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SENSEGIVING IN INITIAL STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION

A constructivist grounded theory study on sensegiving and underlying cognitive aspects

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Abstract

This study examines important features of the initial sensegiving process in strategy implementation and how those features further can be understood from a cognitive perspective. A qualitative constructivist grounded theory approach to study sensegiving as a collective process in organizations is applied. The findings suggest that sensegiving could be seen as management of perspectives and be further understood by several cognitive concepts. Important features in the sensegiving process are proposed to be (i) lead the sensegiving from inside, (ii) create a meaningful story, (iii) prepare the lower level managers, and (iv) start with 'the why' followed by 'the what'. Cognitive concepts helpful in understanding sensegiving are proposed to be (i) reciprocal causation between cognitive factors and the external environment, (ii) self-motivation, (iii) cognitive flexibility, (iv) double-loop learning, (v) self-leadership, (vi) interpersonal communication, (vii) bounded rationality, and (viii) mental models. The study contributes to previous research by looking at sensegiving in more detail than previous studies, and providing some contradictory findings to previous studies. An idea that the collective process of sensegiving might just be a superficial symbolic cover, is also presented.

Keywords

Sensegiving, Strategy implementation, Collective leadership, Cognitive theory, Mental models

Table of Content

1. INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 BACKGROUND	1
1.2 PURPOSE AND AREAS FOR CONTRIBUTION	2
1.3 ROADMAP TO THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS	3
2. OVERVIEW OF THE ARENA	5
2.1 RESEARCH OVERVIEW	5
2.2 OVERVIEW OF THE PRACTITIONER PERSPECTIVE.....	7
2.3 GUIDING RESEARCH QUESTIONS.....	8
2.4 ROADMAP TO DISCUSS QUESTIONS AND FINDINGS.....	9
2.5 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK.....	11
2.5.1 Social Cognitive Theory of Organizational Management	11
2.5.2 Cognitive change and Organizational learning.....	12
2.5.3 Mental models	14
3. METHODOLOGY.....	16
3.1 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH – GROUNDED THEORY	16
3.2 DATA COLLECTION.....	17
3.2.1 Intensive interviewing approach	17
3.2.2 Positions taken	18
3.2.3 Introduction of informants (interviewees).....	18
3.2.4 Interview outline	19
3.3 DATA ANALYSIS.....	20
3.3.1 Initial coding	20
3.3.2 Focused coding.....	20
3.4 RESEARCH QUALITY	20
3.4.1 Ethics	20
3.4.2 Reliability	21
3.4.3 Validity.....	21
4. EMPIRICAL FINDINGS.....	22

4.1 INFORMANTS' ACCOUNTS.....	22
4.1.1 Leading sensegiving from inside.....	22
4.1.2 Creating a meaningful story	26
4.1.3 Preparing lower level managers.....	28
4.1.4 Starting with 'the why' followed by 'the what'	30
4.2 COMPLEMENTING REFLECTIONS.....	32
4.2.1 Collective leadership of a hidden top-down approach?	32
4.2.2 Giver or receiver in focus?.....	33
4.3.3 Serial vs. Parallel process	34
4.3 AGGREGATE DIMENSION	34
4.3.1 Collect perspectives.....	35
4.3.2 Analyze, synthesize, and prepare.....	36
4.3.3 Give perspectives	36
5. INTERPRETATION.....	37
6. DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS	42
6.1 CONCLUSION	42
6.1.1 Question # 1	42
6.1.2 Question # 2	42
6.2 CONTRIBUTION AND IMPLICATIONS.....	43
6.3 LIMITATIONS OF THIS STUDY	43
6.4 AREAS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH.....	44
7. REFERENCES	45
8. APPENDICES.....	50
Appendix A – Coding: Data analysis, Example.....	50
Appendix B – List of Informants	51

1. INTRODUCTION

This section introduces the topic from a research background. The section then presents the purpose and the contribution of the study. Before moving on to the following section, the outline to the research questions will be presented.

1.1 BACKGROUND

Strategic decision-making has long been a topic of great interest in organization theory, as well as in strategic management (Dean & Sharfman, 1996). However, researchers have given less attention to strategy implementation than to strategy formulation (Dean & Sharfman, 1996; Raes, Heijltjes, Glunk, & Roe, 2011). Most decision-making research studies do not go beyond the deciding, into how decisions are realized, and strategy implementation has been relatively neglected in research (Dean & Sharfman, 1996; Hickson, Miller & Wilson, 2003). That is remarkable since about one-half to two-thirds of strategic decisions in organizations fail for reasons relating to strategy implementation, rather than formulation (Nutt, 1999; Hickson et al., 2003; Raes et al., 2011). In addition, Nutt (1999) states that *“the main reasons why so many fail to attain their initial strategic objectives, occurs predominantly during implementation, and not during decision-making”*. Thus, there is a need for a more detailed look at decision implementation (Dean & Sharfman, 1996; Hickson et al., 2003).

Studies that have taken a deeper look at strategy implementation, propose that failure often stems from internal aspects under management control (Nutt, 1999; Hickson et al., 2003). Studies conducted by Nutt (1999) over a twenty-year period derive this failure to *“managers who employ poor tactics”* (p. 75). Previous research shows that, one reason for failure in the implementation process is that management usually focuses on the technical elements of change, with a tendency to neglect the equally important human element, which is often crucial to successful implementation (Bovey & Hede, 2001; Evans, 1994; Kappelman & Richards, 1996). Critical human elements in change processes, such as strategy implementation, involve an attempt to alter the way of thinking and acting by the organization’s membership (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991). Furthermore, organizational change is basically driven by personal change (Steinburg, 1992; Bovey & Hede, 2001), since change requires participation from people who must themselves change for organizational transformation to succeed (Evans, 1994; Bovey & Hede, 2001). The more profound the organizational change, the more important it is to create opportunities for people to reexamine and adjust their own values and beliefs (Moran & Brightman, 2001).

“Unless people can integrate change on a personal level, they cannot sustain it organizationally.”

(Moran & Brightman, 2001, p. 112)

When it comes to people and individual change in relation to implementation of a new strategy, behavioral change alone is not enough since that kind of learning often results in minor adjustments to existing interpretations, references, and norms (Barr, Stimpert & Huff, 1992). An implementation process of a new strategy is more difficult, because it aims to change organizational frames of reference (Collinson & Cook, 2006; Barr et al., 1992). In need for a higher level of learning and change, which is needed for strategy implementation, a cognitive shift is necessary (Argyris and Schön, 1978; Collinson & Cook, 2006; Barret al., 1992). The cognitive component in organizational change is important to how all members of organizations react and respond to change (Neck, 1996; Foldy, Goldman and Ospina, 2008). Thus, strategy implementation should involve an attempt to change current modes of cognition (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991; Vuori, 2011).

Sensegiving is a tool to influence and produce cognitive shift, and is undertaken to create meanings for a target audience (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991; Weick, Sutcliffe & Obstfeld, 2005). Sensegiving is defined as *“shaping how people understand themselves, their work, and others engaged in that work”* (Foldy et al., 2008, p. 514). Interpretive activities, such as sensegiving, can create and justify patterns for organizational change (Dutton, 1993). However, the nature of processes – such as sensegiving – used to launch strategic change has not been well articulated (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991). Previous studies, need to be complemented by a better understanding of sensegiving (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991; Fiss & Zajac, 2006). Foldy et al. (2008) and Maitlis & Lawrence (2007) highlight that there is a need for more work to study areas of sensegiving, and explicitly request scholars to take a deeper look at this.

1.2 PURPOSE AND AREAS FOR CONTRIBUTION

The purpose and the areas for contribution are briefly discussed here. They will be discussed more in detail after the overview of the arena has been taken into account.

As mentioned above, there is a need to take a more detailed look on strategy implementation and the often neglected area of human elements in strategy implementation. The human elements will here be represented by a cognitive perspective, since previous research states the importance of cognitive shifts in strategy implementation. An important tool for providing cognitive shifts is sensegiving, which will be in focus of this study. The areas presented in the background relate to each other in the way shown in figure 1 below.

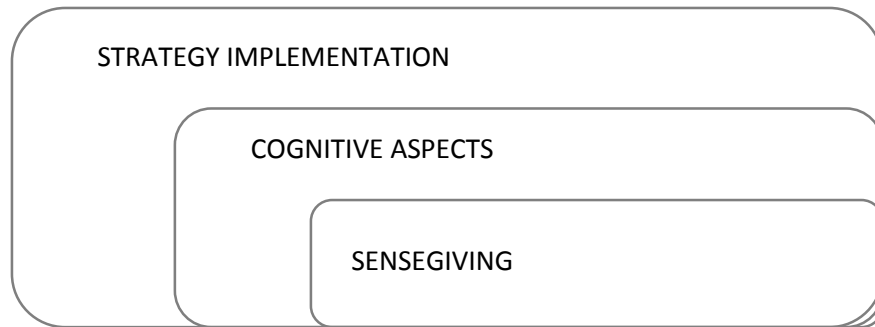


Figure 1: Relationship of theoretical areas.

The purpose of this study is to focus on sensegiving and cognitive aspects in strategy implementation. The main contribution will be directly to sensegiving, and as a consequence indirectly to strategy implementation. Cognitive aspects will be used as a lens to get a deeper understanding of sensegiving.

1.3 ROADMAP TO THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

A brief methodological background to the forming of the research question is provided in order to give the context to why it is deviating slightly from conventional theses. The outline leading to the formulation of the research questions is then provided.

Previous important contributions to sensegiving (for example Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991, and later Maitlis & Lawrence, 2007) have applied data collection methods that are close to practitioners to get a grounded understanding of sensegiving. In order to get the same kind of understanding of the issue and be able to compare it to previous research, this study will use a grounded theory approach. The use of grounded theory will affect the thesis' roadmap. Furthermore, decision on how to apply grounded theory needs to be taken in order to outline the roadmap.

In pure grounded theory, some researchers state that research should start with empirics, and the theoretical perspective should be involved after the empirics are collected and analyzed (Charmaz, 2014). The argument for this is to have an open sense and not be affected by previous research before starting to work with the empirical data. Dey (1999) criticized this by stating that *"there is a difference between an open mind and an empty head"* (p. 251). Other scholars state that the researcher must study a defined question to make sure that his or her research project does not involve *reinventing the wheel* (Alvesson & Sköldbörg, 2000; Chenitz, 1986; Morse, 1994). Furthermore, an overview of the literature can help the researcher to clarify the perspective from which to study the phenomena, with this perspective corresponding to the theoretical sensitivity of a certain discipline (Strauss, 1987).

Thus, in order to find a unique contribution and clarify the perspectives of the study, previous theory has been involved since the start of the study and outlines the context and the perspective of the study. However, a brief empirical section will be included in the overview of the arena and as a background to the research question in order to make sure that the issue is relevant and of interest from a grounded standpoint as well. The roadmap to the research questions is presented in figure 2 below.

