Forming and educating new employees in Professional Service Firms

- A case study at LynxEye AB

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1 Abstract

Professional Service Firms' (PSF) profits are according to Maister (2003) directly linked to how well they are able to leverage the professional skills of their seniors with the work of their juniors. In addition, these organizations often face a constant and substantial inflow of new employees. Hence, it can be argued that a crucial factor for their competitiveness concerns how well the new recruits are introduced to the firms and their new roles. It is especially vital that new recruits in an efficient way are introduced to the firms' knowledge base, grow into their roles as consultants and as fast as possible contribute and add value in projects. Firms try to secure this by establishing more or less formalized introduction phases.

This thesis aimed at studying these introduction phases and especially analyzed how PSFs organize the process of forming and educating newly graduated junior consultants. This was conducted through an explorative research approach and by the use of qualitative data. LynxEye AB was studied as a main case and their way of working was contrasted against eight different reference firms. Nine arenas were found to be central parts of LynxEye's introduction phase and by the use of both human resource management and knowledge management literature, it was analyzed how they contributed to the forming and education of newly graduated consultants. Many arenas filled more than one function and they were often interrelated. Furthermore, the analysis also showed that structure of the different PSFs' introduction phases was determined by the firms' main focus. Lastly, the authors' of this thesis suggested that in order for a PSF to have a coherent introduction phase, the structure should be based upon a clear and explicit personnel concept.

2 Notifications

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5 Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Explanation
BM	Brand management
C	Consultant
HRM	Human resource management
ICT	Information and communication technologies
KM	Knowledge management
LBD	Learning by doing
MBO	Management by objectives
MGMT	Management
NC	Newly hired consultant
PL	Project leader
PSF	Professional service firm
SC	Senior consultant
SPL	Senior project leader

Table 1. Abbreviations

6 Definitions of key terms

Key term	Definition
Arenas	The different activities and elements of an introduction phase
Educating	The training and development of technical skills
Forming	The shaping of an individual's identity in line with certain ideals and values
Products	The prepackaged services a firm offers
Leverage	The ratio of juniors to senior employees.
Standard products	The main product offered by a firm

Table 2. Definitions of key terms

7 Introduction

"By developing the skills of its junior members, the firm adds to the only resource it has to sell: professional judgment and talent"

(Maister, 2003, p. 156)

Often regarded as one of the most knowledge intensive organizational types (Sarvary, 1999) the professional service firm (PSF) can be viewed as the archetype of knowledge intensive firms (Alvesson, 2004). The term is often used to describe organizations such as law firms and consultancies, which have a high degree of well-educated employees, who work with complex and intangible services.

According to Maister (2003), PSFs' main competitive advantage result from their ability to utilize their human capital – the knowledge and skills of their employees – in order to solve complex business problems for their clients. While each individual in the organization would not be able to solve such problems by themselves, PSFs use combinations of knowledge management and HRM techniques to integrate the knowledge of each individual into the collective knowledge of the firm (Sarvary, 1999).

People usually enter PSFs for careers and both the firms and the employees often have a rather clear picture over how long a person is expected to stay in a certain position (Maister, 2003). While this in some firms result in a clear and outspoken "*up or out policy*", most firms have a built in expectation of that the employees gradually should progress in the hierarchy or leave the organization (Maister, 2003). Because of this promotion system, PSFs must continuously secure that they have an inflow of new recruits who can fill the gaps from older employees. A common solution is to recruit newly graduated students directly from universities.

Profits in this type of firms are, according to Maister (2003), directly linked to how well the firms are able to leverage the professional skills of their seniors with the work of their juniors. It can for example be argued that "b*y leveraging its high-cost seniors with low-cost juniors, the professional firm can lower its effective hourly rate and thus reduce its costs to clients while simultaneously generating additional profits for the partners"* (Maister, 2003, p. 8). Consequently, it can be argued that PSFs must be able to fulfill this leveraging opportunity if they want to secure high profits and outperform their competitors. This should not be seen as a onetime challenge but rather as a continuously ongoing process. Furthermore, since many PSFs face a constant and substantial inflow of new employees, it can be argued that a crucial factor for PSFs' competitiveness concerns how well the new recruits are introduced to the firm and their new roles.

It is especially vital that new recruits in an efficient way are introduced to the firms' knowledge base, grow into their roles as consultants and as fast as possible contribute and add value in projects. Firms try to secure this by establishing more or less formalized introduction phases, which consist of different knowledge management (KM) and human resource management (HRM) strategies. Although knowledge management can take different forms, these types of strategies are often constituted of complex IT systems, such as knowledge databases. However, they can also be more built in organizational processes, such as incentive programs, organizational culture and internal rules (Sarvary, 1999). Not entirely separated from KM, the HRM strategies in an organization also to a high degree govern the experiences and knowledge different consultants acquire (Maister, 2003). This thesis analyzed these introduction phases and especially studied how PSFs form and educate their new recruits.

7.1 Problem discussion

"…the firms' capability to attract, develop, keep and deploy staff will be the single most important factor of a professional service firm's success" (Maister, 2003, p. 189).

PSFs need to make sure that their introduction phases fulfill several different functions and targets. One of the most important areas is the identity building process, where the new recruits construct their professional identity and are formed to act in line with the firms' interests. Another central target of introduction phases is the education of the new recruits where they for example are introduced to the firms' frameworks and working methods to be able to leverage from the concealed value of the internal knowledge (Bender & Fish, 2000). Furthermore, it is vital that the new employees acquire an understanding for how to act in certain situations.

If PSFs fail to leverage the skills of their seniors and develop the knowledge and capabilities of their juniors, the consequences can be severe. First of all, new recruits are the future of the firms and managers therefore need to make sure that they are able to retain talents within the organization. According to (Maister, 2003), a distinctiveness of PSFs is a built in expectation that all employees with time and development will reach higher positions and eventually be able to take an ownership or partnership role. Because of these strong career expectations, individual professionals will search for better opportunities if they feel that their development is halted (Maister, 2003). It will imply significant losses for the firms if junior employees decide to leave, since they will face a shortage of leaders and seniors in the future.

In addition, Morris (2001) argues that PSFs in essence are a form of knowledge brokers who use structural holes of knowledge between industries, in order to create business opportunities. Through using knowledge from one industry they can solve the problems of another. However, Hargadon & Sutton (1997, p. 716) states that *"Knowledge is imperfectly shared over time and across people, organizations and industries. Ideas from one group might solve the problems of another, but only if connections are made across boundaries and between them"*. This does not only create business opportunities for a PSF but also highlights the importance of creating strong connections within the firm, so that the lessons learned from one industry by a more experienced consultant, are transferred to new employees working with another industry. If PSFs are not able to leverage their previous knowledge and experiences, their business opportunities and competitiveness will be significantly reduced.

As has been seen, there are several strong incentives for PSFs to secure that they efficiently introduce new junior employees and leverage the firms' previous knowledge and experiences. However, relatively few scholars have critically studied the introduction phases in this type of organization on an organizational level, as argued by for example Bartel (1994). The academic understanding for how these phases are structured and what implications different strategies have is consequently limited.

7.2 Purpose

The purpose of this thesis was to broaden the academic understanding of how newly graduated consultants are formed and educated when entering a PSF. This was analyzed through a case study of the introduction phase at LynxEye. To gain deeper insights and increase the generalizability, the findings from LynxEye were contrasted and discussed in relation to eight reference firms.

7.3 Research question

How do professional service firms organize the process of forming and educating newly graduated junior consultants?

7.4 Disposition

This thesis initially introduced the topic of PSFs and presented several important arguments for why these firms need efficient introduction phases. Based on this discussion the purpose and research question were explained.

The next section will introduce the thesis' theoretical framework. It will start with a more detailed description of PSFs' main characteristics and an elaboration on introduction phases. This will be followed by a description of central tools that PSFs can use during these introduction phases as well as a presentation of four main focus areas. The framework will eventually be rounded off with a general model of the introduction phases at PSFs.

Before introducing the empirical findings of this thesis, the research method will be presented and its trustworthiness will be discussed. The empirics section will then present LynxEye's introduction phase and contrast their way of working against eight reference firms. The following section will cover the thesis' analyses, which are structured around the general model derived in the theoretical framework.

Finally, the thesis main conclusion will be presented and the theoretical framework's general model will be complemented with the findings of this thesis. The conclusions will be complemented with suggestions for further research as well as practical implications of this thesis.

8 Theoretical Framework

This thesis' theoretical framework starts with a short description of the PSF in order to secure a common point of departure and a clear understanding of the research subjects. This description is complemented by a discussion about different focuses of PSFs, which later on will be used to categorize the different reference firms.

This starting point is then followed by a presentation of previous research on introduction phases, in order to understand the specific functions they can fill. When this understanding has been secured, a wider discussion of specific tools that PSFs can use in their introduction phases will be brought forward. The discussion will be divided into two sections, focusing on both HRM and KM strategies in order to discuss how these strategies can be used in PSFs to educate and form junior employees.

In the end the entire theoretical framework will be concluded with a general model that describes how the focus of the PSFs, the available tools and the focus areas of the introduction phases are related. The model is used to illustrate how recently graduated junior consultants are formed and educated by the introduction phases at PSFs and it will later on form the basis of the thesis' analysis.

Figure 1. Structure of the theoretical framework

8.1 Professional service firms

In order to analyze introduction phases at PSFs it is vital to gain an understanding of these firms' main characteristics. This section broadly describes PSFs and shows how different types of business focuses affect their operations.

Although often exemplified by firms such as management consultancies, accountancy firms and law firms, there are several different aspects of PSF that are important to consider. According to Alvesson (2004, p. 20), *"PSFs tend to be characterized by the relative homogeneity of the profession, the common knowledge base, and the strong significance of the profession for identification"*. Further, Maister (2003) argued that there are two fundamental characteristics of PSFs; a high degree of customization as well as face-to-face interaction with clients. In addition, Løwendahl (2000) claimed that PSFs also have a high degree of well-educated employees, who are constrained by professional norms while using a high degree of personal judgment to deliver a knowledge intensive service. Lastly, Delong & Nanda (2003) added that opposed to most organizations PSFs provide intangible products. This thesis defined a PSF through the aforementioned characteristics.

8.1.1 Different focuses of PSFs

To understand in more detail how different PSFs' characteristics can vary, a further elaboration on some common characteristics is needed. This section presents Maister's (2003) argumentation over different organizational focuses of PSFs.

Maister (2003) argued that the focus of these types of firms should mainly be a result of the skill requirements of the respective projects that a firm is conducting. While Maister (2003) discussed three different types of focuses of PSFs, it is important to note that these firms are archetypes of a wide variety of PSFs positioned on a broad spectrum of different focuses.

The first and most innovative type of PSFs is the brain focused firm. This type of PSFs is often characterized by being at the cutting edge of recent research and professional knowledge. Hiring very skilled staff they mainly work on creative projects, which demand unique solutions. As a result of their low ability to make use of routines they often have a very low leverage structure. Finally, these firms are often externally characterized by the mantra *"hire us because we are smart"* (Maister, 2003, p. 5)

At the very center of Maister's spectrum are the grey hair firms, which still produce a highly customized service. However, these firms often produce solutions with less innovation and can be characterized by "*hire us because we have been through this before; we have practiced at solving this type of problem"* (Maister, 2003, p. 5).

On the brain firms' opposite side of the spectrum, lie the procedure focused firms. These firms often work with familiar types of problems. While the clients often have the capability to solve these problems themselves, they hire the procedure focused firms because of their ability to create competitive procedures for how to address the specific problem. As a result the firm has a high leverage structure with a high proportion of juniors working with routines tasks. Maister (2003, p. 5) illustrated these firms through the following statement *"hire us because we know how to do this and can deliver it effectively"*.

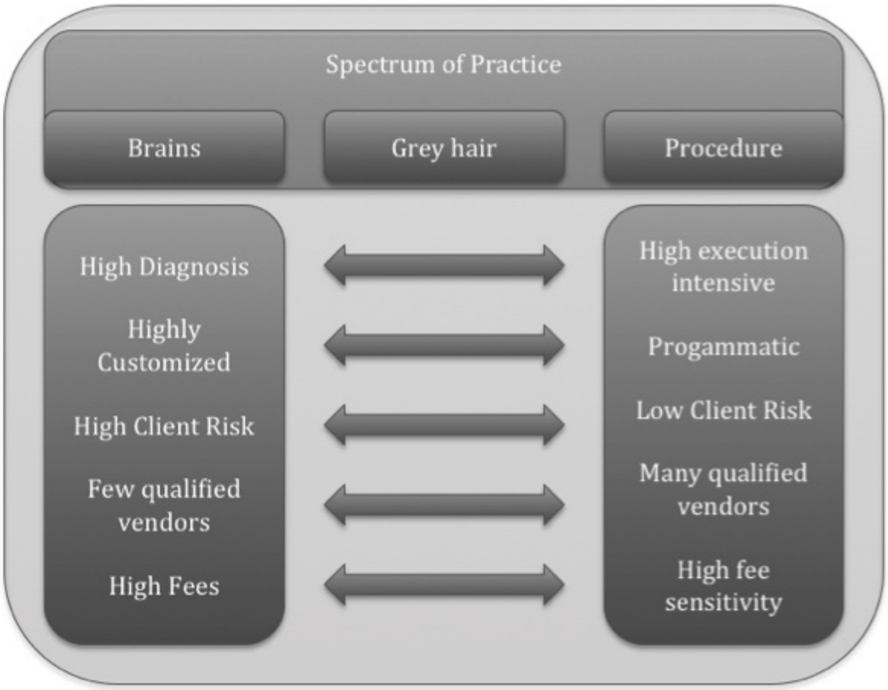

Figure 2. The different focuses of PSFs, based on Maister (2003)

The taxonomy in figure 2, clearly illustrates how PSFs have different focuses on more or less complex problems. Depending on the complexity of the problem at hand, the firms can to different extent create procedures and routines for how to approach the problem. As a result, the firms are likely to need different capabilities from their employees. For instance, in a procedure focused firm where the projects can be broken down to simpler routines, the firm is less likely to need creative employees than in a brain focused firm. As a result, the focus of the firm is likely to have an effect on how the firm educates and forms its employees during the introduction phase, which will be analyzed later on in this thesis. Furthermore, the fact that the firms' focuses have a clear effect on their way of working was taken into consideration when the reference firms in this thesis were chosen. As a result, firms representing all three of Maister's (2003) ideal types have been interviewed.

8.2 Introduction phases

To be able to study introduction phases at PSFs, it is crucial to understand their function in these types of organizations. This section will provide a description of the main benefits and implications of introduction phases.

Only a limited amount of studies have analyzed the effects of introduction phases in PSFs. However, the ones that have been conducted have found that there are several strong arguments for why organizations should establish well thought-out introduction phases. It can for example be argued that in order for any organization to fully leverage the previous education and experience of a new employee, the new employee needs to be efficiently introduced to the organization (Snell, 2006). In addition, although the form that different firms use to introduce new employees varies, an introduction phase can help the new recruit to leverage from the collective knowledge of the organization and the previous experiences that exist within the firm. Furthermore, Bartel (1994) showed through an empirical study that training programs for employees have a significant positive effect on employees' productivity, not only on an individual level but also on an organizational level.

Another dimension of a successful introduction phase is a higher retention rate of new employees that are well integrated into the organization (Snell, 2006). For instance, Dai & Meuse (2007) presented several different examples of where introduction phases have increased the retention rate and argued that there are six key areas that newcomers in an organization have to adapt to; performance proficiency, people, politics, language, organizational vision & values and finally the organization's history.

Although the benefits of an introduction phase clearly can be seen both on an individual and an organizational level, there are still companies who have not implemented one. An even more common problem is that the firms face problems with their introduction phases. For example, according to Snell (2006), more than a third of large companies lack monitoring systems to see whether the introduction phases have been completed as indented. Furthermore, a majority of the respondents in Snell's study, felt that there was a lack of coherency within the organization with respect to the activities, or arenas as referred to in this thesis, of the introduction phase. Lastly, half of the respondents were dissatisfied with the existing introduction phase (Snell, 2006).

In PSFs, where the work often is complex and relies on a high degree of personal interactions, the importance of introduction phases is probably even higher. However, empirical research on the effects of introduction phases on an organizational level, rather than an individual level are few, which reduces the strengths of the aforementioned arguments when discussing introduction phases on an organizational level (Bartel, 1994).

As discussed above, previous research has shown that introduction phases are linked to incentives for PSFs to utilize the knowledge and experiences of their more senior staff. The goal is then to get the new recruits to add value to the organization as fast as possible by leveraging from the existing collective knowledge and skills.

While Dai & Meuse (2007) only mentioned the ability of a recruit to fit in to the organization in passing, several other researchers such as Covaleski, Dirsmith, Heian & Samuel (1998) identified this forming activity as a vital part of a consultant's ability to work within a PSF. Covaleski et al. (1998) argued that PSF can form consultants to largely govern themselves through self control. Further, he claimed that HRM strategies are a vital part of this process, which will be discussed further in the next section.

