

THE DEVELOPMENT OF AN ORGANISATIONAL REDESIGN MODEL

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study was to develop a model to assist a South African information technology company with its organisational redesign interventions. A modernist qualitative methodology, with casing as research strategy and grounded theory as a data analysis method, was used to develop a model. Expert research participants were selected by means of purposive sampling. Their experience of the company's redesign process was explored in order to develop the model. Multiple data collection methods were used. Literature on current organisation downsizing was reviewed. The focus group discussions culminated in the formulation of the Organisation Redesign Model. Recommendations were made for future research.

Keywords: Grounded theory, downsizing, redesign, organisational downsizing, South African IT company

Downsizing may take several forms. Companies reorganise and restructure to increase efficiency or economics of scale, de-layer to eliminate particular layers of bureaucracy and reduce payroll expenses, outsource certain functions in order to focus more resources on key competencies, and use contingent workers to meet demand increases and help keep payroll costs down (Abbasi & Hollman, 1998).

Throughout the early 1990s, the news media issued reports of major North American companies announcing layoffs of several thousand employees. Currently, companies large and small are still cutting jobs at a rate never seen before in the history of the United States. However, cut-and-slash tactics do not necessarily result in high performance, and the productivity-enhancing role of downsizing has been exaggerated. In many cases, downsizing is not only ill considered, but also inappropriate - a knee-jerk reaction to bad times. Companies, particularly those that are bloated and non-competitive, tend to turn to layoffs when they cannot solve fundamental problems (Abbasi & Hollman, 1998).

One of the major challenges of business leadership is to heighten competitive advantage through a smoother management process that involves less employee dislocation. Given the corrosive effect and poor record of downsizing, many companies are searching for more attractive ways to become mean and lean and more competitive in the global marketplace. They see downsizing as a strategy for achieving greater earnings and productivity and improving their financial position. Downsizing is particularly tantalising to companies that are deeply in debt (Fisher & White, 2000).

In appreciating the downsizing phenomenon in South Africa, an open systems perspective of employment relations (see Nel, Swanepoel, Kirsten, Erasmus & Tsabadi, 2005) is quite helpful. From this framework it makes sense to state that employment relations in democratised national states are confronted with various social changes. From Nel *et al.*'s (2005, pp. 25-31) excellent discussion of the possible interplay between employment dynamics and workplace variables in South Africa, the following can be drawn:

- **Socio-economic factors.**

South Africa's economic growth rate, inflation, taxation and interest rates could affect its employment relations, which in turn may result in various interrelated phenomena, such

as (1) too few job opportunities; (2) unemployment; (3) envy, conflict and violence; (4) employee stress; (5) absenteeism; (6) low employee performance; (7) poor organisational competitiveness; (8) restructuring of business processes and downsizing of staff; (9) poor economic growth; (10) labour action, which negatively impacts on foreign investment; and (11) organised mass stay-away or protest actions, which contribute to management-employee conflict.

- **Social and political dynamics.**

The political transformation culminating in South Africa's first democratic election in 1994 led to various legislative changes, including those dealing with the country's labour market and employment relations. Not only employer representatives but also trade unions have a major interest in labour legislation. Organised labour, particularly Cosato (Congress of South African Trade Unions), a federation of trade unions, is actively involved not only in general local political processes but also in international politics. The particular nature of trade unions in organisations and in the broader South African society is influenced by developments in the country's socio-political dispensation, including (1) greater involvement of workers in management decisions; (2) inflated expectations resulting from election processes which, in turn, lead to workers and the unemployed pressurising both government and employers to "deliver"; (3) pressure on the private sector to substantially contribute towards reducing poverty and raising living standards and on employers to ensure that "not only all employees, irrespective of race, gender, etc., share in the same housing assistance benefits, but that even those who have traditionally been deprived of such benefits should now be treated more favourably" (Nel *et al.*, 2005, p. 28); (4) the spilling over of crime into organisations, often exacerbated by violence and intimidation, resulting in organisations taking measures to ensure the safety and security of staff; (5) increasing involvement of business in the education and development of their workforce and the communities in which they are located: "if employees are not developed, it may not only lead to inferior productivity levels and capacity/competency-related cases for the termination of their services, but may also threaten the continued existence of the organisation, affecting job creation which is so necessary for socio-economic growth and social stability in the country" (Nel *et al.*, 2005, pp. 28-29), and making provision for changing societal values,

e.g. increasingly involving women in the business and professional world and introducing devices to deal with maternity and paternity leave, childcare and flexitime); (6) increasing transparency and democratic decision-making in organisations; and (7) the pressure on organisations to illustrate that they care about the environment and the impact of their operations on it.

- **Organisation-related variables.**

The following factors within the workforce may interact with the dynamics of employment relations: (1) management's decision on how to grow the organisation over the short, medium and long term, which might entail entering new markets, expanding the organisation by establishing new operations in new regions, regaining market share, reducing labour costs and cutting back on certain activities, amalgamating with other organisations, dismissing workers, fair staff retrenchment practices and consultation with workers and/or their representatives; (2) organisational structuring, including structures for communication and control, decentralisation and collective bargaining; and (3) ownership, size, geographic distribution and location of the organisation.

The preceding variables clearly illustrate the multi-facetedness of employment relations dynamics and their interrelationship with various factors within and outside businesses, spanning from local political and economic developments to global trends. It should already be clear that South Africa as a recently democratised nation has particular complexities with regard to employment relations.

Given South Africa's urgent need to meet global demands, the extreme complexity of its organisational restructuring, the frequency and haphazardness of its downsizing initiatives, and the resultant protracted litigation and delays in restructuring, the lack of scientific work on the practice of downsizing is astonishing. According to Budros (1999, p. 69), this is also the case in the United States, where there is little serious theoretical or empirical work on the issue. As Cameron (1994, p. 183) puts it, "downsizing may be the most pervasive yet understudied business phenomenon; we have approached this phenomenon atheoretically and the number of systematic studies on it is paltry".

From the aforementioned it should be clear that organisational downsizing is not only a complex phenomenon but also thorny to implement. The situation is further complicated with South Africa's complex legal framework requiring a well-defined process for organisational downsizing assisting local organisations in effecting the process without running the risk of being economically unfair.

Definition of the Problem

According to *Africa News Service* (2001, p. 1), labour is fighting rationalisation in both the motor and mining industries that is causing a job loss bloodbath in South Africa. This approach by local unions makes it very difficult for organisations to restructure their operations to remain competitive. More specifically, there is continued pressure on South African organisations to restructure their operations without retrenching employees, mainly because of its developing economy and because of the inheritance of injustice practices accompanying apartheid.