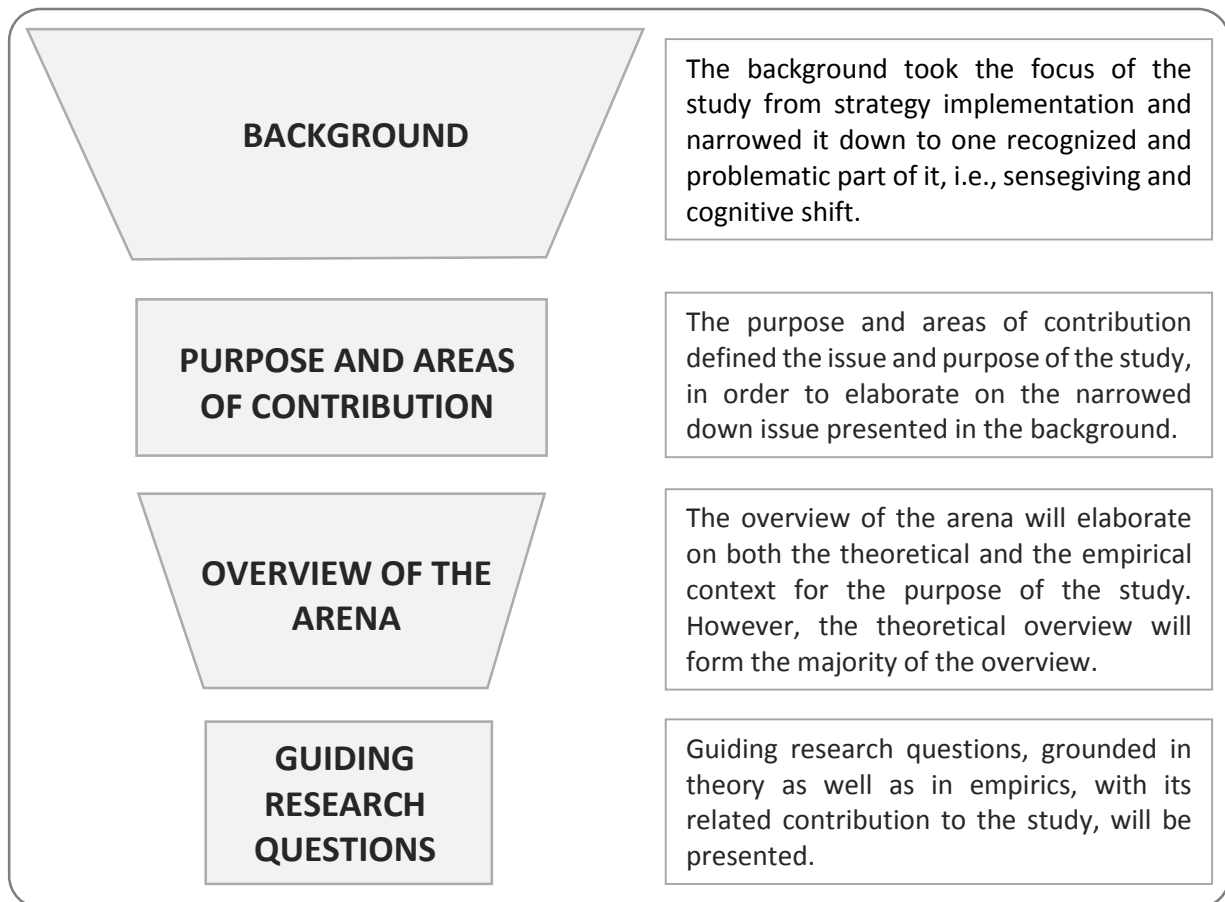


Figure 2: Roadmap to the research questions.

2. OVERVIEW OF THE ARENA

This section introduces the literature overview and provides a brief overview from the practitioner perspective. The section then presents the research questions and provides the roadmap to answer those questions and discuss the findings. The section ends by providing the theoretical framework.

2.1 RESEARCH OVERVIEW

Strategy implementation is based on cognitive and organizational momentum created by sensegiving activities (Dutton, 1993). Sensegiving provides interpretation of context, and therefore matters for patterns of organizational action (ibid.). Sensegiving can, in other words, affect how individuals interpret the context, and organizational change is often facilitated by effective sensegiving (Howell and Higgins, 1990; Pettigrew, 1987; Dutton, 1993). Sensegiving is undertaken to create meanings for a target audience (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991; Weick et al., 2005). It is defined as “*shaping how people understand themselves, their work, and others engaged in that work*” (Foldy et al., 2008).

Being able to handle sensegiving is therefore critical to the work of organizational leadership, and the desired outcome of a sensegiving process is, as mentioned earlier, to produce cognitive shifts (Foldy et al., 2008). Research shows that influencing organizational members’ perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs can strengthen their commitment to organizational goals, spurring them to embark on new directions with enthusiasm instead of resistance (Gardner & Avolio, 1998; Foldy et al., 2008). Typically, an important role of sensegiving is to communicate that the existing mental models are no longer appropriate, which creates motivation for cognitive shift, and a sense of urgency for changing (Frost & Morgan, 1983; Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991; Foldy et al., 2008). Successful sensegiving in strategy implementation can in that way lead to a situation that “*serves as a springboard into action*” (Weick et al., 2005, p. 409).

Gioia and Chittipeddi (1991) is frequently mentioned when researchers describe the arena¹. They developed a framework for understanding the distinctive character of the initial states of strategy implementation. This approach suggest that the top management team’s (and especially the CEO’s) primary role in initiating strategy implementation, might be best understood in terms of the concepts of *sensemaking* and *sensegiving*. Those concepts emerged from the grounded view study, of a major strategic change of an American university. The CEO (or president, as he is called in the university

¹ Cited by 2109 studies according to Google Scholar (<https://scholar.google.com>), on the 16th of May, 2015.

context) had the leading role in formulating the strategy as well as giving sense about it, to the organization in the study.

From the data in their study, Gioia and Chittipeddi were able to structure the process into four stages. In the *first stage*, the top management team develops a sense of the organization's internal and external environment, and defines a revised conception (i.e., a renewed strategy. Thus, this stage is the stage of strategy formulation. In *stage two*, a sensegiving-process takes place, where a vision of the potential future state of the organization is communicated to members of the organization. Communication here needs to declare that the current mental model² is no longer appropriate (see also Frost & Morgan, 1983). Such actions often create instability in member's ways of understanding the organization, and disconfirmation of existing mental models requires some revised model to take place. Thus, an opportunity is created to articulate and advocate a new vision. In *stage three*, stakeholders inside the organization attempt to assess the actions and motives of the renewed strategy. Many try to infer to the new values and goals, while others begin to object to elements of the espoused change. The opposition that arises here, is often threatening the early momentum for change. Given that change efforts seldom happen by decree, a round of negotiated social construction and interpretation is likely to occur. This leads to the sensegiving-activity in *stage four*, where the stakeholders of the organization (the ones not in the top management team) respond with their own sensegiving. In this stage stakeholders often attempt to influence either the need for the new strategy, or the shape of it. As a result of these processes, the original strategy is likely to become more well-defined and undergo some modification.

Maitlis and Lawrence (2007) performed another well cited study of sensegiving³. In their study they investigated conditions associated with sensegiving by leaders and stakeholder in three British symphony orchestras, in a grounded view approach. Despite some distinct characters of symphony orchestras, Maitlis and Lawrence argue that orchestras provide a high level of generalizability to a broader population of organizations. Their study shows that *discursive ability* – which allows leaders and stakeholders to construct and articulate accounts, and *process facilitators* – routines, practices, and structures that give organizational members opportunity to engage in sensegiving – enable sensegiving. Maitlis and Lawrence also found that stakeholders' sensegiving was triggered by issues that they perceived as "*important either to themselves, to a stakeholder group whom they represented, or to the organization at large*" (p. 76).

² They actually use the term *interpretive scheme*. However, the term *interpretive scheme* is often used interchangeable with the term *mental model*. The term *mental model* will be used in this these in order to have consistency among terms.

³ Cited by 2109 studies according to Google Scholar (<https://scholar.google.com>), on the 16th of May, 2015.

Both Gioia and Chittipeddi (1991) and Maitlis and Lawrence (2007) represent a top-down approach to sensegiving. Maitlis and Lawrence (2007) encourage further research to examine a situation where organization members might work to structure the processes in ways that *“facilitate sensegiving by both stakeholders and leaders and thus increase the potential influence of either one or both groups”* (p. 81). Furthermore, they point to *“the importance of research that examines the strategies through which stakeholders and leaders [together] shape the conditions of sensegiving, and perhaps the circumstances associated with such strategies”* (p. 81).

In addition, Foldy et al. (2008) state that the focus on an individual or a small group of leaders – that is the case in both sensegiving studies mention above – obscures collective leadership processes that may also be in play. There are few studies done on how sensegiving can grow out of a collective process, and understanding collective sensegiving is a relatively unexplored arena (Foldy et al., 2008; Pearce & Conger, 2003). Furthermore, scholars call for research that explores the work of leadership, conceptualizing it as *“less the property of individuals and more as the contextualized outcome of interactive [...] processes”* (Gronn, 2002). In addition, scholars acknowledge the relative scarcity of empirical studies that grow from this understanding (Pearce & Conger, 2003).

The collective approach to change is in line with Moran and Brightman’s (2001) approach to change. They state that change should be both top-down and bottom-up.

“Change must be top-down to provide vision and create structure, and bottom-up to encourage participation and generate support. Ultimately, leading change is shared responsibility of everyone in an organization, from top to bottom. If the whole organization is not on board with the change effort, it will fail. The whole organization must be pulling in the same direction to achieve the change initiative goals it has set.” (Moran & Brightman, 2001, p. 112).

2.2 OVERVIEW OF THE PRACTITIONER PERSPECTIVE

The issue with strategy implementation is also present among informants of this study. There seems to be an agreement among informants that the majority of industries are changing faster than before, which make the ability to change more important today than ever before. So, the need for change is growing at the same time as the majority of high-potential strategies seems to fail due to poor implementation.

“Out of all good strategies formulated, two-thirds fail due to low quality in strategy implementation.” (Informant G.)

The major failing link seems to be in the initial phase of strategy implementation, i.e. in the process of launching a new strategy. The problem seems to lie in the communication of a new strategy. The communication is present, but often fails to get the desired effects.

“An organizational leadership usually works on a new strategy for one or maybe two years, then they squeeze it out in the organization and expect ten thousand or maybe hundred thousand people in the organization to say ‘wow, cool strategy, that’s awesome’. But, nothings happens...”
(Informant N.)

So, the problem seems to belong to communication that does not trigger actions in line with the formulated and communicated strategy. In other words, the problem seems to be in the sensegiving process in the beginning of a strategy implementation process.

2.3 GUIDING RESEARCH QUESTIONS

A brief methodological background to the forming of the research question is provided here.

In a grounded approach, as applied in this study, research questions are sometimes a bit broader than in a conventional study. A guiding research question is a defined research question that leaves room for some flexibility in collecting and analyzing of the empirical data (Gioia, Corley, & Hamilton, 2013). The questions are also often of an explorative nature (ibid.). Examples of this could be *“What are the central features of ...?”* or *“How does the leadership ...?”* (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991, p. 434). That fits with the grounded theory approach applied in this study, and that is way guiding research questions will be applied here, instead of more conventional research questions.

Three main key points lead up to the research questions of this study:

First, according to the practitioner’s perspective, the problematic phase is where a reformulated strategy is communicated to the organization. This is where the initial strategy formulation stage goes into the first sensegiving-stage, referring to the model of Gioia and Chittipeddi (1991).

Second, in previous research, studies that examine sensegiving from a collective leadership approach of shared responsibility – a top-down and bottom-up approach – have been requested (for example Maitlis and Lawrence, 2007; Foldy et al., 2008).

Third, sensegiving is an important tool in order to achieve the change implied by a renewed strategy. Previous research makes this connection among strategy implementation, sensegiving, and cognitive change (for example Foldy et al., 2008, Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991; Vuori, 2011, Collinson & Cook,

2006). However, the relationship between sensegiving and cognitive theory could be elaborated on, in a more detailed way, than previous study have been doing.