8.3 Central tools for introduction phases in PSFs

PSFs can use two broad groups of tools in order to efficiently introduce new employees to the organization: HRM and KM strategies. To understand the different processes of the introduction phase, it is important to be aware of how these different strategies work as well as how they are interrelated. This will be explained in the following sections.

8.3.1 Human resource management strategies

The first group of tools, HRM strategies, captures according to Steffy and Grimes (1992), the *"human side of an enterprise"* and deals with activities such as; *"recruitment, training, staffing, career planning and development, compensation and labor relations"* (Alvesson and Kärreman, 2007, p. 711). Effective HRM, according Armbrüster (2006), is crucial for PSFs for two reasons. First of all, the employees need to be capable of conducting complex working assignments for the clients in an efficient and structured way. Secondly, the market for consulting and other professional services is characterized by experience and credence products, which implies that the quality of the firm's human capital can be used for signaling quality (Armbrüster, 2006).

The HRM function has historically not been linked to firms' profit. However, it can be argued that this has changed quite radically (Ivancevich, 2010). For example, the HRM function is today far more incorporated and strategically involved than earlier. This implies that human resource and organizational strategies often are closely connected in many firms (Ivancevich, 2010). Alvesson's (2004) personnel concept was the foundation of the HRM framework in this thesis and will be complemented by additional HRM theories that help explain the introduction of new employees in PSFs.

Alvesson (2004) argued that the term personnel concept should been seen as an ambitious and broad approach to HRM issues and captures a *"company's basic ideas about the starting and anchoring point for HRM"* (Alvesson, 2004, p. 147). Broadly speaking, the personnel concept describes the ideal type of employee that the firm wants to recruit, ideas and strategies for how these employees should be recruited, trained and developed as well as how they should be retained within the company and efficiently utilized in different work situations (Alvesson, 2004).

An overview of Alvesson's (2004) logic is presented in the picture below. PSFs vary in the way they structure different HRM arrangements, such as how they work with rewards and development. These HRM arrangements are affected by the firms' main HRM ideas and strategies. These ideas and strategies are in turn determined by the firm's different personnel concepts, which are the starting point for all HRM work in PSFs (Alvesson 2004).

Figure 3. The personnel concept, based on Alvesson (2004)

Furthermore, these personnel concepts can, according to Alvesson (2004), be based upon different ideas in different companies. For example, Alvesson (2004) argued that monetary rewards can be a central idea in one personnel concept and that it consequently affects the way the company works with HRM issues. A satisfying and challenging work situation can be the building block in another personnel concept (Alvesson, 2004). Interestingly, it can be argued that *"the personnel concept may influence not only HRM systems and specific personnel issues but also the work organization and work structure, the company's operations, and the kind of competence and results it aspires to"* (Alvesson, 2004, p. 148).

Since this thesis studied the introduction of new employees in PSFs it will mainly focus on the training and development aspects of personnel concepts. However, while analyzing and discussing these areas, it is important to remember that all parts of the concept are closely related and consequently affects each other.

8.3.1.1 Identity building strategies

As have been argued above, while studying the introduction of new employees in PSFs, it is relevant to analyze how their professional identities are constructed and formed. Different HRM arrangements fill important functions in this process and this section will mainly describe and discuss strategies that previous scholars have found central. It is important to bear in mind that this HRM framework used Schein's (1978) definition of professional identity as a starting point. He claimed that it should been be seen as *"relatively stable and long-term sets of attributes, beliefs, values, motives and experiences that employees uses to define themselves in their professional roles"* (Ibarra, 1999, p. 764).

In order to understand HRM's role in the identity building process of new employees it is valuable to consider a study by Alvesson and Kärreman (2007), who analyzed HRM from a cultural identity perspective. They viewed HRM practices as *"vehicles for the construction of meanings and "stories" about the individuals – who they are – and the organization – its distinctiveness and coherence"* (Alvesson & Kärreman, 2007, p. 712). More specifically, they analyzed why organizational members often strongly support HRM policies and see them as rational, even though the companies might not follow them as indented and there are several deviations from the normative order and initial plans.

Studying a management consulting firm and analyzing the meanings people ascribe to the HRM system, Alvesson and Kärreman (2007) were able to produce several interesting findings. First of all, they proposed that HRM should be seen in relation to *"organizational identity and individual identity constructions"* (Alvesson and Kärreman, 2007, p. 717). They claimed that employees at the firm support the HRM system even though it has several weaknesses, because it in a very distinctive way communicates the main characteristics of the firm's identity *"employees see what is distinctive and typical for the firm very much in terms of HRM themes"* (Alvesson & Kärreman, 2007, p. 717). The fact that employees' and firms' identities are related was taken into consideration during this thesis' interviews. For example, the authors studied how PSFs use different HRM strategies to affect the identity building process of their new recruits.

Furthermore, Alvesson & Kärreman (2007, p. 720) claimed that *"excess ceremoniality"* plays an important role in increasing the employees' faith in the HRM system since it in a clear way highlights important aspects of the firm's identity. Excess ceremoniality can for example be seen when specific achievements are extensively celebrated within a firm.

In addition, Alvesson and Kärreman (2007) argued that HRM systems can be used as a tool for aligning the individual employee's identity building process with the firm's overall identity. It can be argued that *"HRM seems to work in ways that make organizational life easier for the individuals through structuring, supporting, and constraining their identity projects"* (Alvesson & Kärreman, 2007, p. 720).

Finally, they claimed that HRM systems can create a new form of control over the firms' employees, *"aspirational control"* (Alvesson & Kärreman, 2007, p. 721). This concept implies that employees tie *"the self with a particular career idea and prospect, linked to a prescribed identity project, thus forming a trajectory, including a sense of projected self"* (Alvesson & Kärreman, 2007, p. 720). The result is that employees act in the firm's interest in order to maintain their own view of themselves.

8.3.1.1.1 Provisional selves

Besides acknowledging that professional workers' identities often are connected to the firm's identity, it is also relevant to study how their identities change as they work within the firm. This can facilitate the understanding of the process new recruits go through while they are being transformed from students to consultants.

Scholars who have studied the socialization of newcomers have found that career transitions often involve identity changes (Ibarra, 1999). For example Van Maanen & Schein (1979) argued that, *"in assuming new roles, people must not only acquire new skills but also adopt the social norms and rules that govern how they should conduct themselves"* (Ibarra, 1999, p. 764). This can have vital consequences for professional employees. If a person fails to act and express images that are in line with the person's role, she loses the right to enact that role (Goffman, 1959). According to Ibarra (1999), it can also be claimed that this acting process is more evident for junior employees since the professional identity is more adjustable and fluctuating early in an employee's career,

Further, Ibarra (1999, p. 764) analyzed how employees adjust to new roles by experimenting with different identities, *"provisional selves"*, in order to finally reach their real professional identities. He claimed that this process involves three different phases (Ibarra, 1999);

1. Studying role models in order to assess the supply of possible identities
2. Elaborating with provisional selves
3. Assessing the elaborations with respect to external feedback and internal standards

More specifically, Ibarra (1999) claimed that the provisional selves are *"temporary solutions that people use to bridge the gap between their current capacities and self-conceptions and the representations they hold about what attitudes and behaviors are expected in the new role"* (Ibarra, 1999, p. 766).

In order to find potential provisional selves to enact, people try to find role models to study and learn from. This process is interesting to analyze since when employees study the role models they build *"a storage of tacit knowledge, attitudes, routines, impression management techniques and so on that they can use in adapting to the new role"* (Ibarra, 1999, p. 774). This repertoire can then be tested in real working situations and the employees will judge their value by evaluating the feedback they get (Ibarra, 1999). They will keep certain characteristics of their provisional selves if they get positive feedback, while they will reject other characteristics if they are not well received by the employee's environment. This rejection and retention process will eventually help the employee to construct her own identity in her new professional role (Ibarra, 1999). Consequently, how the firms work with presenting role models for their new recruits was central to study in this thesis to understand the rejection and retention process of the employees' identity building.

8.3.1.2 Mentoring and management by objectives

How professional employees should be managed and how firms can make sure that they act in the firm's best interest is a subject that has gained a lot of attention among management scholars and should be seen as a central question for the construction of introduction phases. Different solutions have been developed but only a few have gained legitimacy and become widely accepted within the business world. Two of the most accepted techniques will be presented below.

A central article within this subject is Covaleski et al.'s (1998) study of six big accounting firms. They studied how contemporary organizations can use disciplinary practices and avowal to manage their employees. They found that mentoring and management by objectives (MBO) were two practices of control that the firms used to align their employees interest with the interest of the organization. Even though the two practices lead to similar outcomes, their characteristics and focus are substantially different.

MBO has previously been seen as a tool firms could use to avoid that well educated specialists, who mainly contribute with their *"specialized knowledge"*, make *"their craft or function an end in itself"*

(Drucker, 1993, p. 432). It can consequently be argued that *"MBO is intended as a disciplinary technique that encodes organizational goals within the individual, so that individuals acting in their own interests generate organizationally favorable outcomes"* (Covaleski et al., 1998, p. 314).

Mentoring on the other hand started to gain support in the 1980s and has also been called coaching or counseling (Covaleski et al., 1998). Townley (1994) claimed that in the mentoring process, senior employees help junior employees *"to become interwoven into an organizational culture"* (Townley, 1994, p. 125). In Covaleski et al's. (1998) study it could be seen that many mentees saw mentoring as a social process, which helped them to better understand and deal with the political landscape of the organization. The advice that mentees received could be very practical and *"helpful mentors instruct protégés on office and firm politics and advise and help their protégés manage their visibility in a panopticon sense with important partners so that protégés may be favorable looked upon"* (Covaleski et al. 1998, p. 316).

Furthermore, previous research has shown that the relation between the mentee and the mentor is crucial if the mentoring process should work efficiently. Covaleski et al. (1998, p. 314) argued for example that the mentor must display herself as an *"embodied symbol"* for the mentee. Further, *"guidance and direction is provided by example and exhortation, wherein the mentor puts on display his or her own identity as a firm member"* (Covaleski et. al 1998, p. 314).

8.3.2 Knowledge management strategies

This section will introduce the subject of knowledge management, the second group of tools, in order to explain different knowledge transfer processes that PSFs can use during their introduction phases. As it has been argued earlier, transfer of knowledge to new employees is one of the main goals of the introduction phase and it becomes particularly vital in knowledge intensive firms such as PSFs.

> *"Because knowledge is the core asset of consultancies, they were among the first businesses to pay attention to – and make heavy investments in – the management of knowledge"*
>
> Hansen, Nohria & Tierney (1999, p. 107)

While KM has been around for a long time, it evolved as a research field as late as the 1990's. As a result a high level of debate exists over the definition of KM. Although several different definitions exist, there are some common characteristics. The first is that KM is concerned with sharing and dissemination of knowledge (Werr, 2011), it is about *"providing point of need knowledge"* (Aaron, 2009, p. 35). The second common characteristic is that they link KM to competitive advantage (Werr, 2011) *"Capturing, codifying and transferring knowledge across the organization in order to create business value or achieve competitive advantages"* (Deng, 2008, p. 175). The last common characteristic is that KM should be seen as a business process (Werr, 2011), "*Knowledge Management is a business process through which firms create and utilize their institutional or collective knowledge". Organizations manipulate KM for solution of problems, preparation of strategic plans, decision making and learning.*" (Wajidi & Asim, 2009, p. 123).

Furthermore, there are three main categories of contemporary definitions concerning knowledge (Werr, 2011). The first sees knowledge as a possession. Knowledge is then viewed as commodity that can be defined. Even though knowledge is considered to be located outside of the body e.g. shared practices, it can be codified (Dougherty, 1992). The second view is that knowledge is socially embedded. It is then linked to individuals and specific situations (Ringberg & Reihlen, 2008). The former implies that knowledge should be codified and shared through knowledge bases with organizations, while the latter view implies that firms should focus on the interaction between people and how knowledge is shared through different mechanisms. A third view incorporates the two aforementioned views and does not regard them as mutually exclusive, but rather exist in harmony. Knowledge is thus viewed to exist in both explicit, i.e. possession, and tacit, i.e. socially embedded, forms within organizations (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995).

No matter which definition you choose to study, there are two main assumptions connected to KM. The first assumption is that people are willing to share their knowledge with other employees within the organization. The second assumption is that receivers of knowledge are seeking to increase their own knowledge and that they are willing to learn (Morris, 2001).

Even though many authors have argued for the positive effects of KM, such as increase in competitive advantage, some authors have claimed that the intangibility of knowledge makes the effects difficult to control as well as to measure. For instance, they claimed that the benefits are hard to prove, as the cost of KM is not connected to the value generated (Mårtensson, 2000). However, while the financial gains are hard to isolate, which some researchers see as one of the weaknesses with KM, Aaron (2009) showed that a KM project at Accenture returned 1 to 18 in return on investment by only looking at the time saved. Arguably, the return on investment would have been even higher if the improved skills of the consultants had been included as well.

8.3.2.1 Models of knowledge transfer

In order to gain a more detailed understanding of the different KM processes that can take place in PSFs, central models of knowledge transfer will be presented below. These models also provide a solid overview of how different types of knowledge are related.

A frequently quoted model demonstrating the co-existence and transfer of tacit and explicit knowledge is the SECI model developed by Nonaka & Takeuchi (1995). The model describes the four different ways knowledge can be transferred between tacit and explicit knowledge. Firstly, socialization is described as the transfer of one person's tacit knowledge to another person. An example of socialization is the apprenticeship to become a master tailor. Secondly, externalization is when a person forms explicit knowledge from hers tacit knowledge e.g. the codification of social protocols. Thirdly, combination is when a person uses several different explicit sources such as books and combines the knowledge e.g. the use of interdisciplinary studies within biology and chemistry. Lastly, internalization is when explicit knowledge is internalized to form a person's own tacit knowledge.

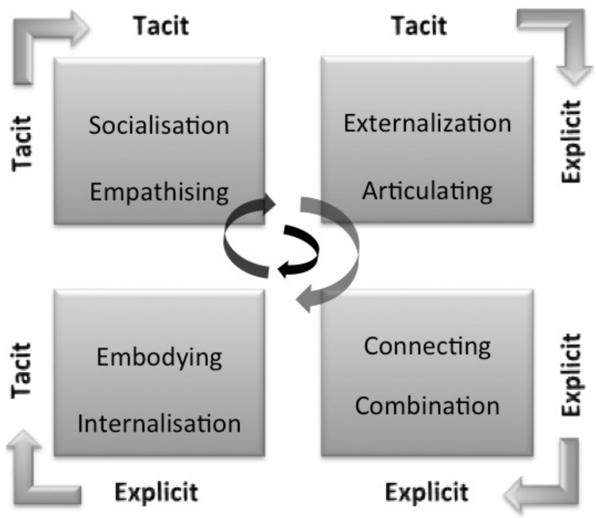

Figure 4. The SECI model, based on Nonaka & Takeuchi (1995)

While heavily used and referenced, Nonaka's SECI model has also been questioned. The main critiques to the SECI model question the empirical evidence on which the SECI model in based. The first issue is that Nonaka based large parts of the model on his previous studies of information creation (Gourlay, 2003). The second issue is that the surveys used to prove the SECI model were only sent out to Japanese managers, thus the evidence as well as cultural generalizability is questioned. Further, the empirical evidence did not statistically support two of the four main pillars of Nonaka's model (Gourlay, 2003).

Linking to the second argument combination and internalization has been critiqued for not being clearly described (Gourlay, 2003). Lastly and often discussed are the illustrative case studies used by Nonaka, which have been critiqued for being anecdotes used to illustrate the model rather than providing support for the theoretical arguments of the model.

Even if the empirical foundation of the model has been called into question, Nonaka's SECI model still provides an illustration of how knowledge is created and transferred. The reason for its inclusion in the theoretical framework is not only its illustrative capabilities, but also the fact that it has been a central part of the KM debate over the last ten years. Further, the model effectively illustrates different ways in which knowledge can be transferred to junior consultants during the introduction period.

Werr & Stjernberg (2003) introduced a similar model to describe KM at management consulting firms. Their model focuses on the complementary nature of tacit and explicit knowledge rather than on the knowledge transfer. The model divides the knowledge within the firms into three groups and clearly illustrates the different forms of knowledge that are vital in the firms. The first group focuses on the tacit knowledge of the employees within the firm (Werr & Stjernberg, 2003), e.g. how to act with certain clients. The second category focuses on the explicit and codified knowledge such as general guidelines within the firm (Werr & Stjernberg, 2003). These guidelines do not only define how the consultants work, but also create a common language and understanding, which facilitates knowledge transfers within the consultancy (Werr, 2011). Lastly, the third group concerns explicit material that relates to certain events or cases (Werr & Stjernberg, 2003) e.g. codified information about clients. The difference between the second category and the third is that the latter is not decontextualized in that it provides specific examples of how previous employees have worked with similar cases.