It should be emphasised that South African organisations do not understand downsizing too well, resulting in many organisations making mistakes during their interventions which, in turn, cost them dearly from an economic and legislative perspective.

Research Questions

From a social science research perspective the following broad questions come to mind:

- How should South African businesses intermittently manage organisational redesign?
- What are the internal and external triggers that lead to organisational redesign?
- What are the phases that impact organisational redesign?

Aims and Objectives of the Study

The aim of the study was to develop an organisational redesign model in South African businesses. More particularly, the objectives of the study were as follows:

- To employ a qualitative methodology to establish and describe the experiences and views of staff of a downsizing intervention recently implemented by their organisation in order to generate knowledge to determine its feasibility, including shortcomings and proposals for improvement.
- To apply insights gained from employees' experiences and perspectives as well as usable abstract scholarly concepts found in the literature on organisational and human resource management and leadership, in order to re-define the downsizing practices and policies of the organisation.
- To compile guidelines that will facilitate the implementation of downsizing interventions by South African businesses.

RESEARCH DESIGN

Three aspects are normally included in the design; the research approach, utilising a case study as a research strategy, and the research methodology (Mouton & Marais, 1988).

Research Approach

According to Mouton and Marais (1988, pp. 20-21) a researcher should be aware of his or her own meta-theoretical values or beliefs or particular philosophical assumptions. These assumptions should not influence the way in which the research will be conducted, but can constitute an "intellectual climate" for particular beliefs in the nature of a social reality that can impact the "qualities of postulates".

Key scientific beliefs

Ontological position.

Ritchie and Lewis (2004, pp. 11-23) believe that social reality implies three broad but distinct positions: (1) realism, i.e. claiming the existence of an external reality existing independently from people's beliefs about or understanding of it; (2) materialism, i.e. posing the existence of a real world but emphasising only the material features that embrace reality; and (3) idealism, i.e. asserting that reality is only knowable through the human mind and specifically by means of socially constructed meanings. The researcher (first author) believes that it is only through experience and understanding of their social environment that individuals are able to attach meaning to it. This belief informed his wish to study the construction of the managers and some executives of his company in respect of the downsizing interventions that the company had experienced (as reflected by their meanings, experiences, understandings, ideas, views, stories, biographies, words, actions, reactions, interactions, situations, social relations, social and cultural practices and processes, rules and ethical values and belief systems). More particularly, he wanted to explore, describe and appreciate their **concrete experiences and perspectives** of a new downsizing process. Therefore he set out to explicate their everyday experiences and viewpoints to the best of his ability, illuminated these with the aid of abstract concepts extracted from the literature and developed a scientific process that could be applied by the company in refining its downsizing interventions.

Epistemological position.

Dick (1999, p. 306) states that: "Epistemology, or the theory of knowledge, is a branch of philosophy concerned with a general treatment of the nature, origins, scope and limits of human knowledge, its pre-suppositions and basis". The first author's epistemological perspective is that a scientific process for organisational downsizing can be developed by employing unstructured flexible methods of inquiry to capture, describe and appreciate the rich experiences of current users of his company's downsizing process.

Choosing a modernist qualitative research approach.

Denzin and Lincoln (2003) state that the history of qualitative research is defined more by "breaks and ruptures than by clear evolutionary, progressive movement from one stage to the next". The first moment, defined as the traditional period, was from the early twentieth century until just after the end of the Second World War. This period was followed by the modernist age, the second moment, up until the 1970s. During this period, attempts were made to formalise methods and processes in qualitative research and, as a result, many texts were written. Most importantly, it was during the latter stage of this period that Glaser and Strauss (1967) further formalised approaches to qualitative analysis to enhance the rigour of data collection and analysis. The fundamental principles underpinning this approach to qualitative research have continued to be elaborated on by Strauss (1987) and Strauss and Corbin (1990). According to Denzin (1989), the modernist paradigm is still a relevant research approach today. Denzin (1989) states that qualitative researchers have choices that they did not have twenty years ago. The first author chose the modernist qualitative approach because of the rigour of data collection and analysis.

Case study as a research strategy

Babbie and Mouton (2004, p. 640) define case study research as an intensive investigation of a single unit. This unit varies from individual people, families, communities, social groups, organisations and institutions, to events and countries. Yin (2003) describes the case study as a research strategy that comprises a holistic method that covers the logic of design including the scope, data collection methods and specific approaches to the analysis of the data. Firstly, the case study in an empirical inquiry seeks to understand present-day phenomena within a real world context, where the boundaries between the phenomena and the context are not clearly evident. Secondly, the author points out that multiple data collection and analysis methods are an important part of the definition as a distinctive situation needs to be dealt with, in which there are many more variables of interest than data points that rely on multiple sources of evidence. This is in line with my epistemological position.

Studies of organisations and institutions entail an in-depth study of an organisation, company, corporation, trade union, etc. However, organisational studies have many foci, including best practice, policy implementation and evaluation, human resources practices, management and organisational issues, organisational culture, processes of change and re-engineering, and so on (Babbie & Mouton, 2004, p. 281). According to Eisenhardt (2002, p. 12), case study research can be based on single or multiple-case studies, and regardless of being single or multiple may be exploratory, descriptive or explanatory.

The first author opted for a single exploratory case study as he intended to explore and describe employees' social construction of his company's recently implemented downsizing intervention and, based on this, he provided a social science basis for this process. Moreover, because of the study's qualitative nature, the strategy of case study was used to formulate theory and grounded theory was used as the data analysis method which is ideally suited for case study as a research strategy because it was designed to develop theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

Research methodology

The word methodology in research is defined as "the logic of implementing scientific methods in the study of reality" (Mouton & Marais, 1988). The first author considered the following components of research methodology:

- The research setting
- The way in which entrée was achieved
- The sampling methods employed
- Data collection methods used
- The way in which the data was recorded and managed
- The analysis of the data
- Strategies used to ensure the quality of the research
- Reporting style followed
- Ethical considerations applied

Research setting

The study was undertaken in a 25-year old South African ICT company's Gauteng-based operations. Employing more than 4000 employees, nearly 30% of whom are from previously disadvantaged backgrounds, the company, as integrator of competitive, innovative business solutions based on Information and Communications Technology (ICT) has offices in all major centres of the country. These regional offices provide a single interface to clients and are supported by a combination of ICT competency centres employing some of the country's leading experts in their particular fields. Furthermore, a corporate services team provides HR, commercial, financial, marketing and communication support. The organisation runs mission-critical ICT systems for many JSE-listed organisations and manages products, services and solutions for key public sector organisations, parastatal enterprises and a host of medium-sized emergent companies.