Thus, the guiding research questions of this study are:

- What are important features of the initial sensegiving process in strategy implementation?
- How can those features be further understood from a cognitive perspective?

The first question will be attempted to be answered from a grounded theory approach, with close connections to the empirics. This will, in addition to contributions mention above and in the preceding section, contribute to decreasing the scarcity of empirical studies that grow the understanding of collective leadership, mentioned by Pearce and Conger (2003).

The second question will be attempted to be answered by interpreting the sensegiving process, identified in this study, with the theoretical framework comprised of cognitive theory.

2.4 ROADMAP TO DISCUSS QUESTIONS AND FINDINGS

The questions have now been formulated and the rest of the study is outlined here. Once again grounded theory is elaborated on, since that affects the research design.

In grounded theory, empirics often have another focus than in conventional methods (Charmaz, 2014). Furthermore, grounded theory is called grounded theory since it attempts to build theory grounded in empirics (ibid.).

“Grounded theorists argue that initial data collection and preliminary analysis should take place before consulting and incorporating any research literature. This is to ensure that analysis is grounded in the data and that pre-existing constructs do not shape the analysis and subsequent theory formation. Existing theory is not completely omitted, its integration is only delayed, since it forms an important part of later theory development.” (Gibbs, 2002, p. 166)

According to the argumentation in the *roadmap to the research questions*, it is beneficial to involve theory and not start with “an empty head”. So, the question is not whether or not theories should be applied, but rather *when?*, *how?*, and *in what purpose?* (Chenitz, 1986, p. 44). In order to be reasonably true to grounded theory, the empirics will be presented and analyzed independently from previous theory. After that, the theoretical framework of this study will be brought in, in order to get a further understanding for the empirical findings. The theoretical framework will achieve this understanding by acting as an interpretive lens for the empirical findings. The outline of the remaining part of the study is outlined below in figure 3.

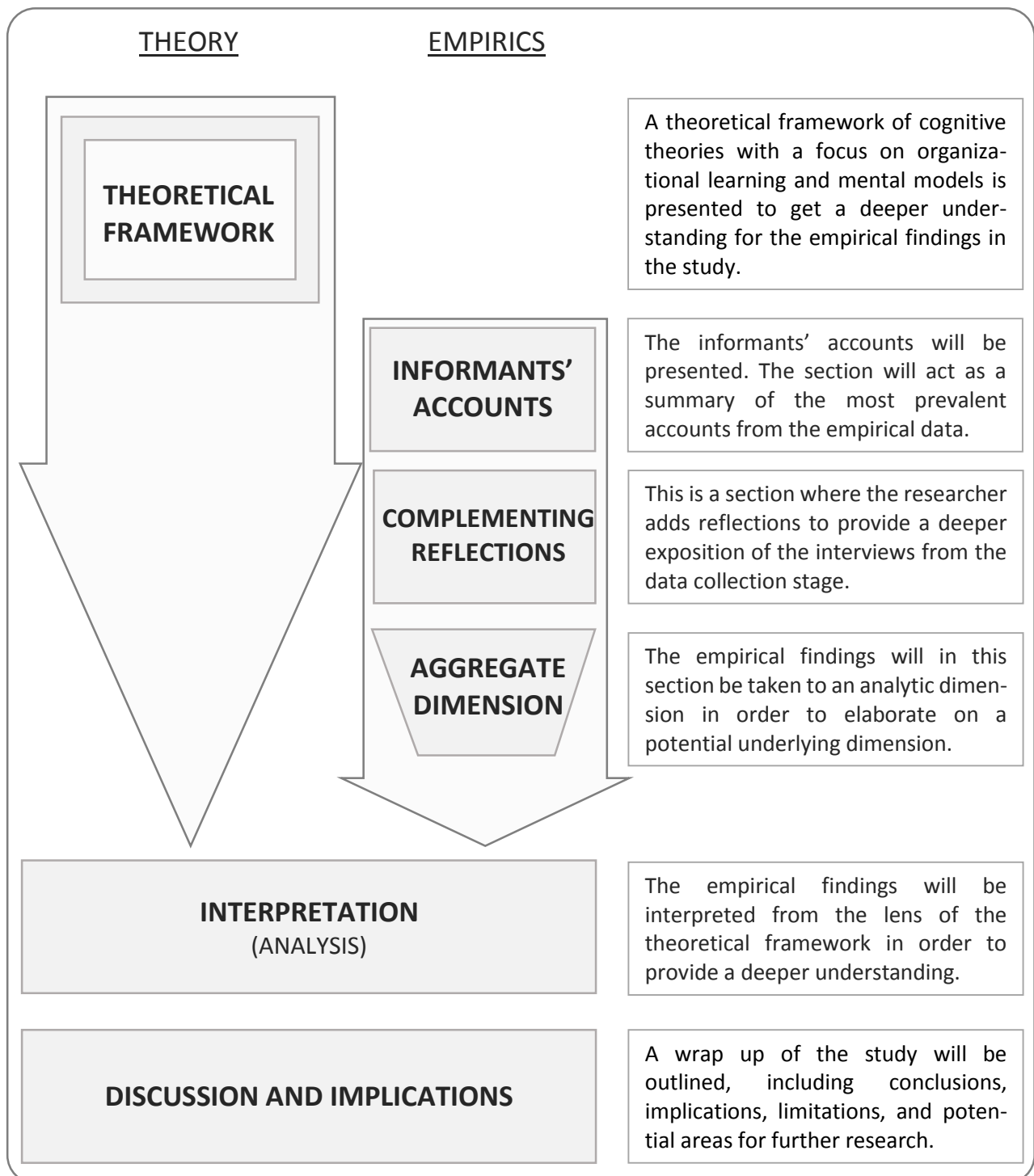


Figure 3: Roadmap to answer the questions and discuss the findings.

2.5 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical framework represents cognitive theory related to cognitive shift, including organizational learning and change. The framework is chosen since previous research has stated that cognition (including mental models) is critical to understand strategy implementation. This is also a way of putting light on the human aspects of strategy implementation, since previous research stated that there has been too much focus on technical aspects and too little focus on human aspects in strategy implementation. The framework will be used in order to interpret the empirical findings in order to get a deeper understanding for those findings.

2.5.1 Social Cognitive Theory of Organizational Management

Cognitive psychology is the study of mental processes (APA, 2013). Organizational functioning, from the perspective of social cognitive theory, explains psychosocial functioning in terms of triadic reciprocal causation, visualized in figure 4 below (Bandura, 1988; Wood & Bandura, 1989). In this causal model, behavior, cognitive factors, and the external environment operate as interacting determinants that influence each other bidirectionally (ibid.). It takes time for a causal factor to exercise its influence and to activate reciprocal influences (Wood & Bandura, 1989). Because of the bi-directionality of influence, people are both products and producers of their environment (ibid.).

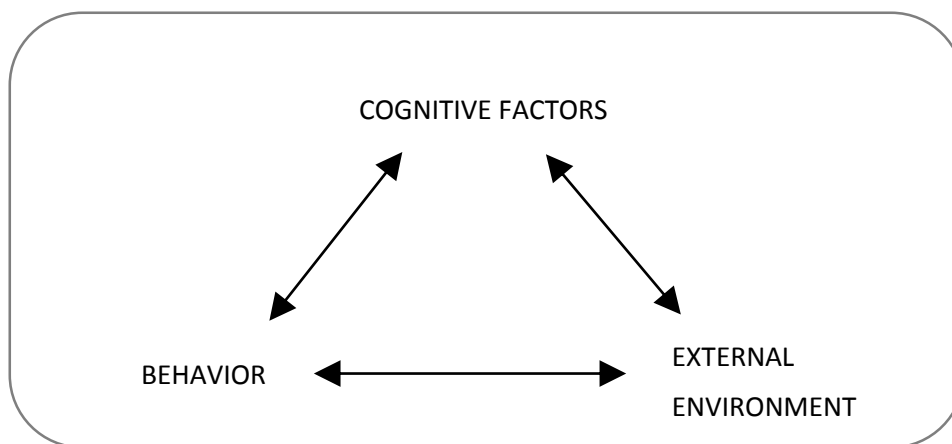


Figure 4. Schematization of the relations in social cognitive theory.

Social cognitive theory also explains human capacities for self-direction and self-motivation. People seek self-satisfaction from achieving valued goals, and are motivated by dissatisfaction with inferior performances. Discrepancies between behavior and personal standards serve as motivators for action designed to achieve desired performance. Goals provide a sense of purpose and direction, and raise and sustain the level of effort needed to achieve them. When individuals are unclear about what they

are trying to accomplish, their motivation is lacking and their efforts are, as a consequence, poorly directed. In addition, accomplishing challenging goals also creates self-satisfaction and increase one's interest in what one is doing. (Wood & Bandura, 1989)

Many of the tasks and activities that people perform are aimed at obtaining future outcomes. As a consequence, people must create guides and motivators in the present for activities that lead to outcomes in the future. Subgoals serve this purpose well. Success in reaching subgoals increases people's self-beliefs in their own capabilities. The beneficial effects of goals are partly determined by how far away in time they are set. Motivation is best promoted by setting long-range goals that set the course for one's endeavors in combination with a series of attainable subgoals that guides and sustains efforts along the way. Making complex tasks manageable by breaking them down into a series of subgoals, also helps to reduce individuals' self-demoralization by promoting high aspiration. Goals have this beneficial effects when they serve as challenges, and not when they serve as grim dictates. Managerial goals that are very difficult to attain, therefore increase the likelihood of failure and individuals' vulnerability to self-debilitating modes of thought. (Wood & Bandura, 1989)

A person's ability to switch between modes of thought and to simultaneously think about multiple concepts has been shown to be a vital component of learning (Boger-Mehall, 1996). This ability can be labeled as *cognitive flexibility*, and has been described as the mental ability to switch between thinking about multiple concepts simultaneously (Scott, 1962). In the field of communication studies, researchers have used the term cognitive flexibility to describe individuals' awareness of various possible options for dealing with a situation, their willingness to adapt and be flexible in new situations, and their ability to represent knowledge from different conceptual and case perspectives (Spiro, Feltovich, Jacobson, & Coulson, 1992; Raes, Heijlites, Glunk, and Roe, 2011). Having a decent amount of cognitive flexibility improves understanding of the bigger picture, and also the understanding of various perspectives (Raes et al., 2011).

2.5.2 Cognitive change and Organizational learning

Many researchers state that organizational change is based on learning (Fiol and Lyles, 1985; Barr et al., 1992). Cognitive shifts can be considered in a variety of arenas in which such shifts can take place – about the work, about oneself, about others engaged in the work (Foldy et al., 2008). Foldy et al. (2008) define cognitive shift in the organizational context as *“a change in how an organizational audience views or understands an important element of the organization's work”* (p. 517).

Low level or single-loop learning is reflected in changes in behavior rather than changes in understanding (Barr et al., 1992). This kind of learning results in incremental modifications or minor

adjustments to existing way of thinking (Watzlawick, Weakland & Fish, 1974; Barr et al., 1992). Single-loop learning is relatively simple because while actions change, existing norms remain unchanged (Collinson & Cook, 2006). Single-loop learning generally involves increasing effectiveness and becoming better at something that is already being done (Argyris & Schön, 1978; Collinson & Cook, 2006). Higher level or double-loop learning, on the other hand, is much more challenging because it changes organizational frames of reference, such as business model, strategy, and norms (Collinson & Cook, 2006; Barr et al., 1992). Double-loop learning may lead to an alteration in the governing variables and, thus, a shift in the way strategies and consequences are framed (Collinson & Cook, 2006). Double-loop learning involves a restructuring of the individual's mental models and results in significant changes in understanding (Barr et al., 1992).

