

Stockholm School of Economics  
Bachelor Thesis in Business and Economics

# A ROOMFUL OF INNOVATION

A qualitative study of how award-winning teachers experience their teacher-leadership,  
as an interactive process, in higher education in Sweden

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## Abstract

Being a teacher at the university level can be experienced as complex, especially when it comes to interacting with a large number of students. The teacher is also a crucial underlying factor in the students' performance, even though higher-level studies are more aimed at self-studies. In addition, the interaction between teachers and students is also a proven important factor for students' performance. Based on the aforementioned, this qualitative study has aimed to investigate how teachers, nominated by their students for the award "Teacher of The Year", experience the interaction process from a leadership perspective. The thesis is based on thirteen interviews with award-winning teachers and the interactive part of the transformative leadership theory. The findings from the cross-sectional study show which aspects of the theoretical framework are most significant: interactive and empowering. The empirical material also points to an additional aspect, availability, as an essential but limiting factor for the exercise of interactive teacher-leadership. This thesis contributes to an increased understanding of how teachers can manage the interaction process at the university level in Sweden, where the number of recipients is extensive, contributing to the students' performance. This is because the thesis aims to reduce the perceived difficulty for teachers to interact with students due to them being a large number of recipients.

## Keywords:

Award-winning Teachers, Successful Teachers, Higher Education, Transformational Leadership, Teacher-leadership, Interaction Process

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# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Background

A higher education, an *“education at a college or university where subjects are studied at an advanced level”* (Cambridge Dictionary 2021), is something that has become more coveted in Sweden due to the pandemic. Therefore, in September 2020, the Swedish government proposed to increase funding to enable an additional 19,000 university places around the country to create better conditions for the population to get a post-secondary education. University education is not only an investment on an individual level but also an investment for the society (Regeringskansliet 2020). This may partially explain the increased growth rate of highly educated people in Sweden, which has grown steadily since 2000. As a result, an impressive 28 percent of the country's population has continued their studies after upper secondary school for three or more years, increasing from 16 percent in 2000 (Statistiska Centralbyrån 2021).

One of the main differences between studying at upper secondary school and the university is the increased number of students in each class and the increased responsibility on students regarding self-studies. This implies increased responsibility on the individual student to manage independent studies and learning (Skolverket 2019). Further, the teacher's role in the classroom is different from studies at lower levels, as being a teacher at a university often implies teaching a large group of students. Hence, teaching at the university level includes challenges such as sharing advanced knowledge with individual students effectively, with the ultimate goal of supporting students' achievement. In addition, there is solid evidence suggesting that good teachers are the most important determinant of student performance (Darling-Hammond 2003). This is strongly anchored in the idea that the teacher's role is not only the ability to impact learning but also the ability to make people develop on a personal level (Uppsala universitet 2021). The teaching profession has been described as *“to be a teacher is to be a leader and role model, and therefore leadership has a prominent role in the teachers' education”* (Ibid). Leadership in the classroom is of importance as it covers the knowledge of how group processes work and how students interact, and the ability to manage these processes on an individual level (Granström 2007), apart from the subject expertise.

The role of teachers' leadership has varied as teachers engage in different activities related to leadership (Sherrill 1999). However, it is generally described as the teacher's interaction with students to facilitate their acquisition of individual goals through people-orientated processes (Treslan 2010). These processes can further be linked to Katzenmeyer and Moller's (2009) definition of teachers' leadership, which focuses on ensuring that the teachers' role as a leader is to motivate and influence students' willingness to learn and thereby also have an indirect impact

on students' achievements. The authors take off these definitions and argue that leadership in higher education is primarily about the interaction between students and teachers as the teaching profession aims to share advanced knowledge. Although it has been established that teacher-leadership, and thus the interaction, has a significant impact on students' performance (Nugent 2009), no studies have been conducted to explore how teachers experience the interaction and what they consider important in this interaction process.

The problems related to the interaction between students and teachers at the university level are linked to the teacher's limited opportunity to establish an interaction with all students due to the number of students and the focus on self-studies. For the teacher to convey knowledge to individual students effectively, research is required regarding the teacher's experience of what is essential in the interaction process to increase students' performance. Although students' motivation impacts student achievement (Filgona, Sakiyo, Gwany and Okoronka 2020), this is something that the authors have not chosen to investigate in this study.

## 1.2 Prior Research and Research Gap

In general, research on teacher-leadership has been interested in studying the correlation between successful leadership and the students' performance in terms of grades (Allen, Grigsby and Peters 2015, Lumpe, Czerniak, Haney and Beltyukova 2012, Seashore Louis, Dretzke and Wahlstrom 2010). Therefore, this supports our approach to the importance of teacher-leadership. The correlation has consistently been shown to be significant. The execution of teachers-leadership has varied from covering specific leadership theories to attributes of leadership behavior, thus not the elements of the leadership as an interaction process. Studies have also examined which type of leadership is best applicable in an educational context. Joyce and O'Boyle (2013) concluded that transformational leadership would be best suited in higher education. This is because transformational leaders can see future elements in the current context and are therefore best applicable in the educational atmosphere that is constantly changing (Ibid).

The authors have not chosen to focus on, for example, motivation theories. However, motivation is an essential factor for students' performance, but rather on transformational leadership as it has been shown to be well-functioning in educational contexts. Additionally, in a study by Yan (2019), the interactive part of the transformative leadership in educational contexts was highlighted and, the study claimed that a good relationship between teachers and students promotes learning motivation, autonomous learning awareness, student achievements and facilitates emotional barriers in students, as well as learning anxiety. Furthermore, the ability to interact and impart knowledge to students also proved essential for a well-functioning leadership in educational contexts as the profession concerns the dissemination of knowledge (Spendlove

2007). Therefore, the authors believe that the transformational leadership theory can help interpret the research gap, as previous research has shown a connection between transformative leadership and the interaction process. However, there is a lack of a theoretical understanding of the execution of this process.

### 1.3 Purpose and Research Question

This report aims to examine how the interaction between students and teachers at the university level is experienced and what is considered necessary. This is examined by interviewing teachers who have been awarded nominations from their students for their ability to impart knowledge. As previously stated, studies indicate that teacher-leadership is essential, and above all, the correlation between transformative leadership and students' performance, but studies also show that the interaction can make a difference to students' performance, despite the focus on self-studies. The area is considered theoretically valuable to investigate. The study results complement previous research and theory through increased understanding of an effective way of sharing advanced knowledge in contexts where the number of recipients is large, and the individual interaction processes are challenging to manage. Accordingly, the research questions read as follows:

*How do award-winning teachers in higher education experience the interaction process with the students?*

### 1.4 Primary Focus and Delimitation

The primary focus is to examine award-winning teachers and their experiences of leadership as an interactive process with the students, as discussed above. The selection of award-winning teachers will later in this report be referred to as successful teachers, who are teachers at universities in Sweden that have received the award "Teacher of the Year". This award is founded at several higher education institutions and has emerged due to the importance of providing the students with high-qualitative education (Stockholms universitet 2021, KTH 2021, Uppsala universitet 2020). Requirements for nominations highlighted and evaluated are rather pedagogical competence, motivation, knowledge transferring, interaction, responsiveness, engagement, and interest (Karlstad Studentkår 2021, Uppsala Universitet 2020, KTH 2021).