Regarding the downsizing process: senior executives made the decision to use the process and were party to the execution thereof. The managers had to buy into the process prior to its implementation. Thereafter, they had to use the process. The regional human resources practitioners had to ensure that the process was implemented according to its original design. It should be clear that all parties had a common interest in the process and in ensuring that it was continuously enhanced.

Entrée and establishing researcher roles

Bogdan and Taylor (1975, pp. 30-37) state that the researcher normally gains access to an organisational setting by requesting the permission of those in charge. We refer to the people who have the power as 'gatekeepers'. The first author had officially obtained permission by the CEO of the organisation to commence with the study. This letter granted him permission to use the identified participants. Furthermore, he held a discussion with these employees indicating the importance of the research to the organisation. All the participants in the organisation had already agreed to participate in this study. The first author had a personal relationship with each of the senior executives who had a vested interest in the study. It was important to them that a proper scientific downsizing process be developed by using the organisation. The regional human resources practitioner reporting to him was equally interested in the study, as the sooner the organisation developed an organisational downsizing process, the easier it would be to monitor an official process that can be justified during future possible downsizing interventions. These participants knew that the interviews would be recorded and that the first author would be making additional notes after each of the interviews, in order to appreciate the employees' social construction of the innovation and, together with key theoretical concepts, develop the downsizing process.

One aspect that is related to the researcher's role and which deserves attention here is managing the qualitative researcher's subjectivity. While this aspect has been receiving increased

attention amongst qualitative researchers resulting in a substantial literature, the following will suffice:

- “Different to quantitative researchers when we study social reality qualitatively, we do not believe that we can be *detached* from our research in an attempt to limit, if not avoid, bias. We are convinced that we need to become *immersed* in people, social situations, and any social reality we study. Amongst others, we assume varying interactive social roles when we observe, interview and interact with people in order to collect and capture data, interpret them, and finally validate our reconstructions of social worlds. In our interaction with our research participants we put the main emphasis on the necessity of a skilled and properly prepared *person* in contrast to some instrument like a questionnaire. But how do we deal with our own experiences and viewpoints? We explicate them as far as possible, inter alia, in memoirs, project diaries or natural histories and/or auto-ethnographics. In short, we strive towards what Erickson (1973) and Mason (1996) respectively term disciplined subjectivity and reflexivity. This implies a critical self-examination of our roles as researchers throughout the entire research process”. (McMillan & Shumacher, 2001) (Emphasis in the original).
- The first author also employed what are known as ‘peer debriefers’ (McMillan & Shumacher, 2001) to assist him with his critical self-examination of his researcher role. In addition to his promoter, he utilised fellow students and colleagues here.

Sampling

The first author decided to select his sample on the basis of his knowledge of the people who had the best possible knowledge of the current organisational downsizing process and would therefore be in the best position to make a contribution to the study. This type of sampling is called purposive sampling (Ritchie & Lewis, 2004, p. 80). Based on his own experience of the company and its employees he selected two top executives, four senior managers who had applied the particular process before and one regional human resources consultant who was the custodian of the process.

After he had obtained data from these employees on the company’s downsizing process and tapped his own knowledge on the issue, he extracted data from organisational documents and derived insights from the scientific literature. The use of additional data sources was based on the need to support the themes, patterns and “emerging” concepts that he derived from the primary data collection. The strategy described above is closely related to theoretical sampling which is mainly associated with grounded theory. Glaser and Strauss (1967, p. 45) define theoretical sampling as the process of data collection for generating theory whereby the analyst sets up codes, analyses data and decides what data to collect next and where to find them, in order to gradually develop a theory. Ritchie and Lewis (2004, p. 80) refer to grounded theory as: “A strategy where the researcher samples incidents, people or units on the basis of their potential contribution to the development and testing of theoretical constructs. The process is iterative, as the researcher picks an initial sample, analyses the data and selects a further sample in order to refine emerging categories and theories. This process is continued until the researcher reaches “data saturation”, or a point when no new insights can be extracted through expanding the sample further (Bryman, 2004, p. 305).

Data collection methods

Denzin and Lincoln (2003, p. 37) state that the researcher has several methods for collecting data. They range from the interview (individual and focus group interviews, referring to a number of individuals with the same background, interests, values and norms who interact with one another in such a

way that each person influences and is influenced by the other persons, (Schurink, 2004a) to direct observation for the analysis of artefacts, documents (solicited and unsolicited) and cultural records, and the use of visual materials or personal experience. The first author made use of both solicited and unsolicited documents.

The first author also used one-on-one structured interviews which is the predominant mode of data collection in social science research (De Vos, Strydom, Fouche & Delpoort, 2005). Finally, he applied focus group discussions with all the participants that were selected via purposive and theoretical sampling techniques. “Focus” means that the discussion taking place in the group is limited to the specific theme under investigation. A focus group interview can thus be described as a purposive discussion of a specific topic or related topics, preferably taking place between eight to ten individuals with a similar background and common interests.

He annotated his observations extensively during the interview; these annotations eventually became part of the field notes he prepared afterwards.

Recording of data

Field notes and transcriptions of recorded interviews are considered traditional means of recording data (Schurink, 2004a, p. 11). He made use of both of these.

Transcribed recorded interviews. According to Bogdan and Biklen (2003, p. 124), it is important to transcribe sections on a tape that specifically address the concerns of the research. In the present study all interviews were recorded with the consent of the participants and the tapes were sent to professional transcribers for typing.

Field notes. According to De Vos *et al.* (2005, p. 285) field notes are made by qualitative researchers of everything they see or hear. Field notes consist of two kinds of materials. The first kind is descriptive – the concern is to provide a word picture of the setting, people, actions and conversations as observed. It is by far the most extensive part of the field notes and represents the researcher’s best effort to objectively record the details of what has occurred in the field. The second field note variety is reflective – it captures more of the observer’s frame of mind, ideas and concerns. It is a more personal account of the course of the inquiry. The emphasis is on speculation, feelings, problems, ideas, hunches, impressions and prejudices. It is about what you think you are learning, what you are going to do next, and what the outcome of the study is going to be. The first author used both descriptive and reflective field notes in his research.

Data analysis

Data analysis basically involves data reduction, data display, conclusion drawing and verification. Analysis involves working with data, organising them, tying them into manageable units, synthesising them, searching for patterns, discovering what is important and what is to be learnt, and what to tell others (Schurink, 2004a). The first author employed grounded theory as a formal qualitative data analysis approach in his study.