Unlearning, relearning and solidification are present in double-loop learning. This higher level of learning – double-loop learning – involves unlearning, the deletion of concepts or assumed associations between concepts in the environment, and the addition of new concepts and associations (Lewin, 1947; Barr et al., 1992), which is labeled as relearning in this study. During the unlearning stage, old beliefs are discarded in order to make way for new understandings (ibid.). New belief structures ultimately become solidified (Lewin, 1947; Barr, Stimpert & Huff, 1992), as they are supported by the occurrence of anticipated events (Argyris, 1976; Barr, Stimpert & Huff, 1992).

Learning does not necessarily has to come from external influences (Neck, 1996). Self-leadership practices might for example be applied to self-learning (Neck, 1996). By, for example, mental imagery where an individual could mentally picture him-/herself successfully managing the adjustment that the change implies and enjoying his/her work even more than before the change (Neck, 1996, p. 206). Neck (1996) also mentions self-dialog as a self-learning technique. Self-dialogue has also been suggested as a self-learning tool for employees and managers as a way of changing and improving performance (Neck & Manz, 1992; Butler, 1981).

In recent years, interpersonal communication has become a central subject in organization research of learning and knowledge creating (Mengis & Eppler, 2008). Mengis and Eppler (2008) states that it is also an important tool for sensegiving. They also mention affirming as an important aspect of sensegiving. By affirming options, they propose that the probability for a balanced conversation process will increase.

Another important feature of human learning is that people are unable to collect and process all information relevant to any situation or choice (Simon, 1947; March & Simon, 1958). This idea belongs to the concept *bounded rationality* (ibid.). People try to be rational, but there is a limit to how much information people can collect and process (Vuori, 2011). As a consequence, the order in which a sensegiver communicates information influences how sense-receivers will interpret the situation

(ibid.). This happens because sense-receivers are more prone to learn from information given early than late in a situation (ibid.).

2.5.3 Mental models

During the past twenty years, numerous scholars have recognized the importance of aligning mental models with organizational strategy (Fiss & Zajac, 2006; Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991; Gioia & Thomas, 1996; Labianca, Gray, & Brass, 2000; Maitlis & Lawrence, 2007; Rouleau, 2005; Vuori 2011; Barr et al., 1992). In a strategy implementation process, individuals' mental models need to be updated in the light of the new strategy, in order to accomplish a successful change (Barr et al., 1992). Organizational renewal efforts may be hindered because actions that are consistent with existing mental models are likely to generate data that can once again be interpreted in light of existing mental models (Barr et al., 1992). The content and accuracy of the mental model comes and gets improved from learning. (Barr et al., 1992).

It is a common assertion that humans have mental models of the systems with which they interact (Rouse & Morris, 1986). The term mental model has been used as an *"explanatory mechanism in a variety of disciplines over the years"* (Mathieu, Heffner, Goodwin, Salas, & Cannon-Bowers, 2000, p. 274). Mental models serve as *maps* allowing individuals to perceive environments on a larger scale, beyond the range of immediate perception (Weick & Bougon, 1986; Huff, 1990; Barr et al., 1992). People rely on mental models to make sense of their environment and enact in it; mental models are simplified representations of people's worlds (Barr et al., 1992). Mental models help people to *"describe, explain, and predict events in their environment"* (Mathieu et al., 2000, p. 274). Portions of people's mental models are shared among, for example, workgroups and are embedded in, for example, organizational culture (Carroll, Serman, & Marcus, 1998). Shared mental models is shared perceptions that make it possible to work and act together.

Mental models determine what information will receive attention (ibid.), and Nisbett and Ross (1980) state that individuals recall the elements of a stimulus situation that are most prominent in their mental models. Motivation to change can also depend on if aspects of the change already are registered as important in an individual's mental models (Danzau & North, 1994). If the change will provide an issue that are central to an individual's assessment of him/her-self, the pace of learning and adapting to change may become much more rapid (Danzau & North, 1994).

Mental models help individuals cope with an overabundance of available stimuli; mental models are simplifications that help people process the environment despite those limited processing capabilities (March & Simon, 1958; Simon, 1955). Therefore, given cognitive limitations, mental models will always

be incomplete. Furthermore, strongly held mental models may lead managers to overlook important environment changes so that appropriate action at the organizational level is not taken. Even if mental models are not strongly held, important aspects of an organization or its environment may be overlooked. This is due to that everybody cannot be everywhere in an organization and its environment. One example of this is global organizations where the top management may come up with decisions that are rational out of their representational mental models of the organization, at the same time as a branch in another country find the decision completely irrational, since they have other views and other knowledge, i.e. other mental models (see Carroll et al., 1998).

3. METHODOLOGY

This section provides a general overview of the research design, the data collection, and the data analysis applied to carry out this study. It also elaborates on the quality of the study.

3.1 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH - GROUNDED THEORY

Since the research questions are *what* and *how* questions, qualitative method and exploratory approach are good choices for this study (Silverman, 2013; Charmaz, 2014; Yin, 2013). Qualitative method is also the standard in the field of management research (Yin, 2010). The exploratory approach implies that the aim of the study is to construct theory rather than testing theory (Charmaz, 2014). That together with the aim to build an empirical understanding makes grounded theory to a good fit (ibid.). It should though be mentioned that a qualitative approach limits the generalization of a study to some extent (Yin, 2013).

Grounded theory is intended to collect rich empirical data from interviewees and systematically seek to find themes and build an understanding based on that (Charmaz, 2014). Glaser and Strauss first articulated grounded theory as a way to develop theories from research grounded in qualitative data rather than deducing hypotheses from existing theories (ibid.). They proposed that “*systematic qualitative analysis has its own logic and can generate theory*” (Charmaz, 2014, p. 7).

It is important though to take into account that theory developed via grounded theory only are “*provisionally verified through systematic data collection and analysis of data*” (Strauss and Corbin, 1990 – via Mewborn, 2005, p. 23). Grounded theory has been criticized for building theories that only offers “*an approximation of the creative activity of theory-building found in good qualitative work*” (Silverman, 2013, p. 73). Silverman (2013) propose that one way to rescue grounded theory from being a “*trite and mistaken technique*” is to apply it as a way to build theory from “*a particular model of social reality*” (p. 73). This point of view is supported by Mewborn (2005), who states that grounded theory is a beneficial method when it comes to understanding the voice of practitioners. This is an approach that is adapted in this study. Even though the study can be rescued (to use Silverman’s own word from above) by build theory from social reality, the theory building in this study will still be provisionally, and as a consequence hypothetical.

This study has a constructivist grounded theory approach. This approach assumes that neither data nor theories are discovered, but are constructed by the researcher as a result of his or her interactions with the field and its informants (Charmaz, 2014).

The empirics are therefore seen of as co-constructed by researcher and informants, and colored by the researcher's perspectives, values, and positions (ibid.).

3.2 DATA COLLECTION

The interview method for collecting data will be provided, together with the researcher's positions taken in the interviews and an introduction of the informants. An outline of the interviews will also be provided.

3.2.1 Intensive interviewing approach

An *unstructured* and *open ended* interview approach is the most common in qualitative research (Silverman, 2013). In this kind of interview method, the key is *active listening* in which the interviewer allows the informants the "*freedom to talk and ascribe meanings while bearing in mind the broader aims of the project*" (Noaks and Wincup, 2004 – via Silverman, 2013, p. 162). An interview method that have those features are intensive interviewing (Charmaz, 2014). In addition, it is a method that fits grounded theory since both grounded theory and intensive interviewing are "*open-ended yet directed, shaped yet emergent, and paced yet unrestricted*" (Charmaz, 2014, p. 85). Intensive interviewing has become more popular in qualitative studies and "*many grounded theorists rely on it*" (Charmaz, 2014, p. 18). The open ended approach is a suitable for the explorative approach of this study.

Key characteristics of intensive interviewing (Charmaz, 2014, p. 56) and thus of this study are:

- Selection of informants who gave first-hand experience that fits the research topic.
- In-depth explorations of informants' experience and situations.
- Reliance on open-ended questions.
- Emphasis on understanding the research informant's perspective, meaning, and experience.
- Practice of following up on unanticipated areas of inquiry, hints, and implicit views and accounts of action.

Interviewing can be problematic since it is based on what people say, and that "*may not be what they do, have done, and would do in the future*" (Charmaz, 2014, p. 78). Therefore, interviews do not necessarily reproduce the reality (Alvesson & Sandberg, 2011; Charmaz 2014). That may decrease the quality of the study.

3.2.2 Positions taken

There are some positions taken by the researcher in an unstructured interview approach, which are important to make explicitly in order to understand how data in interviews were constructed. Fontana and Frey (2000, pp. 654-655) lists three important standpoints to make:

- Deciding how to present yourself (for example, as a student, as a researcher, or simply a humbler learner).
- Gaining and maintaining trust, especially where one has to ask sensitive questions.
- Establishing understanding and unity with informants (i.e. attempting to see the world from their viewpoint without 'going native').

In the interview session I, the researcher, took the role of an interested and curious student, who actively worked with the language and body language to provide interest, in order to make the informants relax and talk in an elaborative manner from a personal perspective.

Gaining trust and establishing a unity with the informants were made by having interactive discussion, where I as the researcher, provided examples from other interviews, without naming the organization or the informants, in order to create a discussion, and not merely asking questions and recording answers.

3.2.3 Introduction of informants (interviewees)

Since this study aim to contribute to *collective leadership*, the focus has been on finding informants with experience of strategy implementation in a consensus-driven culture. Sweden is perceived as a consensus-driven culture, and some even propose that there are a "*Swedish management style*", which is characterized by management by consensus (Gustavsson, 1995; Brewster, 1993).

In order to find individuals who had experience of strategy implementation and could provide context and overview of the process, CEOs, HR Directors, higher level managers, internal change managers, and external strategy implementation consultants were included in the study.

In order to avoid a bias by industry informants in the study were chosen from various industries. Informants belonged to non-profit, global manufacturing, insurance, e-commerce, national and international strategy implementation consulting, software providers, banking, and NGOs.

21 informants represent the sources to the data collection. 4 additional informants where interviewed, but those interviews were excluded from the study due to that they were perceived to not have enough experience or not have experience of a sensegiving process based on collective leadership.

One example is an investment banker, working in Sweden but only with experience from strategy implementation in an Anglo-Saxon culture. His/her accounts of his/her experience were perceived as a clear top management driven strategy implementation.

The average age of the informants is 43 years old, and 62% of the informants were female and 38% were male.

More information of the informants is to be found in Appendix B.

3.2.4 Interview outline

The interviews were conducted in line with the intensive interviews approach. They were really open ended and emergent, at the same time as they were paced to cover certain areas. The informants completed one interview each, with the length ranging from 50 to 70 minutes. Interviews were recorded and transcribed.

The interviews started by explaining the area of interest and explaining the purpose of the interview and the study. All informants were also ensured that they will be anonymous in the study. Then they were asked for their experiences from working with strategy implementation. The answers to this were then followed up with questions relating to that, and in that way the interviews ended up in a situation where it felt more as a discussion than an interview. This was done in line with the position taken as mentioned above. Many why-questions were asked in order to get more detailed descriptions, and the informants were often asked to elaborate further on the statements.

