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Abstracts and presentations

Dialogic leadership: developing a multidisciplinary theoretical framework supporting creativity and innovativeness

Sirpa Syvänen & Kati Tikkamäki, Track: Leadership and innovation

Creativity is a predominant factor of innovativeness in organizations. Innovativeness is a lively part of any organisation and it might be small step improvements, social innovations or innovative products and services. Leadership and creativity theories have been discussed in various forums, but often separately. In this article, the leadership and creativity theories are reviewed and discussed from a dialogic leadership perspective. The objective of this article is to define the relationships with dialogical leadership, creativity and innovativeness based on the relevant scientific literature and empirical research. The study is a part of the Finnish multidisciplinary research programme called Dialogical leadership promoting innovativeness (Dinno).

This article is based on a literature review compiled in a research programme and related workshops. The review was produced by a multidisciplinary research group and it forms a basis for the theoretical framework and research scheme of the research programme. The relevant scientific literature of leadership, creativity, innovativeness, organizational learning and motivation theories was selected and exploited in the review.

Based on the current research and literature, creativity can be increased by wide employee participation, supporting their internal motivation and sharing of knowledge. Dialogical leadership provides means to support the participation, motivation and learning of all the employees. The theoretical framework of the dialogical leadership is defined based on the findings.

There is an immense innovativeness potential in many organisations when the knowledge and creativity of all the employees are fully exploited. Defined based on the literature and research, the theoretical framework of the research programme will be used to identify the preconditions, obstacles and catalysts of organisational learning and innovativeness. It will be utilised and tested in the forthcoming qualitative and quantitative research phases of the programme. The factors of the creativity are quite similar to those promoting the well-being of the employees. These both have an important role in efforts to move towards a more innovative and sustainable working life and so improved competitiveness of the organisations.



Challenging management situations in the professional organisations

Sirpa Syvänen & Sari Tappura, Track: Health and work, wellbeing at work

Conflicts, problems of work ability, work-related illness, harassment, malpractices or other kinds of challenging situations in work community may impede the wellbeing, productivity, creativity and innovativeness of an organization. These situations are challenging to the managers since they are responsible to manage and solve them. Successful management of the challenging situations helps the managers in promoting the wellbeing of the employees and helping them achieve the business targets. Besides, the sooner the conflicts are solved, the less time and effort are employed in solving and discussing them.

The objective of this article is to discuss the specific characteristics of the professional organisation, the challenging situations that might occur in the work community, and the manager's role in preventing and solving them. This article is a part of the Finnish multidisciplinary research program called Dialogical leadership promoting innovativeness (Dinno).

The theoretical part of the article is based on the theories of the professional organization, productivity, quality of working life and management of occupational health and safety, conflicts, and creativity. Based on the literature and participatory action research, the specific characteristics of a professional organisation are defined and discussed. Furthermore, the common factors of occupational health and safety, productivity, quality of working life, and creativity in the professional organisation are discussed. The managers' experiences of challenging management situations are presented based on the case studies, action research interventions, process evaluation data and the thematic interviews of the managers in several sectors. The ways they get support as well as their need for support are also represented. Preventing and solving challenging situations is also discussed based on the case studies and action researches.

The most challenging management situations in professional organisations are related to the psychosocial risks like mental overload, malpractices and taking the individual characteristic and needs of an employee into account. Also the personal problems of the employees are difficult to manage. In the challenging management situations, the managers need support, tools and problem solving methods. They are typically supported by their immediate superior, colleagues, occupational safety and health care professionals, friends and relatives. Also the uniform organizational procedures like early on support model help the managers in the challenging situations.



Downshifting as an individual response to the problems of contemporary working life in Finland

Antti Kasvio & Susanna Lundell

Our institutions of work aren't functioning well. Activities are restructured and employees are made redundant. Creating new profitable jobs is difficult and unemployment is on the rise. In future the economic growth is slowing down because of ageing and heavy public sector debts. Enterprises are moving their operations to emerging markets, technology replaces human labour, and the earth's natural boundaries are exceeded. The whole modern civilization is on an unsustainable path.

Individual citizens build still their careers mostly on a traditional manner. Young people are expected to pass through education and to learn an occupation. Then they are expected to go to work, acquire an economically safe position and move into pension from the top of their career.

In recent times it has become increasingly difficult to reach these objectives. The young people don't always find a way to active working life, and in order to keep their jobs many employees must stretch their resources to the outmost. Some economically active citizens would like to devote more time and energy to other kinds of activities. Career-oriented persons ask whether the sacrifices made in order to reach one's present status have really been worthwhile. Some want to downshift, that is to move voluntarily lower in the existing occupational and status hierarchies.

Others do not necessarily want to downshift permanently but would like to readjust on a somewhat smaller scale their work tasks and working hours so that they can balance better different activities and responsibilities with each other. This trend has led to the need for mass customization of careers in organizations.

In some countries downshifting has become a rather fashionable issue. Downshifting is seen as part of a more general trend towards new lifestyles of health and sustainability (LOHAS). But downshifters have also been criticized about wanting to reduce their work and consumption at a time when everybody ought to work as much as possible in order to save the welfare state.

Actual information about the downshifters' motives and experiences is still scarce. We have tried to cover this gap by interviewing about twenty downshifters in two large Finnish organizations. We have also interviewed management and organized group discussions in order to find out 1) why people have wanted to change their tasks, 2) how the organizations have responded to their wishes, 3) has their work become more satisfactory or meaningful, 4) how the changes have influenced the work of colleagues, and 5) to what extent downshifting can be seen as a signal of more general pressures towards change in modern working life.



The development of the Work Community Based on the Employees' self evaluation and the democratic dialogue

Kaija Loppela

This paper presents a dialogic development method based on the academic multi-disciplinary dissertation of the author in year 2004. It is a systematic method, which involves the exact documentation. Both the employees and managers are involved in a common dialogue about the things that they themselves choose together to discuss and develop. After dissertation the model has been used in many organizations as the methodological tool of development. In year 2012 there has been an evaluation (research) about the benefits of the use of this method. Case studies are based on the materials gathered in Finnish municipal organizations from years 2005 – 2008 on various service sectors such as social and health services, sports and recreation and youth services. The background of the researcher is adult education, educational psychology, work and organizational psychology and health sciences.

The model (systematic method) bases on democratic dialogue and open discussion on different working conditions. The dialogue involves reflective thinking, in other words, alternative approaches to work and action are addressed, sometimes critically, from the employees', the company's and the client's perspectives. This will result the realistic development aims and ensure a connection to the company's operational principles and quality management. The dialogue is not possible, unless time is allocated for this purpose, and staff meetings arranged. It is also essential that besides top management, also middle management and immediate supervisors are seriously committed to the process, and that strategic human resources management is appreciated.

In the findings of this evaluation it seemed that the open discuss, the possibility to influence one's work and workplace, to assume responsibility and to learn together were the central elements in the development of the work community and in the maintenance of work capacity and wellbeing at work. These factors were also considered to increase motivation and work satisfaction. The other central findings were the importance of development of meeting practices and cooperation structures, multi professional groups, not too large groups, enough time for shared development activities, reflective thinking and learning, listening, suspending and trust and commitment between everyone who are involved.