosing a candidate that they have most in common with, and not the one best suited for the job itself (Pinnington & Edwards, 2000). It is easy to be charmed by a person with strong charisma and self-confidence, thereby letting one's personal preferences be the overpowering guiding factor (Lundén, 2000). The thesis will investigate how the recruiters believe the personal qualities affect the recruitment process.

Personality is in theory hard to define, but it has a significant part to play in the process of hiring a new employee, especially at the selection stage because it means many things to different people at different times (Littorin, 1994). Although, Guilford (1959) made an attempt to define personality in his book with the same title, and he does so by stating that it is "any distinguishable, relatively enduring way in which one person differs from another". One cannot claim that a definition of the word makes everything become clear, since personality for most people will stay as an overall definition of many things that will be added together and then make out the whole. To get rid of some of the more emotionally attached preferences considering personality when deciding which of the applying candidates to choose, an idea is to separate the candidate's personality and his/her *personal variables* (Littorin, 1994). The variables are easier for the employer to measure, and the origin of which ones that are important from the organization's viewpoint can more easily be connected with the job description itself. If the tasks of the job can be defined in a concise way, then the personal requirements could also get the benefits of being better suited with the job, since they originate from the precise job description. (Littorin, 1994) A recruiter or organization can put a lot of time into concretizing what qualities are preferred, but a person's personality will always stay a diverse and floating subject to define. Therefore, it might be relevant to consider lessening the focus on personality in the recruitment process. There are tests that can be conducted to determine candidates' traits and what type of person they seem to be "more" or "less" like.

The theory presented about selection suggests that even this stage might be facing potential biases due to e.g. the preferences of the recruiter and how well the applicant's personality matches with the recruiter him-/herself. And as have been stated several times before, personality remains controversial; hence it is vital to investigate research and theories in this area further. Consequently, some theories about how to measure or explain an individual's personality or personal qualities will be presented.

3.5 The Trait Concept

The Trait Concept is one of many theories that tries to investigate peoples' personalities to end up with a result that makes it possible to conclude, foresee and explain why a person behaves in a certain way in different situations. (Matthews *et al*, 2003). Gordon W. Allport is one of the theorists that have developed the trait theory. Further into his own research he leaned more to claiming that all persons have unique traits that cannot be "caught" in a personality analysis, and therefore one cannot really make general assumptions. (Pervin & John, 2001)

Raymond B. Cattell is one of the well-known researchers of this area, and he developed a questionnaire known as *Sixteen Personality Factor Questionnaire*, first published in 1949. This test, with its factor analysis approach to divide people into different groups, has been a frequent addition in a lot of personality psychology research. Although, the test has been developed by different researchers and the majority of them have found it hard to identify as many as sixteen traits, and instead suggests about four to seven different traits (Anastasi & Urbina, 1997).

The function of placing people within different trait dimensions has been a way for humans to help understand one another but also oneself. It has also been a way of trying to predict how people most likely are going to act in certain situations. (Pervin & John, 2001) Although, a description of surface attributes is not sufficient if one wishes to fully understand a person's personality (Epstein,

2010), and thus these tests will not reveal the whole truth. Another well-known test model within this area is the Five-Factor Model. In an article by Smith, Dickson and Hanges (2001) they investigated the usefulness of the Five-Factor Model during recruitment. The authors initial critique originated in that this kind of test does not suit the recruitment process since compared to an original personality test, the subjects performing the test will not be volunteers. The aim of the applicants is to get the job in question, so they will therefore be inclined to provide somewhat untruthful answers and try to portray themselves as best as possible, thus trying to conceal their less wanted traits - what the authors would call *social desirability*. Although, their investigation showed that a traditional personality test performed “spontaneously” and one performed during recruitment circumstances, using the Five-Factor Model, did not differ that much, thus refuting a lot of their initial critique. Therefore, the FFM might be a more reliable theory than some theorists have suggested. (Smith *et al*, 2001)

The Trait Theory will prove an addition to this thesis first and foremost due to its aim to explain how one can try to identify an individual and categorize that person with specific traits, exactly like in many job ads provided by organizations. The specific personality definitions have a lot of similarities with how the ads are created, meaning that certain traits are specified and asked for. Although, one has to be selective about what is relevant and what is not, thus not accepting these definitions in general terms as some of the above discussed research have shown.

3.7 Summary

The different presented theories will help investigate the question of issue when they as a whole provide the right tools to thoroughly examine what constitutes the main focal points. An overview and a more in depth understanding of what factors that could be affecting the recruitment and selection process will help support the analysis of the interviews, and in the end create an opportunity to make some suggestions or conclusions of what the possible and most important factors are. Since research about both recruitment and selection suggested that these two processes often are influenced by personal bias, this will be important

to investigate further in the thesis. How one defines personality or different traits to later include these in job ads is relevant to investigate. With a large basis of theory and previous research to begin from, this will hopefully aid our own analysis whilst at the same time provide the option to establish possible pathways for further research.

