

Foreword

Internationalization and globalization are major forces for companies to change their organizational structures and processes fundamentally. To master the associated problems, profound and well planned procedures are indispensable, a task which is referred to as change management, and which has to take into account both structural and dynamic aspects. Especially interventions in the area of human resource management lead to manifold repercussions—intended and unintended, enhancing or interfering with the original intentions. Birgitte Snabe investigates in her dissertation if and to what extent System Dynamics can be helpful to design organizational interventions and to examine and evaluate in a next step which particular actions offer adequate problem solutions.

In a distinction from the permanent organizational adaptation to a changing environment, the author understands organizational interventions as discrete and fundamental changes to the company's structures and processes. The management of organizational interventions consists of two interdependent cycles: Problem formulation, analysis and solution (what to do) on the one hand, and the resulting actions to make the change happen (how to do it) on the other. It is a central hypothesis of the investigation that the implementation of solutions to strategic problems often presents larger challenges than the development of the solution itself. The methodological support for effective implementation processes is the core topic of the dissertation.

Following an 'action research' approach, a delicate and far reaching personnel decision in a large corporation was investigated and is discussed. System Dynamics uses participative model building since about 1990 and offers the prerequisites for mapping contexts which are difficult to quantify. The author presents the development of a complex system model and the implementation of its recommendations both in the practical steps of the concrete case under investigation and in the abstract form necessary for scientific analysis. She demonstrates the power of the selected modelling approach and points out how group dynamics lead to the integration of

initially individual objectives and strategies into a generally accepted process model – i.e. into a “shared mental model”.

Mrs. Snabe’s work skillfully combines theoretical considerations and aspects of the practical implementation. The propositions about organizational interventions developed in the conceptual parts of the study are tested in a rigorous – even though not extensive and representative – practical setting. Their viability is shown in the context of top-management decision making.

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