Grounded theory

According to Goulding (2002, pp. 38-43), grounded theory can be traced to symbolic interactionism, the origins of which lie in the work of Charles Cooley (1864-1929) and George Herbert Mead (1863-1931). Using the principles of symbolic interactionism as a basic foundation, two American scholars, Corbin and Strauss (1990), set out to develop a more defined and systematic procedure for collecting and analysing qualitative data. The method they developed was labelled grounded theory to reflect the source of the developed theory, which is ultimately the behaviour, words and actions of those under study. They both believe in (1) the need to get out in the field if

one wants to understand what is going on; (2) the importance of theory grounded in reality; (3) the continually evolving nature of experience in the field for the subjects and researcher; (4) the active role of persons in shaping the worlds they live in through the process of symbolic interaction; (5) continuous change and process and the variability and complexity of life; and (6) the interrelationship between subjects' meanings and their actions (Glaser, 1992, p. 16).

Strauss and Corbin (1998, p. 22) state that however illuminating or even "revolutionary" the idea of theorising must be, development of an idea into theory still necessitates that an idea be explored fully and be considered from many different angles or perspectives. It is also important to follow through with the implications of a theory. Those formulations and implications lead to "research activity" that entails making decisions about and acting in relation to many questions throughout the research process – what, when, where, how, who and so on. Also, any hypothesis and propositions derived from the data must be continuously "checked out" against incoming data, and then modified, extended or deleted as necessary. According to Glaser and Strauss (1968, p. 3), the developed theory should (1) enable prediction and explanation of behaviour; (2) be useful in theoretical advances in sociology; (3) be applicable in practice; (4) provide a perspective on behaviour; (5) guide and provide a style for research on particular areas of behaviour; and (6) provide clear enough categories and hypotheses so that crucial ones can be verified in present and future research.

Grounded theory has split into two camps, each subtly distinguished by its own ideographic procedures. On the one hand, Glaser (1978) stresses the interpretive, contextual and emergent nature of theory development, whereas the late Strauss appears to have emphasised highly complex and systematic coding techniques. Strauss and Corbin (1990) exemplify this rupture with their presentation of multiple coding procedures such as open, axial and selective coding, and techniques of comparison that are now used to advance analysis by intentional manipulation of data in a variety of ways. The first author used the Corbin and Strauss (1990) method of grounded theory as it was more structured than the original approach developed by Glaser and Strauss (1968). Once he had completed his application of grounded theory he conducted an extensive literature review on downsizing, whereafter he used the final step in the Corbin and Strauss (1990) method of grounded theory, the conditional matrix, to develop the model on organisational redesign.

Dimensional analysis and conditional matrix

According to Goulding (2002, p. 79), dimensional analysis, a newcomer, was pioneered by Schatzman and Strauss (1973). In order to move the interpretation from a descriptive to an explanatory level it is necessary to have a framework for identifying the relationship between and across emerging phenomena. Dimensional analysis uses as its foundation conditions, processes, contexts and consequences that can be shown to affect the outcome of the informant's story. The first author used the dimensional analysis to build a structure or methodological perspective for analysis and explanation. He collected and scrutinised all the data until a critical mass of dimensions was assembled that represented emerging pathways with explanatory power. A grounded model as in dimensional analysis employs similar strategies for describing and developing theoretical frameworks. He asked the following four questions:

- What were the conditions of the action?
- What were the interactions between the actors?
- What were their actions and strategies?
- What were the consequences of the actions?

He then placed the data in a framework of:

- Causal conditions

- The phenomenon
- Intervening conditions
- Interactional strategies

The dimensional analysis was followed by conditional matrixing. According to Corbin and Strauss (1990, p. 11), it is useful when describing economic conditions, cultural values, political trends and social movements to think in terms of a conditional matrix. The matrix suggests a set of decreasingly inclusive circles embracing different conditions, beginning with the broad ones just noted and moving inward to conditions progressively narrower in scope. The conditional matrix and particularly the notion that "the analysis of the setting must not be restricted to the conditions that bear immediately on the phenomenon of central interest" is a source of conflict between researchers adopting the Strauss and Corbin approach and those using the principles advocated by Glaser (Goulding, 2002, p. 88).

He applied a simpler conditional matrix (Partington, 2000) consisting of four concentric circles labelled as follows:

- External actions
- Internal actions
- Management cognition
- Action

This has been derived from the S-O-R theory which is concerned with how people's understanding of their environment leads to action. This matrix enabled him to understand the interrelationships between the various core categories that assisted him with the development of the model of organisational redesign.

Memos. Glaser and Strauss (1968, pp. 83-84) define a memo as "the theorising write-up of ideas about codes and their relationships as they strike the analyst while coding ... it can be a sentence, a paragraph or a few pages ... it exhausts the analyst's momentary ideation based on data with perhaps little conceptual elaboration." The first author made extensive use of memos.

Strategies used to ensure quality research

Schurink (2004c) contends that there are apparently at present at least three distinct perspectives on assessing the quality of qualitative research (see Cutcliffe, 2000). Qualitative and quantitative research should be evaluated by the same measures; qualitative research should be evaluated by standards that have been particularly developed for it (Holloway & Wheeler, 2002). More recently, Lincoln and Guba (1985) developed the concepts of trustworthiness and authenticity as parallel and alternative criteria.

In addition to peer debriefing, to which the first author has already referred, he also employed member validation or host recognition, authenticity and trustworthiness, credibility, reflectivity, transferability and triangulation to ensure quality research.

Member validation, or host recognition

According to Schurink (2004d), member validation or host recognition entails inviting research participants to comment on the adequacy of the researcher's interpretations; comments are then fed back into the research findings. The first author continuously discussed his developing account of managers' social construction of his company's downsizing process with them, particularly to search for contradictions to his findings (see Murphy & Dingwall, 2003, p. 191).

Authenticity and trustworthiness

These are reflected by "careful documentation of the process of research and the decisions made along the way" (Daymon & Holloway, 2002, p. 93). The first author carefully documented the process of his research and the decisions he made along the

way. The following criteria have been proposed for assessing trustworthiness and authenticity:

Credibility

Schurink (2004d) advises that to be credible, a researcher should be able to demonstrate as far as possible what he planned and executed in such a manner that the social construction of the transformation in his company could be accurately described. In order to accomplish credibility, the first author kept, *inter alia*, a project journal, or natural history, which enabled him to provide a chronological exposition of the decisions, notably the key decisions, he took during the research.

Reflectivity

For Murphy & Dingwall (2003), reflectivity constitutes a level of self-conscious reflection upon the ways in which the findings of research are inevitably shaped by the research process itself and for an analysis that takes this into account. The first author increasingly realised during the study that he had to foster his capability for reflectivity. As indicated, he kept a project diary so as to engage in self-conscious reflections upon his impact upon the research participants, had regular discussions with debriefers to create some distance between the research process and himself and, finally, especially during field note compilation, considered possible reasons for the research participants' particular behaviour during the interviews.