Together the two models facilitate the understanding of knowledge and knowledge transfers during introduction phases for new employees. While the SECI model shows how knowledge can be transferred between individuals as well as the relation between different types of knowledge, Werr & Stjernberg's (2003) model shows what types of knowledge that are specifically needed in PSFs.

8.3.2.2 Learning by doing

Although different KM techniques can help organizations to efficiently disseminate existing knowledge throughout an organization, one important KM process that has been known for a long time is learning by doing (LBD). It is well renowned within PSFs and according to

Dongoghue (1996) it ensures that the most relevant knowledge is used and interpreted by the individual employee.

Dewey (1998), who called this process progressive education, originally founded the concept of LBD and argued that the key to knowledge lies in developing skills through experiences. An individual should critically examine their surroundings and the effects of their actions to develop new practices. A more recent interpretation by Becker (1964) was that LBD can be an organizational process where an employee is given time to reflect on her actions in order to develop new routines.

One of the major weaknesses of LBD, which also undermines the cost efficiency argument put forward by Bahk, Gort & Wall (1993), is that LBD is a highly time consuming tool from a KM perspective. As a result, Bahk et al. (1993) concluded that LBD should not be seen as a productivity increasing tool but rather an add-on to existing KM practices.

An important issue for organizations such as PSFs is that even though knowledge *per se* is generally considered to be positive, to possess knowledge for the sake of possessing knowledge is something that has been criticized. For example, Dewey (1998) argued that only knowledge, which is practically applied is valuable. As previously mentioned, his key argument was that through LBD only relevant knowledge is gained. In the context of introduction programs this implies that it is not always useful to have larger formal trainings if the knowledge transferred is not used. As a result, LBD can potentially complement shorter introduction programs by ensuring that only relevant knowledge is transferred to the consultant.

8.3.2.3 Enablers and barriers of knowledge management

In order to understand the knowledge management processes of introduction phases in more detail, this section will higlight different barriers and enablers of knowledge management that previous research has found to be central for PSFs. These factors were used both as a strating point for the interviews with LynxEye and the respective reference firms and as central reference points during the analysis of the thesis' empircal data.

Possibly because of the rise of information technology there has been a strong tie between KM and IT-systems. However, Werr (2011) argued that there are seven other central enablers of knowledge transfer and sharing. The model below presents these enablers and shows that there is a strong representation of behavioral enablers, which have been underrepresented in much KM literature so far (Werr, 2011).

Figure 5. Enablers of knowledge sharing and transfer, based on Werr (2011)

As can be seen from figure 5, IT-systems can be an enabler. They can for example be used to store information, share knowledge as well as promote networking between members of the organization. However, Werr (2011) pointed out that heavy usage of codification of knowledge to fit into knowledge databases can also have a de-motivating effect on employees.

Research has shown that there are many behavioral barriers to knowledge sharing, such as for example the fear of losing a key asset (Morris, 2001). This can take the form of a consultant who does not want to teach others how to perform a specific task since the knowledge makes him indispensible to the firm. Some of these behaviors can be mitigated or reduced through implementing reward structures that promote sharing of knowledge (Robertson, Sorensen & Swan 2001). These structures could also create a knowledge sharing culture, where the spreading of knowledge within the organization is promoted. Although a clear definition of what exactly constitutes a knowledge sharing culture and how to create one is less researched (Werr, 2011), De Long and Fahey's (2000) showed specifically that organizational culture could be both an important enabler and a barrier of KM.

On the subject of organizational culture, Carlile (2002) argued that a knowledge sharing barrier is a lack of shared basic understanding that hinders knowledge integration within organizations. Furthermore, Swan, Newell, Scarbrough, & Hislop (1999), argued that social interaction can limit these barriers as employees develop a mutual appreciation of different world views as well as a common sense of purpose. Child and Rodrigues (2003) further argued that the social identities of professionals at PSF's are tied to knowledge integration, which they also link to previous research on social identities.

To further reduce the barriers of knowledge sharing, KM can be integrated in the normal business processes (Kaplan & Thomson-Reed, 2007). This can for example be done through planning in time for feedback after projects or having regularly meetings for reflection over key lessons from projects. Although this should be integrated in the normal work, so that KM is not seen as an add-on to the ordinary tasks. Both during activities like the aforementioned and during regular work, having a common language within the organization facilitates communication and thus knowledge sharing. Werr & Stjernberg (2003) argued that using common guidelines and frameworks within a consultancy does not only assure a common way of working, but also increases communication and collaboration within the firm. Having a common language further reduces the heterogeneity of the employees' beliefs on cause and effect as well as how they view the goals of the organization. This decreases the risk of politics within the organization (Pfeffer, 1998), which in turn can reduce the incentives to share knowledge within the firm (Morris, 2001).

The incentives for how employees work with each other are further affected by the internal structure of the organization (Apostolou & Mentzas, 1999), such as if there are any specialized roles or cross functional teams. Furthermore, the type of work teams engage in also affects knowledge sharing. Runsten (2011) showed that when faced with multi dimensional and complex tasks, as compared to clear and narrow tasks, teams engage in more knowledge sharing. Runsten's argument is further strengthened by Dougherty & Takacs (2004) who found that innovative firms focused on teamwork and a broad grasp of the market, while less innovative worked with narrow and specialized tasks.

In addition, the aforementioned enablers rely heavily on the support of top management and their commitment to promoting KM strategies (Kaplan & Thomson-Reed, 2007). When a KM project is implemented, a shared understanding of what the project means at the specific offices or divisions should be communicated by managers, so that employees know how their processes and behaviors need to be changed (Fahey & Prusak 1998).

8.4 A model of introduction phases at PSFs

This theoretical framework started by describing PSFs, their introduction phases and the tools available for forming and educating junior consultants at these firms. This section aimed to integrate the discussions into one general model of introduction phases at PSFs. The model was developed by using Dai & Meuse's (2007) aspects of introduction phases as a reference point of what should be covered during an introduction phase. Werr & Stjernberg's (2003) model of different types of knowledge in PSFs and Sandberg & Pinington's (2009) model of competence in PSFs were then integrated to illustrate what the main focuses of PSFs introduction phases are specifically.

Sandberg & Pinington's (2009) argued that there are four parts of professional competence: a specific self-understanding, a specific understanding of work, other people and tools. Sandberg and Pinnington (2009) further argued that previous research has focused too much on tacit knowledge, when the competence of a professional should be viewed from a way of being, rather than focusing on knowing in action or tacit knowledge. While their model, as well as Werr & Stjernberg's (2003) includes tacit and explicit knowledge, they added the dimension of self-understanding. Sandberg and Pinnington (2009) argued that self-understanding in essence is how we as humans relate ourselves to our surrounding. Similar to Covaleski et al.'s (1998) self-knowledge, this makes up the consultant's identity.

As a result, the main addition of Sandberg & Pinnington's (2009) argument is the addition of an identity perspective on Werr & Stjernberg's model, which together form the basis of this thesis' model of focus areas of PSFs' introduction phases. By complementing the professional identity with Werr & Stjernberg's model four focus areas are found: professional identity, tacit knowledge, situation specific explicit knowledge and general explicit knowledge.

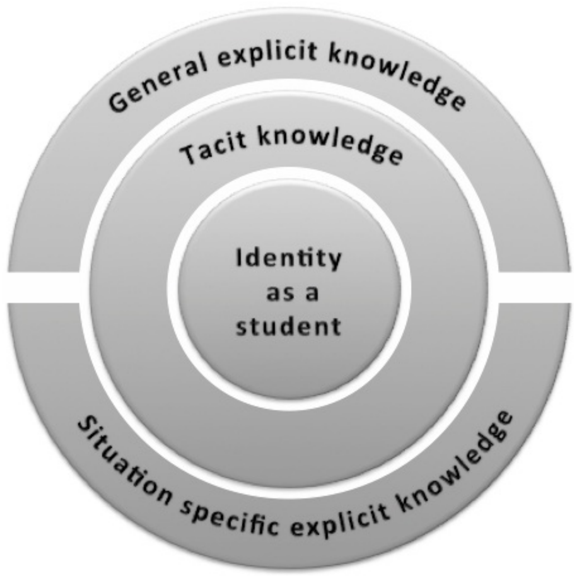

Figure 6. The four focus areas of introduction phases for new consultants in PSFs

In line with Werr & Stjernberg the tacit knowledge of the consultant refers to the socially embedded knowledge of the consultant. Within the context of PSFs an example can be the knowledge of how to act with a client. As such tacit knowledge will also refer to what Sandberg and Pinnington (2009) described as other people i.e. how to act around other people. While Nonaka & Takeuchi (1995) referred to explicit knowledge as one group, this thesis regarded it as being two groups in line with Werr and Stjernberg's (2003) argumentation. This choice was based upon the fact that Werr and Stjernberg (2003) had a clearer focus on PSFs when they developed their two groups.

The third area refers to explicit knowledge, which is situation specific e.g. codified knowledge on how to apply a product in a specific situation or context. The separation from the fourth area, non situation specific explicit knowledge, is that the latter will be used to refer to other codified knowledge, which is not adapted to a specific situation. In the context of PSFs this can be a guideline of how to perform a certain service or the use of a standard methodology.

Building on the above discussed model of focus areas for the introduction of new consultants, the following model will illustrate how the four focus areas are shaped by the introduction phase. The model illustrates how the graduate student (left) goes through the introduction phase and is formed and educated using the PSF's HRM and KM strategies, which in turn are shaped by the characteristics of the specific PSF. The right side of the model then illustrates how the identity of the former student has been shaped towards that of a professional consulant.

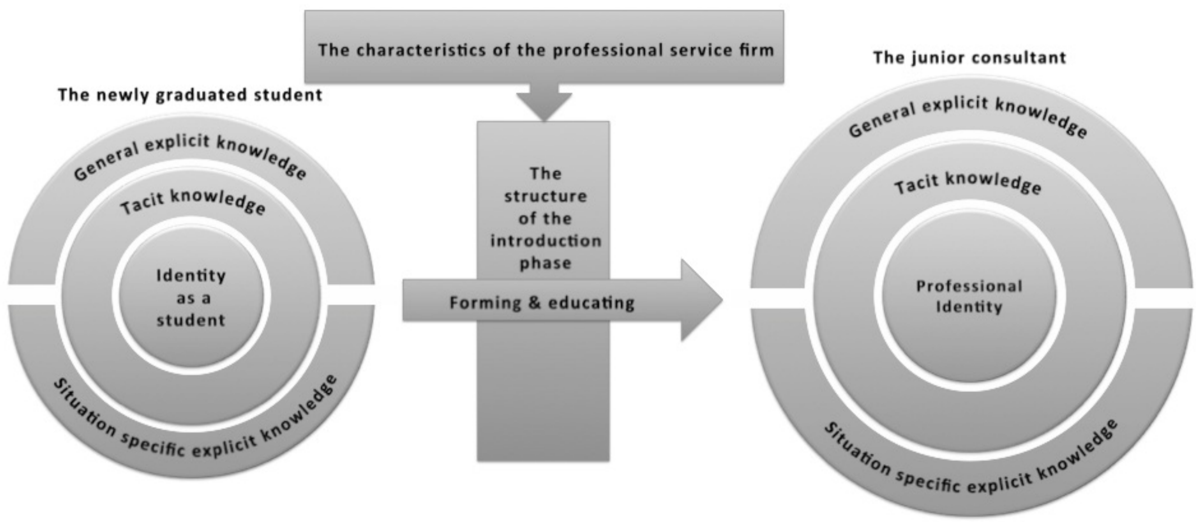

Figure 7. The general model of introduction phases in PSFs

9 Method

This thesis was built upon an explorative research purpose, which is suitable when the current knowledge base within the research field is limited (Gustavsson, 2004). Few studies have in a structured way analyzed and discussed how PSFs form and educate newly graduated consultants. Furthermore, the thesis used an inductive research approach in order to answer the research question. When using this research approach, observations and analyses of different phenomena can lead to new understandings and theories (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2009).

Whit this research approach it is suitable to base the analyses on qualitative data (Saunders et al., 2009). The data was gathered through a combined method, consisting of qualitative interviews and an onsite collaborative study. The main reason for using a combined method was to strengthen the theoretical value of our results, as argued by Gorard, Roberts & Taylor (2004). The combined method enhanced the precision of the gathered data since the information that was collected during the interviews could be compared and contrasted with the onsite observations. Further, the use of these two data collection tools enabled a more complete description of the situation at LynxEye, as the two techniques complemented each other and allowed a situation to be viewed from different angles. Lastly, it enables the inclusion of environmental and motivational factors (Denscombe, 2007).

9.1 Qualitative interviews

The thesis was as described mainly based upon qualitative interviews, which is a suitable method for an explorative research approach (Gustavsson, 2004). This research method focuses on the respondents' personal experiences and allows for broad perspectives (Befring, 1994).

Semi-structured interviews were conducted because of their ease of comparison between several interviews, as well as their relative depth compared to closed question interviews (Keats, 2000). By using semi-structured interviews the authors were able to compare the responses between different target groups while at the same time probing for deeper answers on issues deemed relevant. To structure the interviews, Gillham's (2005) framework was used. He argued that the semi-structured interview is *"the most important way of conducting a research interview"* (Gillham, 2005, p. 70).

The main pillars of a semi-structured interview, according to Gillham (2005), are;

- The same main questions should be used during all interviews.
- There should be a direct connection between the probed questions and the theoretical framework.
- Sub-questions should be used to ensure that all areas of interest are covered even if they are not directly addressed during the main part of the interviews.
- All interviews should be allocated approximately the same amount of time.

Lastly, to reflect previous research within the field, the main structure of the interviews was based upon the previously established theoretical framework e.g. enablers of knowledge management and the four focus areas of a PSF's introduction phase. A more detailed description of the questions used during the interviews can be found in the appendix.

9.1.1 Interview groups

In order to analyze how firms work with educating and forming newly graduated employees, the PSF industry was chosen as the vessel of analysis. The industry was deemed to be of great value for the analysis due to its heavy focus on knowledge as a key competitive advantage and the importance of the firms' human capital.

To analyze how PSFs can use KM and HRM strategies to efficiently transform their new recruits into effective consultants, LynxEye was chosen as the main case to study. The firm has been growing rapidly over the last years and has hired several newly graduated consultants. In addition, LynxEye has strongly felt the need for establishing a well-structured introduction phase for their new recruits and was consequently interested in analyzing and discussing these types of questions. Furthermore, in order to gain deeper insights into the PSF industry and increase the generalizability of the thesis' conclusions, eight firms were studied as reference cases. LynxEye's introduction phase was consequently contrasted against several other firms.

Kvale (1997) argued that it often can be challenging to determine how many interviews should be conducted in a qualitative study. If too many interviews are conducted, it can be difficult to conduct an in-depth analysis. On the other hand, if too few interviews are conducted, it often becomes difficult to generalize findings or to test hypotheses. The authors took these factors into consideration when they decided to interview around twenty employees at LynxEye and between five and ten reference firms.

9.1.1.1 LynxEye – the main case

Founded in 1999, LynxEye is a rather young PSF based in Stockholm with 39 employees, 14 of which have joined during the last year (Management, 2011). The firm has specialized on Brand Management (BM) consulting with a clear focus on combining strategy and branding.

LynxEye has a wide range of clients but their primary target group is large Swedish or international firms within the *fast moving consumer goods, telecommunications* and *media* industry, such as Volvo, Absolut, Carlsberg and Nokia. These clients have had a very high level of satisfaction with LynxEye's services, which has resulted in the firm being awarded *"Swedish Brand Agency of the Year"* from 2008 to 2010. Furthermore, LynxEye has been growing rapidly and has hired several new employees during the last years, which makes it an ideal case to study with respect to forming and education of new employees.

To effectively analyze the effects of the introduction phase, the employees at LynxEye were divided into four different groups depending on their position and seniority within the firm. This division allowed the authors to get a broader and more accurate picture of the introduction phase. For example, it allowed them to compare the top management's ideas of how the introduction should be structured with how the new recruits actually perceived it.

As seen in table 1, the first group consisted of the management of the organization, which was interviewed concerning how they work with introducing the new members to the organization. The second group consisted of consultants and senior consultants who had been working for one to three years at LynxEye. This group was used as a reference group that helped the authors to understand when a consultant is fully integrated in the working environment of LynxEye.

The third group of employees had been working at LynxEye since January 2011. This group was used as an intermediate reference group, to show how consultants have developed halfway through the introduction phase. Finally, the fourth and last group consisted of freshly recruited consultants. This group was interviewed before they started working at LynxEye or early on in their career within the firm. The main purpose of interviewing this group was to understand how new recruits perceived the introduction phase.