A successful teacher is described as a teacher who engages and motivates the students to want to learn more. It is also vital that the teacher is responsive to best contribute to the students' further development (Stockholms universitet 2021, KTH 2021). Even though this description does not include the word "leadership", many aspects raised are covered by leadership styles, principally transformational leadership, which mainly covers the influence and motivational part of the description of a successful teacher. In addition, the transformative leadership style concerns an



interaction process that is relevant in this context as the leadership executed by the teachers is evolving around conveying advanced knowledge to the students.

Most universities in Sweden have an award for teachers, either in “Teacher of the Year” or a “Pedagogical Award”. The selected universities are based on (1) location limited to Sweden, (2) declare the “Teacher of the Year” and (3) have similar criteria for nomination in terms of the price as “Teacher of the Year”. The universities included in this study therefore are; Stockholm School of Economics (SSE), Royal Institute of Technology (KTH), Lund University (LU), Gothenburg University (GU), Stockholm University (SU), Karlstad University (KU), and Linköping University (LI).

### 1.5 Disposition

The disposition of the study is structured as follows: initially, a literature review of what teachers do from a leadership perspective that contributes to high performance amongst students is presented. Secondly, transformational leadership is presented, which is the theory used in this thesis. Thirdly, the execution and design of the study are presented, followed by the fourth section, which deals with empirical data based on interviews with teachers nominated to the “Teacher of the Year” at different universities in Sweden. Finally, the thesis ends with a discussion and a part where the research question is answered.

## 2. Literature Review

Unconditionally, the literature review provides insights into the importance of teachers’ execution of leadership and its relationship to student achievement. Thus, several studies are based on the department’s point of view (Davies, Hides and Casey 2001, Black 2015, Basham 2012). Many of these studies result in that transformative leadership has proven to be effective in maximizing the lecturer’s achievements in teaching (Nurtjahjani, Noermijati, Hadiwidjojo and Irawanto, 2020). Jovanovic and Ciric’s (2016) research is consistent with the above and highlights that *“Transformational leadership of teachers affects positively the learning outcomes of students, and primarily relates to the development of high-quality learning and teaching in schools”*. A potential reason why studies have examined leadership from the management group’s point of view, not the teacher-leadership, is that the leadership as a teacher in the classroom is not apparent (Ackerman and Mackenzie 2007). On the other hand, the authors believe that the leadership perspective is evident in the interaction with the students where the teacher is in power and command over the knowledge to be taught.

However, there are several studies conducted on the teachers' leadership. It is proven that transformative leadership is best suited in teaching environments. It creates conditions for the teacher to provide good guidance to students, which is an essential part of the interaction process (Jovanovic and Ciric 2016). Without functional guidance and guidelines, it is difficult to maintain a well-functioning interaction process, which leads to students failing to deliver based on the knowledge requirements. In addition, according to Kim (2012), *"Transformational leaders and effective teachers share many of the same characteristics that make them successful in their respective professions"*. This is because the execution of transformational leadership resulted in more satisfaction among the students, higher willingness to learn, and as the instructions became more efficient with the students. Therefore, Kim (2012) recommended introducing transformational leadership programs to improve effective teaching practices by interacting with students. How this program would be executed is unclear.

Transformative leadership has proven successful in higher education as it is positively correlated with *"students' motivation, satisfaction, perceptions of instructor credibility, academic performance, affective learning, and cognitive learning"* (Balwant 2016). Studies have also shown that an absence of leadership as a teacher, where students experience a lack of study motivation, has resulted in poorer self-efficacy among students (Öqvist and Malmström 2017). This, in turn, is linked to the interaction that is considered the primary factor for the student's performance ability, where the interaction process between teachers and students can be decisive for individual students' performance (Ibid). How the interaction could be executed is not covered.

This thesis will build on what has previously been established in the studies as mentioned above, that transformative leadership is beneficial in teaching environments since it, among other things, promotes good academic performance (see, e.g., Jovanovic and Ciric 2016). Instead, this thesis strives to identify complementary aspects of importance related to the teacher's implementation of the interaction process towards students in higher education. Previous findings form the basis for this research, which has a different approach as this study examines how attentive teachers have experienced their leadership, focusing on the interaction process that has proven to be crucial for students' achievements.

### 3. Theoretical Framework

Based on insights from previous research, it can be stated that transformative leadership is characteristically positive for students' performance ability. This theory is often used as it has shown to have positive effects on the students' willingness to learn and be high-performing by teachers execution of the interaction processes, which includes motivating and influencing the students (Jovanovic and Ciric 2016) but also to have a positive impact on the teacher's performance (Anderson 2021). Therefore, transformative leadership will outlay the basis of the theoretical framework for this report.

#### 3.1 Transformational Leadership

According to Burns (1978), who introduced transformational leadership, a transformative leader can help the followers perform their utmost and achieve great results through rising morality and motivation. Burns (1978) introduced this leadership style in contrast to transactional leadership and argued that these two leadership styles could not be combined. In addition, transformational leadership is associated with evolution and influence on the followers' individual development, effort, and performance and is also applicable to organizational settings (Avolio, Waldman and Yammarino 1991).

Bernard Bass (1985), in contrast to Burns (1978), opined that these leadership styles could be combined. However, Bass (1985) did share the definition of what transformational leadership is but did focus more on the psychological aspect in the relationship between leaders and followers. Bass (1985) developed transformational leadership and divided the theory into four main aspects, and is described by Davies (2009) as (1) *Individualized consideration* is about providing support and showing concern for their followers as individual followers and hence see to all followers different needs. (2) *Intellectual stimulation* can increase the followers' awareness of problems and inspire them to be creative and practice problem-solving where their thoughts can take expression through their insights. (3) *Inspirational motivation* concerns the communication of an appealing vision to the followers that eventually can lead to an increase in efficiency at the workplace, thereby helping the followers reach beyond their individual goals. (4) *Idealized influence* explains the degree to which followers strive to emulate the leader and hence arouse solid emotions and identification with the leader's personal qualities.

The authors believe that these aspects cannot be achieved without interaction between the leader and the followers, which makes the interaction process fundamental in transformative leadership. Therefore, these four aspects have been developed further by, among others, Hackman and Johnson (2013), who instead have identified five aspects of transformational leadership. These aspects were later highlighted in a dissertation by Steinwart and Zeigler (2014) that discussed

implications of transformational leadership in pedagogy, which points to the importance of an interactive process. Hackman and Johnson's (2013) five aspects focus on leadership as communicating and interactive processes, which the author believes is suitable in higher education. The leadership mainly consists of the interaction between students and teachers (see, e.g., Steinwart and Zeigler 2014). Previous studies have mainly used this theoretical framework in contexts where they have studied how to teach leadership and followership from a communicative perspective (Hackman and Johnson 1994, Raffo 2013). Hackman and Johnson's (2013) theoretical framework is presented below with a further connection to the interaction process as teacher-leader, where the five aspects concern how the interaction is mediated.

