AGILE PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT FOR AGILE ORGANISATIONS

Qualitative Methods Research Symposium "Inclusive Involvement in Qualitative Research Methods: Opportunities and Challenges" – September 3rd 2020

Summary

A participatory action research (PAR) project was undertaken within a small organisation that develops software using 'Agile' methods (Lee & Xia 2010); a limited change approach (Coghlan 2019) was employed, addressing the specific problem of executing performance management. The research is viewed from a constructivist perspective, enabling the co-creation and analysis of data through an interpretation of process produced via human interaction (Goldkuhl 2012). Use of PAR enabled a deeper understanding of contextual performance management implementation than exploration based research would have produced (Coghlan 2019).

Results

An abductive approach was employed to enable incorporation of existing theory alongside analytical methods. Thematic analysis was undertaken on data gathered during a workshop, using the session transcript, co-generated material outputs and the researcher's diary (Braun & Clarke 2006). The diary added further context, enabling reflexivity and meta-learning (Coghlan 2019), adding richness to data analysis.
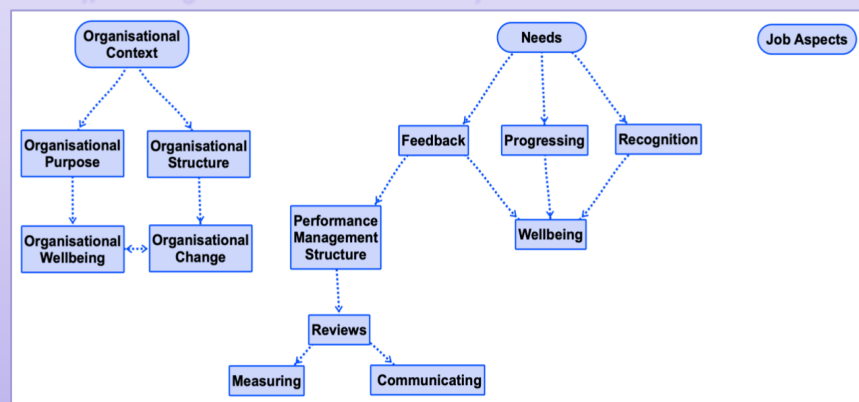
Through qualitative process a thematic map was produced showing three main themes of 'Organisational Context', 'Needs' and 'Job Aspects', along with a number of related sub-themes.

Conclusions

Comparison of themes alongside existing theory found similarity to the concept of strategic ambiguity (Eisenberg 1984) and issues relating to uncertainty.

Interpreting this through a knowledge-based view provided insights related to absorptive capacity (Marabelli and Newell, 2014) and parity with agile software engineering processes. This could result in prevention of knowledge identification and heightened opportunity sensitivity, resulting in low focus on performance management.

When shifting to an institutional view (Scott 2008), resistance to all elements of organisational isomorphism provides a substantive reason for rejection of traditional performance management.

Further research is suggested to investigate strategic ambiguity in the wider agile software development context, as well an opportunity to study institutional isomorphism alongside performance management difficulties.

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