Transferability

According to Seale (2000), "transferability replaces the notion of external validity or generalisability, and refers to the researcher's task of assisting the reader to transfer research findings of single case studies or small-scale worlds to similar settings". In the present study the challenge was to unpack the complexity of downsizing in such a way that it would lead to the modification and/or improvement of the current practice in the company, or in companies with similar characteristics.

Triangulation

According to Ritchie and Lewis (2004, p. 43) triangulation involves the use of different methods and sources to check the integrity of, or extend, inferences drawn from the data. According to Ritchie and Lewis (2004, p. 43) triangulation has been adopted and developed as a concept by qualitative researchers as a means of investigating the 'convergence' of both the data and the conclusions derived from them. It is also often cited as one of the central ways of "validating" qualitative research evidence. The first author used different methods and sources to check the integrity of inferences that were drawn from the data.

Reporting

It is important for the researcher to explain to the reader the type of writing style which is to be followed in writing up the study. The writing style which was used by the first author to write up this article was mainly the scientific tale. Bruner (1986) in Sparkes (2002, p.31) explains that the scientific explanations aim to be formal, logical and, where possible, shows mathematical logic. Such explanations are framed to be paradigmatic or logico-scientific in mode of thought.

Ethics

The first author agreed with the position generally held in social science research communities regarding ethics, and specifically with the ethical code of the Department of Human Resource Management at the University of Johannesburg. Therefore, he: (1) conducted the research overtly; (2) drafted an informed consent form, outlining the aim of the research, its nature, what was expected from research participants, and assurances that all information obtained in the study would be used only for

research purposes, and that all participants' names, including his company's name, and identifying particulars would be treated confidentially at all times; (3) accepted no person's research contribution unless the informed consent form had been duly signed by Professor Schurink and himself on the one hand, and the research participant on the other; and (4) negotiated responsibilities and guarantees with his company before he began the study.

Data analysis tool used

The first author had to select the most appropriate data analysis tool which was well suited to grounded theory ATLAS.ti V 5.0.

Computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS)

According to Bryman (2004), one of the most notable developments in qualitative research in recent years has been the arrival of computer-assisted software (CAQDAS) that facilitates the analysis of qualitative data.

According to Muhr (2004, pp. 1-3), ATLAS.ti V 5.0 is a powerful workbench for the qualitative analysis of large bodies of textual, graphical, audio and video data. It offers a variety of tools for accomplishing the tasks associated with any systematic approach to understanding data, e.g. data that cannot be meaningfully analysed by formal statistical approaches. ATLAS offers tools to manage, extract, compare, explore and reassemble meaningful pieces from large amounts of data in a creative and flexible yet systematic way. ATLAS was of great use to the first author. It aided open coding and expedited the analysis of large volumes of text. It assisted him to generate 107 open codes, 78 categories and 23 core categories (derived through the selective coding process) which ultimately constituted the definition of the organisational redesign model.

Definition of the model

Mouton (2002, p. 196) suggests that "models present phenomena systematically by identifying patterns and regularities among variables. They explain the relationships between core categories heuristically". Based on this definition, the first author constructed a model for organisational redesign that consists of 23 steps. Locke (2003) refers to various examples in organisational studies where grounded theory was used to develop models. The first author is of the opinion that the "theory" in grounded theory does not (and should not) refer to the building of one theoretical concept "theory" only, but should also (rather) entail at least the possible development of conceptual frameworks that include theories, typologies and models, and at best the construction of any intellectual tool or building block of science (see Mouton, 2002).

The SOR theory and the model of organisational redesign

On the face of it, the assumptions behind grounded theory's symbolic interactionist origins match this premise and are in line with the broad aim of S-O-R theories. Partington (2000) believes that management actions are not always observable in an objective way, because social processes are rarely reducible to absolute laws. For research into management action some of the events in management behaviour are only observable and accessible through the subjective accounts of managers and other organisational actors. As mentioned previously, matrices based on the SOR theory enabled the first author to understand the interrelationships between the various core categories that assisted him with the development of the model of organisational redesign. Furthermore, the S-O-R theory provides a 'thinking structure' that will support management cognition in an assimilated way – something which is necessary for mode 2 management research.