The areas that were covered in all interviews were the ones stated below. The process here refers to the strategy implementation process with a focus on the initial communication in the strategy implementation:

- Who should be involved in leading the process?
- What people are important to involve, and when should they be involved?
- What kind of resistance is common in the process?
- What content is important to communicate in the process?
- What is important to take into account in the process?
- How should external consultants be involved, or not be involved?
- What lessons learned do you have from your experience of the process?
- What are common mistakes made in the initial communication of a renewed strategy?

3.3 DATA ANALYSIS

Data in grounded theory is analyzed by systematic coding, and the coding consists of at least two phases: initial and focused coding (Charmaz, 2014). Coding means labeling segments of data with a label that categorizes, summarizes, and accounts for each piece of data (ibid.). Taking fragments of data apart and asking what meanings to glean from these fragments is a part of the analysis (ibid.).

3.3.1 Initial coding

During initial coding fragments of data are studied closely for their analytic import (Charmaz, 2014, p. 109). From time to time the participants' telling terms are adopted as codes (Charmaz, 2014, p. 109). Initial coding continues the interaction that was shared between the researcher and the participant while collecting data (Charmaz, 2014, p. 109).

Conducting grounded theory coding involves at least two phases: The initial phase involving naming each word, line, or segment of data,

3.3.2 Focused coding

Focused coding is a selective phase that uses the most significant or frequent initial codes to sort, integrate, and organize large amounts of data (Charmaz, 2014). Some researchers prefer elaborate coding schemes, but Charmaz (2014) recommends to keep coding simple, direct, and spontaneous. In the focused coding the most salient codes are developed (Charmaz, 2014). It is a way to cluster the initial coding (ibid.).

3.4 RESEARCH QUALITY

3.4.1 Ethics

An important ingredient of ethical research is to make people's comments and behavior confidential (Silverman, 2013). This study explicitly declared to every informant in the interview that anonymity would be ensured. In some interviews respondents described situations that they thought were interesting to talk about, but that they explicitly did not want to be included of the study. Therefore,

information like this were excluded from the study, even though it would have been interesting to include in the study.

3.4.2 Reliability

Reliability in qualitative research is by Moisander and Valtonen (2006 - via Silverman, 2013, p. 360) satisfied by making the research process transparent through describing the research strategy and data analysis methods "*in a sufficiently detailed manner*", and by paying attention to theoretical transparency by making the theoretical stance explicit by showing how the analysis methods produces particular interpretations and excludes others. This has been taken into account of this study. However, a flaw in the reliability of this study is that the interviews were really open ended. On the upper hand, that provided a relaxed interview setting where informants felt relaxed and elaborated freely on their experiences. On the other hand, the interview process gets less transparent for readers of the study.

3.4.3 Validity

Construct validity refers to how well the measures of a study measure what they are intended to measure (Trochim & Donnelly, 2008; Kvale, 1995). As the social context constantly changes a qualitative study can to some extent be hard to define as consistent (Bryman, 2002). One way to take the validity into account was by letting the informants speak freely. That made it possible to some extent grasp how they interpret different terms and concepts. In this process a few interviews were also excluded, since the experience of the informants was not enough to make sure that they *knew what they were talking about*. Despite of those measures taken to address the validity, informants give their own version in the interviews and that may sometimes have presented a distorted view.

4. EMPIRICAL FINDINGS

In this section, empirical findings from the study are shared. The empirics are divided into three sections. First, a descriptive presentation of the coding of the interviews, which presents the informants' accounts. That is followed by complementing reflections from the interviews. That section takes a higher perspective and also introduces some critical reflections. The section concludes by putting the informants' accounts into to an aggregate dimension, in order to present an underlying analytical dimension.

4.1 INFORMANTS' ACCOUNTS

The final categories and coding from this process is shown in figure 5 below. An extended version of this table, including quotes exemplifying how the codes where created, is placed in Appendix A.

INITIAL CODING	FOCUSED CODING
Owning the process	Leading sensegiving from inside
Cross-functional collaboration	
Including diversity	
Managing informal leaders	
Taking account of human behavior	
Seeing employees as customers	Creating a meaningful story
Finding meaningful triggers	
Simplifying the vision	
Synchronizing and trying the message	
Leading change at the lower levels	Preparing the lower level managers
Projecting resistance	
Facilitating dialogs	
Leading with empathy	
Providing the big picture	Starting with 'the why' followed by 'the what'
Understanding how value is created	
Providing visionary goals	
Being persistent	

Figure 5: Initial and focused coding.

4.1.1 Leading sensegiving from inside

This category is about how the process was recommended to be led, how to include various individuals in the process, and the importance of building the process on knowledge of human behavior.

Owning the process

Informants state that the sensegiving process (as well as the strategy formulation and the entire strategy implementation process) should be driven from inside the organization, because members of the organization must feel that the organization owns the process in order to be committed. Reasons for this, recurring in the interviews, are that people in the organization know more about the organization than external individuals.

“Often you have all the knowledge and information you need in the organization.” (Informant N.)

Therefore, informants emphasize that members of an organization will not trust or be emotionally engaged in the sensegiving process, if it is owned by “outsiders” because that are perceived as uninformed of how things work in the organization. Consultants are perceived as important, but only when it comes to getting advice and feedback, especially about the external environment, but informants (including consultants) expressed clearly that consultants should not own the strategy processes.

“Strategy and the accompanied processes have to be something that grows inside an organization. However, as a CEO I see many benefits from using consultants as sounding boards.” (Informant A.)

Cross-functional collaboration

In order to take advantage of internal knowledge and create a united internally driven force for planning the sensegiving process, collaborating over the borders is emphasized among informants as critical. In general, change leaders of the implementation process, representatives from the HR department, and representatives from the communication department should be involved in leading the sensegiving activity, at least. This kind of collaboration should decrease the borders between departments and functions, according to lessons learned by informants.

“Today we work as a team. We are HR, communication and change managers. We have different perspectives to influence each other, at the same time as we synchronize our work, so the message does not get ambiguous out in the organization.” (Informant B.)

“During the last five years, I’ve noticed that communication departments in organizations get more and more responsibility in strategy implementation.” (Informant N.)

When those functions were not working close together, informants describe that important perspectives were forgotten about.

“If we were not working as a team, the communication department would create material without taking consideration to human aspects, and the HR department would not be crisp and clear in their message. When looking at the Q&A-set we support the managers with, half of it consists of communication related content and half of it consists of HR related content.” (Informant M.)

In addition, informants describe that it is important for this group to have close access to the top management and the other managers of the organization. One informant described that in his/her case, the communication department has close contacts with the top management and the HR department has close connections to the other managers of the organization.

“Often the communication department has close access to the top management and the HR department has close access to the middle and lower level managers.” (Informant B.)

Including a diversity

By leading from inside, it is easier to include many members of the organization. A strong benefit of including many members of the organization, is that it makes it relatively easy to collect valuable information from inside the company. Informants explain that, in order to understand the entire organization it is necessary to get input from people representing different levels and departments in an organization. Informants have good experiences from including members of the organization, by asking them for advice for how to handle a certain and relatively concrete problem, or receiving information of what is important (and not important) to people in the organization.

“Foremost, employees are really clever. Many times I have a clear direction, but with the input from the employees I always get good ideas that are helpful in twisting the idea to the next level.” (Informant A.)

One organization included representatives from all parts of the organization in the strategy formulation process before the direction was set. This could be explained by that it is a large non-profit organization with a lot of extended democratic systems built into its governance structure. Most informants said that it was most common to include people in the process after a rough direction was decided upon by the top management. Even though there are some potential benefits from including people early on, including everyone is often not possible. When there is not possible to have a wide including process, it is still recommended by informants to at least involve the level of managers beneath the top management in planning the sensegiving process.

Managing informal leaders

When elaborating on what individuals to include as representatives from different parts of the organization, the most common answer was to include informal leaders. Thus, an important stance to make before starting the sensegiving process is to decide about managing informal leaders. The majority of informants stress the importance of identifying and including informal leaders as early as possible. Another informant adds that the informal leaders can be more important to manage, than the formal ones, in a sensegiving process.

“If informal leaders get resistant, the implementation process has a high probability to fail, regardless sensegiving efforts”. (Informant A.)

However, few informants state that you do not always need to work with informal leaders. In some cases, you can actually choose to work against them as a conscious strategy, in order to break the influence they got, according to a few informants. Furthermore, informants say that it may be possible to create new informal leadership or increase the status of some existing informal leaders, by actively including them and give them important roles in the sensegiving process. There were only two informants that mention the opportunity to alter informal power structures. Others took informal power structures as given.

Taking account of human behaviors

One weakness in the planning of the sensegiving process according to informants, even though the characteristics above are included, are lacking knowledge of human behavior. Some informants perceive that there are in many organizations a lack of understanding of behaviors in change management, which puts focus on structure and mechanical aspects instead of human aspects.

“I feel that the ones working with change management should be behavioral scientists. Today, there are too many business economist and engineers leading change.” (Informant A.)

One consultant talks about the journey she has been doing. She started at a global strategy firm and after a while got curious of why strategies, that she was a part of formulating, turned out successful or non-successful. One day she saw implementation consultants that help an organization to implement strategy from the perspective of organizational behavioral management. She describe that the quality of that implementation was high, and after that she started herself to work more with organizational behavioral management and implementation, which today is her primary area. She states that applying knowledge of human behavior in sensegiving makes a difference.

One consequence of the lacking knowledge of human behavior seems to be the common mistake of underestimating the need for implementation, including sensegiving. Informants describe that they often meet colleagues that think it is enough to inform about a strategy in one information meeting.

“Many times, I have encountered people saying to me that ‘this is the strategy.’ When I then ask for the implementation plan, people say ‘What? We have the strategy and we talked about it in an information meeting’. Haha, so having a plan for implementation is not always given.” (Informant F.)

There seems to be a lacking of understanding of that changing people’s behaviors, is a demanding process. Informants emphasize that much preparation and planning are needed, even when it comes to the implementation and sensegiving of a simple concept.

“I think one of the most common mistakes is to not put enough energy into whether communication or implementation, and if the effort is there, there are still common that people do not show enough respect for the change that has to be done.” (Informant F.)

4.1.2 Creating a meaningful story

Informants talk about the importance of finding a meaningful and *simple enough* story that makes sense for and triggers members of the organization.

Seeing employees as customers

Some informants emphasize the importance of seeing employees as customers for the sensegiving process. In the same way as there should be a focus on the external customers when launching a new product, informants state that the employees should be seen as the main customers for the sensegiving process.

“The communication should have the same basics as external marketing. You need to know the needs of the target groups and what the target groups look like. You need to communicate with knowledge and insights about the target group. The members of the organization should be seen of as an internal customer group for the new strategy. That way of thinking is often forgotten about.” (Informant G.)

Many informants describe that a common mistake by sensegivers is that they have often been involved in the strategy process for a while, but forgets that the recipients for the sensegiving has not. So the sensegivers have assumptions that they base the information on, that they are not providing in the

communication. By failing to make those assumptions explicit in the sensegiving-process, people do not get the complete message, and thus have a hard time to get committed to it.

Finding meaningful triggers

In order to create a meaningful story, finding meaningful triggers is an enabler. Informants described that the message should be modified in a way that makes sense to different people in different departments and branches. For example, people in the salesforce are often driven by other factors than people in the HR department. The message should be customized so everybody involved in the change, feel that it affects them in one way or the other and is important to them. In order to manage this, triggers for different groups have to be identified and used in the sensegiving process. An important lessons learned is to understand that employees often have other triggers than what the leadership has. So, the leadership need to catch the employees' perspectives, and not only rely on their own perspectives.