4. EMPIRICAL FINDINGS

In this part we will present material about each organization and a summary of the interviews. The information about the two organizations consider basic facts about each company's background and their mission, vision and values.

Information concerning recruitment/a career at each company is also presented. The second part is a summary of all the six interviews, which has been divided into important themes discussed during the interviews.

4.1 Presentation of the Organizations

4.1.1 Volvo Car Corporation

Volvo Car Corporation is a Swedish originated car manufacturer. The company was formerly owned by Ford Motor Company, but in 2010, the Chinese company Geely Holding bought the company and currently stand as the owner. The aim of the organization is "to be the world's most progressive and desired premium car brand" and their corporate brand strategy is "Designed Around You", with the aim of "putting people at the heart of everything they do". (Volvo Car Group, 2014)

On the "Career"-page on Volvo Car Corporation's website they state that "The future belongs to those who are empowered by a great idea and have the ability to carry it out." The company's website states that they are looking for people with passion, energy, business sense and the drive to innovate – all of them somewhat specific personal qualities. (Volvo Car Group, 2014) If a student was looking for a job at Volvo Car Corporation, they will come across even more personal qualities that Volvo Car Corporation are looking for. "You are unique. You're a graduate full of energy and committed to success. You have excellent leadership abilities and teamwork skills. You master the art of communication and can inspire those around you. You're results-orientated and open to change." (Volvo Car Group, 2014)

When taking a closer look at some of the open positions within the company (both blue collar and white collar openings), you will also find examples of personal qualities listed in there. For instance, personal qualities that are asked for are: self-driven, result oriented, good leadership skills, ability to encourage people, flexible, innovative, independent, structured, service minded, positive mindset, strategic understanding etc. (Volvo Car Group, 2014) For a job within the HR-department a good fit would be an individual that is “passionate about people” (Volvo Car Group, 2014). The list goes on and it is clear that stating personal qualities in their job ads is nothing unusual.

Volvo Car Corporation cooperates with two different employment agencies. Randstad is responsible for its recruitment of officials while Lernia is responsible for the recruitment of blue collar workers. The respective agencies function is to make all of the administrative and pre-hiring arrangements when Volvo Car Corporation has a need of hiring. This includes communicating with the hiring manager at Volvo Car Corporation of what the needs are, creating the job ads, conducting the first stage interviews and rating candidates to then finally send the best ones through for an interview with the recruiting manager in question.

4.1.2 SKF

SKF (Svenska Kullagerfabriken) is one of Sweden’s oldest companies founded in 1907. Today they are conducting business within the area of technology. The company’s mission is to “Provide the world with SKF knowledge” and their stated core values are: high ethics, empowerment, openness, and teamwork. (SKF, 2014)

On the “Job openings” site it is possible to find “personal requirements” for many of the jobs and listed qualities are e.g. high energy level, self starter, leadership skills, self-motivated, driven, creative, motivated etc. For the job as a MHS Manager they are looking for someone that has “a great ability to develop relationships, cooperate, and to create trust”. They are also stating that “We are building our future on pro-active people with an open, innovative mindset”. (SKF, 2014) Thus, it is not unusual for SKF to state personal qualities in their job ads either.

SKF does all of their own recruitment and does not outsource to employment agencies. They are following a HR Transformation programme with the goal of “aligning all HR activities at SKF to achieve a common agenda...”. (SKF Annual Report, 2014)

4.2 Presentation of Interviews

4.2.1 The Recruitment Process

All the interviewees working with recruitment for Volvo Car Group work with a similar process that includes first posting ads about the vacancies, making a first selection of candidates that match the demand profile, performing interviews and lastly suggesting the right candidate/-s for the position to the recruiting manager. All three explained that it is the recruiting manager who decides the demand profile and what competencies are needed. The recruitment specialists work as a supporting part for the managers and help them decide what qualities are needed for a position.

According to interviewee A, the recruitment specialist, a lot of the recruitment job for him involves an internal process and not an external since it is their suppliers, Randstad and Lernia, who manage that process. He does not take part in the whole process since his job is to perform the assessment of the final candidates. It is the recruiting manager who makes the final decision of deciding which candidate gets the job but he gives his recommendations since he is the assessment specialist. *“At this stage I look at all factors that do not have anything to do with the formal competencies”*, is how he explains it.

Interviewee B and interviewee C, recruiting white-collar and blue-collar workers, are both more involved and are the one who actually create the job ad, perform interviews, check references and select candidates that will be presented to the recruiting manager. The difference between the two is that interviewee B includes personality tests on the candidates applying for white-collar jobs. *“Before candidates are invited to an interview they get to do two*

different tests: one personality test and one logical problem test.”, she explains as a part of the process.