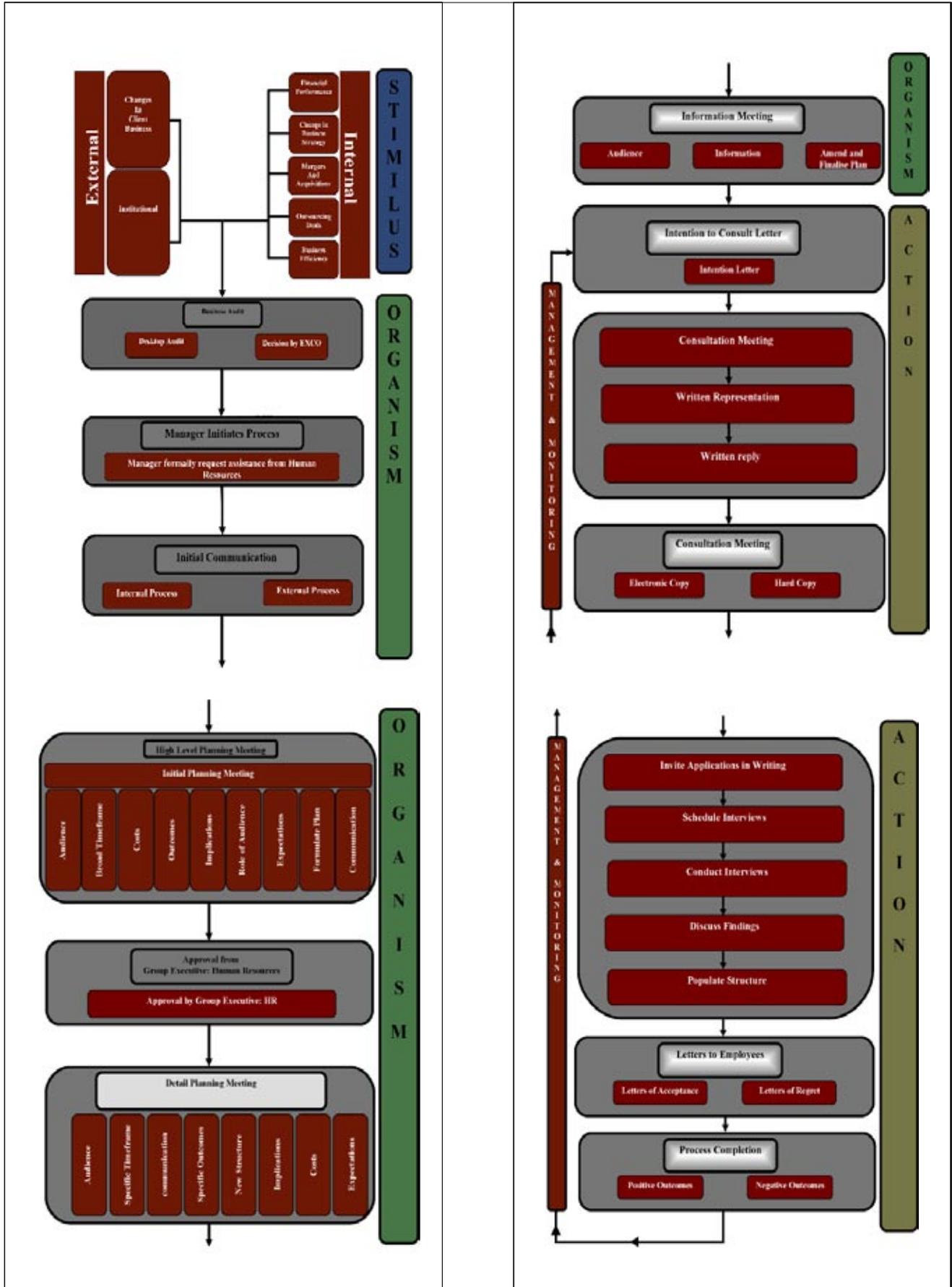


FIGURE 1
A model for organisation redesign

RESULTS

The model for organisational redesign which will now be discussed is presented in Fig. 1.

Step 1: External triggers

Two types of external triggers may initiate organisational redesign, namely changes in the business of clients and institutional triggers. Changes in the business of clients include: (1) the clients cannot afford the services of the organisation any longer; (2) the organisation terminates its contracts with clients when they do not renew their contracts; (3) clients restructure their businesses and no longer require the services procured from the organisation; (4) clients cancel their contracts with the organisation for a variety of reasons; (5) clients do not further require the organisation to render services any longer; and (6) a change in market demands as a result of an economic downturn, which may necessitate clients to cut expenditure on external

services. Institutional triggers include: (1) the wealth concerns of the shareholders, which cause them to demand higher returns on their investment; (2) black empowerment forces supported by the charters applicable to the organisation, forcing it to redesign its business to ensure better black representation; and (3) health and safety legislation incumbent on clients that calls upon an organisation from a different sector to cancel its business with these clients because this legislation is industry-specific and compromises the organisation's effectiveness. The external triggers correspond with the S-O-R theory in that they act as external stimuli for organisations to redesign their business.

Step 2: Internal triggers

A number of internal triggers may force an organisation to restructure its business. First, there is financial performance, which includes: (1) cost savings by the organisation; (2) poor financial performance of business units within the organisation; (3) unreasonable expenses created by the organisation or some of its business units; (4) a lack of profitability in the organisation as a whole, or one or more of its business units; (5) losses suffered within the organisation or some of its business units; and (6) budget constraints that prevent the organisation from expanding or carrying the prevailing cost structure.

Second is a change in the business strategy of the organisation, which includes: (1) amalgamation of departments due to the duplication of functions; (2) closure of particular business units because they perform non-core business; (3) restructuring of business operations where there are too many employees or a non-core product line is closed; (4) reorganisation of some of its business to reduce some management layers because management salaries are too high; (5) redesign of business processes that are inefficient; and (6) redesign of the organisation to ensure better black representation at all levels.

Third are mergers and acquisitions, such as when the organisation acquires another ITC business or merges with another ITC company. The increase in employees, duplication of functions and other inefficiencies will force the organisation to restructure.

Fourth is outsourcing, such as when the organisation takes over non-core business from clients, which leads to duplication of functions, which in turn has to be eliminated.

Finally, business inefficiencies may lead to redesign. These inefficiencies include: (1) unproductive employees; (2) poor management practices; and (3) ineffective and inefficient business processes. All of them result in losses for the organisation. These internal triggers are in line with the S-O-R theory in that all of them act as stimuli for organisations to consider remedial action.

Step 3: Business audit

At this stage the organisation, responding to the above triggers, conducts a desktop audit, which entails a thorough financial analysis of under-performing business units. Once it is clear that corrective action is required, the Executive Committee has to issue the instruction to redesign the organisation. This is the first step in the S-O-R theory where management takes control and is called the "management cognition phase".

Step 4: Manager initiates the process

The Executive Committee instructs the affected line managers to redesign their business. They initiate the process by discussing possible redesign options within their business with the Human Resources Division. It is important that the affected managers agree with the Executive Committee that action is indeed necessary. If not, their buy-in will not be achieved. This step is in line with the S-O-R theory and forms part of the management cognition phase where management is in control of the action they set out to take.

Step 5: Initial communication

Initial communication consists of an internal and an external process. With regard to the internal process, the CEO is required to communicate by e-mail with the following audiences: line managers, the Employee Communication Forum (a consultative body representing the interests of the employees) and the remainder of the organisation. The message has to be broad, informing the audiences that the organisation is investigating under-performing business units and will disclose the selected action as soon as possible. This prevents employees from spreading rumours and harming the organisation.

With regard to the external process the CEO and his top executives should personally visit the organisation's key clients while the relevant account executives should meet the smaller clients. The message must be broad and exactly the same as the message to the internal audiences, that is, that the organisation faces a business problem, is investigating it and will take appropriate action once it understands the extent of the problem. This step is in line with the S-O-R theory and part of the management cognition phase where management is in control of the action.

Step 6: High-level planning meeting

The purpose of this meeting is to decide on the action to be taken. The Human Resources Practitioners and their manager, the line managers of the business units concerned, the executive team and heads of the business units, and the relevant Executive Committee member accountable for them must participate in the meeting. The planning meeting must first determine the commencement date of the intervention, outline the timeframe for the process and emphasise the speed of executing a decision once it has been taken to minimise disruption within the business.

There must also be a clear understanding of the estimated cost of the intervention, although precise calculations are out of the question at this stage.

It is important that the envisaged outcomes of the process should be a long-term solution. The meeting must create a clear understanding of how the end result will be achieved, define what the new organisational structure will look like and clearly indicate the best option, such as redundancy, transfer of people or restructuring of the business, and the number of functions that will be falling away.