Simplifying the vision

Another important but challenging factor, that informants describe as a common failure, is to simplify the vision for the sensegiving process. Informants are discussing this as a balancing act. When working with formulating strategy, individuals involved sometimes start to value the complexity and the details too much, so they forget to simplify it in the sensegiving process. Communicating too much at the same time makes it hard for other members of the organization to make sense of it. The simplification should also be customized to separate groups in the organization, so people get the parts that are most relevant and interesting for them. This is why it is important to first find meaningful triggers for different segments of employees in an organization, and customize the sensegiving. The number of goals and objectives are recommended to be as few as possible so every individual in the organization can get them on top-of-the-mind.

"I think that one enabling factor leading up to the clarity in structure and goals that we have today, is that we have few overarching goals. We don't have twenty goals. We have four."
(Informant H.)

"Before I wrote a strategy document consisting of 30-40 pages. Nothing happened! Today we communicate the strategy with 5 PowerPoint-slides, and employees know more of the strategy today than before." (Informant J.)

Synchronizing and trying the message

Even if managers working with sensegiving are good communicators, synchronizing the message is critical before launching the sensegiving process. The sensegivers should use the same kind of vocabulary in order to avoid ambiguity. The effort needed to make this synchronization, increases with the size and the complexity of an organization. Furthermore, in order to be prepared for the sensegiving process it is important to involve both managers and individuals in trying out the message. This could be done both to managers and employees, and in the form of, for example, focus groups. In addition, the message could also benefit from being tested other relevant stakeholder groups.

“The probability of getting the members of the organization to accept the strategy will increase if the strategy has been tested on the owners, customers, and a sample from the employees, before it is presented to all the members. This increases the feeling of that the strategy is well elaborated on.” (Informant G.)

4.1.3 Preparing lower level managers

Informants describe the importance of equipping managers in an organization before starting the sensegiving process. Even if a simple concept should be implemented, an important enabler is to equip the managers in the organization with skills as well as information.

“For four years ago I got the mission to implement 5S. The theory for the tool could be communicated in less than an hour. However, in practice it means that people have to change behaviors. So I demanded that I needed five weeks of education with the managers at each factory that should be responsible for the implementation of it, and I got it, and that really turned out great.” (Informant F.)

Leading change at the lower levels

Informants propose that leading change often demands leadership capabilities above what is needed to lead the day-to-day activities in an organization. The managers who are in the strongest need to be equipped are described to be the lower level managers. They are often the ones that will get approached by the most by employees, at the same time as they often are the least experienced managers.

Informants describe that fostering courage among managers is important in order to meet the employees' resistance with confidence and transparency. It takes courage to lead in resistance. Fostering a sense of confidence and security is also recommended. In general terms, said one of the informants, people do not like change and the uncertainty that comes with change. If the managers

does not have courage, confidence and a sense of security, they might send confused signals to the employees in the sensegiving process, which will affect how the employees perceive the sensegiving. Sometimes the lower level managers has not been part of the strategy formulation or much of the planning for the sensegiving process, which makes it challenging for them to work as confident sensegivers for something that are relatively new for them. One manager describe how a former manager to him was able to provide calmness and security in the team he worked in at that time.

“A lot of initiatives are going on in the organization. There are both new products being launched and new markets being penetrated. This creates a lot of worry in the team, regarding how to handle all new initiatives. Fortunately, our manager is very calm and pragmatic in approaching upcoming problems, which gives the whole team a calm feeling of that we are in control.”

(Informant J.)

Projecting resistance

Among the informants there is a wide agreement of that the initial sensegiving process needs to take human aspects in to account. This approach creates an importance for knowing what kind of questions that will pop up into people’s minds when the sensegiving process starts. In order to prepare managers, projecting resistance in an upcoming implementation is critical according to informants. There will always be questions in the sensegiving process. One-way communication will decrease trust and increase frustration and resistance. In order to counteract this, the managers should be prepared for dialogs and ready to answer questions. The organization can support managers by giving them a set of expected questions and answers to those questions.

The informants that elaborated on this stated that, in general, people get one question on top of their minds when a change is made public. They want to know how the change will affect them. They want to know what will happen to them, and what is in the change for them.

“Will I keep my job? Will I be affected? How will I be affected? Who needs to leave? Will I be able to do more or less of the things that I enjoy? Will I get more responsibility? Will I have a new boss?”

(Informant B.)

Informants strongly recommends that the answers to these questions should be provided as early as possible in the sensegiving process. Doing so, will minimize the ambiguity and the worries that arise in the sensegiving process.

Facilitating dialogs

In order to make it easy to discuss questions in the sensegiving phase, a recommended way to handle people and their concerns is by facilitating dialogs through small groups. Informants state the

importance of creating dialogs in the sensegiving process. Even though managers do not have all the answers, this forum is important so employees can be able to express their questions, feelings, and concerns.

During the sensegiving process, it is also important that managers provide accessibility for the employees that they are responsible for. It should be easy for employees to come to their manager and ask questions, in a one-to-one dialog about the change that is going to happen in the organization. To listen to the employees should not only be a symbolic move. Often the employees can come up with great input, which managers should take care of and forward to where that input will be valuable.

To prepare managers for this, it is important to provide discussions in different management teams, so managers can discuss together with their peers and representatives from the top management team, before the sensegiving process is launched. Even though the message is synchronized, it may be interpreted in different ways, and that is one reason to why it is important that managers have dialogs together to align their mindsets before going out and launching the sensegiving process.

Leading with empathy

Even though a manager cannot answer all question, the manager could still have the role of listening and showing concern and support for the employees. Leading with empathy is important for managers to listen and understand employees' feelings and concerns during change. People often feel better when they are able to express their feelings and concerns. A key to do a good job as a manager in the sensegiving process is by understanding others' perspectives. It is important to understand the perspectives of the employees. This is of special importance in the cases where the managers have been knowing about the change before the employees, and it is important for managers to respect the different people need different amount of time to accepting changes. As a consequence, the sensegiving process needs to be a dynamic. However, it is also important to making people widen their perspectives. Managers need to handle resistance in a constructive way. They need to provide individuals with information, support, and coaching. They need to understand what each individual need to understand and accept the change. Emphasizing positive aspects is also an important mission for the managers.

4.1.4 Starting with 'the why' followed by 'the what'

'The why' is the reason for why the strategy has to be renewed, and 'the what' is the actual strategy.

"In order to align mindsets, you have to make people understand 'the why'. People are logical, and want to know the reason behind going in the new direction. If you neglect to provide 'the

why', the probability for changing mindsets and behaviors in and organization will be low."
(Informant N.)

Providing the big picture

All informants agree that, getting the big picture, is important for people in an organization to make sense of the upcoming changes. The bigger picture have the answers to why the new strategy is needed. What challenges are the organization facing?, and how are they affecting the organization? It seems important to not only provide the big picture of the future vision, but also about the background. The context need to be provided. To get the big picture it is important to know the history, the present, and the predicted future. In general, people want to know why they should do or are doing something. Not knowing the reason will in many cases lead to low motivation.

"If you cannot provide the bigger picture to the members of the organization, the strategy will stay as a desktop exercise and implementation will fail." (Informant D.)

"The big picture is about where are we heading?, why we are heading in that direction?, and what the organization's renewed overarching goal is?" (Informant J.)

A typical misunderstanding from unexperienced change agents seems to be that they perceive people's critical questions as something negative. Instead, those critical questions should be seen of as a window for opportunity to communicate the *why*-perspective. People will listen more to the arguments, when the arguments are answers to their own questions.

"People ask critical questions, but I do not perceive that as a sign of not wanting to change, I see the critical questions as a sign of people wanting to understand why we are changing, and why we have the strategy and the goals that we have." (Informant K.)

Understanding how value is created

Connected to getting the big picture is understanding how value is created in the organization. An important aspect to create the big picture, is to make every member of the organization understand how the organization creates value. Note that creating value does not necessarily means creating money. Some organizations create social value as well. When people realize how the organization creates value, the strategy starts to make sense, during the permissions that it is a well formulated strategy. This also give the ability to employees to come with adjustments to how even more value can be created. When an individual knows that he/she is really creating value by doing what he/she does, motivation, engagement, and commitment to the renewed strategy is created.

Providing visionary goals

'The what' is the actual strategy. It is *what we shall do*. In order to create a clear meaning to the strategy, connecting individuals to the corporate goals of the strategy is important. It is thus important for individuals to see the red thread of how each individual contribute to the organization. However, in the initial sensegiving phase the focus should be on a high level, and translating the strategy down to each employee is the mission on the second phase, which can be labeled as 'the how'-stage. In order to make 'the what' concrete without elaborating on too many details the communication of the strategy could involve visionary goals. Goals that say what the organization wants to achieve with the renewed strategy. Informants say that it does not have to be a time limit to this goals. The goals should be of a visionary character that foster motivation and commitment.

Being persistent

A common mistake that was frequently measured in the interviews was the mistake to moving forward too fast. Often individuals overestimate the speed of organizational learning. Some informants also mention that they themselves often feel restless while they have communicated the same message for a while. They described that they themselves had to struggle with being persistent and have patience.

"It is easy to underestimate how much communication that is needed. Usually you should communicate until you get so sick and tired of hearing your own voice that you feel ill. Then, maybe, you have communicated enough." (Informant F.)

4.2 COMPLEMENTING REFLECTIONS

In order to provide more implicit findings from the interviews, this section provides complementing reflections from the interviews that are perceived to be of importance.

4.2.1 Collective leadership of a hidden top-down approach?

Under the *Starting with 'the why' followed by 'the what'*-category, it is mentioned that the sensegiving phase in focus in this study, the initial sensegiving phase, is about providing the big picture, the direction and visionary goals. The focus should be on where to go and why to go there. In order to make a process that encourage a mix of top-down and bottom-up informants state that it is important to first provide 'the why'. This is described to be in order to avoid a top-down feeling. If the communication starts with 'the what' *"people will feel that decisions are already taken and the*

leadership of the organization do what they want to, without caring about the rest of us in the organization” (Informant C.). By first providing the context people can come to their own conclusions of what *‘the what’* should be. Then people will accept the strategy when it is communicated, since it matches their own conclusions.

Taking a critical stance, this process could be described of as a top-down approach covered by a symbolic inclusive approach. If the top management want people to perceive it as a consensus-driven change, they can arrange the sensegiving process in a way that provides people with a description of the context that make people come to the conclusion that the top management has planned the others to arrive at. From this perspective, information collected about the members of the organization will be used in order to arrange the sensegiving process so they themselves, come to the “right” conclusion.

When it comes to the case where there are a wide inclusion already in the stage of formulating the strategy, as mentioned above in a non-profit organization, members are included in formulating the strategy, so in that case there are no room for the same type of influencing (or manipulating) as mentioned in the discussion above. In that particular case there where a wide and extended inclusion process in finding out opportunities and threats in the external environment and in finding out various opportunities of where the organization could go. However, when all the inputs were synthesized, the top management had a big interpretive power. So, it could be that all inputs were welcomed, but the top management could then more or less choose the inputs and perspectives that they thought where the “right” ones. So even that case that where described as an extensive democratic process, could also be interpreted as more of a symbolic democratic process.

The sensegiving process is recommended to be led by a cross-functional team that also is more like a guiding team, than a directive team. That is emphasized as important. This could also be seen as a symbolic gesture. It is a guiding team, but they are recommended to have close connection to the top management team. So, there might be a possibility that the top management team have a lot of power over the guiding team. Even if it is not formally so, it may be so informally. It may even be so unconsciously. The guiding team might weigh inputs from the top management team heavier than input from others, since the top management team, actually is the top management team.