All the interviewees at SKF explain that the process always starts with an internal process since the company has a policy of trying to keep employees within the company for a long time. All three of them are involved in the process from the beginning. Interviewee D and E work with a similar process, since they both recruit candidates for white-collar jobs. The difference is that interviewee D works with recruitment of managers and specialists. Although, both of them work together with the recruiting managers to help decide what qualities and competencies are needed for the position, to help find candidates and make a selection. *“Then I schedule a meeting with the recruiting manager where I go through the demand profile concerning what we are looking for, creating a time-plan for when the recruitment should be finished, and we’re discussing the process...”*, is how interviewee E describes her initial part in the process. The difference between them is that interviewee D often works with fewer candidates since she is recruiting specialists and managers.

The first goal when there is an open vacancy for interviewee F, recruitment specialist for blue-collar workers, is to try to match someone who needs to be relocated within the company to the available vacancy. The next step for her is to advertise the vacancy internally first and after that externally.

After having discussed how the recruitment process works for each recruiter we wanted to know more about how the recruiters felt that they could influence the process, and in what way.

4.2.2 Recruiter’s Influence on the Process

Within Volvo Car Group all the interviewees express that they have the possibility to influence the process, but all of them in different ways. Interviewee B and C, who both are working for the two different employment agencies cooperating with Volvo Car Group, mention that they can influence the process early on. For them that means designing the demand profile in accordance with the recruiting manager (at Volvo Car Group) wants and needs, creating the job

ad itself, selecting what candidates to interview. Hence they are more involved during the whole process from start till end. Interviewee A, the recruitment specialist, plays his biggest part during the assessment and interviewing of the final candidates. Thus, he does not take part in creating all the “pre-work” and performing several interviews.

It is a consensus among the three interviewees at Volvo Car Group, concerning that their opinions are respected and listened to by the recruiting managers. Interviewee B and C, both working for the employment agencies, express that they help the recruiting manager to define what certain personal qualities mean and why they are important. Interviewee B, recruitment specialist at Randstad, says that “*sometimes they are looking for a hero*”, and then it is her job to mediate and help decide what is of crucial importance. Both women express that they have certain guidelines and core values provided by Volvo Car Group that they follow during their recruitment process. “*The way we construct all interviews is to make sure that everything is in line with the wishes of Volvo Car Group.*”, is how interviewee B explains it. Although, precisely as interviewee A mentions, the interpretations of these core values is not always the same by everyone but efforts and discussions are held between Volvo Car Group and the two employment agencies to make them more similar.

None of the interviewees working with Volvo Car Group has the authority to make the final decision of hiring a candidate, but all of them agree upon that they have the power to influence the decision of the recruiting manager in a certain direction. Interviewee A, the recruitment specialist, explains that “*Sometimes I clearly express who I think shouldn't be hired, and usually they listen to me.*”. Even interviewee C, staffing coordinator at Lernia, expresses that she is in control of presenting the final candidates for the recruiting manager, and she will “push” some extra for the ones she likes the best.

Neither one of the interviewees at SKF have the authority to decide what candidate should be hired, but even they express that they are influencing the decision of the recruiting manager. Interviewee D, recruitment specialist for managers and specialists, talks more about what kind of selection methods she

has at hand and not so much about her own personal influence. She is very clear when expressing that her own opinions and interpretations of specific personal qualities is not of relevance. According to her, the only thing that matters is how the specific quality should be interpreted in the particular situation, and that it must be in accordance with the company's guidelines. "*...I don't want what driven means to me, I mean that doesn't matter.*", is one of her statements.

It is expressed by both interviewee E, recruiting white-collar workers, and interviewee F, recruiting blue-collar workers, that there are certain guidelines to follow during the recruitment process created by the upper management. Interviewee F explains that these are to act as a "theme" for everyone to follow through the whole recruitment process, even if she also mentions that everyone cannot have the same interpretations of them. Sometimes she must help construct the sought personal qualities to be reasonable and not excluding, since her role is affected by both the recruiting managers requirements and the legal aspect. "*... you should not deny someone a job just because they are not 100 % perfect.*", she describes. Interviewee E means that she has the possibility to influence the process through what they include in the demand profile etc, but also by discussing with the recruiting manager and providing her or him with help and pointers.

When both discussing the process and how the recruiters might influence it, all interviewees mentioned that required competencies are the first thing they look at. This opened up for a transition to what is most important, the personal qualities or the required competencies?

4.2.3 Personal Qualities vs. Competency

The three interviewees working with recruitment for Volvo Car Group talk about how a person first and foremost need to have the required competencies. Meaning practical competencies needed to perform the job. They explain that a person has to meet the minimum requirements needed for the job. Interviewee A, the recruitment assessment specialist, therefore believes that managers often choose candidates based on experience and actual competencies rather than on personal qualities. Sometimes they have to disregard personal qualities over

competencies because they are crucial for the position. However, he mentions that it is very important to see if the candidate has potential to develop. *"Are the candidates able to develop their flaws or not?"*, is something he brings up. When asked if it is important to already hold the qualities that Volvo Car Group is looking for, he explains that they are hard to learn, either you have them or you do not.

