



Quality and productivity

A substantive theory on the implementation process of operational performance improvement methods

Uma teoria substantiva sobre o processo de implementação de sistemas de melhoria de desempenho operacional

Una teoría sustantiva sobre el proceso de implementación de sistemas de mejora del desempeño operativo

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Abstract

This study aimed to present theoretical categories on the phenomenon of the implementation of performance improvement methods in organizations. The method used was Grounded Theory, following the procedures presented by Strauss and Corbin (2008). In this way, the study was conducted based on the principles of theoretical sampling, and the data collection and analysis were conducted in alternate sequences, and it was composed by 05 (five) sample groups. The theoretical sample was composed of 26 (twenty-six) interviews conducted in 12 (twelve) companies. The participants were managers who have had experience with implementation of assessment and performance improvement methods. Thus, the substantive theory “A phase of change and learning” was built up. It consisted of 09 (nine) categories besides the core category. According to the results, the phenomenon of implementation of performance improvement methods is understood as a phase of change and learning that involves behavioral and structural aspects of the organization. It is concluded that these aspects should be considered from a systemic perspective, in order to integrate structure, technologies, behaviors and processes that are part of the phenomenon of implementation.

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Keywords: Implementation; Performance improvement; *Grounded Theory*

Resumo

Neste estudo, teve-se como objetivo apresentar categorias teóricas sobre o fenômeno da implementação de sistemas de melhoria de desempenho em organizações. O método utilizado foi a *Grounded Theory*, seguindo os procedimentos apresentados por Strauss and Corbin (2008). Desta forma, a pesquisa foi conduzida baseada nos princípios da amostragem teórica, sendo que a coleta e análise dos dados foram realizadas em sequências alternadas, e compreenderam 05 (cinco) grupos amostrais. A amostra teórica foi composta por 26 (vinte e seis) entrevistas, realizadas em 12 (doze) empresas. Os participantes foram gestores que já tiveram experiência com implementações de sistemas de avaliação e melhoria de desempenho. Desta forma, construiu-se a teoria substantiva “Uma fase de mudança e aprendizado”. Esta se constitui de 09 (nove) categorias, além da categoria central. De acordo com os resultados entende-se o fenômeno da implementação de sistemas de melhorias de desempenho como

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uma fase de mudança e aprendizado que envolve aspectos comportamentais e estruturais da organização. Conclui-se que estes aspectos devem ser considerados a partir de uma visão sistêmica, a fim de integrar estrutura, tecnologias, comportamentos e processos que fazem parte do fenômeno da implementação.

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Palavras-chave: Implementação; Melhoria de desempenho; *Grounded Theory*

Resumen

En este estudio el objetivo es presentar categorías teóricas sobre el fenómeno de la aplicación de sistemas de mejora de desempeño en las organizaciones. Se utiliza el método de *Grounded Theory*, siguiendo los procedimientos presentados por Strauss and Corbin (2008); así, el estudio tiene como base los principios del muestreo teórico. La recopilación y análisis de los datos se realizaron en secuencias alternas y comprendieron 05 (cinco) grupos de muestras. La muestra teórica consistió de 26 (veintiséis) entrevistas realizadas en 12 (doce) empresas. Los participantes fueron directivos que tenían experiencia con implementación de sistemas de evaluación y mejora de rendimiento. Así, fue construida la teoría sustantiva “Una fase de cambio y aprendizaje”, que consta de 09 (nueve) categorías, además de la categoría central. De acuerdo con los resultados, se entiende el fenómeno de la implementación de sistemas de mejora de desempeño como una etapa de cambio y aprendizaje que incluye aspectos conductuales y estructurales de la organización. Se concluye que estos aspectos deben ser considerados desde una visión sistémica, con el fin de integrar estructura, tecnologías, comportamientos y procesos que forman parte del fenómeno de la implementación.

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Palabras clave: Implementación; Mejora de desempeño; *Grounded Theory*

Introduction

The organizations started to feel the need to resort to models and tools in an attempt to meet the real necessities of the context in which they operate, seeking, thus, to guarantee their continuity and assure competitive advantages. However, it is increasingly clear that a significant part of the change programs in the organizations has difficulty in operationalization. The results offered by the models do not always occur, and the efforts made (time, structure and money) end up being wasted.

Despite the great amount of publications about performance assessment, there is still a lack of approaches regarding the problems and difficulties associated to the implementation of change, and there is evidence of high levels of failure on the applications of the performance improvement methods (Bourne, Neely, Mills, & Platts, 2003; Hashmi, Khan, & Haq, 2015; Neely & Bourne, 2000; Scherer & Ribeiro, 2013; Trad & Maximiano, 2009; Waal & Counet, 2009; Walter & Tubino, 2013).

Therefore, in this research it is sought to discuss the following question: what is the meaning of the implementation of organizational performance improvement methods, experienced by business managers? Based on this question, it was sought to clarify how the organizations deal with the difficulties and the ease during the phase of implementation of operational performance improvement, which are the problems faced by the organizations during the implementation phase and how the initiatives may become more efficient and effective.

In light of the foregoing, the objective of this study is to present theoretical categories about the phenomenon of implementation of operational performance improvement in organizations, based on the reality experienced by business managers. The model building took place from the investigation of real cases that had experience in the application of operational performance improvement methods.

In order to achieve the objectives, the methodology used in this work was based on the Grounded Theory principles. Glaser and Strauss (1967) explain that in the Grounded Theory, the generation of assumptions substantiated in data is a way of getting to an appropriate theory for its alleged use. The concern is related to the construction of knowledge from specific realities.

The existing studies focus on the description of categories and instead of on their planning or theorization. They differ, therefore, from the proposal of this study. According to Strauss and Corbin (2008), there is a difference between description, conceptual planning and theorization. In accordance to a research, it was found that the studies that focus on the theme of implementation are descriptive. From the research done in the databases Scielo, Spell and Portal de Periódicos Capes [Capes Journals Portal], works dealing with this theme with the intention of conceptual planning or theory generation were not found. Another aspect differing this study from the others is related to the proposal of not studying a particular model, but proposing a more comprehensive and abstract research. Thus, the use of the grounded theory provides this study certain level of unprecedented nature, considering the theme approached.

It is common for the performance assessment and measurement models (TQM, 5S, Six Sigma, and others) to be described in literature as performance improvement methods or continuous improvement methods (Attadia & Martins, 2003; Frederico & Martins, 2012; Goessler, 2009; Gonzalez & Martins, 2007; Lima, Carvalho, & Herkenhoff, 2010; Silva & Araújo, 2006). In this sense, along this study the use of the expression performance method will be common.

After this introduction, the part referring to the literature is presented, and its focus is on the implementation process of organizational performance improvement methods. Subsequently, the methodological procedures are described. After, there is the presentation of the results, and the theoretical model

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