Group	Position	Date of interview
Management (Mgmt)	Partner & CEO	2011-09-12
	Senior project leader & head of introduction	2011-09-13
	Project leader & head of core insight	2011-09-22
	Senior project leader	2011-09-21
	Project leader	2011-05-30
	HR manager	2011-05-30
	Project leader	2011-06-07
	Newly hired senior project leader	2011-05-10
Senior Consultants (SC), 1-3 Years	Senior consultant	2011-09-14
	Senior consultant	2011-09-15
	Senior consultant	2011-09-22
Consultants (C), since Jan 2011	Experienced consultant	2011-09-15
	Experienced consultant	2011-09-16
	Experienced consultant	2011-09-19
Newly hired consultants (NC), started during fall 2011	Newly hired consultant	2011-05-31
	Newly hired consultant	2011-09-19
	Newly hired consultant	2011-09-20
	Newly hired consultant	2011-09-20

Table 3. Interview groups at LynxEye

9.1.1.2 Reference firms

As described, different PSFs have been chosen as reference firms in order to achieve a broader understanding of how the PSF industry works with forming and educating new employees and to contrast LynxEye's way of working. The firms were chosen with consideration to the theoretical framework, which had shown that PSFs can have rather different characteristics and organizational focuses. As a result, an even and broad distribution of different types of PSFs were chosen to participate in the study, in order to gain a justifiable contrast of industrial practices to the main case. The firms differed mainly with respect to organizational focus, size, leverage structure, their products as well as their main type of clients. Furthermore, it was also taken into consideration that a broad distribution of firms with different characteristics could facilitate the analysis of which characteristics determine the structure of a PSF's introduction phase.

Firm	Position	Date
Prime Pr	Senior consultant & HR responsible	9/9/11
Hallvarsson & Halvarsson	CEO	9/16/11
Cordial	Managing director	9/13/11
Söderberg & Partners	Head of risk management	9/12/11
Arthur D. Little	Principal & HR manager	9/7/11
JKL	HR business partner	9/27/11
At Kearney	Nordic HR manager	9/7/11
Mannheimer Swartling	Professional development lawyer	9/12/11

Table 4. Interviewed reference firms

9.2 Collaborative onsite study

Collaborative onsite observations were used to complement the qualitative data gathered through the interviews. The strength and reason for using this research method was that it allowed the authors to conduct a deeper analysis by comparing the described reality from the interviews with observations of the authors. For example, it allowed the authors to validate whether some respondents' description of the LynxEye's culture should be seen as representative. It further allowed the authors to gain an understanding of the introduction phase before the interviews, which allowed for a deeper discussion of the effects of the different arenas i.e. activities and processes of the introduction phase.

The weakness of this model can be linked to the intervention, which the researchers have in the studied organization, as well as the risk of accusation of falsification and replication (Dreyfuss, 2000). This risk was handled by using semi-structured interviews allowing replication and documentation of the responses from the organization.

The actual collaborative study took place while one of the authors worked on a project for the LynxEye over a period of 10 months, prior to the commencement of this thesis. In line with Schein's (2004) argumentation this allowed for a deeper understanding of the espoused values and assumptions in the culture. This prior knowledge of the firm facilitated the process of constructing the questions for the interviews since the authors had an understanding of the firm's introduction phase. Furthermore, the fact that both authors attended informal meetings at the company throughout the empirics gathering process allowed for a deeper understanding of the organizational culture.

9.3 Empirics and analysis

While constructing the theoretical framework it became clear that a PSF's introduction phase should especially focus on developing four specific areas of their new recruits, in order to form and educate them. The interviews at LynxEye and with reference firms then aimed to find out how the firms work with these four areas.

All the interviews, both at LynxEye and at the reference firms, were conducted through face-to-face meetings at the respective firm's office. This physical presence is beneficial since the researchers can expect to gain more detailed information and also get the opportunity to ask clarifying questions as well as ensure a correct understanding of the answers (Denscombe, 2000). Each interview lasted for about 45 minutes and each respondent was promised anonymity and that it should not be clear how a specific firm works, with the exception of LynxEye.

The interviews were recorded in order to facilitate the future analysis of the gathered data and to secure that no relevant information was missed. The fact that the interviews were recorded allowed the authors to focus on moderating the interviews and asking relevant questions. It can often be challenging for the respondents to express personal experiences in a structured and clear way. Therefore it is important that the interviewers can steer the interviews, in order to go into depth within certain areas (Ghauri & Gronhaug, 2005). The recordings were then transcribed in order to structure the gathered data.

When all interviews had been transcribed, the authors initiated the analysis process by studying the data from the employees at LynxEye in order to find and understand the structure of the firm's introduction phase. By studying the transcriptions with focus upon how many different respondents mentioned a certain factor, a list of the most central arenas could be constructed. These arenas were then contrasted against the reference firms' way of working; in order to understand whether the arenas of LynxEye's introduction phase were common in other PSFs and to see how the approach differs depending on firm type.

When a clear understanding of LynxEye's introduction phase had been secured, the next step was to analyze which function each arena fulfilled. This was done by analyzing the respondents' argumentation in each arena in relation to the four focus areas from the theoretical framework. This process of contrasting the empirical data against the theoretical framework allowed the authors to understand in more detail, which focus areas of the new recruits that the firm tried to develop with the use of each specific arena.

The next phase of the analysis was to understand how the different arenas were related. This was achieved through a process of mapping all the arenas and focus areas into one single table. From this table it could be seen that many arenas of LynxEye's introduction phase affected more than one focus area. By further studying this table in relation to the theoretical framework the authors could establish a discussion about how HRM and KM strategies affect each other. Furthermore, the arenas' relative importance within each focus area was analyzed when applicable. This process was once again based upon how many respondents that had mentioned the arena as important within a certain focus area.

Finally, the last step of the analysis discussed factors that determine how PSFs organize their introduction phases. This was achieved by comparing the different reference firms' ways of working in relation to their organizational characteristics. Since the reference firms in the study possessed different characteristics and used different approaches, this process resulted in a list of organizational factors that affect the structure of a PSF's introduction phase.

9.4 Trustworthiness

Before the findings of the thesis' research are presented, this section will discuss how trustworthy this method of gathering and analyzing empirical data is. Since the thesis is built upon qualitative data retrieval, the main concern should be how well the presented picture of the organization corresponds to reality (Merriam, 1995). In order to rigorously judge the trustworthiness of the empirical evidence, Guba's (1981) criteria will be used. These criteria also correspond well with Merriam's (1995) criteria for quantitative studies.

9.4.1 Credibility

The first criterion, credibility, is concerned with how accurately the empirical data has been recorded (Shenton, 2004). To increase the credibility of the study, the authors used triangulation, which is *"the use of multiple investigators, multiple sources of data and multiple methods to confirm emerging findings."* (Merriam, 1995, p. 54).

Throughout the datagathering phase, both authors were present at the interviews in order to be able to confirm the results. Further, several parties were interviewed in each respective interview group to confirm findings and make sure that no arguments represent only one single individual's opinion.

The empirical findings were then sent back to some of the interviewees to confirm the results, using what Merriam (1995) called a memory check. Lastly, the data from the interviews and from the collaborative study were used to confirm the findings of each other. It is however important to acknowledge that the thesis' goal was not to arrive at an objective truth, but rather to use the different views of the interview groups to compare how different activities were perceived by different groups.

Noteworthy is that the credibility of the empirical material gathered from LynxEye is significantly higher than the data from the reference firms, where only one interview was conducted. However, the credibility of the findings from the main case was prioritized and the credibility of the reference firms was deemed to be high enough considering the scope of the thesis.

9.4.2 Transferability

The second criterion, transferability, applies to how well the conclusions drawn from the study can be applied to other cases (Merriam, 1995). This is often a weakness of qualitative studies (Shenton, 2004). Although this thesis is a case study and the authors did not aim for widely generalizable conclusions, some of the findings of how PSFs work with educating and forming new consultants can be applicable, much as Shenton (2004) argued often is the case. The transferability of the findings is also strengthened by the fact that the findings from LynxEye were contrasted with eight substantially different reference firms' ways of working. Since firms with different characteristics were chosen, for example with respect to size and focus, a broader understanding of the problem could be secured which could lead to more general findings over the PSF industry.

9.4.3 Dependability

The third criterion, dependability, refers to how well the empirical findings of the research can be replicated by other scholars (Merriam, 1995). Since qualitative studies often depend on the settings of when the evidence was gathered, replication can be more difficult than that of purely quantitative studies (Shenton, 2004). Shenton (2004) further argued that this limitation can be reduced by using complementing methods as well as providing clear methodologies for how the data was received. This is why the authors of this thesis chose to complement the qualitative study with collaborative observations. Furthermore, a wide range of reference cases were used to reflect industry practices, which should increase the ability to replicate the findings as it becomes less dependent on the settings of one specific firm.

9.4.4 Confirmability

The last criterion, confirmability, is concerned with how objectively the data has been retrieved from its sources (Shenton, 2004). As discussed above the authors have chosen to use several different methods for gathering the empirics, in order to present the data as objectively as possible. In addition, the fact that all interviews were recorded and thoroughly transcribed increases the confirmability of the gathered data.

10 Empirics - The Introduction Phase at LynxEye

The following sections outline the empirical findings from the interviews at LynxEye, the main case, by chronologically following a newly hired consultant. Each section starts with discussing the ideal picture from LynxEye's perspective, that is how the management of the firm wants it to be, while the following part of each section discusses deviations from the ideal as well as the newly hires own thoughts on the process. Thus, the sections describe an event from the perspective of senior management, which is contrasted by the experience of the consultants. Furthermore, each section ends with a discussion over how the different reference firms deviate or resemble LynxEye's way of working.

Through mapping out the first years of a junior consultant's time at LynxEye, a list of different activities and events, which will be referred to as arenas, were found to accurately describe the introduction phase at the firm. The same process was repeated with senior managers at the reference firms to compare the existence and importance of similar arenas for forming and education.

LynxEye has been growing rapidly during the last years from a small, less than 20 people organization depending highly on the social interaction among its members, towards becoming a more structured and larger organization of 39 employees. As a result of its growth in size, top management has strongly felt the need for establishing a well structured introduction phase for their new employees (Management, 2011). Their idea is that this phase should facilitate the learning process and form new employees into Lynxes, which is the firm's ideal employee. The introduction phase should also make sure that employees can take part of the firm's current knowledgebase at an early stage and contribute as much as possible in the projects (Management, 2011). The new recruits are not grouped into specific classes, but instead the management team wants to be able to adapt the different arenas of the introduction phase to the individual needs of their new recruits.

Currently, the introduction phase consists of nine different arenas as can be seen in table 3. Each part will be described in more detail below.

The main arenas of LynxEye's introduction phase
1. Introduction training
2. Manuals and guidelines
3. The first project
4. Management structure for new employees
5. Informal socialization between employees
6. The evaluation system
7. Weekly firm wide briefings and training
8. Knowledge databases
9. Training and development

Table 5. The main arenas of LynxEye's introduction phase

10.1 Introduction training

When a new employee joins LynxEye they will as soon as possible participate in two introduction days that the company arranges. This is generally done during the first week, although exceptions have been made. The event takes place outside the office in order to create a more informal climate. According to the management of the firm, the main purpose of the event is to get the new recruits to get to know both the company and their new colleagues. During the days several small lectures take place where the company's core values and working methods are presented. The amount of participants at these events varied, depending on how many persons the firm has recruited. During the most recent introduction days around 5 persons have participated.

Senior management holds the first lectures and presents general information about the company, for example the core values. Later on different senior project leaders and specialists introduce LynxEye's products as well as the firm's specific working methods. Lastly, general administrative issues, such as how to report working hours, are presented by the HR responsible. LynxEye wants these lectures to be casual to encourage discussions and questions, according to one of the project managers. To further promote socialization and a casual environment there are special events such as mingles and dinners between the different days (Mgmt, 2011).

The introduction training is generally strongly appreciated among the new recruits. Several of them stressed the importance of the informal part of the days (NC, Mgmt, 2011), since it allows the new hires to get to know their coworkers. However, many agreed that they did not fully understand the products and working methods of LynxEye during the introduction days. Instead they mainly contribute to an understanding of the *raison d'etre* of LynxEye. The reason the junior consultants stated was that the days simply covered too much information and they could not process it all.

"*It was really too much, but it was good since you could use it to read more on later*" (C, 2011)

"*It felt like being run over by a train*" (C, 2011)

However, one junior pointed out that even if there was a lot of information the training was still useful since it provided a general understanding of many different areas; "*you listen, but then you have to do some practical work and that is when the questions come*" (C, 2011). Generally among the consultants, the ones who did not start directly with the introduction days, but instead first worked for a couple weeks, were more positive to the introduction days and believed that they had good use of it. The ones who attended the training after one or two days had difficulties with understanding the context of some issues discussed and expressed that they often felt overwhelmed by all information.

Many juniors stated that these introduction days gave them a good first impression of the firm and that they got motivated to start working. They claimed that the organization gave a professional impression and that they really showed that they were expert within their specific business area.

Reference firms

Similar to LynxEye, a majority of the reference firms have established introduction days for their new employees. However, the scope of these phases varies depending on the specialization and size of the firms. Within the management consulting firms there is a high degree of shorter introduction training, such as a couple of days. On the other hand of the spectrum are the more procedure focused firms who have large and organized introduction training. As a result of having larger and more extensive introduction training, the newly hired often becomes "*part of a class*" (Procedure focused firm A, 2011), who then continues to have a close connection throughout their time at the firm.

The major trends are that smaller organizations' introductions focus more on administrative parts e.g. how to file a salary report, while the larger ones have more organized introduction trainings that introduce newly hires to the processes of the firm. While most firms include an introduction to the firm and its specific culture, several managers noted that it was more a statement of how the firm is, rather than making the newly hired understand how this affects the daily operations (Brain focused firm B, 2011).

Further, several of the reference firms that have small offices and short introduction days in the Nordics are at the same time part of a larger international network, which creates a more comprehensive introduction training for all of the newly hired in e.g. Europe. These introduction days often take place a couple of months after the consultants have been hired and most of the time off-site in another country (Brain focused firm B, 2011).

One HR manager noted that one of the main benefits with hiring several employees at the same time is that the introduction training can become more professional and more cost efficient (Brain focused firm B, 2011). Another manager noted that when the classes become too large the program can become rather standardized and not flexible to the respective consultants' previous experiences and knowledge.

Company	Form of introduction training
LynxEye	Two day general intro at start of employment
Brain focused firm A	One day administrative introduction and global training days
Brain focused firm B	A three day general introduction and global training days
Procedure focused firm A	Two days of introduction and one week of introduction to different departments
Procedure focused firm B	A short general introduction during the first day
Grey hair firm A	Part time (50%) over the first two weeks
Brain focused firm C	A short general introduction aimed at welcoming new recruits
Grey hair firm B	One introduction day per year
Brain focused firm D	Short introduction during the first day

Table 6. Introduction training

10.2 Manuals and guidelines

LynxEye provides each new recruit with a small handbook during the introduction days, where they explain important administrative questions as well as stress the company's main policies and core values (Management, 2011). This book also shortly describes the typical projects and standard products that the company offers (Management, 2011). By providing the recruits with this book, the company hopes to avoid many unnecessary questions and to help the employees to more rapidly start focusing on their projects and taking part of the company's knowledge base (Management, 2011).

In addition to the introduction book, LynxEye has also established guidelines and manuals for how the different standard products should be conducted and how presentations and documentations should be created. These documents are placed in the company's database to facilitate continuously updates and constant availability.

Several junior employees stated that the handbook had been useful during their first days at the company, but since it mostly covers administrative questions, it is not used much at later stages. Some juniors argued that the guidelines gave them a good overview of the company, but claimed that during their first months it was difficult to get a clear picture over which type of competences the firm possesses in-house, for example different employees' backgrounds and experience. Two of them suggested that the handbook should capture these types of questions as well. *"An internal list of qualifications is something concrete that we definitely can be better at" (NC, 2011).*

A clear majority of the juniors argued that the manuals and guidelines for the different products where useful and facilitated their learning process. However, the extent to which they are used varies from person to person and a broad spectrum can be found. Some of the respondents use them extensively during their projects, while some use them from time to time. A few respondents do not use them at all. Furthermore, the juniors also highlighted that old presentations are very important for them and that they also should be seen as a form of manuals. *"You check old presentations very often, for example to check how they structure the flow and how they plan the project"* (*C, 2011).*

Reference firms

Similar to LynxEye, a majority of the reference firms have established a small handbook that is handed out to new employees. The handbooks are often quite short and simply summarize the most important aspects of administrative questions as well as general rules within the organization. Further, many firms have invested much time into creating guidelines for how their main products should be conducted and for how the projects should be documented for both internal and external use.