|                    |  |
|--------------------|--|
| <b>Creative</b>    | <p><i>Definition:</i> Understanding the importance of innovation to get both people and companies to develop.</p> <p><i>Teacher-leader mediation:</i> The teacher's ability to convey knowledge through different senses, for example, for students to read or listen.</p>   |
| <b>Passionate</b>  | <p><i>Definition:</i> The leader has a strong inner drive and is completely dedicated to the commitments.</p> <p><i>Teacher-leader mediation:</i> The ability to convey their passion for both the subject and the profession to the students.</p>   |
| <b>Visionary</b>   | <p><i>Definition:</i> Possesses the strategic ability to decide which goals should be set and the communicative ability to inform and convince the followers.</p> <p><i>Teacher-leader mediation:</i> The teacher conveys convincingly that the students will meet the course requirements if they take responsibility for their learning.</p> |
| <b>Interactive</b> | <p><i>Definition:</i> Aware of the needs and driving forces of its followers, and this is achieved through interaction, listening, teaching, and helping.</p> <p><i>Teacher-leader mediation:</i> The teacher adapts according to the students' needs and meets their level of knowledge to facilitate the learning process.</p>               |
| <b>Empowering</b>  | <p><i>Definition:</i> Aware that success is easier to achieve together and makes the followers feel ownership while inspiring and coaching them.</p> <p><i>Teacher-leader mediation:</i> Encourage students through interaction to think independently and take responsibility for the learning process.</p>                                   |

*Table 3.1. Overview of theoretical framework.*

### 3.2 Conceptual Discussion of Theoretical Framework

Despite the track record in educational contexts of the transformative leadership theory, findings indicate that transformational leadership is not appropriate in teaching environments, thus focusing on the principals' leadership. This is because the transformative leadership from principals can shift focus from the main task of teachers, which is to share advanced knowledge with students, to get involved in school initiatives linked to the corporate world (Barnett, McCormick and Connors 2001). The theory choice can also be criticized as it covers motivational aspects, but as studying at the university level is voluntary, one might argue that the motivation should come from the students and not from the teachers' leadership.

Further, the transformational leadership theory has been criticized in general for being difficult to train or teach as the aspects are too comprehensive and do not have any clear definitions of the different dimensions, leading to overlapping and lack of depth (Tracey and Hinkin 1998). It has also been questioned about its moral aspects as it can abuse power as the motor does not always attend to positive moral values (Hay 2006). Additionally, transformative leadership is often used in contrast to transactional leadership. However, since there is no evidence from previous research that transactional leadership is beneficial in a teacher-leadership context, the authors have excluded this theory. This is because transactional leadership is mainly about an exchange. The leader wants something in exchange, such as promotions or a salary increase (Hasan Al Khajeh 2018), which is not characteristic in an educational context between teachers and students. Finally, the theory used in this study is not exhaustive in leadership in educational contexts. Therefore, choosing another theoretical framework, the empirical material, and the analysis input would potentially result in different findings.

## 4. Research Method

### 4.1 Method of Choice

#### 4.1.1 Research Method

The study uses an exploratory approach to interpret aspects of the interaction process that are important between teachers and students. This method is appropriate since the research question has not previously been answered and as the study's validity and reliability can contribute to existing research. Furthermore, there are elements of both a deductive and inductive method as the study uses existing theory and research and own data collection that has been crucial to supplement existing research and be able to answer the question (Bell, Bryman and Harley 2019). In addition, it can be determined that it is a qualitative study since the result is based on empirical material.

#### 4.1.2 Research Paradigm

A constructivist ontological observation perspective is used, meaning that the authors see the respondents as socially constructed and as a result of real situations. This approach is further based on the interaction between humans and has been chosen because the authors perceive that the interviewees only exist due to social interactions between individuals. This study examines the teachers' leadership, which connects to the interaction with the students, hence the constructive ontological study orientation. Moreover, the study follows an epistemological approach of interpretivism as the interviewees consist of successful teachers' experience of the interaction process from an individual subjective perspective (Bell, Bryman and Harley, 2019).

#### 4.1.3 Research Design

The design of the research question is based on the authors examining and comparing different teachers' subjective experiences, and therefore a cross-sectional design study was chosen. This is best suited when the analysis primarily takes place at the individual level and then be able to make comparisons between the empirical data to identify themes through a thematic processes analysis (Bell, Bryman and Harley 2019). It is noteworthy that a cross-sectional study provides a "snapshot" of what a situation looks like during a specific period due to its limited time interval of collected data (Levin 2006). Furthermore, semi-structured interviews have enabled the interviewees to highlight aspects that do not just confirm the theoretical framework and be flexible, which would not have been the case if using a structured interview approach. Thus, according to Bell, Bryman and Harley (2019), having semi-structured interviews can lead to that the comparability between the respondents may differ.

### 4.2 Sample

#### 4.2.1 Interviewed Individuals

The selection of interviewees is strategically made and is based on that the interviewees should be relevant and contribute to answering the research question (Bell, Bryman and Harley 2019). Therefore, teachers awarded the "Teacher of the Year" at various universities have been interviewed. As a result of the scope of the study, the number of interviewees has been limited to thirteen. In addition, the teachers do not teach the same subjects, and the criteria for nominating someone differs somewhat between the universities. However, this is not considered a limiting factor. This study's common and interesting aspect is that students at each university have paid attention to these teachers' efforts and chosen to nominate them to the "Teacher of the Year" award. An overview of the universities and respondents is given in Table 4.1.

| No. | Respondent* | University** | Gender | Subject***                  |
|-----|-------------|--------------|--------|-----------------------------|
| 1   | Anders      | University A | Male   | Law                         |
| 2   | Adam        | University A | Male   | Law                         |
| 3   | Bengt       | University B | Male   | System Science              |
| 4   | Björn       | University B | Male   | Economic History            |
| 5   | Christina   | University C | Female | Social Science              |
| 6   | Carl        | University C | Male   | Mathematics                 |
| 7   | David       | University D | Male   | Organic Chemistry           |
| 8   | Daniella    | University D | Female | Statistics                  |
| 9   | Erik        | University E | Male   | Finance                     |
| 10  | Erika       | University E | Female | Sustainability & Leadership |
| 11  | Filip       | University F | Male   | Mathematics                 |
| 12  | Filippa     | University F | Female | Material Science            |
| 13  | Gudrun      | University G | Female | Business Law                |

*Table 4.1. Overview of universities and respondents<sup>1</sup>.*

## 4.3 Data Gathering

### 4.3.1 Interview Process

Since the study uses transformative leadership as a framework, questions for the interviews have been designed based on this, including contextual variables such as interviewees' background and teaching subject. Since the thesis focuses on teacher-leadership, the authors considered it essential to ask the interviewees' views on leadership as teachers. Subsequently, the five previously mentioned aspects by Hackman and Johnson (2013) formed the fundamental basis for the interview guide, and an overview is found below.

---

<sup>1</sup> \* = Fictive names are used throughout the study; \*\* = Names of universities have been anonymized throughout the study; \*\*\* = Official teaching subject according to official university information.

| Introduction                   | Leadership   | Main questions   |
|--------------------------------|--|--|
| Background<br>Responsibilities | Leadership definition<br>Successful leadership in the<br>classroom | Creativity<br>Passion<br>Vision<br>Interaction<br>Empowering |

*Table 4.2. Themes in interview questions.*

All of the interviews were held over a video conference (via Zoom or Teams) due to the required social distancing in the pandemic, and the majority of the respondents were not located in Stockholm. The interviews varied between a minimum of 24:59 minutes and a maximum of 48:18 minutes, with an average of 35:58 minutes. The empiric material included many similarities and some differences, but after the thirteenth interview, the authors believed that the study had achieved empirical saturation. Therefore, one interview was canceled upon the authors' proposal.

