

Project Management for Scientists - Exercise 3

Christiaan van Buchem
s1587064

October 31, 2019

1 Exercise 3

Task description: Watch the video at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mnUEDA6drB8> and write 10 sentences on what you learned and how you see similar issues within your organization.

What I learned from this video is that innovation within an organization can be stifled by a combination of bureaucratic rigidity and the more human propensity of superiors wanting to stay within their comfort zone. It also looks like these two aspects strengthen each other. On the one hand the superiors are able to hide their true feelings about new ideas behind the complexity of the system and on the other they may feel this way about innovation due to their own experience with the complexity of the system. Another theme that was quite apparent in the video was that of making sure that the requirements are met and doing nothing beyond that. This points towards a lack of vision within the organization, people are no longer critically thinking about what the end goal of the whole operation is but are entirely bogged down in their own small part of the project, or as it is called in the video: 'silos of compartmentalisation'.

One example where some of this behaviour is visible within my organization, which in this case is the university, is the trouble one needs to go through in order to follow a course which is not listed in the prospectus of your major. Whenever a student wants to follow a certain course for their major which is not specifically listed in the prospectus, they need to send a letter to the exam committee in which they have to describe exactly why they should be able to follow this course. Although more often than not permission is granted to these students, this does create quite a barrier for students that are interested in following courses that do not lie directly within their field of study. Although far less extreme, it can be compared to the NASA case study because people are being limited by (arguably) arbitrary guidelines and compartmentalisation. Furthermore, I personally believe that this does not lie in line with the philosophy of Leiden University when they promote with the slogan '*Bij ons leer je de wereld kennen*' (which directly translates to '*With us you learn to know the world*'), which implies a broad education that is not only limited to your specific field of study.