Company	Manuals and Guidelines
LynxEye	Administrative handbook, product and documentation manuals
Brain focused firm A	Handbook that captures administrative matters and the firm's main offerings and tools
Brain focused firm B	Handbook that captures administrative matters but no manuals. Relies instead on documentation from old projects
Procedure focused firm A	Deviates between different departments. Some provides a handbook that captures administrative matters and the department's main offerings. Additional manuals for many products
Procedure focused firm B	Handbook that captures administrative matters. Separate manuals for the firm's main offerings
Grey hair firm A	No handbook. No manuals and guidelines, since all products are adjusted to the specific customer's situation
Brain focused firm C	Course material for the firm's main offerings
Grey hair firm B	No handbook. Provides guidelines within the firm's intranet
Brain focused firm D	No handbook. Provides guidelines within the firm's intranet

Table 7 Manuals and guidelines

10.3 The first project

Several managers (Mgmt, 2011) at LynxEye explained that they want the new recruits to start working within a project team directly from day one. Consequently, LynxEye does not provide a couple of study weeks. Instead they want their employees to learn through their own experiences from real projects (Mgmt, 2011). During the first project the employees primarily receive *"direct orders" (*Mgmt, 2011) and are being guided into their roles by their respective project leaders. To further facilitate learning during projects, the most important part is to have a culture of constant feedback within the project team, as one senior manager explained. The manager also explained that it is central that all expectations are clear from both parties e.g. the consultant's role in a client meeting.

Top management at LynxEye prefers that new employees take part of several different projects during their first year at LynxEye, in order to cover all standard products (Mgmt, 2011). They want to give the employees a valuable overview over the company's way of working and help them to get to know different colleagues within the organization.

While the goal clearly is to let new employees start working with different standard products as soon as possible, it is not always the case. "*Everybody's ambition is that it should be as fair as possible, but the company comes first*" (Mgmt, 2011). Several of the new consultants actually end up working on internal project or contributing where they are mostly needed at the moment, for periods up to almost 6 months before starting on a standard project. There is consequently a high variance of when new recruits start working on their first project, which the management team is aware of. One SPL stated that the reason is that "*you have to weigh everyone's ambition together - the company, the owners and the Lynxes (employees)*" (Mgmt, 2011). As a result the new consultants' first project depends on the internal power of the mentors as "*you (as a mentor) have to fight with claws and nails in order for your mentee to receive the right project*" (Mgmt, 2011). Consequently, the selection process is arguably not completely objective and a consultant's ability to receive high status projects does not only depend on the consultant's own merits but also on the internal power of the mentor.

While the type of work a new consultant performs differs, most of them agreed that they receive a high degree of "*extremely detailed feedback*" (SC, 2011), although one consultant stated that "*it varies a lot between project, it is seldom at the top of the list*" (C, 2011). Further, a few consultants pointed out that while the feedback often is very specific in what should be done it often lacks context, since the new consultant is told what to do but not why to do it (SC, 2011). Furthermore, while many juniors agreed that the project leader tried to clarify expectations in the start of a project, there had to be *ad hoc* clarification throughout the project as the consultant acted inappropriately.

Interestingly, many of the senior managers discussed the specific "*LynxEye way of doing things*". While the description varied between managers, they all agreed that everybody within the firm understood what makes the LynxEye way unique. However, many of the consultants were not at all sure of what the LynxEye way of doing things was "*you are often influenced by the project leader you are working with at the moment. Looking at how they work. You take for granted that it is the LynxEye way, you do not know any better…*" (SC, 2011)

Reference firms

Similar to LynxEye, most of the reference firms stated that the most important way for new recruits to learn is through working directly on projects. One CEO noted that *"there cannot be any compromises on the first project"* as he claims that the first project either makes or breaks a new consultant. Further, there was a high tendency of letting new recruits start working on projects from day one or two.

However, one company differed significantly in that they tend to recruit students who have not finished their studies yet. The new recruits then start working on a project before they even are employed in a fulltime position. In addition, these recruits tend to receive less initial training. Instead the company focuses on gradually increasing the complexity of tasks, until the employees start on their fulltime position. It should however be noted that while all firms claimed to staff new employees on projects directly from start, the limited amount of interviews at reference firms hinders the control of these statements.

Company	Start of first project
LynxEye	Day one or two
Brain focused firm A	Day two
Brain focused firm B	Day two
Procedure focused firm A	Week two
Procedure focused firm B	Most recruits start working parallel to studies. Otherwise, within the first week
Grey hair firm A	Day one but only 50% during the first two weeks
Brain focused firm C	Day one
Grey hair firm B	Within the first week
Brain focused firm D	Day one

Table 8. The first project

10.4 Management structure for new employees

All employees at LynxEye should receive a mentor from day one, who is supposed to act as a coach and guide the employees in their careers. The mentoring policy has strong support from the management team and deemed to be a corner stone of their way of working.

"We have a mentorship structure, which is rather vital for us" (Mgmt, 2011)

Depending on the seniority of the mentee the mentor is either a senior project leader or a partner (Mgmt, 2011). The main focus of the mentoring process is to further improve the employee's strengths after a hygiene level has been reached within all other areas (Mgmt, 2011). Although the mentor is responsible for the evaluation of their mentees, their main responsibility is to ensure that the development of the mentee is in line with the firm's expectations. In addition to the mentors, project leaders deal with the daily operations of the firm and are expected to guide and lead junior employees in their first projects. The project leader provides more detailed feedback with a higher frequency while the mentor should have a more long-term focus.

Several new recruits highlighted the value of being coached by a more experienced colleague (NC, 2011). They claimed that it gave them the opportunity to ask questions that might be hard to ask in a regular project setting and the mentor often could provide the mentee with an outside perspective and valuable feedback *"when you speak with your mentor, you and the company's development is in focus rather than the projects development"* (C, 2011), which is also supported by one of the mentor's argumentation *"I base my feedback on what other people have said, my role is to bounce questions with"* (Mgmt, 2011). However, some consultants noted that there are questions that they would not ask their mentor either, such as issues with a specific person. *"There is some resistance to contact the mentor when you do not meet naturally, you save it or you simply do not ask"* (SC, 2011). Instead these issues would be raised with external friends or mentors (outside of the company's control). Further, one mentor noted that even if their role is to bounce ideas they *"still have a clear idea of what the result should be"* (Mgmt, 2011).

Some factors indicated that the role of the mentor is not entirely clear. For example, all mentors argued that it was the mentees' role to initiate the meetings, while a clear majority of the mentees believed that it was the mentors' role to schedule the meetings. Furthermore, some juniors claimed that they during some occasions had the same person both as mentor and as project leader. One consultant argued that this could lead to some problematic situations since it could be hard for the mentor to separate the two roles. Further, it could be hard for the mentees to discuss certain project specific issues since the mentor also was involved in the project. *"Actually, I think that it is better that the mentor is not involved in the project, since it is easier to discuss questions with someone who is not involved in my daily work"* (C, 2011). However, it is worth acknowledging that some juniors claimed that it actually could be valuable to have the same person as mentor and project leader, since the mentor would then have a more thorough understanding of the mentee, which would result in better feedback and a steeper learning curve for the mentee.

Some respondents that had worked with different project leaders noticed that the approaches and working methods could vary from person to person. For example, one junior stated, *"During projects the amount of feedback has varied. I think it depends a lot on the person. Some are better at giving feedback and like it more as well"* (C, *2011).* Even though the project leaders' approaches could differ, almost all juniors argued that they work from a common platform, which is based on the firm's core values. "*The values are the same but how you work depends a lot. Some want to have it very structured and like working after a clear plan while some have a more ad hoc approach"* (C, 2011).

Reference firms

The model with having a mentor as well as a project leader is very common among the reference firms, even though there are some deviations. One organization only provides a mentor during the first month, while stating *"you can not really call it a mentor"* referring to that they are only in charge of the introduction phase. This person should rather be seen as a *"buddy"*. On the other hand of the spectrum, one consultancy provide both a mentor, a project leader as well as a team leader, which resulted in that three people were in charge of the development of one person. However, even though most of the organizations referred to the mentors as just mentors, there is a difference in the responsibility placed on the mentoring role. In some firms the mentors closely resemble that of a line manager. In other firms there is a stronger focus on the informal parts of the organization and the importance of being supportive towards the mentee.

Company	Management structure for new employees
LynxEye	Mentor and project leader
Brain focused firm A	Mentor, project leader and functional leader
Brain focused firm B	Mentor, project leader and buddy
Procedure focused firm A	Mentor and team leader
Procedure focused firm B	Project leader, functional leader and buddy
Grey hair firm A	Mentor, project leader and functional leader
Brain focused firm C	Mentor and project leader
Grey hair firm B	Project leader and functional leader
Brain focused firm D	Project leader and functional leader

Table 9. The management structure for new employees

10.5 Informal socialization between employees

After discussing the introduction phase with new employees at LynxEye it gradually became clear that their informal socialization with other employees have a rather central role for the consultants' development during their first years. Both their relations with more experienced employees as well as contacts with other juniors should be seen as central since they fill two complementing functions.

"The value of a coffee machine is not only the coffee, but the discussion around it" (Mgmt, 2011)

Many juniors stated that it is stimulating to work in an environment where many experienced and skilled employees work. They tried to learn as much as possible from them and interestingly, it could be seen that much of this knowledge transfer took place outside of the formal project setting. For example, juniors can receive several pieces of small and helpful advices from more senior employees while eating lunch or travelling together. These advices sometimes focus on product specific issues, although it is more common that they focus on issues that are related to the individual junior consultant's development, such as how to behave in certain situations or how to deal with specific political issues. Furthermore, by socializing with older employees the juniors also receive an overview over how the firm is structured and they develop a feeling for the different persons' backgrounds, which can help them to understand who they should ask for certain types of information.

Since the new recruits often were allocated to different types of standard projects they shared and discussed their experiences with each other extensively. This helped them to understand the different products that the firm sells as well as the different project leaders' way of working efficiently. The new recruits often discussed certain project specific questions in order to understand how other teams have dealt with them.

Reference firms

All reference firms clearly claimed that the informal socialization with other employees is central for new recruits' development. However, one significant difference was found. The socialization process in the smaller firms often happens across hierarchical borders. In the larger organizations there frequently is such a large amount of junior employees that they often felt like *"they are part of a class"*, as such there is a more intense socialization within this group. Lastly, the firm's cultures were perceived to affect the internal socialization, but due to a limited amount of interviews at these firms' any further comparison of the firms different approaches was hindered.

10.6 The evaluation system

LynxEye has established a rigorous evaluation system, which the management strongly believes in and which has gained significant importance within the company. The mentors play a central role in the evaluation system and are assigned two main responsibilities. Based on feedback from the mentee's teammates, the mentor grades the mentee in the evaluation system. Further, the mentor describes the mentee on a general basis and identifies the main development areas. The information is collected through the internal evaluation system called *"Min Personliga Utvecklings Plan"* (MPU), which translates to *"My personal development plan"*. According to senior management, the MPU contains six different areas with different weights depending on their relative importance. Within each area there are several different criteria that the consultant is judged on, although LynxEye did not want these exact criteria to be published.

	Consultants seniority			
Variable	JC	SC	JPL	SPL
LynxEye's Values				
Consulting Skills				
Brand Management Skills				
Teamwork				
Leadership				
Sales & Client Responsibility				

Table 10. The MPU (Relative weighting of evaluation areas, higher importance illustrated by darker color)

Each of the criteria has a set of objectives, which a consultant has to achieve to receive a certain score on the MPU, except for the LynxEye values where all employees are scored relatively to each other.

The main areas of the MPU are described in the table below:

Area of the MPU	Example of focus
Values	The consultants humility and result focus etc
Consulting skills	Problem-solving, analysis, recommendations and presentation skills
Brand Management	- Working with core insights, understanding consumers for a junior - For a senior on developing "Thought Leadership" in Brand Management
Team work	How well the consultant works within a team
Leadership	A seniors ability to lead a team
Sales & Client Responsibility	- Junior project leaders are only qualitatively evaluated - Senior project leaders are quantitatively evaluated for new business generation as well as existing client sales

Table 11. The general focus of the MPU

The MPU was recently reviewed and the weights of the different areas were changed. The area *"consulting skills"* was also included, since the management team thought it had been under prioritized previously especially with respect to recent graduated consultants. Lastly, during this revision, LynxEye's values also got a higher importance.

Further, throughout the interviews a unanimous positive voice of the objectiveness and soundness of the MPU was heard. The few times when criticisms were aired it was often followed by a comment that explained that the consultant still thought the MPU was fair and clearly linked to salary and promotions. However, some discrepancies were still found. For example, one consultant explained how she perceived that the relative scale of *"LynxEye values"* was changed with a promotion. That is, the consultant believed that it was harder to fulfill the criteria for values when promoted to a new position. However, when the management was confronted with this concern they explained that the scale should not change with promotion. As a result the reason for the perceived difference could not be established. Nevertheless the issue raises concerns for how objective the evaluation system really is, as well as how objective it is perceived to be among the employees. Further, as one consultant mentioned it does not matter what she thinks of it, *"the MPU is the truth"*. Lastly, the company has established certain yearly rewards, which are not directly linked to the MPU. This confused some consultants since it is hard to know what they should focus their energy on.

Reference firms

Most of the reference firms use rather similar processes as LynxEye with comprehensive firm wide evaluations. However, not all of the firms link the evaluation to bonuses, promotions and salaries. For example, in one more procedure focused firm, the employees' seniority within the firm is seen as a crucial factor for promotion and bonuses. Evaluations were only of secondary nature. They claimed that this way of working made sure that all employees cooperate as much as possible and thought of the firm's interests instead of only focusing on their own development. The frequency in which the reference firms conducted evaluations also differs compared to LynxEye. While most firms use annual evaluations, some firms evaluate employees twice a year. Although this required more resources they believed it was necessary to keep up with the consultants' development.

The exact dimension that the different firms use for their evaluations are out of the scope of this thesis, but many of them claimed to have similar dimensions with the exception of brand management skills.

Company	Frequency and scope of evaluation
LynxEye	Once per year, focus on how to be promoted
Brain focused firm A	Twice per year, focus on how to be promoted
Brain focused firm B	Twice per year, focus on how to be promoted
Procedure focused firm A	Once per year focusing on the development needs
Procedure focused firm b	Twice per year, focus on how to be promoted
Grey hair firm A	Twice per year, focus on long term development
Brain focused firm C	Twice per year, focus on long term development
Grey hair firm B	Once per year, focus on long term development
Brain focused firm D	Twice per year, focus on long term development

Table 12. The frequency and scope of evaluation

10.7 Strengths vs. weaknesses

Within the management team of LynxEye there is a clear intent of focusing on *"leveraging the strengths or spikes"* (Mgmt, 2011) of a consultant rather than focusing on areas where a consultant not is performing well. However, they also stated that a consultant has to achieve a hygiene level on the rest of the consultant's skills, *"in order not to punish the project team in which the consultant is working"* (Mgmt, 2011).

Although the management believes that they focus on the strengths of the consultants, several of the new recruits noted that it sometimes felt like weaknesses were the main focus *"they want you to decrease the gap, which makes it feel like they are focusing on weaknesses"* (C, 2011). However, not all of the consultants feel the same way "*it felt like they were encouraging me, they were really focusing on my strengths*" (C, 2011). One consultant noted that the main focus was on strengths, but that it was easier for the consultants to only listen on what they needed to improve, which led to an observed bias towards weaknesses.

Reference firms

From the references firms a rather polarized view of strengths vs. weaknesses was found. One CEO noted that *"you cannot change people anyway"* and that there is no point of wasting too much energy on improving weaknesses. The same CEO noted that correcting feedback does not work on high performing individuals instead it is important to focus on positive feedback. He further stated that for every negative thing the manager has to say, four positive things about the consultant should be said. As a result they has an extensive focus on the strengths within that firm.

In contrast, another consulting firm stated that they focus on the weaknesses of an individual for *"at least the first five years"* in order to build a *"great generalist"* (Brain focused firm B, 2011). Overall, in most reference firms there is a tendency to focus on the strengths while keeping all skills above a hygiene level.

Company	Strengths vs. Weaknesses
LynxEye	Focuses on strengths while keeping hygiene level overall
Brain focused firm A	Focus on weaknesses
Brain focused firm B	Focus on weaknesses, for the first five years
Procedure focused firm A	First get weaknesses to a hygiene level, then on strengths
Procedure focused firm B	Focus primarily on strengths
Grey hair firm A	Focus on strengths
Brain focused firm C	Focus exclusively on strengths
Grey hair firm B	Focuses on strengths while keeping hygiene level overall
Brain focused firm D	Focus on strengths

Table 13. Strengths vs. weaknesses

10.8 Weekly firm wide briefing and training

Every Friday LynxEye has a one hour internal company meeting, in which all employees are expected to participate. These meetings play a central role in the development of new employees, even though they are not specifically designed for the introduction phase (Mgmt, 2011). The plan is to alternate the content of the meetings from week to week. Every second week the firm holds something they call *"open window"* where they invite an external lecturer. These lectures should preferably fill two objectives; increase the employees' knowledge within certain areas as well as be seen as inspirational. The others weeks are allocated for *"closed windows"* where the main focus are on internal knowledge sharing and education. During these Fridays it is common that the company asks one internal project team to share their experiences and key lessons from different projects (Mgmt, 2011).