The importance of personal qualities versus competency is something depending on the situation, and refers to the time range for recruiting a candidate, is how interviewee B described it. She talks about that sometimes the vacancy needs to be filled as quickly as possible, and like interviewee A expressed, you have to disregard the personal qualities to some extent because of that. She also explains that the personal qualities can become a competitive factor if the candidates who have applied have similar experience and competencies. *"If you finally have two candidates that have the exact same competencies and the same profile, of course the personal qualities matter."*, she explains. Then you can afford to include the personal qualities more in the judgement, but she still points out that you first and foremost must possess the requirements.

Interviewee C, staffing coordinator at Lernia, talks about that everything depends on what kind of job it is, concerning if competencies or personal qualities are more important. If there are specific experience or competencies needed for a position she thinks that they are both just as important but emphasizes that the personal qualities are very important to consider. Especially the will to learn. She explains that it helps if you are humble about your competencies and have a strong will to learn the job.

Required formal competencies are important when recruiting new personnel, an opinion that is expressed by all interviewees at SKF. Interviewee D, recruitment specialist of managers and specialist, explains that a candidate's ability to meet the required competencies is always the first thing she assesses. If specific requirements are not needed for a position the personal qualities are more important. She would never reject someone because of a cover letter and she

explains that the personal qualities are very important. However her first priority is to establish that the candidate has the right competencies. Interviewee F, recruitment specialist for blue-collar jobs, expresses similar thoughts when discussing what is more important. She explains that the managers always start by creating a demand profile for the vacancy which establishes if the candidate is eligible or not. She also refers to the personal qualities as a competition factor, exactly like interviewee B did. *"You raise the bar depending on how many applications you receive. Then you distinguish between what a candidate "must" have and what is "good" to have."*, is how she explains a way of separating candidates with similar profiles. However it is not common to get applications that include such similar competencies that you cannot compare them. She stresses the fact that the first selection of candidates is always based on the demand profile because it expresses what is required for a specific job.

Personal qualities are more important than competency, states interviewee E. *"It is better to hire a person who has the capability to learn a job and has the right personal qualities, than a person who already knows the job but does not have the personality for the position"*. However, she thinks that prioritizing personal qualities is not always possible due to the time limit of how quickly a vacancy sometimes has to be filled. Then the managers focus on the specific competencies in the resumé, but she sees it as her job to prevent them from making too fast decisions without considering the candidates personality.

All of the interviewees express that the formal competencies are what they value the most in the first stage of the recruitment process. Although, they believe that personal qualities are an important competition factor that might generate the perfect candidate. This led to the question about how they can confirm that a candidate possesses the required personal qualities.

4.2.4 Confirmation of Personal Qualities

The short telephone interview in the beginning of the process is mostly for confirming actual competencies, is mentioned by both interviewee B and C. However, they both express that it is a way of picking up on the candidates

“energy” or “enthusiasm” which gives them a first impression. Although, they both mention that almost no one would be excluded from the recruitment process after a telephone interview due to their personal qualities, since this is difficult to validate by telephone. Neither one of the three interviewees associated with Volvo Car Group believes that you can confirm any personal qualities by reading the cover letter. As interviewee C expresses; “... *the cover letter might be wonderful, but when you meet the person face-to-face, you wonder “who really wrote this cover letter”?*”. Although, they all express that the cover letter invokes an initial interest.

The first confirmations that interviewee A, the recruitment specialist, makes are after the assessment test has been performed. Thus, his work and assessment of the candidates is based on the performed test that he analyzes and uses during his interviews. This is his way of confirming if the candidates possess the sought personal qualities or not. The women, interviewee B and C, also explain that it is the interview itself that makes out the most vital part of the confirmation of the candidates stated personal qualities. Interviewee B, the woman working for Randstad, bases a lot of her questions during her interviews with applying candidates on what was found out during the personality tests. Both interviewee B and C uses situational based questions (STAR-technique) when trying to confirm personal qualities. Thus, they try to discover candidates previous behavior in certain situations or induce them to explain how they would act in hypothetical scenarios that are portrayed to them. Both of them are of the opinion that this is a more secure way of ensuring if the candidates possess these qualities or not. “You notice if it is genuine or not.”, states interviewee C when discussing the situational based questions.

The last part of getting personal qualities confirmed is through the references explain interviewee B and C. Interviewee C means that candidates sometimes portray themselves in a specific way but when looking up the references, a whole other picture appears. That is why this part is important every time they are to recruit someone, since it is a way of correcting potential errors before any decisions are made according to her.

All three interviewees working at SKF mention that it is during the actual interviews that the personal qualities can be detected and confirmed. All of them mention that it is specifically through situational questions about previous behavior or answers to created scenarios are what can give them an understanding and proof of if the candidates possess these qualities. According to interviewee E and F, the candidate's cover letter is adapted to the job ad itself. They all believe that the candidates write *"what the recruiter wants to hear"*, like interviewee E, the recruitment specialist of white-collar workers, expresses it.