4.2.2 Giver or receiver in focus?

There seems to be a bias among leaders to talk about what *“we need to do”*. Informants for example more often say that *“we need to include employees early on in the process”*, instead of saying *“we need to make sure that the employees themselves feel included in the process.”* The difference seems to be a fine line, but it reveals an important distinction. In the first example there is a description of what to

do and in the latter example there is a description of what to achieve. What you do is just a tool to get to the final destination. Focusing on the tool instead of the destination may decrease the probability of reaching the destination.

Many of the informants in the study talks more about their own perspective than the employees' perspective. A metaphor describing this could be product focus vs. customer focus. The former one describe a situation where an organization focuses on producing a certain product. The latter one focuses on the consumption of the product. A problem that can occur in the product focus perspective is that producers focus too much on themselves and too little on the "audience" for the product.

One quote that exemplifies the focus on the production is *"one challenge that we have is to communicate the big and complex picture in a simplified way."* The focus here is on what the producers need to do. One example from the opposite side is *"in general, an individual is not receptive to communication regarding change before he or she knows what will happen to him or her, or what's in it for him or her."* Here the focus is on the individuals that are the "customers" for the sensegiving process. By starting with how they think and react, the sensegiving could be customized for them.

As presented in the empirical results above, the majority of the informants perceive that one of the most common mistakes made by organizational leaderships is to forget that they have significant informational advantage in relation to the other members of an organization. So they lead the sensegiving process out of what they know, and not out of what the recipients know (or not know).

4.3.3 Serial vs. Parallel process

Many informants state that sensegiving starts right away. The argument is that an organization cannot decide when to start the sensegiving process, since the process starts when you start working on a strategy. People will realize that something is going on, and that is when sensegiving starts, even if it is consciously or non-consciously. In the same way, when internal analysis due to the formulation of the strategy is going on inside an organization, that is an interaction, and every interaction is in fact a sensegiving process. So, sensegiving will according to that be parallel with the formulation process.

4.3 AGGREGATE DIMENSION

This section brings the informants' accounts to an analytical level in order to provide a discussion on an underlying dimension of the sensegiving process studied.

Bringing the empirical findings to an aggregated analytical dimension reveals that the sensegiving phase in the focus of this study (initial sensegiving in strategy implementation) could be seen as management of perspectives, with the aim of aligning mindsets in favor of a renewed strategy.

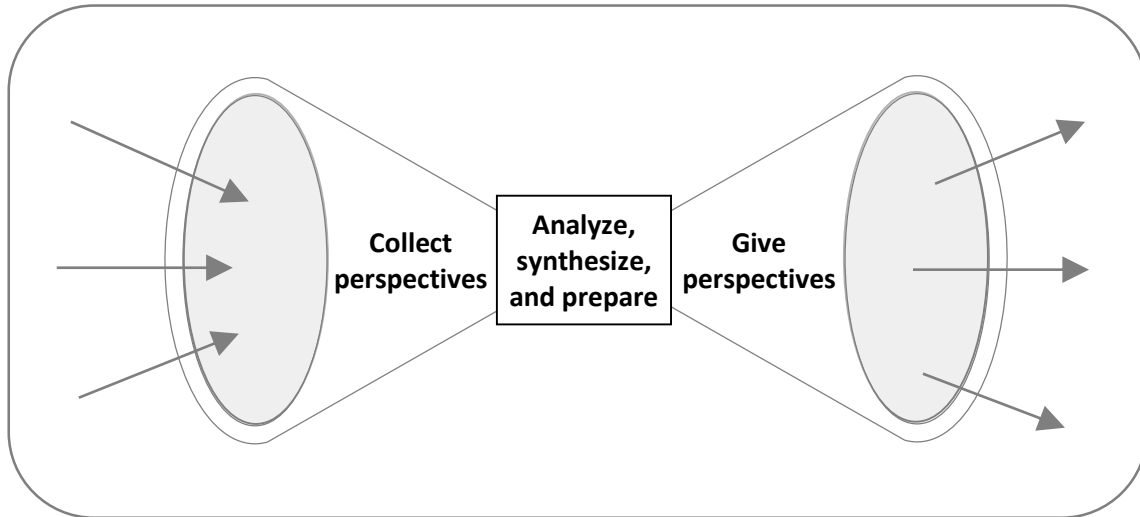


Figure 6: Aggregate dimension.

4.3.1 Collect perspectives

The process is recommended to be led from inside the organization, due to that important perspectives needed for leading the process is perceived to exist on the inside of the organization. Outsiders are perceived to have too little knowledge of the actual organization in order to be legitimate to lead the sensegiving process. So the management and the legitimacy of the overall process is highly affected by where certain perspectives are perceived to be. Thus, the collection of perspectives starts when the guiding team for leading the process is put together. The leadership of the process should also have close connection to other important perspectives relevant for the sensegiving process. That is why a cross-functional collaboration with close access (both internal and external) to important perspectives is an enabler. Diversity of individuals, perspectives, and input are enablers as well.

Included in the important perspectives mentioned above includes to map the informal power structures. An image of how the informal power structures looks like may be important to paint before deciding how to handle that structure. To work with the informal leaders seems to most be important, and especially when an including sensegiving process is preferred. However, informal leaders creates informal followers, or informal bystanders. The perspective of those might get unnoticed, of not the informal leaders influence is decreased.

Another important perspective that should be collected in this stage, if it is not fully present among the individuals leading the sensegiving process, is the knowledge of human behavior and organizational behavioral management. This should be emphasized here since lacking knowledge and respect for this perspective, seems to lead to underestimates of the effort needed for sensegiving, communication, and implementation of a new strategy.

4.3.2 Analyze, synthesize, and prepare

This is where the perspectives come together. The collected perspectives need to be analyzed and synthesized in order to make sense of them and later put them into action. A meaningful story created with knowledge of the audience for sensegiving is created, synchronized over the organization, and tested, in order to make sure that the story works and is consistent for the audience. The message needs to be simple enough to attract people and be easy to grasp, at the same time as it needs to provide the amount of information needed in order to comprehend the extent of the upcoming change. To make it attractive, triggers for different kind of people in the organization should be taken advantage of.

It is also perceived as important to educate and prepare managers for the upcoming sensegiving process. A critical factor is the lower level managers that are closest to the employees. They have most frequently interactions with the employees, at the same time as those managers often has least experience of leadership of all managers. In addition, even though they have much experience of leadership, leading change and sensegiving is perceived as demanding other leadership skills than leading operations.

4.3.3 Give perspectives

In the third step, the sensegiving process is actually launched. The purpose of the process is to align mindsets to make people understand why a new direction of the organization is necessary and what that direction should be. The aim is to give sense about the new direction and as a consequence align mindsets in favor for the new direction. In order to give sense, it is recommended to provide the big picture to show how value is created, and visionary goals so people get a good sense of in what direction the organization should go.

Here 'the why' and 'the what' is in focus, so no comprehensive change is expected to happen. The actual change of behaviors are supposed to come later in the strategy implementation process,

together with 'how' the strategy should be translated into sub-strategies and concrete goals for teams and individuals.

It is important that the individuals involved in the sensegiving process are well prepared. Not only with information, but also with necessary skills and approaches. Important skills are stated to be leading with empathy, handling resistance in a constructive way, being persistence, and facilitate dialogs in a constructive way.

5. INTERPRETATION

In order to get a deeper understanding of the empirical findings, these will be interpreted through a cognitive perspective in this section. The cognitive perspective is represented by the theoretical framework provided in Section 2.

The empirical findings suggests that the essential processes used during the initial sensegiving process in strategic implementation can be seen as management of perspectives. Peoples' perspective, which are discussed in the preceding section are, according to this study, critical to manage in order to produce successful sensegiving. In order to manage them, they first need to be identified. By identify them and have them as a palette for sensegiving, a decent amount of cognitive flexibility is put into the sensegiving process, which is important to create a thoughtful process (Raes et al., 2011). This study argues that people's perspectives are "stored" in people's mental models. Perspectives can be defined as mental views (Merriam-webster, 2015), and mental views are based on mental models. In addition, mental models serves as maps and representations of an individual's environment (Weick & Bougon, 1986; Huff, 1990; Barr et al., 1992). As mentioned earlier, numerous scholars have recognized the importance of aligning mental models with organizational strategy (Fiss & Zajac, 2006; Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991; Gioia & Thomas, 1996; Labianca, Gray, & Brass, 2000; Maitlis & Lawrence, 2007; Rouleau, 2005; Vuori 2011).

The sensegiving process should according to the empirical data be led from inside the organization. The argument that an individual who spent time in an organization knows more about it than an outsider, was expressed by many informants. This could be explained by that the external environment to an individual slowly affect the individual's cognition (Wood and Bandura, 1989). Mental models of a certain environment – a mental understanding that describes, explains, and predicts the environment – are not created in one day, so a considerable amount of time is needed to build mental models (Wood and Bandura, 1989; Weick & Bougon, 1986; Barr et al., 1992; Mathieu et al., 2000).

Thus, the phase of collection of mental models, starts by putting individuals with existing mental models of the organization into leading the sensegiving process.

A cross-functional team is recommended to lead the sensegiving process, and the team is also recommended to have access to managers from different positions and parts of the organization. In addition, consultants is recommended to be used to collect additional perspectives, which may not be existing in the internal sensegiving leadership. The more diversity of sources, the more perspectives will be covered. Even though an individual has been in an organization for an extended time, the individual may overlook important aspects of the organization (Barr et al., 1992). That explains why a mix of individuals are beneficial for leading the sensegiving process. This is also an argument that the top management alone, shall not lead the process. This could be explained by that mental models are simplifications, and will therefore never be absolute accurate (Barr et al., 1992; March & Simon, 1958). In addition, since people are on different levels and departments in organizations, their immediate perception of the same organization may differ. Furthermore, even though two individuals would have the same mental models, different aspects of it can be called up on in a given situation, depending on what elements of the situation that are most prominent in their mental models (Nisbett & Ross, 1980). Thus, to lean on a few individuals mental models to get an accurate map of how things work in an organization seems to be risky. This could fail to take important aspects into account (Barr et al., 1992).

The mission to collect important views in an organization might get more difficult with the increasing size and increasing decentralization of an organization. Informants working with sensegiving in large global organizations explained that the head quarter may have different views of the organization and the business than local branches. The informants describe that a common mistake from the head quarter is to sensegive from their own perspective, without knowing how the branches views a certain issue. This phenomena is by Carroll et al., (1998) described as local rationality and global irrationality, and arises since mental models are simplifications and do not capture the fullness of complex and dynamic systems (Carroll et al., 1998; Simon, 1979). So in the same way as the leadership of the sensegiving process should come from different roles in the organization, collecting views should include as much diversity as possible, in order to get a reasonably accurate overview of a current aggregated model of an organization. This also explains why the sensegiving process could benefit from including various employees early on.

As argued above, mental models are individual, but portions of these mental models are shared across workgroups and embedded in organizational culture (Carroll, Serman, & Marcus, 1998; Mathieu et al, 2000). Informal power structures can be seen of as “stored” in the web of shared mental models. Formal leadership are stored in an organization’s formal structure and systems, and is therefore easier to identify. However, informal power structures can be strong, and in some cases even override the

formal power structures. Getting a reasonably accurate image of the informal leaders is important to create a reasonable accurate map of an organization's power structure. By first getting formal leaders as well as informal leaders on board, they may become agents can have significant impact of the members of an organization. However, if the current power structure are resistant to and work against the renewed strategy, considerable effort needs to be put in place in order to struggle with changing the power structure. Changing power structures can in itself be seen of a mission of changing mental models in an organization.