Newly hired employees expressed that these meetings help them to get an overview of the company and that they hold a high quality. Mostly they argued that it helped them to understand which projects the company currently was working with, as well as lessons from previous projects (NC, 2011). One consultant stated *"you do not really know what projects that are conducted at the* *moment"* (SC, 2011) and then claimed that it is first during the Friday meetings "*you go, ah! That's what they have been doing*" (SC, 2011). However, the consultant further argued that not everybody presents their project during the Friday meetings. It mostly depends on whether the SPL wants to show what they have done or not, since it requires extra work and might be less important than starting a new project.

Although most employees find the meetings rewarding, some point out that *"they are often on the border line between inspiration and education"* (NC, 2011) and that they could be better at really transferring the key lessons from a project. For the new consultants who have not worked on as many projects it *"can be hard to understand the lessons, especially if you have not worked on a similar project before"* (C, 2011). However, most consultants considered the meetings valuable and found it stimulating to be in an environment with a high degree of knowledge and experience. Further, they argued that the more senior employees are really willing to share it with the juniors. *"There are a lot of individuals with knowledge and it does not go beyond them"* (SC, 2011)

Even though no employees stated it explicitly, these meetings seemed to have an important impact on the firm's cohesiveness. For example several employees argued that it was nice to meet all colleagues at the same time and discuss issues with both juniors and the management team.

Reference firms

Even though not all of the reference firms have a form of Friday meetings, a clear majority have similar meetings, while the day, length and name of the meeting differed. The common goal is to in a more informal setting, spread knowledge within the organization and create a team mentality. The smallest and most brain focused organization has the most informal settings where different cases simply are discussed over lunch or breakfast. They claimed that every project is unique and that it thus is hard to learn from previous projects. They only use old projects for *"inspiration and to think outside the box"* (Brain focused firm C, 2011).

Among the medium sized organizations, which generally are positioned in the middle of the brain vs. procedure scale, the Friday meetings are most common and they are used to spread *"best practices"*. For the larger firms, who are more procedure focused, the firm wide meetings are less common and if they exist they are mostly conducted within different product teams rather than for the whole organization. Lastly, many of the smaller offices that are part of larger international organizations have regular best practice seminars with the rest of the organization over Internet i.e. *"webinars"* (Brain focused firm A, 2011). These are seen as very valuable since they give the office access to a larger and more diverse knowledgebase.

Company	Focus of scheduled firm wide meetings
LynxEye	Briefing (about the current situation within the firm), knowledge sharing (lessons from old projects) and education (training and development)
Brain focused firm A	Knowledge sharing and education
Brain focused firm B	Monthly meetings with briefing focus
Procedure focused firm A	Too big for frequent firm wide meetings, which take place only a couple of time per year with a clear social focus. The firm's different business teams have weekly meetings with a focus on briefing and administrative matters
Procedure focused firm B	Monthly meetings with briefing focus. Knowledge sharing when needed
Grey hair firm A	Knowledge sharing and education
Brain focused firm C	Only informal weekly meetings. Monthly briefings
Grey hair firm B	Monthly briefings as well as several educational trainings per month.
Brain focused firm D	Knowledge sharing and education

Table 14. Firm wide meetings and training

10.9 Knowledge databases

LynxEye has established a companywide database in order to gather and distribute codified knowledge and information within the company. Material from previous projects as well as key lessons can be found within the database. Recently, a part with the different product offerings has been added in order to include best practices and guidelines for typical projects (Mgmt, 2011). The senior management at LynxEye wants their consultants to use the database as much as possible and hopes it can help the firm to avoid duplication of work and leverage their structural capital and previous experiences.

New recruits highlighted that they often find the database valuable but that it can be hard to find the specific information they are looking for. For example, several respondents explained that the database needs more structure and clarity. At the moment, it is for many employees rather unclear who has the primary responsibility over the database, as well as how they should update and work with it (NC, 2011). *"There is a common guideline, but it is not followed. Everybody names things* *differently. You have to go to a person who was part of the project, because you cannot find anything yourself, it is just unnecessary and takes a lot of time"* (SC, 2011) another consultant states *"some PLs want a specific structure, while some PLs want something logical"* (NC, 2011). An indication of how the database is nobody's responsibility was the fact that throughout the interviews not a single person knew who was in charge for it, even though some hypothesis were made they turned out to be false, when verified with the person believed to be in charge.

Some juniors highlighted that the unclear structure actually had some benefits for them. Since it is hard to find specific information, they often ask their older colleagues for help which lead to that besides getting a good answer they also get to know them better and they also get a feeling for what they previously have worked as well as their specializations. One person argued that this social process significantly would be reduced if all information easily could be found on the database.

Reference firms

Concerning internal databases, three main groups can be found among the reference firms. The first group consists of small and brain focused organizations which only use databases to a lesser extent and similar to company meetings they are mainly used for inspiration rather than for promoting best practices within the firm. The second group makes use of internal "wikis" or smaller databases. These databases are often less structured and mostly used for uploading previous projects and some product information. This group consists mainly of small and medium sized organizations. Lastly, many of the larger organizations or the small offices in large international networks make use of very advanced and large databases, where a larger amount of data is stored. These firms often make use of a standardized process of how to store information and have specific employees that are responsible for monitoring and administrating the databases. One international consultancy probably goes the furthest with keeping the information as good and as available as possible. This company has a very clear process, which starts with a junior consultant writing the document that is going to be published. A senior member of the office then quality checks it and hands it over to a person dedicated to managing the database. This person is then also available for the consultants to help them finding information and researching different topics.

In addition to only using databases for storing information and lessons from previous projects, several firms use their databases to store and communicate the specific skills and backgrounds of their employees. While most of these firms are larger firms, several small firms use similar but less advanced versions. One firm even publishes the core skills of their employees on their website with the argument that *"it is the skills of our employees that we sell, so we need to communicate it directly to our customers"*.

Company	Content of internal knowledge databases
LynxEye	Old projects, product manuals and templates
Brain focused firm A	50 % of focus on old projects and 50% on finding the right people
Brain focused firm B	Old projects and information about the firm's employees
Procedure focused firm A	Old projects, product manuals and templates
Procedure focused firm b	Old projects
Grey hair firm A	Old projects and information about the firm's employees
Brain focused firm C	Old projects and presentation templates
Grey hair firm B	Old projects, best practices and templates
Brain focused firm D	Old projects and information about the firm's employees

Table 15. Knowledge databases

10.10 Training and development

Each year all employees at LynxEye receive 50,000 SEK and five days off, which is called *"competence money"*. During the year the employees are expected to use this money for developing their capabilities within certain areas. The employees can use half of the money to freely choose which courses or programs they want to take part in. However, the final decision is often taken in collaboration with the employees' mentors, in order to make sure that mentees focus on important areas (SPL, 2011).

The other half of the money is dedicated to certain courses that will develop the employees in their specific hierarchical role at LynxEye. These courses are mandatory and focus on different educational areas depending on the seniority of the consultant. Junior consultants should focus on basic consulting skills, senior consultants on Brand Management, project leaders on project management and senior project leaders should focus on sales.

Several respondents highlighted that a major problem for the firm has been that not enough people use their competence money. Different reasons for this were brought forward. Many stated that they did not have time for it, since their regular work took all available time. But one consultant stated, *"They might say that they do not have time, but it is just that they do not prioritize it"*.

Furthermore, it seemed as if the juniors carefully study how their project leaders acted. As a result a negative trend has emerged, since senior managers generally do not prioritize their own education and *"if they do not go the juniors will not dare to"* (NC, 2011). In addition, it can also be hard for new recruits to evaluate how much money that is appropriate to spend on education during the first years at the company, *"since it is my first year I do not dare to go to New York for three days yet"* (NC, 2011)

Reference firms

Although competence money as such is not commonly used among the reference firms, all of the organizations believe that continuous education is very important for the firm. However, only one other firm uses individualized *"competence money",* but they claimed to have a very low utility rate on it.

Naturally, due to their size, the smaller organizations claimed to focus on internal education since they could not reach a large enough scale to hire external lecturers. Most of the organization interviewed believed that internal educators should be preferred to external, not only because of monetary concerns, but also since they could communicate easier with the employees and it could be seen as a type of reward for a person who has managed to specialize in a specific area.

Although only one firm gives its employees a cash amount to find suitable courses, some firms, although still a minority, allow their employees to request different types of courses if they claim that it would benefit them and the firm. Similar to other areas of the introduction phase, the larger firms tend to be more organized and standardized in their educational offerings. The most standardized processes are found in the procedure focused firms, which tend to have a rather strict system where most of a junior's education is already planned when they join the firm.

Company	Training & development
LynxEye	25,000 SEK dedicated to role changes and 25,000 SEK dedicated for consultants own development
Brain focused firm A	Training both internal and external, focus on internal international training within the network as well as competence money
Brain focused firm B	Individual training both internal and external, focus on internal international training within the network
Procedure focused firm A	Very structured group focused internal training
Procedure focused firm B	Focus on internal training, has a talent program for top talents within the firm
Grey hair firm A	Consultants are very seldom allowed to attend external courses, the intention is to learn from each other
Brain focused firm C	Focus on internal education, although external are allowed
Grey hair firm B	Focus on internal training
Brain focused firm D	Focus on internal training, has a talent program for top talent within the firm

Table 16. Training and development

11 Analysis

The theoretical framework's review of previous research showed that a PSF's introduction phase should especially focus on four main areas in order to form and educate new recruits; the consultant's professional identity, tacit knowledge, situation specific explicit knowledge and general explicit knowledge. The review also showed that the firms can use different KM and HRM strategies in order to fulfill these areas.

The empirical data then showed that LynxEye's introduction phase consists of nine different arenas in which the firm tries to make sure that their new employees grow into their roles as consultants and as soon as possible contribute and add value in projects. However, further analyses need to be conducted in order to understand which functions the different arenas fulfill.

This section will gradually go through the four different focus areas of PSFs' introduction phases and discuss which arenas have central roles within these specific focus areas. LynxEye's way of working will be contrasted and discussed in relation to the theoretical framework and the reference firms. Furthermore, the analysis will also investigate why the firms use different approaches for introducing their employees. It will lead to a list of characteristics that appear to determine how PSFs plan, organize and execute their introduction phases.

11.1 Focus area one - the consultant's professional identity

As will be explained below, LynxEye uses several different arenas for forming their new recruits' professional identity, from being a student to becoming a professional consultant. The firm relies mainly on their evaluation system and their management structure for new employees but other arenas play important roles as well.

Arenas that forms the consultants' professional identity
Introduction training
The first project
Management structure for new employees
Informal socialization between employees
The evaluation system
Weekly firm wide briefings and training

Table 17. Arenas that forms the consultants' professional identity

11.1.1 Evaluation

"MBO is intended as a disciplinary technique that encodes organizational goals within the individual, so that individuals acting in their own interests generate organizationally favorable outcomes"

(Covaleski et al., 1998, p. 314)

It can be seen from the empirical data that LynxEye's evaluation has a rather central role during the introduction of new employees. It takes the form of the firm's MPU, which uses several different criteria, similar to what Covaleski et al. (1998) would call objectives, to measure how well the consultant has preformed over the last year.

This evaluation system can according to Covaleski et al.'s (1998), be seen as a form of MBO and as a disciplinary technique, as it is not only linked to monetary rewards such as salary and bonuses, but also to a consultant's potential promotion. For that reason, the MPU has a significant impact on the consultants' careers and behaviors. One of the consultants noted that it does not matter if they think they have acted correctly since "*The MPU is the truth*". Such a mindset further illustrates how the MPU links the goals of LynxEye to those of the consultants, as they clearly believe that the evaluation is the path to promotion, which was repeatedly argued for by several of the interviewees.

That the MPU forms the consultant's identity is made even clearer by the inclusion of evaluation criteria such as how well the recruit fulfills the firm's core values. From the consultant's perspective, the values are likely first considered to be simply another objective to achieve. However, as the consultant is iteratively pushed to show the values in different settings, the values are internalized by the individual, who considers the objectives to be the truth of how to act as a consultant.

Further, linked to Alvesson & Kärreman's (2007) aspirational control, the consultant ties herself to a projected career path and a future position, which is shaped partly by the MPU and the included objectives. As such the values become a part of the future self that the consultant strives to become. Consequently, it can be argued that the criteria of the MPU become a part of the individual's identity building process and are even further reinforced. This will, according to Alvesson & Kärreman (2007), lead to the employees acting in the firm's interest in order to maintain their own view of themselves.

Many of the consultants argued that they already had similar values as the core values of LynxEye before they started working at the firm. Although that might to a large extent be true as the recruitment process explicitly searches for these values in potential recruits, the fact that consultants point out that the values were already their own, reinforces the perception that they have internalized these values.

Arguably the link to the core values not only becomes stronger with time, but also as the consultants start to evaluate other employees on how well they fulfill the values. Further, when the evaluated employee is a more junior person, the consultant becomes an embodied symbol of what the values are and how they should affect behavior. This reinforces the consultant's need to internalize the values in order to be able to justify and act in line with the values in front of others.

Similar to the objective of values, the two objectives of teamwork and leadership form how a consultant acts within a team and how they see their professional identity. By establishing a norm for correct behavior in teams and leadership situations, the evaluation system controls the way in which consultants are evaluated and thus shapes the way they act. Again the same process of internalization acts on the consultant whose identity project is shaped by the established norm of behavior.

In addition, rewards linked to the MPU, such as *"Lynx of the year"*, should be seen as central for the new recruits' identity building processes. It can be argued that such celebrations act as a vessel of what Alvesson and Kärreman (2007) named excess-ceremoniality, since strong results and other achievements in the evaluation system are extensively celebrated within the firm. It thus increases the perceived importance and objectivity of the MPU. Especially, *"the Lynx of the year"*, which is a reward for the person with the highest score on values, creates an explicit norm to which other consultants can measure themselves. During one year this person becomes the embodied symbol of what it means to be a "*Lynx"*. Arguably this process does not only create a measurement of values but also shapes the consultant's own identity project. Further, the fact that the whole firm stops to celebrate promotions contribute to the excess-ceremoniality.

Overall, all of the reference firms use rather similar evaluations where an employee is evaluated using a 360 degree evaluation. One of the main differences in the evaluation was the type of objectives that the firms see as most important. For example, some firms focus on the skills of the employee while others focus more on the results of the employee. While a more in-depth study is needed to analyze the impact of these differences on the employees' identity building processes, the type of objectives likely shape the behavior of the employees as well as their identity building process, in line with Covaleski et al.'s (1998) findings that different goals indeed shape the identity.

Another difference is that the results from the evaluations have different effects on rewards, such as salary levels, bonuses and promotion. An extreme case is that of one bigger and more procedure focused firm, which has no monetary or promotional incentives linked to the evaluation system. As a result the impact of the evaluation and its ability to form individuals' identity and shape organizational behavior can be severally decreased, as the employees have very little incentive to change their behavior in line with the evaluation system other than the pressure of performing well on evaluations. However, as Napoleon noted, "*Men die for baubles*", meaning that sometime the reward can simply be that the employee is recognized for her achievements, rather than given a monetary reward.

11.1.2 Management structure for new employees

Another central arena that forms the new recruits' professional identity is the firm's mentorship and project management structure. Within this arena, the firm's feedback culture in which junior employees continuously receive feedback from their mentors and project leaders, should be seen as central. As shown in the empirics section, the feedback that the project leaders provide should focus on the technical abilities of the consultants, while mentors should have a broader focus and deal with issues such as the consultants' long-term development and more social and political issues. Both actors have important roles in the process of forming new employees into Lynxes, despite the fact that they have rather different roles and responsibilities within the firm.

The well-established mentoring structure has a central role in the introduction of new employees at LynxEye. The management team continuously stressed its importance and a clear majority of the new recruits declared that it has been vital for their development. Townley (1994) argued that mentorship could be seen as a process in which junior employees *"become interwoven into an organizational culture"* by the help of their more senior colleagues (Townley, 1994, p. 125). This is a rather accurate description of the mentoring process at LynxEye, where the firm's culture often is clear for more experienced employees but new recruits can need some guidance in adapting to it, as was illustrated in the empirics section where juniors highlighted the ambiguity of the LynxEye values.

The mentoring process often focuses on the competences that the mentee needs to posses while working in a project team. The mentor and the mentee for example discuss social situations that have gone well, as well as situations in which the mentee has experienced that something went wrong. The mentor acts as a guide and helps the mentee to find appropriate approaches for how to act in a given situation. This guidance is in turn based on how well the approaches correlate with the firm's core values. The result is that characteristics and approaches that are not in line with the firm's culture are scaled away and those that are in line are enhanced. Consequently, the mentoring process can rather easily form the new recruits' identity and opinions of what should be seen as correct behavior. The result is then that the consultants gradually act more in line with the firm's culture.

Project leaders fill a similar function but they deal with smaller and more daily issues. By continuously correcting and adjusting a consultant's behavior with their feedback, they can form new consultants into acting in certain ways. For example, the project leaders help new recruits to understand how they should approach customers, which roles they should take during meetings and how they should present their findings. This process also affects the recruits' professional identity and their view of what should be seen as correct behavior.