Interviewee D and E both include personality tests in their recruitment processes. The latter explains that it is not until after the test has been performed that she is able to really "explore" the personal qualities of the candidates. According to her, the beginning of the recruitment process is more a question of getting to know *"who are you?"*, and not finding out immediately if they possess the personal qualities or not. She also mentions that it is important to follow up with the candidates references for further validity.

Since personal qualities are confirmed in the later stages of the recruitment process, it became even more relevant to investigate the recruiters' opinions about why they are include in the job ads.

4.2.5 The Importance of Personal Qualities in Job Ads

Interviewee A, recruitment assessment specialist at Volvo Car Group, expresses that personal qualities and the company's core values considering recruitment are expressed in the job ads in one way or another. Although it is not always with the specific four words. *"Some managers kind of describe the same things but without using the exact words that exist in the company culture."* The recruiting managers may use words like "flexible" etc., but the point is that it should derive from the four core values of recruitment. He also explains that the personal qualities included in the job ads are a way of showing the more "soft" side of the company. It shows potential applicants what the company offers besides the "hard" parts (salary, vacation etc.) and what kind of people there already are at Volvo Car Group, or at least what kind of culture they wish to create. By

specifying certain personal qualities in the ads, he explains that the company stands at better chance of creating a certain corporate culture by issuing ads that are looking for people that are like this. *"You're attracted by that your own personal development is important, you're aware of that at Cars you'll be placed in different constellations where you work with others, you will be challenged, tested and developed. It is a part of the offer."* When asked about what would happen if the personal qualities in job ads were to be excluded, he believes that not that much would change instantly. Although, with time candidates would not have the chance to adapt their letters to the organization's needs. He thinks that the interest for applying for a job there would then decrease. Further, he explains that personal qualities are a way of expressing the company's "character", and that companies in general are finding it more important to express this even if it does not provide any monetary benefits. To totally exclude the personal qualities *"does not exist in my imagination"*, is the last thing he claims during his interview.

According to interviewee B, recruitment specialist at Randstad, personal qualities included in the job ad are adapted to the core recruitment values of Volvo Car Group, and what the recruiting manager wants. Although, she means that they also need to be situation specific, since the plan is often to develop a group within the organization in a certain direction. She also expresses that including personal qualities gives them the right to choose between candidates. This allows them to explain why some candidates did not make it through the whole recruitment process - a kind of transparency and support when they are rejecting some candidates, according to her. When we asked her what would happen if the personal qualities were to be excluded from job ads, her answer was; *"It is our duty to express in an ad what we are looking for so that the candidate can decide if this is right or wrong."* She believes that if they were to be excluded it would have generated more "miss-hits". She expresses that she thinks that candidates would have a harder time understanding what kind of environment they were applying for, and since it takes time and energy from people to look for a job it would not be fair by them to exclude it.

"A person might seem completely right on paper but when this person is placed in a group and he or she has a bad attitude, that might ruin the entire corporate culture or subculture.", explains interviewee C, staffing coordinator at Lernia. She believes that the personal qualities are very important because they show who fits into the organization's culture. She emphasizes that Volvo Car Group's culture is very important and that they are looking for specific personal qualities in candidates. Being a teamplayer is an important quality to have when working there. She explains that if the personal qualities were to be excluded from the job ads it would complicate her job of finding the right candidate support the organization's image. *"Because then it is like, it is enough if you got the competency – come here and work. I believe that you are more proud as a company if you include the personal qualities."* She would in that case establish the candidates personal qualities at a later point, during a phone interview for example. However, she would find it strange to only demonstrate competencies in an application.

The belief that candidates adapt their cover letter to the stated personal qualities in the job ad is shared by both interviewee B and interviewee C. However this is not always the case, and it is not vital to do so. Both of them explain that a candidate will not be excluded if he or she were to only state their formal competencies. Interviewee B believes that the cover letter rather is about how well a candidate can express her-/himself, while interviewee C portrays it as a way of "selling in" oneself. Although, both women explain that even though it is hard to confirm anything through the cover letter, they will put some consideration to it during the recruitment process. Even interviewee A expresses the opinion that the cover letter is a way of "getting an interview".

Interviewee D, recruitment specialist for managers and specialists at SKF, explains that the personal qualities in the job ads show the candidates what the company is looking for. It is also what the recruiter can use to justify from a legal aspect why a candidate can receive a "no thank you" from the company. Further, she explains that it is difficult to know what would happen if the personal qualities were excluded from job ads since she has never done that. However,

she believes that the personal qualities show “*the person behind the competencies*”, and that is why they are an important part of the process. They give value to the formal competencies.

Both interviewee D and interviewee E, recruitment specialist for white-collar jobs, think that including the personal qualities in job ads gives candidates a chance to explore if they recognize themselves in the descriptions. As interviewee E expresses it; “*it is supposed to make the candidates feel if this is right or wrong for them*”. She believes that they are included in the ads to both attract and deter candidates for job positions She expresses that “competencies are important but that the personal qualities are two thirds of the whole picture”.