Finally, the meeting should also cover all the possible implications of the process: (1) the legal requirements must be implemented correctly; (2) the contractual obligations with clients must be observed; (3) moral and ethical considerations must be looked at (for example, if the Christmas season falls in the middle of the timeframe of the process, the process

might be delayed); (4) the implications of the intervention for the business must be estimated as accurately as possible; (5) the impact of the intervention on clients, employees and the rest of the organisation must be assessed; (6) concerns raised by the managers about the task of supporting the process in its entirety have to be clarified; (7) the roles of the various audiences and the expectations of the managers should be addressed so as to clear up any unrealistic expectations; (8) a detailed communication plan should be worked out; and (9) the process must be monitored and the organisation alerted to the seriousness of problems. The outcome of this meeting is a broad plan incorporating the above points, and it should be signed by all attendees. The plan should provide the decision makers with sufficient high-level information to decide if the intervention must proceed or not. This step is in line with the S-O-R theory and its management cognition phase – management is in control of the desired action.

Step 7: Approval of the Group Executive: Human Resources for commencement

The Group Executive: Human Resources must provide approval for the commencement of the process once the initial plan has been signed by all the audiences. This also assures him/that the process can be implemented successfully and allows him/to allocate the resources for the implementation of the intervention. This step is in line with the S-O-R theory and is part of the management cognition phase – management is in control of the desired action.

Step 8: Detailed planning meeting

This is the second planning meeting and is aimed at determining the details of the process to ensure its successful implementation. The following audiences must be present: (1) the Human Resources Practitioner who is the custodian of the process; (2) the Senior Human Resources Manager (who is responsible for all the human resource issues related to the intervention); (3) the line managers of the affected business units; (4) the executive team of these business units; (5) the heads of the business units; and (6) the relevant Executive Committee member (who is overall accountable for the performance of the affected units).

Once the details of the intervention have been determined, a plan is drawn up accordingly. The plan must cover the specifics of the timeframe, that is, it must provide the commencement date and spell out the duration of the process. Speed of execution of the process must be emphasised.

Communication must be planned in line with the content of the detailed plan, the communication must be well timed and the communication process must be determined.

The specific outcomes of the intervention must be defined, that is, the plan must be shown to be viable, and the accountabilities of the respective audiences and the monitoring of the intervention must be set out.

A new structure must be designed. The design must include the following: (1) the layout of the new structure; (2) new functions in the structure; (3) job grades; (4) salary levels; (5) job profiles; and (6) job specifications of the new functions.

All the specific implications must be taken into account: (1) the legal implications if the intervention is incorrectly implemented as well as contingency plans to cover any problem that may arise; (2) specific contractual obligations to clients and what impact the intervention may have on the organisation's ability to comply with these obligations; (3) specific moral and ethical considerations; (4) the extent of intervention in the business; (5) the impact of the intervention on clients, employees and the rest of the organisation; (6) the specific policy implications and their cost; and (7) the minimisation of risks to the organisation.

The specific costs of the intervention must be calculated, including the exact costs that the organisation can save, the specific cost implications of the intervention and whether the organisation can afford the intervention.

Finally, the expectations of the audiences must be clarified, particularly those of the managers.

This step is in line with the S-O-R theory and is part of the management cognition phase where management is in control of the desired action.

Step 9: Information meeting

The purpose of this meeting is to share the details of the plan with the relevant audiences. The meeting must be attended by all affected line managers, the relevant Executive Committee member (because he/and the Group Executive: Human Resources are jointly accountable for the successful implementation of the intervention), and the Employee Communication Forum member representing the affected employees.

The detailed plan is shared with the attendees and they are encouraged to disclose their concerns and make recommendations. The plan is then updated and finalised. This step is in line with the S-O-R theory and is part of the management cognition phase where management is in control of the desired action.

Step 10: Issuing of the consultation letter

The step, which is the first step in line with the S-O-R theory, takes cognisance of the Labour Relations Act, 66 of 1995, as amended in 2002. The Act requires that a letter be issued to the affected employees that reflects the organisation's intention to consult with them on the organisational redesign. The specific information required in the letter is set out in Section 189. This letter must precede the commencement of the organisational intervention.

Step 11: Second communication

This communication is directed at internal as well as external audiences and is the second step in terms of the S-O-R theory.

The internal communication has to be addressed to the following audiences: the line managers, the Executive Committee member concerned, and the affected and non-affected employees of the business unit where the redesign takes place. The Executive Committee member initiates the communication. The message must be clear, succinct and consistent across the organisation, and must contextualise the intervention by mentioning which employees are likely to be affected, the duration of the process, reasons why the organisation has decided to embark on the intervention, the detail of the process, affected positions, and the view of the organisation on the state of its business and the areas that are affected. The timing of the message is important. All audiences should receive the communication at the same time to prevent rumours from spreading.

Regarding the external communication the following audiences have to be addressed: the affected key clients (large revenue-generating accounts) and the affected non-key clients (small revenue-generating accounts). The CEO and the top executives must communicate in person with the key clients and the appropriate account executive must communicate in person with the smaller clients. The message should be clear, consistent and persuasive, and must contextualise the process, explain compliance with service level agreements (SLAs), set out the duration of the process, reasons for the intervention, details of the process, extent of the intervention, affected business units and affected positions.

Step 12: Consultation meeting (clarification)

The face-to-face consultation meeting required by the Labour Relations Act is the third step in terms of the S-O-R theory. The

meeting must be attended by the affected line managers, the affected employees, the relevant business executives, the Group Executive: Human Resources or Group Manager: Human Resources (who conducts the meeting) and the Employee Communication Forum representative (who represents the interests of the affected employees). The purpose of this meeting is to clarify any information in the first letter that is unclear to the employees. The employees are permitted to raise any concerns about the process.

Step 13: Written representations by employees

As stipulated by the Labour Relations Act, the affected employees get an opportunity to make written representations to the organisation on how they believe the organisation should approach the redesign. This represents the fourth step in terms of the S-O-R theory.

Employees may also make suggestions on how the organisation may prevent job losses and are given an opportunity to consult with their respective legal advisors or trade union representatives to document their concerns and/or suggestions. This is the fifth step in terms of the S-O-R theory.

Step 14: Written replies by the organisation

In line with the Labour Relations Act the organisation must reply in writing to the representations of the employees, and does so in consultation with its legal advisors. This is to eliminate any legal risks for the organisation. This step boils down to the sixth step in terms of the S-O-R theory.

Step 15: Introducing the new organisational structure

The organisation provides the affected employees with the new organisational structure in electronic and hard copy. This enables the affected employees to see which positions are available and which have fallen away. The relevant job grades, job titles, salary levels, job profiles and job specifications are also given.

Step 16: Inviting written applications

The employees are invited to submit written applications for the positions to the Human Resources Practitioner who is the custodian of the process. They include a cryptic CV and a synopsis of their aspirations. Where the managers feel that the employees can add value to certain roles, they should encourage the employees to apply for the relevant positions. This step is the seventh step in terms of the S-O-R theory.

Step 17: Schedule interviews

The Human Resources Practitioner who is the custodian of the process schedules interviews with the relevant line managers, business executives and Human Resources Practitioners based on the written applications. This step is the eighth step in terms of the S-O-R theory.