#### 4.3.2 Process and Analysis of Empirics

All interviews are recorded after approval from the respondents to enable transcription later. By looking for patterns, such as similarities in words and repetitions, the authors followed a thematic analysis process (Bell, Bryman and Harley 2019). The thematic analysis process led to the distribution of first-order concepts, second-order themes, and finally to aggregate dimensions through the application of a theoretical lense. A summary of the results from the thematic analysis process is shown in Table 4.3.

| Aggregated dimensions                          | Second-order themes  |
|--|--|
| General successful teaching characteristics    | Availability<br>Engagement<br>Clarity  |
| Prerequisites for well-functioning interaction | Competence and knowledge<br>Motivation<br>Previous experience<br>Pleasant atmosphere |
| The interaction process with students          | Interaction responsibility<br>Individual development<br>Individual feedback          |

*Table 4.3. Overview of the results from the thematic analysis process of the empirics.*



#### 4.4 Ethical Considerations and Implications

Certain ethical aspects have been considered when conducting the study to increase authenticity, reliability, and credibility. Firstly, all interviews began with information about the ethical considerations to highlight the participants' rights and strengthen the likelihood of truthful and sincere answers. Secondly, participants were informed that the material would only be used for this study and nothing else. Thirdly, it was clarified that participation is voluntary and completely anonymous, and to give the interviewees the greatest possible confidentiality, pseudonyms are used in the thesis, both for name and workplace. It was also highlighted that the participant at any time could end the interview or refrain from answering questions. Lastly, participants were asked if the recording was allowed to have later the opportunity to transcribe.

#### 4.5 Method Criticism

Several methodological criticisms can be raised regarding the study. The choice of interviewees can be questioned as there are only teachers awarded with "Teacher of the Year". The criticism is mainly towards the fact that most of the interviewees have preferred teaching over researching, which is not representative of how teachers usually prefer it at the university level in Sweden. Additionally, as mentioned before, this award has nothing explicit to do with leadership per se, which means that this selection can be assumed to be irrelevant. However, this is taken into account, and the connection to the transformational leadership theory is found indirectly in the nominations and underlying motivations that these teachers have received.

Regarding the choice of a cross-sectional design study, it is worth highlighting that this method is aimed to give answers from individuals in a specific context over a short time interval. This means that the study results with high probability can change depending on the context or time performed. A cross-sectional design study can also be criticized as the empirical data is collected over a short period and sheds light on connections rather than causality. According to Bell, Bryman and Harley (2019), this can reduce the study's credibility. However, this has to some extent been prevented as the authors have executed in-depth interviews to ensure that the focus is on obtaining relevant information to find congruent to the theory and its components. Moreover, according to Bell, Bryman and Harley (2019), collecting data in neutral environments can increase credibility, which also can be questioned in this study as all interviews took place online via either Teams or Zoom.

Finally, the choice of semi-structured interviews and the usage of a thematic analysis process can be criticized. The usage of semi-structured interviews has enabled certain flexibility to get more nuanced answers from the interviewees. However, this is to be taken into account when processing the data, as the questions that have been asked in addition to those in the interview

guide may have been perceived as leading and led to a skewed answer. The thematic analysis process also enables flexibility but can reduce the complexity of the analysis due to the identified themes (Braun, Clarke 2006). This has been taken into account by providing a more detailed description of teacher-leadership.

## 5. Empirical Material

### 5.1 General Successful Teaching Characteristics

The introduction of the interviews was centered around questions regarding the respondents' career and the underlying motivation behind the award as the "Teacher of the Year". Many aspects were raised by several of the interviewees connected to the motivation behind the award. Still, there are differences in the perception of the meaning of these aspects, including availability, engagement, and clarity.

#### 5.1.1 Availability

The availability of successful teachers has proven to be one of the main factors for students to experience a good climate. Erik believes that availability should never be a problem, but the opposite, students should always feel that they can establish a dialogue, regardless of the time of day. He continues by saying, *"I have always hated office hours. Again, you can always contact me as I think that is a part of my job [...]. I receive a lot of emails per day, but again, it is not that many that I cannot respond or meet with the students"*. Similar to this, Filip, pushes that teachers must schedule extra time for students to be able to ask questions about the course. When he describes why he was awarded the prize, he says *"I was always available for students which made me receive this award. I also scheduled some extra time to help the students before exams. It was always easy to contact me"*.

#### 5.1.2 Engagement

Anders emphasizes the importance of seeing the teaching profession from a larger perspective that focuses on students' learning process rather than their interests. This is to create engagement among the students. He says, *"I am not here for my own sake but rather to create benefits for someone else [...]. It is important with micro motivations that create engagement so that the students feel that it will be fun to go home and read after the lectures"*. Unlike Andreas, Gudrun emphasizes the importance of students' inner engagement. She believes that it is impossible for a teacher to engage all students but still highlights the importance of bringing in knowledge from the corporate world to create conditions for internal engagement among students. She says, *"The first time I taught in taxation law, the engagement spread fast as I came from the 'real world' and with first-hand knowledge [...]. However, which course the students have had before might also have an impact on the engagement. In general, I think that if students are not interested, it does not matter if you are an engaging teacher or not"*.

### 5.1.3 Clarity

Although clarity is not a pronounced aspect of the transformational leadership nor in the nomination criteria for the “Teacher of the Year” award, it is the factor mentioned most times when the interviewees explain what characterizes a successful teacher’s interaction with the students. Adam says, *“It is important that you as a teacher, and hence the leader in the teaching situation, are clear regarding the course requirements and which information is applicable and not so that the students feel confident in knowing what they need to achieve”*. Furthermore, he believes that without the ability to communicate the knowledge requirements, students will be in a zone where they have to guess the course framework, which does not contribute to students’ ability to perform. Daniella agrees with this view but explains that it is vital to have clarity from the beginning regarding the course requirements and the different roles in the classroom. She says, *“I always start all courses by explaining that we have different roles in the course, and I am the one who is responsible for the course and hence me who decides. You need someone who guides and shows the way, and you must be clear about this role”*.

## 5.2 Prerequisites for Well-functioning Interaction

### 5.2.1 Competence and Knowledge

An essential prerequisite to successfully interact with the students is for the teacher to master their subject with excellence. Only then can the teacher reach all students, both those who experience difficulties on the subject and those who master the course well. In obedience to the aforementioned, Filip continues by saying, *“During a lesson, you should try to teach on different levels so that everyone understands. If you do not consider this when performing the lessons, only the weak will attend the lectures, and therefore there will be a weaker atmosphere in the classroom, which is not optimal for the students’ achievements”*. Accordingly, Carl believes that the teacher must master his subject well to provide students with knowledge that contributes to increased logical thinking and enhanced problem-solving ability. Furthermore, he says, *“I want to give students a systematic way of thinking that can be used throughout life and not just in teaching environments”*.