An opinion that interviewee F, recruitment specialist for blue-collar workers, also has; is that the personal qualities are supposed to both attract and deter candidates but also to create a common understanding of what they are looking for in the employee. “*The demand profile is like a theme throughout the whole process. It is the document that ties the existing needs and the person who gets employed together.*”, she emphasizes. There are several people involved when recruiting an employee and therefore it is important to have everything written down. Both interviewee E and interviewee F believe that excluding personal qualities in job ads would generate more applicants and that it would make the process of finding the perfect candidate more difficult since they would have to make a deeper investigation of who the person is.

4.3 Summary

The material presented from the six interviews has explained what all the interviewees expressed. We noticed some similarities and differences both concerning the interviewees individual opinions and within the two companies. Based on the interview material from both companies, the interviewees care about personal qualities and the general opinion is that they are relevant. What has been gathered from the interviews about personal qualities function and relevance will be analyzed and connected to theory in the following chapter.

5. ANALYSIS

In this chapter we will analyze the empirical findings and compare it to the earlier presented theory. This will be done to find answers to the research questions, which we have chosen as the main themes for our analysis.

5.1 What is the purpose of including personal qualities in job ads?

From the gathered interview material we notice that several of the interviewees express that one of the reasons for including personal qualities in job ads is to provide potential applicants with a feeling of "is this me or not?". It is evident according to the interviewees that the expressed personal qualities in the ads are connected with each respective organization's core values considering recruitment or corporate culture. The exact core values do not have to be directly expressed in their original form, but all of the interviewees mention that it is important that the personal qualities expressed in the ad are based upon the core values. This could be assumed to relate to *targeted recruitment*, suggested by Casper, Wayne and Manegold (2013). Although, interviewee A, the recruitment assessment specialist, did not mention this specific approach, but a lot of the statements during his interview indicates that this is something that Volvo Car Group tries to achieve. For instance, he mentions that including these values in some way *"is a way of showing what kind of people there already are at Volvo, or at least what kind of culture we wish to create"*. Interviewee D, the recruitment specialist of managers and specialist at SKF, explains this in a similar way. She mentions that the job ads are a mean of showing what SKF are looking for.

This is supported by the two recruitment specialists working for the two employment agencies cooperating with Volvo Car Group, since interviewee B expresses that without the personal qualities, the candidates would have it difficult to understand what kind of environment they would face. Interviewee C mentions that candidates have to possess the specific qualities searched for by Volvo Car Group otherwise it can have negative consequences on the subcultures and the entire company culture. These statements can then again be connected

to *targeted recruitment*, since they are all aware of that they are searching for people with similar qualities to create the best environment.

At SKF, the same opinions seem to be shared between all the three interviewees. Interviewee E, the recruitment specialist of white-collar workers, believes that the organization includes personal qualities to both "attract and deter" candidates, thus we interpret it as a way of attracting the "right" candidates that supports the organization's culture while avoiding the ones that might ruin it (Matthews & Redman, 1996). Interviewee F, the recruitment specialist of blue-collar workers, also mentions the function of "attracting" and "detering" possible applicants but adds that the purpose of including them is to make sure that everyone has a common understanding of what they are looking for in their candidates.

These notions from the interviews, we believe, might be a way of strengthening the overall corporate culture. Everyone, including both the personnel already employed and the ones that might be employed, should have the same idea of who is "wanted" there and how the environment is there. This to facilitate that the organization's overall efficiency is maintained and improved, and not disturbed by totally deviant values. Therefore, this represents an important part of the recruitment process for both parties; for the recruiters to exactly know what they are looking for, and for the applicants to know what they are applying for. Littorin (1994) discusses that an organization needs to decide which attributes are crucial to hold to reach their goals, which is expressed by the interviewees in both companies.

The subject considering "attracting" candidates that the interviewees are talking about, is linked to that it is not only organizations that choose their candidates, the candidates also choose the organization. (Bergström, 1998) Interviewee A, the recruitment assessment specialist, especially expresses this when he is talking about it as a mean of "marketing" what the organization can offer. The personal qualities is what constitutes the "softer" side of its offer to the candidates. The other interviewees at both organizations do not use the word

marketing, but there is a consensus considering that they all want the "right" people to apply for their jobs and therefore they have to create ads that are attractive. Hence, there must exist distinct information in the ads to create a correct match between the organization and the individual.

Another reoccurring reason is that the personal qualities in the ads are used to validate why some candidates are rejected. Interviewee D, the recruitment specialist of managers and recruiters at SKF, mentioned that this is important from the legal aspect of the recruitment. Even interviewee B, recruitment specialist at Randstad, talks about that including personal qualities in the ads give them the right to make a selection. Further she means that this is how they can motivate why a candidate did not get a job, if they were to ask. If the personal qualities were to be excluded from job ads, all of the interviewees express that their job would become more difficult. As earlier mentioned, they believe that they would have problems with rectifying whom they choose/not choose to offer an employment, and the organization would become somewhat "depersonalized" if they only displayed the formal competencies that were required.