Furthermore, when the mentoring process focuses on the employee's long-term development the mentor and the mentee try to establish a plan over areas that the mentee needs to improve further. The mentor always has the final word and must for example approve the courses that the mentee wants to participate in. This should also be seen as a forming process since the mentors easily can steer the mentees development in ways that are in line with the firm's culture and interests. *"Being a mentor is more about letting the employee come with the answers, but I still have a clear idea of what the result should be"*. The fact that these development plans are individualized is crucial, since different employees need to improve different factors in order to become a Lynx.

Several of the new recruits expressed that they have a very good relation with their mentors and project leaders. They actually gave an impression of that they often see them as role models and carefully observe their behavior. By studying how their mentors and project leaders behave they receive clues for how they should act in certain situations. It can be argued that the mentors and project leaders at LynxEye present different characteristics that the mentees can use for constructing what Ibarra (1999) called *"provisional selves"*. The mentee will try to internalize some of the mentors' and project leaders' characteristics and based on both the internal and the external feedback that they get, they will determine which elements to keep and which they should abandon. Consequently, it is vital to acknowledge that the mentors and project leaders form the new recruits' professional identities with their talk but also with their actions. It should be noted that other more senior employees can fill the same function, but since the mentors have a closer relation with the mentees, they have a more direct impact on the mentees' identity building and forming processes.

A majority of the reference firms uses similar mentorship structures, but their way of working as well as the goal of the mentoring process varies form firm to firm. While LynxEye has a rather clear idea of the type of employees they want to *"create"*, it did deviate among the other firms. Firms with a clear brain focus do not present any ideal employee but instead use a more *ad hoc* approach to the forming process and try to leverage from the difference in the individuals identity.

Moreover, the relation between the mentor and the mentee deviate among the reference firms. For example, the frequency of the meetings varies from firm to firm. The mentors meet the mentees on a daily basis in some firms while other firms only establish meetings once every second month. However, the different approaches have arguably both pros and cons. The firms that advocate a high frequency of meetings said that it strengthens the ties between the individuals and helps the mentor to understand the mentee's working situation. The firms that advocate fewer meetings, in contrast, said that it facilitated the mentoring process since it allowed the mentors to be more objective in their guidance.

Another interesting factor to study is the allocation of responsibility between the mentor and the mentee. For example, should it be the firm's or the individual employee's responsibility to book and structure meetings with the mentor? These types of decisions have an important role in the forming of new employees' professional identities since it affects the way the new employees see themselves in relation to the firm. Some firms that clearly wanted to show their new recruits that they are in charge of their own careers at the firm chose to allocate more responsibility to the mentees.

11.1.3 Other identity building activities

Although the evaluation, the mentorship and project management structure should be seen as the two cornerstones of the identity building processes at LynxEye, there are several other arenas of the introduction phase that form new consultants' professional identities at the firm.

A rather small but yet significant event is the introduction training, which for many employees was among the first events they took part in. They are important as it can be seen from the interviews, that very few recruits had a clear picture of LynxEye before they started working at the firm. For example, several juniors had a hard time understanding how LynxEye deviated from other similar firms. Because of this uncertainty, the management team at LynxEye can use the introduction days as a tool for forming the new recruits' view of the firm as well as how they see themselves in relation to the firm. For example, one consultant who argued that he did not know much about the company when he started, said that the introduction days made him see the firm as *"very professional"* and *"well structured"*.

Further, it especially seems as the large information flows during the introduction days play a vital role in the forming process. Most likely, the management team does not expect the new recruits to understand and learn everything, but by presenting all of the firm's products as well as several successful projects, the firm can give new recruits an impression of professionalism, expertise and complexity, which makes the junior consultants feel proud of having joined such a successful firm.

It was further perceived that several reference firms spend a lot of effort on planning and conducting the introduction days, most likely because it is easier to form new recruits in the beginning of their time at the firm, when they have not yet established a clear identity and much uncertainty is present.

"The first project either makes or breaks a consultant" (Brain focused firm C, 2011)

Another factor that should be seen as important for the forming of new employees' professional identity is the first project. The management team at LynxEye wants new recruits to initially participate in one of the firm's projects with a standard product. These projects which are suitable for new recruits make sure that they receive a structured introduction to the firm's way of working and are formed into acting in line with it. A first project that deviates a lot from the standard projects appeared to have negative consequences for new recruits professional identity since it distorts the way they see themselves as professionals. For example, consultants that had worked with more strategic projects saw themselves as strategy consultants rather than brand management consultants. Although this might seem like a minor deviation, it shows how the consultant's identity is not formed in line with the firm's ideals.

Further, receiving a good first project should also be seen as a status symbol within LynxEye, which can affect the new consultant's identity building process. Some consultants that had not received a project after a couple of weeks expressed frustration, since they did not have the chance to show their capabilities. In turn, they also started to question why their colleagues had received interesting projects, when they had not. Without clear communication and explanations from the mentors this can make the consultants feel less competent and not prioritized compared to their colleagues.

All reference firms stressed the importance of the first project. They often highlighted that the first project clearly shapes the consultant's relation to the firm and that it can be hard to correct factors that initially have gone wrong. As a result many firms have a list of projects that are beneficial for new recruits.

Moreover, LynxEye's weekly firm wide meetings should also be seen as a tool for forming new employees' professional identity. First of all, when the management team asks different project groups to present their results and lessons in front of the rest of the company, they clearly stress what they see as correct behavior. When for example one project team presents an especially creative approach that deviates a lot from the standard way of doing things, it signals that it is appropriate to think and act outside the box. Further, the weekly meetings construct a certain mentality between the employees. Since all employees participate, both managers and juniors, several employees declared that the meetings made them feel as if they were a part of a family. This family feeling reinforced some of LynxEye's core values, such as the importance of cooperation and humility.

The effort put into the firm wide meetings differs among the reference firms. It can be argued that some of the firms do not perceive them as an identity building arena and rather see them as a necessary administrative activity. This point of view is mainly common in the larger firms. Smaller firms have more thought out approaches for their firm wide meetings and use them for highlighting correct behavior and increasing the cohesiveness within the firm.

Finally, both LynxEye and several reference firms stressed the importance that informal socialization among employees has for the new recruits' identity building process. While discussing different issues with more senior employees as well as studying their behavior, new recruits get a feeling for what the firm's values mean in reality as well as how they should see themselves and their career in relation to competitors and the external environment. Since many of the older employees have often worked at different firms before they started at LynxEye, they could clearly explain what makes the firm special and contrasted LynxEye's way of working with their other experiences.

11.2 Focus area two - tacit knowledge

While the previous section focused on how the new recruits' professional identity is formed through different HRM and KM mechanisms, the following sections will analyze how LynxEye uses different arenas of their introduction phase for educating their new recruits. This educating process has, in line with the theoretical framework, been divided into three separate areas. The first area will cover the consultant's tacit knowledge, which can be described as socially embedded and linked to individual people and specific situations (Ringberg & Reihlen, 2008). This should be seen in relation to the consultant's identity, which as described, refers more to how the person sees herself in relation to others as well as the person's values. Within LynxEye four main arenas were found to transfer tacit knowledge:

Arenas for transferring tacit knowledge
The first project
Management structure for new employees
Informal socialization between employees
Training and development

Table 18. Arenas of tacit knowledge transfer

Although there is a significant variance in the amount of formal training a new consultant receives at the different firms, there is a high degree of unity in that the largest part of tacit knowledge transfer, e.g. of how a consultant learns how to work as a consultant, takes place through working in their teams and through LBD.

As one CEO noted *"there cannot be any compromises on the first project"* since not only is the consultant's identity to a large extent formed through the first project, but it also dictates what skills and knowledge a consultant attains and focuses on. Because of this reason, LynxEye and several other firms want new hires to work as soon as possible on the standard projects of the particular firm, to learn the basic products and working method of the firm. This approach is in line with Dongoghue's (1996) argumentation of that the firms through LBD can ensure that mostly relevant knowledge is attained. This further illustrates why the first project is important, as if the project is not relevant the knowledge attained becomes less useful.

In line with Becker's (1964) argumentation of that organizations should have built in reflection periods for their employees to critically examine past events, both LynxEye and several of the reference firms include group reflections at the end of their projects. This allows the new recruits to discuss their lessons with more experienced employees. In this process they get many advices and can more clearly understand how they should adjust their behavior and approaches during their future careers.

In addition, another way that the experiences of a consultant are critically reflected upon is with the help of their respective project leaders, who provide each consultant with feedback on their work on a daily basis during each project. This process should be seen in relation to Nonaka &

Takeuchi's (1995) example of craftsmen who continuously adjust their trainees' behavior until they master the craft. Although it often is the project leader's reflections rather than the consultant's own thoughts that are discussed, feedback from superiors can arguably help the LBD process since it critically evaluates the work process. At the same time, by not focusing on the consultant's own reflections, the project leader shapes how the consultant reflects on her experiences and how she views correct behavior. As such it can be argued that the process becomes more efficient from the firm's point of view as the project leader can faster correct the consultant's behavior in line with the firm's policies. Furthermore, the mentors fill a similar function as the project leaders, but as described previously they focus on broader questions.

Further, several consultants pointed out that the more informal feedback they receive directly from their team members during projects as well as from other colleagues during informal sessions, such as lunch and coffee breaks, the better they understand different problems and products, *"the value of a coffee machine is not only the coffee, but the discussion around it"* (Mgmt, 2011). Again the feedback facilitates the consultant's reflections, although the informal feedback is not as controlled by the firm as the formal feedback is. This socialization process allows the firms to transfer knowledge, which would have been difficult to codify and transfer to a new consultant through formal training, such as studying guidelines for codes of conduct. Several of the managers also pointed out that this process does not only take place between junior consultants who need help with a minor issue, but also happens between the more senior consultants and managers who discuss how to approach a new project.

Even though LBD is an effective way to ensure that a consultant attains relevant tacit knowledge, several of the firms perceived LBD in line with Dongoghue (1996) as a rather time inefficient process. It can be claimed that this inefficiency can explain why the firms complement LBD with more formal training. However, although this formal training comes in many different forms it can clearly be seen that a significant part of the formal training the consultants take part in aims at transferring more tacit knowledge. For example, it is common that the firms provide courses that enhance the consultants' presentation skills.

Overall, most of the reference firms claimed that LBD is the best way for new recruits to learn the most central skills at the specific firm. While some firms complement LBD with a large amount of formal training, they for natural reason all work with on project training and have established routines of continuously feedback.

11.3 Focus area three - situation specific explicit knowledge

The third focus area of a PSF's introduction phase deals with how situation specific explicit knowledge is transferred to the new recruits. At LynxEye four arenas were found to facilitate this process.

Arenas for transferring situation specific explicit knowledge
The first project
Weekly firm wide briefings and training
Knowledge databases
Training and development

Table 19. Arenas for situation specific explicit knowledge transfer

The main form of knowledge transfer of situation specific explicit knowledge at LynxEye takes the form of lessons learned from old projects. This process is facilitated by documents from all old projects, which can be found in the firm's database. For example, within this database the main documents and final presentations of each project are uploaded. The management team's intention is that new recruits should be able to find a lot of relevant information within the database. However, since a large amount of data is uploaded, a clear majority within LynxEye claimed that the database was very hard to maneuver within. The easiest way to find correct information is instead to first find the person who has written it and then ask that person which version should be used and where the file can be found.

As a result, several consultants stated that they always went to a more senior consultant or a previous member of the project team before they searched in the database, as such it is important for the consultants to build strong internal networks. While this system works fine given the size of the organization today, it will face serious problems as more offices are established and the new employees will have a more difficult time finding the author of a specific document. The management team is indeed very aware of this issue and intends to address it. However, an interesting consequence of the problem can be found. The poor database has clearly affected one of Werr's (2011) enablers of knowledge management, the firm's culture. The database has actually created a culture of knowledge sharing through communication and the barriers between consultants and managers have according to several respondents been reduced. Consequently, it might not only be positive to improve the structure of the database since it can potentially have negative effects on this culture.

While the main enabler of situation specific explicit knowledge transfer at LynxEye clearly is the knowledge database, other arenas of the introduction phase also contribute to this process. As discussed previously, the weekly firm wide meetings are used to present completed projects and main lessons the project teams learned from those projects. Thus, these meetings become a formal meeting point to discuss different issues with the standard products and how they need to be adapted to situation specific circumstances. These meetings also affect another of Werr's (2011) enablers of knowledge management, the firm's common language. By discussing situation specific issues and solutions together with all employees at the firm, the management team can ensure that a common language is used and that everyone understands its importance. Even though LynxEye has not focused extensively on developing this common language, several respondents claimed that the use of common terms and expressions can speed up the internal communication and knowledge transfer process.

Furthermore, the on-project training and more formalized training also contribute to the transfer of situation specific explicit knowledge when specific cases are used as reference point for the training. For example, it is common that the project leaders during the projects progression present how they have used a product in similar settings during previous projects.

Almost all of the reference firms claimed to use databases where they upload codified situation specific explicit knowledge, although the exact form varies between the different firms. From the perspective of newly hired employees the firms often use old projects so that new employees can understand how a specific product or project has been conducted before. Deviations from this form of using old projects can interestingly be found on both ends of the brain vs. procedure spectrum. The most procedure focused firms still tend to store old projects, but they focus on teaching the methodology and procedure of their offerings without the use of old projects as reference cases. On the other hand, the most brain focused firms also store their old projects but use them "*mainly as inspiration*" (Brain focused firm C, 2011), as they claim to have few similarities between different projects. Consequently, documentation from old projects is not heavily used in neither of the two extreme cases.

11.4 Focus area four - general explicit knowledge

The last focus area of the introduction phase is concerned with how PSFs transfer general explicit knowledge to their new recruits. At LynxEye six different arenas were found to facilitate this process.

Arenas for transferring general explicit knowledge
Introduction training
Manuals and guidelines
The first project
Weekly firm wide briefings and training
Knowledge databases
Training and development

Table 20. Arenas for general explicit knowledge transfer

The first arena that a new recruit comes in contact with when she enters LynxEye is naturally the introduction training, which the firm often arranges directly in the beginning of a consultants time at the firm. While this training mainly focuses on presenting the company and clarifying administrative issues, it also introduces the consultant to the different standard products offered by the firm. This knowledge is often decontextualized to provide the consultant with a more general knowledge base. Further, the introduction training is often the first arena were the new recruits are introduced to the firms common language, which as described acts as an enabler of knowledge management (Werr, 2011).

As mentioned above, while the majority of the training at LynxEye takes place while working on projects, the firm also uses several forms of formal training. The main form of training addressing decontextualized knowledge is the competence money for the employees, which focuses on the individuals' own development needs. At LynxEye the outspoken ideal is that the individual should control a large part of how this money is invested in different courses. However, several junior consultants highlighted that a half of the money is dedicated to role transfers, which leads to less control from the consultant's perspective. The other half of the money is to a large extent controlled by the mentor who has the final decision making power in which courses the consultant should attend. Several of the consultants claimed that during their two first years at LynxEye, this amount was completely controlled by the firm by the establishment of mandatory courses for the consultants. Since the firm to a large extent actually determines which courses the employees should participate in, the management team can affect which general explicit knowledge their new recruits acquire.

Another arena LynxEye uses for transferring general explicit knowledge is handbooks and guidelines, which often are used during the first years of a consultant's career. The handbook is distributed during the recruits' first days at the firm and contains general information about administrative issues as well as an introduction to the standard products at LynxEye. Although these books are most often only used at the beginning of the consultants' time at LynxEye, they contribute to getting the consultants up and running as fast as possible.

The second form of information is used over a longer period of time. These are the guidelines of the standard products at LynxEye, which discuss in more detail how they should be used and how the projects should be conducted. These guidelines are not situation specific and several consultants stated that they used them occasionally. However, they claimed that a majority of the information and knowledge of how they should use the standards products is taught directly from their respective project leader. At the same time they stressed that when more information about a product is needed, they directly contact the product specialist rather than studying the guidelines. One product specialist explained that this often was the case and that the internal policy was to upload issues, which were frequently discussed, on the database in order to decrease the work load for the product specialists. It could be argued that, even though LynxEye tries to codify the knowledge of how to use the different standard products, a large dimension of the tacit knowledge is actually lost in the codification process, which could explain why the consultants prefer contacting the specialists directly.

Among the reference firms, the ones that use a more advanced introduction training, which included the firms' different products and working methods, are generally focusing more on procedure work rather than brain assignments, if classified according to Maister (2003). Arguably, these firms focus more on this arena since a majority of their work can be codified due to their standardized work processes, while the brain focused firms require more tacit knowledge in their approaches.

Further, the reference firms vary in how they either focus on internal training and use the in-house competences or rely more on external training. Most organizations' goal is to make use of group trainings as much as possible due to the cost advantages. Nevertheless, several of the smaller firms make use of individualized training as the specific needs of each employee vary too much to use group trainings. Lastly, the consulting firms that make use of their international networks can have very specialized trainings while still targeting a group.