### 5.2.2 Motivation

When speaking about motivation, it is clear that the distinction between research and teaching impacts the motivation of the teachers and hence the interaction process with students. According to Bengt, the educational world is embossed by a hierarchy where research is considered finer than education. He announces that *“For me, that is not the case, as they are just as important and connected to each other. There is no research that cannot be explained in the hall. If you cannot explain it and communicate it, then it does not exist. Then, it is just a piece of paper”*. Bengt emphasizes that it is common for teachers who believe that the hierarchy exists to have more difficulty integrating with students due to their lack of interest in teaching. Although most of the working time is

usually devoted to research, Björn indicates that more time should be spent on teaching as a significant fraction of the research produced will not be noticed. He states that the interaction with the students in a learning process to a greater extent can impact the environment and its continued development. He says, *“A lot of the research that is produced will not be read by anyone. You are writing an article that sometimes is not so interesting to an audience that does not exist. Just to get a publication in a journal does not mean anything. The true legacy that you can leave on people’s lives is through good teaching. That is the best way you can influence young people’s minds and the best way you can produce something for your surroundings that is better”*. Despite the perception that teachers who prioritize research do not possess the same ability to interact, Filippa, who explicitly describes teaching as a burden, has won the award as “Teacher of the Year”. She says, *“There is an old saying that if you get the award ‘Teacher of the Year’, it is a ‘Kiss of death’ when it comes to research as you have spent too much time teaching [...]. You have to share the teaching burden that exists since you do not get a higher H-index because you teach well”*. Furthermore, she continues by telling how she has managed to make the teaching more meaningful from her perspective *“It usually becomes more interesting for me if I can integrate my research in the teaching, and I also feel that the students can provide me with insights that challenge me in my research”*.

### 5.2.3 Previous Experience

What permeates the selection is that most of the interviewees are practically rooted in the teaching as they have experienced from the business world that the students consider valuable for teaching purposes. Björn, who has previously worked at CitiBank, describes that his previous experience makes it easier for him to integrate the real world with the teaching, making it more tangible and exciting for the students. He states, *“I have taken advantage of educating myself within the companies to become a master in my subject, something that I now am using as a teacher”*. Despite this, not all interviewees have a background in the corporate world but instead only focused on an academic career. Erik holds a Ph.D. in both finance and computer science and immediately started a career in academia. However, a similarity with Björn is that he always tries to anchor his teaching to reality to make it more practical. He mentions that *“As a teacher, it is important that you can provide interesting information to the students and make clear why people should care about it and why it is of importance. A good way of doing that is by integrating real caseexamples that make it more fun for the students and me”*.

### 5.2.4 Pleasant Atmosphere

Another vital factor that reappears among the interviews is to create the right conditions for good interaction by building a pleasant environment for students to develop within. This is mainly because, according to all of the interviewed teachers, the interaction must occur through two-way communication and not only from the teacher to the student. Further, Anders says that a success factor is to create a climate where mistakes are encouraged as that is how we learn, *“You should fill the classroom with love, and you should feel that you care about each other. We must dare to make*

*mistakes. We must dare to test, and we must monitor the tentative attempts. I am never as happy as when I read a course evaluation, and someone has written that they, for the first time in their lives, dared to speak in front of a group".* There are different ways of creating a pleasant atmosphere, and according to Adam, each teacher must find a way that works best for them. Adam emphasizes that humor is something that characterizes his attempt to create a pleasant environment, and says *"I usually use humor in my teaching profession relatively often, partly as a way to create security to have some self-distance and to de-dramatize oneself. This means that even the students who find it difficult to speak in front of a large group and ask questions can feel safe in asking questions and start a conversation with the teacher. If you use humor in this way, it strengthens the feeling of security for the students"*.

### 5.3 The Interaction Process with Students

#### 5.3.1 Interaction Responsibility

To maintain a functioning learning process, responsibility related to managing the interaction between students and the teacher has proven necessary. This, in turn, is linked to the teacher's perceived role in the classroom, where the teacher should see themselves as a leader to take responsibility for the interaction processes. However, this is something that is not obvious for all interviewees. Anders says, *"I have not thought of it as leadership, but now when you say it, a light comes on, and I realize that it, of course, concerns leadership as well"*. That leadership as a teacher includes the baton for a functioning integration process is something that Erika highlights. She emphasizes that *"Leadership is very much about setting structures, frameworks, boundaries and also about co-creating, listening to everyone and developing together"*.

#### 5.3.2 Individual Needs

What is highlighted as problematic with the interaction at higher education levels is for the teacher to reach all students individually. On the other hand, Christina has no problem interacting with each student as she believes that the most important thing for students' performance ability is to meet their needs. She says, *"Sometimes I may have to change my focus depending on the group's experience. It is very important for me to meet the students where they are in development. The students should feel involved, and communication is the number one priority"*. Similar to this, David does not see any difficulties focusing on the individual student's needs and explains how important it is for the course structure to be adapted for the individual student to perform. This lays the foundation for the interaction process. He says that structures often characterize the course structures at universities set several years ago and therefore are not optimal for today's society. He continues and says, *"We started pretty good development work and recognized that many courses were problematic and therefore, we experienced big problems with low throughput and largely it was due to poor structure. They were cut and pasted together from many years ago. I decided to re-do the course structures, and*

many students did appreciate that I adopted the course material in accordance with the student's needs, and especially with regards to the students having special needs". Erika instead focuses on covering all areas of how students perceive knowledge by simplifying the knowledge intake: *"It is almost ten years ago now, but back then almost all the students lived in Stockholm and took the bus every morning to attend lectures. I created podcasts as lectures which were supposed to be the same length as the bus trip to the school"*.

### 5.3.3 Individual Feedback

A final aspect that students often demand from teachers is continuous feedback to develop individually. However, many of the interviewees highlight difficulties in giving individual feedback. Anders, among others, says, *"My experience is that teachers are bad at feedback and students are bad at receiving it. It costs an enormous amount of money to give feedback, which will be a great challenge for teachers"*. Consequently, he continues by telling how students can receive individual feedback without the teachers spending too much time. He says, *"Students must learn to evaluate their achievements, and also other students' achievements. I work a lot to teach students to give and receive feedback"*.

## 6. Analysis

The following analysis presents the most notable aspects of the interpretation of empirical data. After that, different strategies to implement a well-functioning interaction with students are interpreted to disclose implications. All parts of the analysis will be connected to the extended transformative leadership theory. A summary of the empirical analysis can be seen in figure 6.1 and will, after that, ongoingly be discussed by the theory.

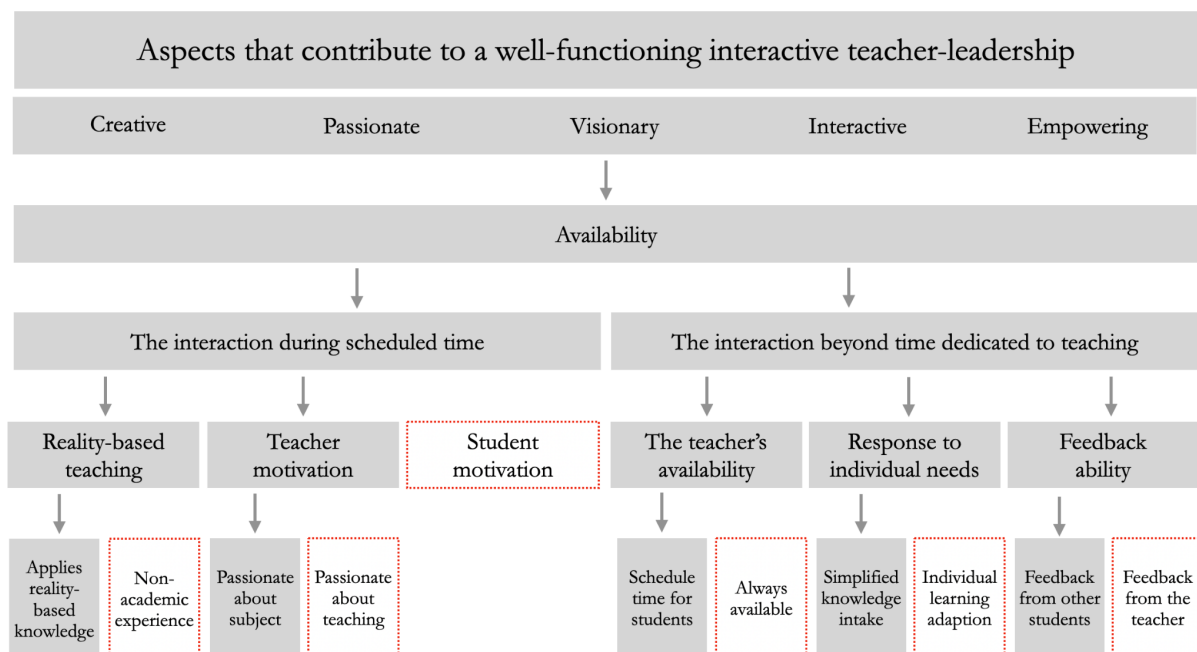


Figure 6.1. Overview of empirical analysis (Lennhammer & Westergren 2021).