5.2 How can the personal qualities included in job ads affect SKF's and Volvo Car Group's recruitment and selection process?

The first impression from both SKF and Volvo Car Group is that personal qualities really do matter. Most of the interviewees mentioned that they actually are the most important part. To quote interviewee E, the recruitment specialist for white-collar jobs at SKF, "*personal qualities are 2/3 of the whole picture*"; or interviewee C, staffing coordinator at Lernia, "*ultimately, it is always the personality that is the deciding factor*". Although, they all express that a candidate cannot reach that point in the recruitment process where he or she is compared with others based on personal qualities, if he or she does not possess the formal competencies demanded for the job. Hence the vital factor is that a candidate must fit the demand profile competence-wise, and it is first after that the personal qualities are taken into account. To quote interviewee A, the recruitment

assessment specialist, *“the engineer must know how to use the programs, whether how brave or integrity full he or she is. If the competency is not there, there will not be a good engineer”*. This is in accordance with what Young (2009) describes. He suggests that it is more effective during the selection process to first rate the candidates individually against the required competencies required for the job, and thereafter rate the candidates against each other.

The recruitment process seems to be more affected by personal qualities in its later stages. In the beginning it is more a question of if the candidates possess the formal competencies. For instance, interviewee D, the recruitment specialist of managers and specialists, mentions that she *“only looks at the formal competencies in the first selection process”*. From the other interviews similar statements are expressed. Interviewee B, the recruitment specialist of white-collar workers, explains that in the application stage she has to put more focus into the functional competencies. Thus, we are left with the notion that the personal qualities do not matter when the first selection is made. Only in the cases when candidates possess exactly the same competencies and experience, is when they are relevant from the start.

According to theories within the area of recruitment and selection, an important area is the recruiter's own influence on the process. Pinnington and Edwards (2000) explain that people seem to be attracted to others that they feel are like themselves. When the interviewees were confronted with questions about this, they all seemed very conscious about not getting affected by their own subjective interpretations. Many of them mentioned that it was first and foremost the requirements of the position and the preferences of the own organization that was crucial throughout the whole process. It was also important to strive for personal qualities that were specifically needed for that position and the positions work-group/environment. As both Pinnington and Edwards (2000) and Littorin (1994) discusses, a recruiter's personal opinions can affect the recruitment and selection process. Since all the interviewees worked with recruiting managers at each company, they expressed that their job was to interpret that manager's specific requirements, hence not putting any

consideration into their own preferences. Therefore, it did not seem like the recruitment process was affected to a larger extent by their subjective opinions as theory suggests. Our impression is that they all wished to act as carriers of the company's values whilst trying to ignore their own preferences as much as possible. Although, we believe that even if they explain that they are not affected by personal biases, we need to keep in mind that even an experienced recruiter will be affected to some extent (Bergström, 1998). That is why we view this with a somewhat critical eye, because the recruiters cannot prove that they are not affected on any level, they can just strive to not be.

Another interesting finding is that both organizations use personality tests when they are recruiting white-collar workers, but not for the blue-collar jobs. When the interviewees were asked if personal qualities mattered equally much for all kinds of jobs, the consensus was that it did (although, some mentioned that it was depending on the position). Even the two women recruiting blue-collar workers shared this opinion even if they do not perform any personality tests. We find this somewhat remarkable, that if all recruiters are of the opinion that personal qualities are as important for all jobs, why are the blue-collar workers then excluded from these tests. This makes us question if personal qualities in fact are more important in the process of recruiting white-collar workers, even if it is not expressed by the interviewees.

5.3 Summary

Through the analysis of the interviews we have tried to find answers to our research questions which are supporting our purpose. The analysis has shown that personal qualities depend on several different factors and is somewhat situation dependant. It also appears that personal qualities act as a "tool" for the recruiters to use when distinguishing candidates from each other, a tool the recruiters do not want to exclude. The interviewed recruiters where also highly aware of working towards not being influenced by their own personal impressions during the process, something a lot of the theory indicated could happen. In the next part we will present our conclusions about the relevance and purpose of including personal qualities in an organization's recruitment process.

6. CONCLUSION

In this thesis we sought out to investigate the relevance and purpose of including personal qualities in an organization's recruitment process. Through the interviews our own results have shown that the recruitment process is colored by different personal qualities, while seeking to find the right fit for the organization. The perfect fit is what everyone ultimately would be looking for, but the "right" fit is probably many times what you will get. Finding this "right" candidate is done by requiring certain formal competencies while trying to attract people who can relate to the personal qualities in the job ads. The personal qualities are not what will help an organization to immediately reject someone from a recruitment process, it is as shown, more a mean of creating a connection between the candidate and the organization. Thus, personal qualities carry the tool of being able to "attract" and "deter". Attract, meaning to present a picture of what candidates can expect from the company, the job, and the environment; and deter, in the meaning of helping the organization to avoid mismatched candidates that might not concur with the already existing company values. This is also viewed from the candidates perspective, so that he or she can feel a personal attraction to the organization or not.