Interestingly, LynxEye is one of two firms that use a form of competence money, which allows the employees to individualize their training. The other firm that uses the same concept only uses it as a smaller part of a more comprehensive training package, as the utilization rate of the competence money is quite low.

Furthermore, it can be seen that the larger and more procedure focused firms rely more heavily on guidelines and manuals. They have for example, established clear routines for how these should be used and invested a lot of resources into making them easy to find and understand. Not surprisingly, more brain focused firms rely less on manuals and guidelines since their offerings are often more customized. One manager even argued that structuring their working methods can actually be a disadvantage.

11.5 Concluding discussion

As have been seen in both the empirics and the analysis sections, there are several differences in how LynxEye and the references firms have constructed their introduction phases. These differences come in many forms. Some of them are small such as the use of an introduction handbook or not. Some of them are larger, such as if the introduction training is a half-day focusing on administrative issues or two weeks covering most parts of the organization. Furthermore, while several firms use almost all of the different arenas listed in the empiric's section, some of the firms do indeed skip or miss parts of the introduction processes used by other firms.

The reasons for why each individual part of the firms' introduction phases are structured in a specific way might be linked to specific internal politics or simply have been formed a specific way by chance. However, on a general level most of the firms use a congruent and coherent introduction period, where a red thread seems to link the different activities. Further, several firms with similar characteristics appear to use very similar strategies and arenas for forming and educating their new employees.

One such characteristic is the firm's size, or more specifically the local office's and the global firm's size. The firms that are smaller in size tend to use processes that encourage creativity and enhance the strengths of their individual consultants. Many of these firms also tend to have highly individualized training programs. Larger firms on other hand have often been able to invest heavily in creating very structured and standardized introduction phases, which efficiently form and educate the employees. However, these firms cannot offer the same degree of customization and individualized development as smaller firms.

Further, in line with Maister (2003), there tends to be a clear link between a firm's leverage structure and the size of their office. This partly explains why a correlation between the types of introduction phases the reference firms use and their leverage structure can be found. The firms that have a high leverage structure tend to have larger offices and focus more on forming what Alvesson and Kärreman (2007) called corporate clones. These firms also tend to have a larger focus on teaching procedures and working methods. As a result many of these firms have large group trainings, which focus on teaching the employees technical skills.

Another correlating factor is the type of personnel concept the firms use, which should be seen as their overall starting point for HRM strategies (Alvesson, 2004). A central question is which type of employee they consider to be their ideal employee. Depending on this view, their personnel concept and introduction phases are designed to either form the employee into one specific mold or to leverage from the differences among their individuals. However, it should be noted that in firms that use one mold, the goal is not to make all employees exactly alike but the firms rather aimed at forming the new employees into acting and behaving in similar ways.

While all these factors correlate with the type of introduction phases the different firms use, the overarching determining factor for the structure of a PSF's introduction phase is arguably the firm's main focus. According to Maister (2003), there is often a link between the size of an office, the leverage structure and the specific focus of the firm. Further, Alvesson & Kärreman's (2007) personnel concept is arguably also linked to the focus of a firm, as a brain focus and a procedure focus demand different personnel concepts. The reason for this lies in the different type of work the employees at the two types of firms are expected to perform.

A firm with a brain focus is characterized by having a higher uniqueness of each project as compared to a procedure focused firm (Maister, 2003). The procedure focused firms on the other hand mainly compete through their ability to create repeatability assignments and leverage from economies of scale from their old projects. Thus, the pressure on procedure firms to standardize their processes in order to create an advantage in price explains why they would construct an introduction phase, which focuses on educating the recruits in these procedures, and create a common model to cast their employees in. Similarly, the very competitive form of brain focused firms explains why they need to leverage from the strengths of each employee to create the broad understanding of a given problem, which is required by their clients. As a result of the high variation in work, these firms make use of a broad set of specializations and the uniqueness of their employees.

Consequently, factors such a size, leverage structure and personnel concepts, which at the first glance seem to accurately explain the structure of the firms' different introduction phases, are likely rather a result of the firms different organizational focuses, instead of being the causal reason for the structure of the introduction phases.

As described above, LynxEye uses several different arenas for forming and educating their new employees. The arenas relative importance varies and it can easily be argued that some are more central than others. However, in order to get a broader overview of LynxEye's KM and HRM strategies, it is interesting to study all arenas together. The table below summarizes the different arenas that LynxEye uses for forming and educating their employees.

	The consultant's professional identity	Tacit knowledge	Situation specific explicit knowledge	General explicit knowledge
1. Introduction training	X			X
2. Manuals and guidelines				X
3. The first project	X	X	X	X
4. Management structure for new	X	X		
5. Informal socialization between	X	X		
6. The evaluation system	X			
7. Weekly firm wide briefings and training	X		X	X
8. Knowledge databases			X	X
9. Training and development		X	X	X

Table 21. The main arenas of LynxEye's introduction phase

As can be seen, several of the different arenas LynxEye uses can fill more than one function. This indicates that one arena can be central for both the forming and the education of new employees at the same time. Consider for example, how the close relationship consultants have with their project leaders and how project leaders act as an embodied symbol of correct behavior towards the consultants. Forming the consultant through her own behavior and feedback, the project leader at the same time educates the consultant in technical skills required in the projects. As a result, the example of the project leader illustrates the centrality several of these processes or activities have in both education and forming of new consultants.

It can be further argued that the arenas are interrelated which implies that managers planning a firm's approaches for educating new recruits must also consider how this affects the forming process. That is, a change in one arena can affect both the education and the forming of a consultant. Consider how a project can be perfect for educating a consultant in a specific product, but at the same time form the consultant's identity towards not being aligned with the corporate identity.

Since the forming process is normally seen as a HRM issue while educating questions often are related to KM, it can be argued that KM and HRM clearly affect each other. As a result PSFs need to consider these different strategies together in order to achieve an effective and competitive introduction phase for their new employees.

12 Conclusion

This thesis aimed at answering the following research question: *How do professional service firms organize the process of forming and educating newly graduated junior consultants?*

By mapping out the first years of a junior consultant's time at LynxEye, a list of nine different arenas and strategies was found to accurately describe the firm's introduction process. The list was reinforced by interviews at eight reference firms and it could be seen that all factors in one form or another exist in a clear majority of the firms and that they clearly are used to form and educate newly graduated junior consultants.

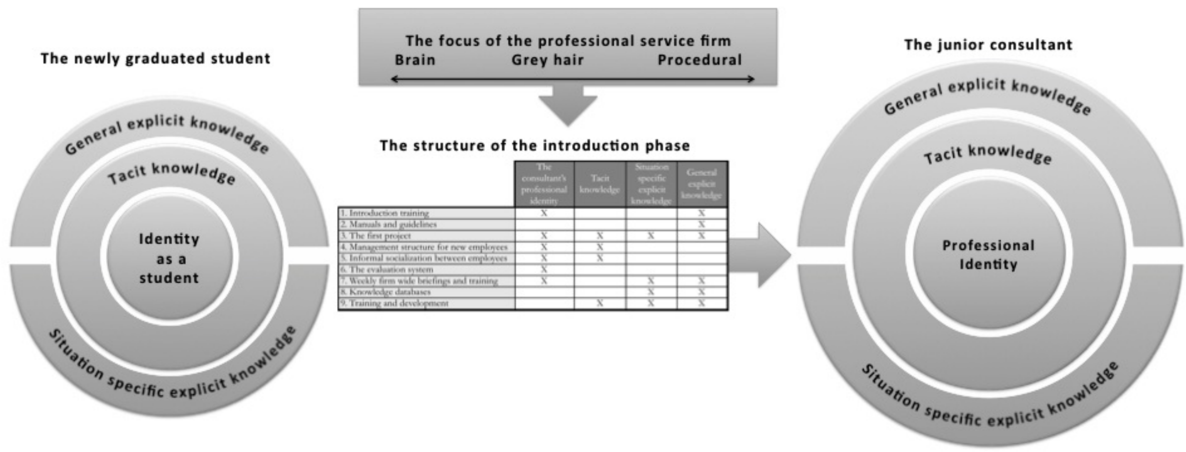

Figure 8. The general model of introduction phases in PSFs

Furthermore, the firms use different approaches for working with these arenas. Several factors, such as size, leverage structure and personnel concept appear to explain these differences. However, one overarching factor was found as the root cause, namely the firms' placement on Maister's spectrum of either brain or procedural focus.

Finally, it was found that an interrelation between HRM and KM strategies exists during the introduction phases at PSFs, where a change in a HRM or KM strategy can affect the other. As a result the authors argued that both concepts have to be considered at the same time during the construction of introduction phases at PSFs.

13 Practical Implications

This thesis has many different practical implications for PSFs. One of the major benefits is the ability to benchmark a PSF's current introduction phase with the different arenas deducted from LynxEye's introduction phase. This can show a clear picture of useful strategies as well as provide a deep understanding of each arena's function.

Further, although some PSFs might already be using all of the abovementioned arenas for forming and educating junior employees, this thesis has clearly shown that the focus of a specific PSF reflects how its different arenas should be arranged. As a result, other PSFs would benefit from considering how their current arenas are affecting the forming and educating of new employees. They can then gain an understanding of how important it is to construct the introduction phase with a coherent set of arenas, which together should aim to form and educate the employees in line with the focus of the specific PSF.

Finally, this thesis suggests that PSFs should aim at having a closer connection between their HRM and KM strategies. During the interviews at different PSFs, the perception was that different people are in charge of different parts of their introduction phases, which could potentially lead to less coherent introduction phases. A solution could be that top management establishes an explicit and coherent personnel concept, which should be used as a basis of the construction of the different arenas.

14 Suggestions for Future Research

Since this thesis investigated how PSFs could structure their introduction phases, a natural progression of the findings would be to investigate the following research question.

How should PSFs structure their introduction phases in order for them to be as efficient as possible?

That is to add an efficiency perspective of the different arenas that this thesis has deducted. Even though this thesis has shown how LynxEye has structured their introduction phase and used several different reference firms to contrast LynxEye's way of working, an important dimension that was out of the scope of this thesis was an assessment of how efficient each arena forms and educates the new recruits. However, it should be noted that to measure the efficiency of HRM and KM strategies is not always as simple as at first portrayed, as shown by the extent of the disagreement of KM strategies' general profitability for a firm. Furthermore, to be able to measure the efficiency of an introduction phase, not only strict performance measurements should be considered as the introduction phase also forms the employees into the corporate culture which requires other types of measurement.

Another dimension, which could be further researched is how other and broader factors than the focus of the PSF affect the structure of the introduction phase. An example of a dimension that could affect the introduction phase is the national culture of a specific firm.

How are the introduction phases dependent on other factors such as national culture?

Although further studies do not necessarily have to be limited to the effects of national culture, the example illustrates that there are a wide variety of factors that could have a direct impact on how a PSF should construct its introduction phases, which not have been investigated in this thesis.

15 Appendix

15.1 Agenda for interviews with junior employees at LynxEye

This agenda was used when interviewing the different junior consultants at LynxEye, that is the consultant and the senior consultants.

Goal of this thesis

Short introduction to the goal of the thesis and its context

Interviewee's background

- Could you please tell us shortly about yourself?
  - Job, studies, length at company
- What is your role at LynxEye?
  - Why did you apply for LynxEye?
  - What was your image of LynxEye before you started?

Introduction training

- What did you do the first couple of weeks at LynxEye?
- How was you introduction training structured?
  - What were the activities?
  - What people did you meet?
  - Were you satisfied with it?
  - What was good and what could have been done better?
- How could it have been done differently
- How did it differ from your previous experiences?

Mentorship

- How is the mentorship structure at LynxEye?
- Do you have a mentor?
  - When did you receive a mentor?
  - How often do you meet?
  - What do you discuss?
  - Is it valuable?
    - How? Why?

- How could it be done better?
- How does it differ from your previous experiences?

Information retrieval

- How do you search for new information or knowledge?
  - Could you give an example?
  - Who do you turn to?
  - How does you colleagues react to questions?
  - Can you ask anyone?
  - Do you know who is an expert on what?
- Have you finished a project?
  - How did you capture the lessons learned?
  - How did you spread it to the rest of the organization?
- What are the Friday meetings
  - Do they work well?
  - What do you learn?
  - How could it be done better
- Do you make us of the internal database?
  - How is it structured?
  - What do you use it for?
    - Please give an example
  - Who is responsible for it?
  - How often do you use it?
  - How could it be done better?

Personal development

- How are you affected by the MPU?
  - What do you think of it?
  - How are the goals set?
  - How does it affect knowledge transfer?
  - How could it be done better?

Education

- What possibilities are there for internal and external education?

- What is the competence money?
  - What have you/what are you going to use it for?
  - How does it differ from you previous experiences?
  - How could it be done better?
- Do you think that we have missed anything important on how the introduction phase affected you?

15.2 Agenda for interviews with management at LynxEye

This agenda was used when interviewing the management at LynxEye, which this thesis defined as project leaders, senior project leaders, partners and other employees in the top management team.

Goal of this thesis

Short introduction to the goal of the thesis and its context

Interviewee's background

- Could you please tell us shortly about yourself?
  - Job, studies, length at company
- What is your role at LynxEye?
  - Why did you apply for LynxEye?
  - What was your image of LynxEye before you started?

Introduction training

- How is the introduction training structure at LynxEye?
  - What are the main activities
    - What are the most important once?
  - What is the main goal?
  - Who do the juniors meet?
  - Do you think its working well?
    - What is working well and what is not?
  - How could it be done differently
  - How does it differ from you previous employers?
  - How has it changed the last couple of years?
    - Why?

Mentorship

- Do you have mentors at LynxEye?
    - How do you define mentors?
- Are you a mentor?
    - How often do you meet?
    - What do you discuss
    - Do you think its valuable?
        - Why?
    - How could it be done differently?
- How does it differ from your previous employers?

Information retrieval

- How should new employees search for information/knowledge?
    - Who should they turn to?
    - Can they ask anyone?
    - Do you know who is an expert in what field? Do the juniors know?
- How do you transfer the lessons learned from a finished project?
    - Do you think all employees know about your current projects?
    - What are the Friday meetings?
        - How are they structured?
        - How could they be structured differently?
- How should you knowledge database be used?
    - How is it structured?
    - Who is responsible for it?
    - How often is it updated?
    - How often do you use it?
    - How could it be done better?

Personal development

- How does the MPU affect knowledge spreading internally?
    - How is it structured?
    - Is knowledge transfer encouraged through the MPU?
        - How?
        - How could it be done better?

Education

- What possibilities are there for internal vs. external education?
- What is the competence money?
  - What do the employees use it for?
  - What should they use it for?
- How does the education differ from you previous employers?
- Could it be done better?
- Do you think we missed any important aspect of the introduction phase?

Generation Y

- Do you think that generation Y differs from previous generations?
  - How? Or why not?
  - What are the different characteristics?
  - Do you need to adapt your introduction phases to generation Y?
    - Is it easier or harder?
    - Have your methods changed the last years?
      - How?

15.3 Agenda for interviews with the reference firms

This agenda was used when interviewing the different management representatives at the different reference firms.

Goal of the thesis

Short introduction to the goal of the thesis and its context

Interviewee's background

- Could you please tell us shortly about yourself?
  - Job, studies, length at company

Introduction phase

- Could you describe the introduction phase for newly recruited employees at you firm?
  - Activities
  - Who do you meet?
  - What is the goal with the introduction training?
  - Is it working well?

        - What is good and what is bad?
        - How can it be done differently?
    - How does it differ from your previous employers?
    - Have you changed the introduction phase the last two years?
        - How
        - Why?

General information about personal development and knowledge management

- Do you employees receive a mentor?
    - How do you define mentor?
    - Are you a mentor?
    - What do mentors and mentees discuss?
    - Do you think its valuable?
    - How can it be done differently?
    - How does it differ from your previous employers?
- If an employee wants knowledge or information about something, how do they do it?
    - Who should they talk to?
    - How do employees feel about this?
    - Can they ask any questions?
    - Do you know who is an expert on what? Do the juniors know?
- How do you ensure that the lessons learned are captured when ending a project?
    - How do you ensure that the lessons are spread?
    - How do you ensure that everyone knows what projects are ongoing? Do they know?
- Do you have any internal databases?
    - How do they work?
    - What is their purpose?
    - How easy is it to navigate?
    - Who is responsible?
    - How often is it updated?
    - How often do you use it?
    - How could it be made better?
- How do you work with internal vs. external education?
    - Why?

- To what extent do you use an internal lingua?
- What is the top managements role in KM?
  - Do you have any dedicated roles for KM
- What role does your corporate culture play in spreading knowledge?
- What are your incentive programs linked to?
  - Is it linked to KM?
    - How?
  - Could it be done better?
    - How?
- Do you think we missed any important aspect of the introduction phase?

Generation Y

- Do you think that generation Y differs from previous generations?
  - How? Or why not?
  - What are the different characteristics?
  - Do you need to adapt your introduction phases to generation Y?
    - Is it easier or harder?
    - Have your methods changed the last years?
      - How?

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