## 6.1 The Interaction During Scheduled Time

### 6.1.1 Reality-Based Teaching

Reality-based teaching is by empirics proven to correlate positively with a well-functioning interactive leadership in the classroom. The anchoring of reality facilitates the students' learning process and provides the students with good conditions for understanding how the theory can be embodied in a non-academic world. By connecting the theory to reality, students can feel ownership of the learning process as it opens up more opportunities to understand the knowledge that is taught in a more comprehensible way. With a self-study-based focus, this can lead students who experience difficulties in understanding knowledge through theory, exclusively looking for gateways to an understanding through practical examples. Ownership and individual thinking, as part of *empowerment*, are essential aspects of students' performance.

Although not all interviewees had a background in the non-academic world, all interviewees emphasized that their teaching is always linked to real-life examples. Since seven of the thirteen teachers interviewed teach theoretically difficult subjects, such as mathematics or organic chemistry, providing students with more tangible examples becomes even more critical. This can be linked to the teacher's ability to be aware of the needs that exist in terms of the learning process, which is included in the *interactive* part of the extended version of the transformative leadership theory.

### 6.1.2 Teacher Motivation

The teachers' motivation can be divided into both its motivation for the subject itself and the motivation for teaching. The differences in the empirical material indicate ambiguities about the motivation for the teaching itself as it has emerged that the teaching is even considered a burden, according to Filippa. Therefore, it is possible to analyze whether teachers who are not motivated for teaching have an inner drive, despite their *passion* for the subject. With an only passion for the subject and not for the teaching itself, it becomes difficult for the teacher to express their inner drive to the students as the context hinders its possibility for a well-functioning interaction. Again, the ability to *interact* with the students becomes crucial regardless of whether the passion for the teaching itself exists or not. This is not the case for all teachers interviewed, but it is the opposite, as eleven out of thirteen interviewees want more time for teaching rather than research. However, this comes naturally due to the selection, as all interviewees have been noticed for their ability to teach. On the other hand, the possibility of including their research has been highlighted as something that reduces the expressed burden and increases the passion for teaching as it creates conditions for challenging their research.



Furthermore, the ability to interact with one's passion can be connected to the teacher's *availability*. A teacher who is perceived as constantly available probably outwardly shows more passion for the profession as a teacher to a greater extent than one who is not. In addition, it is worth mentioning the existing hierarchy which characterizes the teaching world, indicating that research is finer than teaching. The notion is that professors should focus on developing a high H-index to gain a higher status in academia. However, this is something that most of the interviewees do not agree upon. Hence, the empirical evidence highlights that research does not contribute to an enriching world as the journals often are read by a few people, but rather than teaching does so as it affects the surroundings, according to Björn. As a result of the impact from teaching, this can be linked to *empowerment*, which aims at success generally being achieved together.

### 6.1.3 Student Motivation

Based on the empirical evidence, it can be stated that there are contractions regarding the teacher's role in influencing the students' willingness to learn. Some, including Anders, emphasize that his role as a teacher is to benefit students through a motivating environment. On the other hand, Gudrun believes that it is not the teacher's task to create motivation. This can be linked to the fact that university-level studies include individual responsibility and that the individual student is there on his or her initiative. Gudrun believes that this is a requirement that can be demanded of the students. Furthermore, the teachers who choose to take responsibility for the motivation creation of the students can be assumed to take on a leadership role where the interaction aims to create a *vision* for the students. To create this vision, the ability to *interact* with the students is required to believe that they can achieve the knowledge requirements. Moreover, to take on this visionary leadership role, it is also necessary that the teacher has time *available* as students' motivation in large numbers can be time-consuming. Hence, there will be a trade-off for whether this can be included in the teaching profession or not.

## 6.2 The Interaction Beyond Time Dedicated to Teaching

### 6.2.1 The Teacher's Availability

Teachers have different opportunities to set aside time for students due to their different time divisions between education and research. Thus, *availability* can be expressed in different ways. Some teachers, for example, Filip, schedule extra hours beyond the scheduled time, dedicated to the students to take control of the situation and not be overloaded with questions. Other teachers, such as Erik, rather mean that you always should be available by email, even outside working hours. In addition, it is worth emphasizing that almost all interviewees value the educational part of their profession, which may explain their demand for themselves to be



constantly available. Whether this can be expected of a teacher can be questioned and criticized as studies at the university level include individual responsibility and the ability to take the initiative. As mentioned in the section on background, it is a problem for teachers to *interact* with students at the individual level, which becomes unreasonable if the teacher is expected to be constantly available to hundreds of students. Instead, the teacher should take command of the situation and be responsive to the current needs and, based on this state, when they are expected to be available for interaction.

If the teacher is to be constantly available, it can be further discussed whether the quality of the interaction is expressed. For this, students will probably take advantage of the teacher's availability. Instead of thinking for themselves once more or asking a classmate, students will immediately turn to the teacher with questions. This, in turn, dampens the individual's initiative and contradicts the fact that studies at universities should include more responsibility and initiative. This can contradict *empowerment* from a theoretical perspective, as the students do not feel ownership of the learning process.

#### 6.2.2 Response to Individual Needs

Despite teachers' unreasonableness of being constantly available, the empirical evidence suggests that all teachers use methods to simplify knowledge intake for students to perform better. These teachers then take into account the fact that students learn in different ways. For example, some learn by reading and others by listening. To meet this demand among students, Erika used her *creativity* and created podcasts as lectures that were as long as a bus trip that her students could listen to on the way to the university. In this way, Erika has then managed to meet the needs of several students and also simplified the availability of knowledge. On the other hand, it is again not reasonable for a teacher to set aside time outside working hours to meet students' needs. Again, there is a trade-off to be made in the teachers' *availability*. It is also worth adding that Erika has chosen to teach almost exclusively at present, and thus she has more time to devote to teaching and providing for needs.

Additionally, it has also emerged in the empirical data that, among other things, David has had to restructure an entire course to meet the students' needs. This is because the course was previously based on old theory, and the number of people who passed the course has decreased drastically. By being *interactive*, David has listened to the course evaluations that have been made and tried to design the course in accordance with this, which is something that more teachers can take on if there is a low throughput of approved students on a specific course. However, it is worth noting that the course evaluations are generally not carried out by all students but usually only by the most or most minor satisfied students, which can provide a skewed basis for shaping the course's progress.