One of our main conclusions from the interviews is that in the end, the personal qualities also appear to be a deciding factor when making the final selection of applying candidates. They can motivate who and why the organization chooses to employ one candidate over another, both from a legal aspect and a personal one. Thus, personal qualities play the part of a competitive factor when candidates are similar competencewise.

Also, our empirical findings imply that the personal qualities are a vital part of the recruitment process, and that the recruiters do not see themselves ever excluding them from a job ad. Our own opinion is that the personal qualities are not crucial for the job ad in the sense of who is selected for an interview or not, but to give potential candidates a picture of what the job actually means. Thus, excluding them could probably hamper the process of matching individuals to organizations.

6.1 Suggestions for Further Research

This thesis was made through the viewpoint of the two organizations, investigating the opinions of their recruiters. To create another perspective, an interesting study would be to investigate personal qualities from the candidate's point of view. Meaning to focus on how they try to express that they have the required personal qualities stated in job ads, and if it would be helpful for them to do so. Further, one suggestion is to look at it from the employee's perspective to see how important they feel that the personal qualities are during the actual job. Are the personal qualities that were stated when he or she was hired a continuous element affecting their daily work performance, and do they matter after having gone through the recruitment process?

APPENDIX 1

Interview questions

Vad är ditt jobb och hur har din karriär sett ut inom SKF?

- Alltid varit på Randstad?
- Hur länge har du rekryterat med SKF?
- Vad för typ av jobb är det?

Hur ser en typisk arbetsdag ut för dig?

- Huvudsakliga uppgifter?
- Hur ofta går du igenom ansökningar?

Kan du berätta hur den rekryteringsprocess ni genomför på SKF rent allmänt ser ut?

- Har ni en policy som ni följer eller övergripande strategi?

Hur kom man fram till att processen ska skötas så som den gör?

- Bestämdes av ledningen eller HR-avdelningen?

Har det alltid sett ut på detta viset?

- Förändringar?

Har du möjlighet att själv influera processen mycket?

- Har du befogenhet att själv ta beslut om vem som väljs?
- Har alla befogenhet att göra detta som rekryterar?

Vilka personliga egenskaper brukar ni eftersöka hos era kandidater?

- Varför just de?
- Har dessa förändrats historiskt sett?
- Finns det några som alla borde ha?
- Hur har detta bestämts och av vem/vilka?
- Finns dessa egenskaper med i alla annonser (eller iaf merparten)?

Hur märker du som rekryterare om kandidaten innehar de efterfrågade egenskaperna eller inte?

- Märks detta redan i kandidatens ansökan eller först vid intervjun?
- Förlorar ni intresset om sökande inte inkluderar efterfrågade egenskaper i ansökan?
- Hur kan du som rekryterare bekräfta att det han/hon säger/skriver stämmer?
- Är vissa egenskaper svårare att få bevisade än andra - hur löser man det?
- Hur kan en kandidat bevisa mer komplexa egenskaper (analytisk, team-player)?
- Utför ni några slags tester förutom intervjuer?

Kan man se i ansökningarna till era tjänster att kandidaterna anpassar sina ansökningar till de valda egenskaperna?

- Kan man märka om någon "ljuger"?
- Har de som inte inkluderar dessa också en chans?

Har du något exempel på en felrekrytering som berodde på kandidatens personlighet?

- Hur visade sig det?
- Varför såg man inte det under rekryteringsprocessen?

Vilken betydelse har personliga egenskaper när det är dags att göra det slutgiltiga urvalet?

- Värdesätts egenskaper mer än erfarenhet och meriter?
- Bortser man ibland från de till en början sökta egenskaperna pga. andra faktorer?

Tror du att tolkningen av de personliga egenskaperna är samma för dig och dina kollegor?

- Diskuterar ni sådant sinsemellan?
- Finns det någon övergripande åsikt som ni delar?
- Tror du att detta är påverkat av företagskulturen?
- Har detta förändrat sig för dig under din karriär?

Hur hade du valt att definiera dessa följande egenskaper?

- Driven?
- Passionerad?
- Analytisk?

Tycker du att de personliga egenskaperna utgör en nytta i rekryteringsprocessen?

- Varför?
- Hade man klarat sig utan att inkludera dem?
- Hur tror du att det hade sett ut då?
- Hade de ansökande haft lättare att direkt visa vilka de är då när de inte följer några givna alternativ?
- Hade det blivit mer sanningsenligt då?
- Är de lika viktiga för alla sorters tjänster?

Har du något mer att berätta som vi inte har tänkt på som kan vara till nytta för oss?

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