

COGNITIVE COMPLEXITY'S INFLUENCE ON
INFORMATION NEEDS IN CHANGE

by

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To those I love

&

South Africa in Transition

All is related, the end and the beginning and we are amidst of turbulence, trying to understand our paradigm from a mirror, which is ourselves.

Thanks to my father and mother as well as Johan
for your support during this journey.

SUMMARY

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1. Problem and Objective

Communication and provision of information are often sited as essential aspects in change management. Addressing individual needs is a challenge when a change initiative affects various people. A considerable challenge is also to address individual needs on a micro level, while manage change on a macro level.

The integrative theory that endeavours to address organisational levels of work, while also focusing on individuals, is referred to as requisite organisational theory. Elliot Jaques' theory is known by various names, like: the Requisite Organisation (RO), Stratified Systems Theory (SST) or the levels of work (LoW). The human aspect in RO theory, that matches a person to the ability to function in complexity and work, is based on the innate mental ability to organise information. This ability is also referred to as cognitive complexity.

There is consequently a theory that explains micro and macro dynamics, while considering people's natural ability to deal with information. This posed the

opportunity to investigate the theory's practical application in organisational change.

The objective of this research is consequently to determine cognitive complexity's influence on information needs in change.

2. Theoretical Investigation

The theoretical investigation ranges from detail in the cognitive complexity section of the literature study to a broad scope in the information and change sections. Writings on change abounds, ranging between practice and theory. The literature study focuses on understanding concepts of cognitive complexity, but it is easier comprehensible when understood in terms of a unified theory in the human resources discipline.

3. Qualitative Research Investigation

This study utilised the theoretical and validated research background which is currently practically applied in organisations by assessment methods like Career Path Appreciation (CPA) and the Initial Recruitment Interview Schedule (IRIS).

The investigation was of an explorative, qualitative nature. Focus groups with similar cognitive complexity profiles were selected. Profiles were obtained from a database in which individuals were assessed by CPA or IRIS. It was possible to conduct eight focus group sessions in three geographical regions.

Data was generated by transcription of the focus group sessions as well as the written responses from the participants. Concepts were identified from the sessions. Concepts were clustered, until four primary groups emerged from the main clusters.

4. Conclusion

Information needs, encompasses much more than information flow. There is a hierarchy of information needs, that changes according to the application areas of people capable of increasing cognitive capability.

A general framework of people's needs for information during change was constructed during this research. Four building blocks form the basis of people's information needs. The building blocs are: information flow, people considerations, change implementation, and context.

People have much in common concerning information needs, irrespective of cognitive complexity. Cognitive complexity has an influence on people's needs for information during change. There are variations in importance of information needs to individuals in the model, according to levels of cognitive complexity. The different strata of cognitive complexity, correspond to theory that describes different levels of work. This is in accordance to principles of a requisite organisation. It is evident that the shift in areas of importance in the needs for information, is related to the intended use of the information.

OPSOMMING

DIE INVLOED VAN KOGNITIEWE-KOMPLEKSITEIT OP INLIGTINGSBEHOEFTE TYDENS VERANDERING

deur

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1. Probleem en Doelstelling

Daar word gereed na kommunikasie en inligtingvoorsiening verwys as essensieële aspekte van veranderingsbestuur. Bevrediging van 'n individu se behoeftes is 'n uitdaging wanneer verandering verkeie mense affekteer. Dit is 'n uitdaging om 'n individu se behoeftes op 'n mikro vlak aan te spreek, terwyl verandering op 'n makro vlak bestuur word.

Die teorie rakende 'n organisasie van vereiste (engels: Requisite Organisation), integreer die individuele fokus met die adressering van organisatoriese vlakke van werk. Elliot Jaques se teorie het verskei benaminge soos: gestratifiseerde sisteme teorie, die organisasie van vereistes, asook die vlakke-van-werk. Die persoonsaspek van gestratifiseerde sisteme teorie plaas 'n persoon in die konteks van sy/haar vermoë om in kompleksiteit te funksioneer. Dit is die natuurlike verstandelike vermoë om inligting te organiseer, wat ook kognitiewe kompleksiteit genoem word.

Daar is gevolglik 'n teorie wat mikro en makro dinamika verduidelik, terwyl mense se natuurlike vermoë om inligting te hanteer oorweeg word. Hierdeur word die

geleentheid gebied om die teorie se praktiese toepassing in organisatoriese verandering te ondersoek.

Die doelwit van hierdie navorsing is gevolglik om te bepaal wat kognitiewe kompleksiteit se invloed op inligtingsbehoefte tydens verandering is.

2. Teoretiese Onderzoek

Die teoretiese onderzoek strek vanaf besonderhede in die kognitiewe-kompleksiteitsafdeling van die literatuurstudie tot 'n breë spektrum in die inligting-en veranderingafdelings. Daar is heelwat literatuur oor verandering, vanaf teorie tot praktyk. Konsepte aangaande kognitiewe kompleksiteit is makliker verstaanbaar wanneer dit as deel van 'n unifikasieteorie in menslikehulpbronbestuur gesien word.

3. Kwalitatiewe Navorsingsonderzoek

Hierdie studie het teoretiese en gevalideerde navorsingsinligting gebruik wat in die praktyk gebruik word deur assesseringsmetodes soos die loopbaanpad waardering (CPA) en die oorspronklike werwingsonderhoudskedule (IRIS).

Die aard van die ondersoek was kwalitatief, eksploratief. Fokusgroepe was geselekteer wat soortgelyke kognitiewe kompleksiteitsprofile gehad het. Profile was verkry vanaf 'n databasis van individue wat geasseseer was met die CPA of IRIS. Die navorsingsvraag is ondersoek, deur van agt fokusgroepe in drie geografiese areas gebruik te maak.

Die transkripsies van die fokusgroepe sessies, asook die geskrewe gedeeltes van die deelnemers het bygedra tot datagenerering. Konsepte was geskep vanuit inligting bekom vanuit die fokusgroepe sessies. Groepering van konsepte het plaasgevind, totdat vier hoofgroeperings voortgespruit het uit die groeperingsanalise.

4. Gevolgtrekking

Inligtingsbehoefte behels veel meer as inligtingsvloei. Daar is 'n hiërargie van inligtingsbehoefte wat verhoog volgens die toepassingsareas van mense met hoër kognitiewe vermoëns.

'n Algemene raamwerk van mense se behoeftes vir inligting tydens verandering was tydens die navorsing opgestel. Vier boublokke vorm die basis van mense se inligtingsbehoefte. Die boublokke is: inligtingsvloei, menslike oorwegings, implementering van verandering, asook die konteks.

Mense het heelwat in gemeen rakende inligtingsbehoefte, ongeag hul kognitiewe kompleksiteit. Kognitiewe kompleksiteit het wel 'n invloed op mense se behoeftes vir inligting tydens verandering. Daar is variasies in die belangrikheid van behoeftes vir sekere inligting vir individue in die model. Belangrikheid is onderhewig aan vlakke van kognitiewe kompleksiteit. Daar is 'n ooreenstemming tussen verskeie strata van kognitiewe kompleksiteit en teorie, wat verskillende vlakke van werk in 'n organisasie van vereistes beskryf. Die belangrikheid van inligting wat verlang word hou verband met die areas vir die beoogde gebruik van inligting.

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