Step 18: Conducting interviews

Panel interviews are conducted with all the employees who submitted applications. The panel consists of the relevant business executive (compulsory), the line managers and the Human Resources Practitioners. The latter conduct the first part of the interview to assess whether the candidate complies with the behavioural requirements of the job; the line managers conduct the second part of the interview to ensure that the candidate meets the technical requirements of the job. This step is the ninth step in terms of the S-O-R theory.

Step 19: Discussing the findings

A formal meeting is scheduled with all the members of the interview panel. The purpose is to discuss the suitability of the candidates based on the results of the interviews. This process is formal and the meeting is chaired by the Group Manager: Human Resources to ensure objectivity. This step is the tenth step in terms of the S-O-R theory.

Step 20: Populating the structure

The top management structure is populated first, after which the process is devolved to the next levels. Each employee receives the formal feedback of the interview panel. During the feedback session the Human Resources Practitioner is present to ensure that the organisation is not exposed to legal risks and to handle any emotional outbursts that might be directed towards the manager who provides feedback. This step is the eleventh step in terms of the S-O-R theory.

Step 21: Issuing letters to employees

The successful employees receive formal letters of appointment, after which they attend an internal workshop to work through their negative experiences of the intervention. They also get an opportunity to raise concerns about the process and to suggest improvements. They resume their work in their new positions.

The unsuccessful employees receive letters of regret and attend an internal outplacement workshop. During this workshop they get an opportunity to deal with their being unsuccessful, and are guided towards managing their emotions and preparing CVs for possible positions elsewhere in the organisation. This consultation is informed by the stipulations of the Labour Relations Act. The employees are invited to apply for voluntary redundancy and may leave the organisation as soon as their application has been approved.

Information on employees applying for alternative positions elsewhere in the organisation is regularly presented to line managers and the Human Resources Division for consideration. If the employees are not placed in a suitable position by the end of the consultation period, they receive a confirmation of retrenchment letter that specifies their gratuity payment. This also occurs in terms of the Labour Relations Act. On acceptance of the letter their services are formally terminated. This is the twelfth step in terms of the S-O-R theory.

Step 22: Process evaluation

The intervention must be evaluated in terms of internal outcomes: whether it has improved productivity; the extent of "new blood" in the structure; whether the business is more effective and efficient and more profitable; if employees are correctly placed in terms of their skills; and the extent to which "dead wood" has been cut. External outcomes are also evaluated: do clients view the intervention as positive; is the business now aligned with market demands; was the time span adequate; was the process too constrained by the law and too risk adverse; and did the implementation period affect productivity and effectiveness. Should negative outcomes be detected during the intervention they must be eliminated by the improvement of the overall process. The process is reviewed with the affected units at the conclusion of the intervention. This is the thirteenth step in terms of the S-O-R theory.

Step 23: Monitoring and managing the process

The Human Resources Practitioner who is the custodian of the intervention must ensure that a counselling system is in place for employees and managers during the process. He/she must also ensure that the process does not deviate from the project plan; that everybody involved in the process adheres to the Labour Relations Act; that decision makers are available to take important decisions; that emotional distress among employees is monitored (anger, guilt, criticism of management, tension, resistance, uncooperativeness, rumours, negativity, aggression, low morale and unproductivity); and that decision makers are contacted to institute remedial action as soon as problems occur. Research assessing the consequences of organisational downsizing has primarily centred on the effects of being a layoff survivor and the experience of job insecurity. It suggests that employees suffer from decreased job satisfaction (Ashford, Lee & Bobko, 1989), a greater incidence of reported illness (Cottingham, Matthews, Talbot & Kuller, 1986; Dooley, Rook & Catalano, 1987; Kuhnert, Sims & Lahey, 1989; Probst, 1998), and

increased psychological stress (Dekker & Schaufeli, 1991). The research also found that the more dissatisfied employees are with their perceived job security, the more frequently they will engage in absenteeism, tardiness and task avoidance (Probst, 1998).

DISCUSSION

INSIGHTS

The first author gained the following insights into organisational redesign:

- This highly contentious business phenomenon was not well researched and scientific models for addressing this important organisational change were lacking in South Africa
- In South Africa the first author found only one model of downsizing, namely that of Donald (1995). However, as the current Labour Relations Act was promulgated in 1996 and amended in 2002, a new redesign model was required that would take cognisance of the Act's section on redesign interventions
- South African organisations, like organisations abroad, restructured intuitively or did "knee-jerking" which will expose them from a legislative perspective

These insights supported the aim of his study, namely to develop an organisational redesign model to guide South African organisations within the ICT Sector with their redesign interventions. The objectives have been achieved:

- **A model for organisational redesign has been developed to assist South African businesses intermittently to manage their organisational redesign interventions**
- **The internal and external triggers that lead to organisational redesign have been identified and incorporated into the organisational redesign model**
- **The phases that impact on organisational redesign have been identified and incorporated into the organisational redesign model**

DISCOVERIES

The first author discovered the following:

- He applied grounded theory in quite a pure manner, consulting existing theoretical concepts only at the end to consolidate his insights.
- Applying a conditional matrix in particular represented an important step forward in the application of grounded theory, as conditional matrices are generally absent from local grounded theory studies.
- The model of organisational redesign incorporates current South African labour relations legislation, which the participants identified as an important inherent requirement for the organisational redesign model.
- The study led to the first author's company updating and amending its policies so as to incorporate all the steps outlined in the model.

LIMITATIONS

The following limitations were identified:

- The newly developed organisational redesign model can only assist other South African IT organisations, with similar organisational characteristics in their downsizing interventions.
- The study only focussed on the development of the model and did not consult employees who went through the redesign intervention of the company to incorporate their perspectives into the research. This could have yielded different perspectives to the model. It was difficult to obtain the co-operation of these employees as they were still very

angry with the organisation's downsizing interventions.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The first author makes the following suggestions:

- A model must be developed on how to deal with employees who remain behind after an organisational redesign, particularly within the context of different reactions to the intervention among different race groups.
- Although he is certain that the model could be used in other organisations in the information technology sector, the applicability of the model across industries should be studied.
- The conceptual integration of the model of organisational redesign with the S-O-R theory (a behaviouristic paradigm) and the mode 2 management process (action-related management) should be empirically studied. Mode 2 management researchers show concern for the gap between academe and practice, advocating for research aimed at advancing the interests of the latter. It is trans-disciplinary, and as such less likely to bring with it mature theoretical frameworks developed within the boundaries of particular academic disciplines. It underscores the importance of accessing the tacit knowledge of organisational actors (Locke, 2003, p. 96).

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