### 6.2.3 Feedback Ability

Feedback is a topic that is closely related to the availability of teachers. Firstly, it is difficult for a teacher to provide hundreds of students with continuous feedback. Secondly, feedback can have an inhibitory effect on students' initiative, which is also discussed in the empirical study. Among other things, Anders believes that students should give feedback to their peers or themselves to increase their understanding of what results in a better result. This is also beneficial from a time-saving perspective because the teacher does not have to spend extra time providing the individuals with feedback but rather can place this workload on the students instead. Again, this is a trade-off between the teachers' *availability* and where this available time should be spent to maximize the overall benefits and contribute to the students' achievements. In turn, this also benefits students' perceived ownership of the inter-learning process, which is something that is emphasized in the *empowerment* that the teacher possesses.

## 7. Discussion

### 7.1 Answer to Research Question

This qualitative study examines how successful teachers at the university level experience the interaction process with the students by applying the extended transformative leadership theory focusing on the interactive perspective. Empirical data from thirteen interviews with teachers at different universities in Sweden who has won the award as the "Teachers of the Year" have been analyzed with the purpose to answer the following research question:

*How do award-winning teachers in higher education experience the interaction process with the students?*

Based on the analysis in the previous section, it can first and foremost be stated that the teacher's ability to be *interactive* enables the other four aspects in the extended transformative leadership theory to be fulfilled. The empirical data indicates that *empowerment* is the second most crucial aspect in higher education for a perceived good interaction since the aspect focuses on the students' perceived ownership of the learning process. The importance of ownership cannot be ignored as university studies are characterized by personal responsibility due to the focus on self-studies. Suppose the teacher can contribute to perceived empowerment among the students, i.e., ownership and independence. In that case, the interaction process can be assumed to have a reasonable basis for the student's performance ability. Empowering creates reasonableness for the teacher's profession, especially in terms of availability, but also for the students to find the best way to absorb knowledge and continue to develop by increasing the individual's thinking ability.

In addition to the already existing theoretical aspects, the research question can also be answered by adding *availability* as an aspect. This is due to the ambiguity regarding whether the teacher should be available for interaction with the students even after the scheduled teaching time. The availability has proven to be a limiting factor in executing the interactive teacher-leadership. Availability as an aspect can, in university contexts, be defined as the teachers' ability to clarify when they are available for interaction with the students to avoid inhibiting the student's initiative. This is per the fact that the studies are characterized by self-study to a large extent. The new theoretical framework from an interactive teacher-leadership perspective used in higher education consists of availability, creativity, passion, vision, interaction, and empowerment. Successful teachers experience that these aspects are essential parts of the interaction process.

#### 7.1.1 The Study's Contribution

This study contributes with an in-depth understanding of how Hackman and Johnsons' (2013) five aspects of transformative and interactive leadership can be applied in a context between teachers and students at the university level. Based on the theoretical aspects that form the basis of the study, evidence has emerged for which aspects are important according to teachers, who have been noticed by students for their ability to teach. Based on the already existing aspects, the empirical evidence shows that the teacher's ability to be interactive and empowering is most important in creating a good condition for the students' continued ability to perform. Furthermore, availability has been identified as an additional theoretical aspect that is considered important for teachers' ability to interact with a large number of recipients, as discussed above.

Moreover, as mentioned during the introductory part of this study, it is difficult for teachers to have an interaction with all students in each class as these can amount to several hundred. To promote teachers' ability to interact with students and to continue to increase students' performance, this study has helped to identify what can be considered important in the interaction process. This is to facilitate the sharing of advanced knowledge.

### 7.1.2 Limitations of the Study

There are a few limitations that can be raised with this study. Firstly, the study is based on a constructive interpretive perspective, meaning that the data collection depends on the authors' ability to interpret the information and present it correctly. Secondly, the usage of transformational leadership as a theoretical framework, focusing on the interactive part of the leadership aspect, is considered a limitation as other parts of that framework could have been used instead. Thirdly, this study is based on successful teachers from universities in Sweden, and hence the results of this study might not be representable for an international setting nor in education at lower levels. In addition, as all of the interviewees had won the award as the "Teacher of the Year", their answers might have been biased in the sense that they mainly prefer teaching rather than researching, which does not correspond to how teachers in higher education, in Sweden, generally prefer it. Lastly, this study is limited by the wide definition of leadership. Leadership is a complex concept that includes many different dimensions, which can be seen from many different perspectives. It is also a concept that some teachers in higher education are not aware of, meaning that they do not see or reflect upon themselves as leaders.

### 7.1.3 Future Research

An interesting aspect for future research would be to investigate how a potential accreditation would affect the outcome. Thus, how successful teachers in higher education experience the interaction process with students in a teaching environment characterized by accreditations that ensure an acceptable standard for the quality of education. The collected empirical evidence indicates that individuals' achievements are the result of shortcomings in quality management. Universities that have, for example, been awarded the accreditation AACSB (Association of Advanced Collegiate Schools of Business) have undergone a review of research, education, and administration, which means that the lowest standard for approval is met. This can be linked to the teacher's conditions to perform as the quality assurance ensures a certain quality for all teachers and the university. The reasonable idea is that these quality assurances reduce the prevailing hierarchy in the world of education, as it would become more important to maintain an even level, both in teaching and research, to remain the quality assurance.

## 7.2 Conclusion

This study is based on the notion that teachers in higher education significantly impact the students' achievements. Although studies have identified that transformational leadership is suitable in educational contexts and that the interaction between teachers and students is of great importance for students' performance, they have failed to examine how the interaction is experienced by the teachers and what is of importance for them to perform a well interactive teacher-leadership. To fill this research gap, this study was executed to increase the understanding of how successful teachers experience the interaction process with students and identify which aspects are essential in interactive teacher-leadership. The final contribution from this study is thus that *interactive* as an aspect from the theoretical perspective enables teachers to exercise an interactive teacher-leadership, followed by *empowerment* that aims to contribute to high performance among students. Another aspect that emerged during the interviews was *availability*, which can be included in the extended version of the transformational leadership theory in the context of higher education. The identification of the importance of empowerment and interaction and the addition of availability as an aspect of the theory constitutes the theoretical contribution.

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## Appendix

### Appendix 1. Overview of criteria for nomination of the “Teacher of the Year”

| Universities                       | Nomination Criteria<br>(in brief)   | Joint Criteria<br>(without mutual order)  | Connection to<br>transformational<br>leadership   |
|------------------------------------|---|---|---|
| Gothenburg University, GU          | Inspiration, communication, knowledge, individual development, passion (Göteborgs universitet 2015).                                    | 1. Engagement<br>2. Motivation<br>3. Generating interest<br>4. Passion<br>5. Individual development<br>6. Communication | <i>Creativity</i> (mainly: generating interest and individual development)<br><br><i>Passion</i> (mainly: passion and engagement)<br><br><i>Vision</i> (mainly: generating interest, communication and motivation)<br><br><i>Interactive</i> (mainly: communication and individual development)<br><br><i>Empowering</i> (mainly: individual development and generating interest) |
| Karlstad University, KU            | Engagement, pedagogical competence, generates interest, communication, individual development (Karlstad Studentkår 2021).               |   |   |
| Royal Institute of Technology, KTH | Pedagogical development, influence, engagement, individual development (THS 2021).  |   |   |
| Linköping University, LI           | Individual development, knowledge, openness, communication (Ström Bernad 2012).   |   |   |
| Lund University, LU                | Dedication, individual development, passion, knowledge, communication, motivation (Ekonomihögskolan vid Lunds universitet 2020).        |   |   |
| Stockholm School of Economics, SSE | Inspiration, motivation, engagement, passion, caring, communication (HHS 2015).   |   |   |
| Stockholm University, SU           | Engagement, inspiration, passion, motivation, generates interest, helpful, improves individual development (Stockholm University 2021). |   |   |

## Appendix 2. Email to potential interview candidates

(Swedish)

Hej [personens namn],

Hoppas allt är bra med dig.

Mitt namn är Julia Westergren och just nu studerar jag min sista termin på kandidatprogrammet i Business and Economics på Handelshögskolan i Stockholm. Tillsammans med min kurskamrat, Anna Lennhammer (cc:ad), skriver jag en kandidatuppsats inom *Management* med fokus hur framgångsrika lärare förmedlar sitt ledarskap i klassrummet. Vi skulle väldigt gärna vilja ha eran syn på denna punk med tanke på att du har tilldelats priset "Årets Lärare", för att få en ökad förståelse om sambandet mellan att vara en framgångsrik lärare och det utövade ledarskapet.

Deltagandet kommer självklart att vara anonymt och uppställandet på en intervju beräknas ta cirka 45 minuter. Med hänsyn till Covid-19 kan formatet på intervjun självklart anpassas utefter ert behov. Hur ser ert schema ut i början av nästkommande vecka?

Om detta är utav intresse får ni gärna återkoppla, samt om några frågor eller funderingar har uppstått är ni mer än välkomna att återkomma med dessa till oss.

Vi ser fram emot att höra från er och tack på förhand!

Med vänliga hälsningar,

Julia Westergren & Anna Lennhammer

(English)

Hi [person's name],

Hope you are doing well!

My name is Julia Westergren and I am currently studying my last semester on the bachelor's program in Business and Economics at the Stockholm School of Economics. Together with my classmate, Anna Lennhammer (cc'd), I am writing a bachelor's thesis in *Management* with a focus on how successful teachers execute their leadership in the classroom. We would very much like your view on this subject since you have been awarded the "Teacher of the Year" prize, to gain an increased understanding of the connection between being a successful leader and the executed leadership.

The participation will of course be anonymous and the setting up of an interview is estimated to take approximately 45 minutes. With regard to Covid-19, the format of the interview can of course be adapted to your needs. How is your availability at the beginning of next week?

If this is of any interest, you are welcome to reach back to us, and if any questions or concerns have arisen, you are more than welcome to return these to us.

We look forward to hearing from you and thank you in advance!

Sincerely,

Julia Westergren & Anna Lennhammer

## **Appendix 3. Interview guide**

(Swedish)

### **Etiska aspekter**

1. Dina svar kommer att genomföras för en forskningsstudie som en del av en kandidatexamen i Management vid Handelshögskolan i Stockholm.
2. Ditt deltagande är frivilligt och helt anonymt, därför kommer ingen att informeras om ditt deltagande.
3. Du behöver inte svara på alla frågor och kan när som helst avbryta intervjun.
4. Har vi ditt tillstånd att spela in intervjun för att möjliggöra en transkription efteråt?
5. Finns det något annat du kanske undrar över innan vi börjar?

### **Personlig information**

1. Vill du berätta lite om din karriär?
2. Hur länge har du arbetat med undervisning av universitetsstudenter?
3. Vilket ämne lär du ut inom?
4. Vill du berätta lite om din nominering? Varför tror du att du har tilldelats priset som "Årets Lärare"?

### **Ledarskapet**

1. Hur skulle du definiera ledarskapet som lärare?
2. Hur ser du på ditt ledarskap i klassrummet?
3. Vilka kännetecken är utmärkande för ditt ledarskap?
4. Vad, enligt dig, kännetecknar ett bra ledarskap i klassrummet?

### **Kreativ**

1. I ditt ledarskap, utmanar du processer och befintliga idéer?
2. Skulle du säga att du utövar ett entreprenöriellt förhållande sätt i din undervisning? Varför/Varför inte?

### **Passionerad**

1. Vad är det bästa med ditt yrke?
2. Hur ser du på fördelningen mellan undervisning och forskning? Vad brinner du mest för?

### **Visionär**

1. Hur kommunicerar du vad som krävs från studenternas sida för att uppnå ett godkänt resultat?

2. Uppmuntrar du studenter att arbeta tillsammans med varandra och med dig eller föredrar du individuellt arbete genomgående?

### **Interaktiv**

1. Hur föredrar du att ha en dialog med studenterna?
2. Hur tar du emot potentiell feedback?

### **Upplyftande**

1. Hur ser du på möjligheten att studenter kan ha inverkan på undervisningen?
2. Hur uttrycker du ditt engagemang i din undervisning?

(English)

### **Ethical Considerations**

1. Your answers will be conducted for a research study as a part of a bachelor thesis in Management at the Stockholm School of Economics.
2. Your participation is voluntary and completely anonymous, hence no one will be informed about your participation.
3. You do not need to answer all the questions and can at any point end the interview.
4. Do we have your permission to record the interview to enable a transcription afterward?
5. Is there anything else you might be wondering before we start?

### **Personal information**

1. Could you tell us a little about your career?
2. How long have you worked teaching university students?
3. What subject do you teach?
4. Do you want to tell us a little about your nomination? Why do you think you have been awarded as “Teacher of the Year”?

### **Leadership**

1. How would you define leadership as a teacher?
2. How do you view your leadership in the classroom?
3. What are the characteristics of your leadership?
4. What do you think characterizes good leadership in the classroom?

### **Creative**

1. In your leadership, do you challenge processes and existing ideas?

2. Would you say that you exercise an entrepreneurial relationship in your teaching?  
Why / Why not?

### **Passionate**

1. What is the best thing about your profession?
2. How do you see the distribution between teaching and research? What are you most passionate about?

### **Visionary**

1. How do you communicate what is required of the students to achieve an approved result?
2. Do you encourage students to work with each other and with you, or do you prefer individual work throughout your course?

### **Interactive**

1. How do you prefer to have a dialogue with the students?
2. How do you receive potential feedback?

### **Empowering**

1. How do you see the possibility that students can have an impact on the teaching?
2. How do you express your commitment to your teaching?



#### Appendix 4. Conducted interviews

| No.   | Pseudonym | Time  | Date      | Place            |
|---|-----------|-------|-----------|------------------|
| 1   | Daniella  | 34:59 | 7/6-2021  | Video conference |
| 2   | Anders    | 45:56 | 7/6-2021  | Video conference |
| 3   | Christina | 27:36 | 9/6-2021  | Video conference |
| 4   | Bengt     | 48:18 | 9/6-2021  | Video conference |
| 5   | Erik      | 28:26 | 9/6-2021  | Video conference |
| 6   | Carl      | 24:59 | 9/6-2021  | Video conference |
| 7   | David     | 34:23 | 9/6-2021  | Video conference |
| 8   | Adam      | 32:50 | 9/6-2021  | Video conference |
| 9   | Erika     | 46:43 | 9/6-2021  | Video conference |
| 10  | Björn     | 42:59 | 11/6-2021 | Video conference |
| 11  | Filip     | 36:08 | 14/6-2021 | Video conference |
| 12  | Gudrun    | 25:56 | 15/6-2021 | Video conference |
| 13  | Filippa   | 38:17 | 16/6-2021 | Video conference |
| <b>Minimum: 24:59</b><br><b>Maximum: 48:18</b><br><b>Average: 35:58</b> |           |       |           |                  |