The ability to interpret practitioners' recommendations in terms of mental models create a deeper understanding for why some features in sensegiving is important. Thus, understanding and respecting human behavior in organizations is in itself an enabler for sensegiving, and cognitive processes are an important part of explaining human behaviors (Wood & Bandura, 1989; Converse, 1993).

So, in order to create successful sensegiving, it is recommended to know the audience. That is, the members of the organization is the audience for the sensegiving activities. Motivation to change can be created from how important the change and the underlying ideas of the change is to the individuals (Denzau & North, 1994). If the change involves issues that are central to how the individual assesses themselves and the environment, and is paying substantial attention to the situation, then learning, and the associated cognitive change, may be much more rapid (Denzau & North, 1994). That can be one explanation of why finding triggers among the members of the organizations is perceived as an enabler. Those triggers can be used as a shortcut for achieving commitment to the renewed strategy. By connecting those to the new strategy's direction and goals, motivation for the change can take place. Social cognitive theory describes that production and reduction of perceived discrepancies (Wood & Bandura, 1989). So, if a salesforce are motivated by commission, connect the commission to the goals of the new strategy. So, if following the new strategy gives commission and continue acting by the old strategy does not, they will follow the new strategy. The example with commission – and extrinsic motivation – is easy, but it will be trickier working with intrinsic motivation.

Informants recommend that the vision should be simplified in order to be attractive and have a triggering effect its recipients. The general implication for sensegiving is that people will mainly pay attention to the information they hear first. This is explained by bounded rationality (Vuori, 2011). If the sensegiver does not convince the sense-receivers fast enough, the satisficing explanation can be that the sensegiver is not worth listening (ibid.). This also explains why the questions people first get in their heads, should also be answered as early as possible. Thus, it is important for the sensegiving to simplify the message so people get the key points before people lose focus and interest.

In a sensegiving process building on inclusion, as seen of as a collective process, the lower managers are by informants recommended to have an important role. Since they are closest to the employees

and have more interaction with the employees than any other managers, they are perceived to be important sensegivers. Those managers' role and importance in strategy implementation and change in general has been emphasized in recent research (for example Raes et al., 2011; Purcell, Kinnie, Swart, Rayton, & Hutchinson, 2009; Rouleau, 2005; Wooldridge, Schmid & Floyd, 2008).

Projecting resistance make it possible, for the managers responsible for the sensegiving, to be prepared for tough dialogs with employees. By projecting resistance in advance the managers can use mental imagery to practice on meeting resistance before the sensegiving actually starts (Neck, 1996). That is a way of learning to handle the situation before it appears. It is a way to develop mental models with information and approaches that will be easier to use if they already are prepared in the mental models. A mental imagery of successful handlings resistance will also increase the manager's confidence (Neck, 1996). Mental imagery can be helpful for learning in a lot of other areas in preparing managers for an upcoming sensegiving process.

The mentioning of seeing critical questions as an enabler was also mentioned in a few interviews. This notion could be understood by Maitlis and Lawrence's (2007) finding that stakeholders sensegiving was triggered by issues that they perceived as important. When someone comes up to the manager with a critical questions, the person probably has something to say that are important to him-/herself. So a situation like that should be seen as an opportunity. The person can have something important to say that the manager can forward to the leaders of the sensegiving process. It could also be that the person has misunderstood something, and then the manager gets the opportunity to change that. Of course, the person may also have unconstructive resistance and concerns that can be avoided. Then the managers gets to know more about the resistance, which also is important for the collective sensegiving process. Getting to know more about the resistance increases the cognitive flexibility and the aggregated understanding of the situation and the process. Mengis and Eppler (2008) mentions that by merely affirming a person in a conversation can make the person feel better, when the person has a concern. So simply by listening to and show understanding for a person's concern, a manager can make that person feel a little bit less concern. Informants describe that an important feature is to make room for conversations in the sensegiving process, both in small groups, and in formal as well as informal one-to-one discussions. Mengis and Eppler (2008) state that conversations can be managed to foster developments in organizational learning. Since (double-loop) learning affects mental models (Barr et al., 1992), conversations can be managed to change and develop mental models, by fostering learning.

One enabler for start motivating people for change is to make them understand that there are discrepancies in how things are done today and how they should be done in order to achieve the renewed strategy. By giving people the big picture and the knowledge of how value is created, people

also can come to the conclusions that the organization will not reach its new visionary goals if the organization not change. In this phase the long-range goals are described. The subgoals that are important will be created in the following phase. (Wood and Bandura, 1989).

When looking at the schematization of the triadic causations of Wood and Bandura's (1989) social cognitive theory of organizational management, the external environment are the factor that is the target for influencing in the sensegiving process. The external environment in that model is the environment that is external to each individual. Thus, it consists of both the internal and external environment of the organization. Giving sense about 'the why' and 'the what' is to alter individuals' external environment. To give sense to members about the organization and its environment affect cognitive factors in individuals according to Wood and bandura (1989). Wood and Bandura states that it takes time for factors to influence each other. Therefore it is important to repeat the message in the sensegiving and take time for the process, in order to give the cognitive system the time needed for the external environment to influence the cognitive factors. This is also why it is important to be persistent and repeat the message over and over again in the sensegiving activity.

The empirical finding in this study that sensegiving cannot be turned on an off, and is instead present from the first interaction that has to do with formulating a new strategy, can be explained by social cognitive theory of organizational management. Due to bi-directionality of influence between individuals, their behaviors, and the external environment people are continuously both products and producers of sensegiving activities (Wood and Bandura, 1989). In this case, I propose that producing the environment can be seen of as a sensegiving activity. The suggestion that there are no on/off button also connects to the notion that sensegiving should be seen of as a parallel activity to strategy formulation and implementation, and not as a serial process.

6. DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This sections starts with introducing the conclusions. That will be followed by discussions of contributions, implications, and limitations of the study. The section ends by elaborating on areas for further research.

6.1 CONCLUSION

The guiding research questions for the study were:

- What are important features of the initial collective sensegiving process in strategy implementation?
- How can those features be further understood from a cognitive perspective?

6.1.1 Question # 1

What are important features of the initial sensegiving process in strategy implementation?

The empirical findings suggest that the initial collective sensegiving process could be seen of as management of perspectives that could be divided into three stages. Namely, (i) Collect perspectives, (ii) Analyze, synthesize, and prepare, and (iii) Give perspectives.

That conclusion comes from the informants' accounts that revealed that important features in collective sensegiving is to (i) lead the sensegiving from inside, (ii) create a meaningful story, (iii) prepare the lower level managers, and (iv) start with 'the why' followed by 'the what'.

6.1.2 Question # 2

How can those features be further understood from a cognitive perspective?

The interpretation section show that much of the sensegiving process can be understood on a deeper level with help of cognitive theory, with focus on mental models and organizational learning.

Cognitive concepts helpful in this study for the interpretation at a deeper understanding have been (i) reciprocal causation between cognitive factors and the external environment, (ii) self-motivation, (iii)

cognitive flexibility, (iv) double-loop learning, (v) self-leadership, (vi) interpersonal communication, (vii) bounded rationality, and (viii) mental models.

6.2 CONTRIBUTION AND IMPLICATIONS

This study has examined the initial sensegiving process in strategy implementation in a more detailed way than much of previous research in the field. It for example adds more detailed findings that contribute to pillars in the area, such as Gioia and Chittipeddi (1991), Maitlis and Lawrence (2007). It also questions Gioia and Chittipeddi's serial approach to the process.

The study contributes by focusing on collective leadership and a sensegiving approach that mixes top-down and bottom-up approach. A perspective that has not been much focus on in the area before (Maitlis & Lawrence, 2007; Foldy et al., 2008). However, it raises an idea of that the collective process may not be as collective as it purports to be.

Another important contribution for researchers is the connection between sensegiving and underlying cognitive factors made in this study. That suggests that the sensegiving area would benefit from and get a more depth by involving cognitive theory.

The study provides practitioners with important features to take into account in the sensegiving process. The suggestion to see sensegiving as management of perspectives together with a cognitive understanding might turn light to the human aspects in strategy implementation, and might in that way contribute to higher strategy implementation quality.

6.3 LIMITATIONS OF THIS STUDY

This study only creates provisional theory. The findings have to be tested more in-depth in order to be able to draw general conclusion and build a legitimate theory.

The data collection was solely based on interviews and informants' accounts. In addition, solely people with the roles of sensegivers were interviewed. That was executives, managers, and strategy implementation consultants. The way of constructing accounts for sensegiving may differ from those individuals that are the targets for sensegiving, e.g. employees. That may lead to lacking depth of the findings in the study.

Informants may present facts and events in a subjective way.

The cognitive framework is in this study merely used as an interpretive framework. That is, the connection between sensegiving and cognitive theory is here made on a conceptual level. However, that is a challenge since cognitive theory is on an abstract level.

This study is explorative to its nature and the conclusions have a hypothetical character and need to be further researched in order to say for sure if they are generalizable or not.

6.4 AREAS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

A first suggestion for future research is to carry out similar studies as this one, but include more diversity among the informants. Especially employees views on this phenomena studied here would be important to get a more complete picture and understanding. In addition, more nuanced findings might also come out of that approach.

A second suggestion is to carry out similar studies, but apply more or other data collection methods than merely interviews. Interviews is dependent on the informants' accounts, and since people often want to be perceived as knowledgeable, they may be tempted to provide euphemistic picture.

A third suggestion is to test findings from this study. Since this study is of an explorative nature, the findings may be hypothetical to their nature. More research in testing the findings will be able to elaborate on the findings here and make them into more substantiated theory (or reject them).

As mentioned in the limitations above, the cognitive framework is in this study merely used as a conceptual interpretive framework. In order to make stronger connections between sensegiving and cognitive theory, the cognitive framework could be used on a level closer to the empirics.

The empirical findings suggest important features of sensegiving. However, there is one thing to talk about what is important, and another thing to do it. Further research could dig deeper into those features and how to manage them.

The process studied here had a distinctive character about it. It was fraught with extensive planning, analyzing, and preparing before the actual sensegiving was launched. The process developed here from the informants' accounts involves more of those activities than for example Gioia and Chittipeddi's (1991) model. One explanation for this might be that this study focuses on an including sensegiving process, while Gioia and Chittipeddi studied a process that were more top-down in its approach.

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8. APPENDICES

Appendix A – Coding: Data analysis, Example

EXEMPLARY QUOTES	INITIAL CODING	FOCUSED CODING
<i>Strategy and the accompanied processes has to be something that grows inside an organization.</i>	Owning the process	Leading sensegiving from inside
<i>Today we work as a team. It is HR, communication and change managers. We have different perspectives to enrich each other with.</i>	Cross-functional collaboration	
<i>Foremost, employees are really clever. Many times I have a clear direction, but with the input of the employees I always get good ideas that is helpful in twisting the idea to the next level.</i>	Including diversity	
<i>If informal leaders get resistant, the implementation process has a high probability to fail.</i>	Managing informal leaders	
<i>I feel that the ones working with change management should be behavioral scientists. Today, there are too many business economist and engineers leading change</i>	Taking account of human behavior	

Appendix B – List of Informants

INFORMANT:	POSITION:	AGE:	DATE:
A.	CEO	51	2015-03-02
B.	HR Director	38	2015-03-09
C.	HR Director	49	2015-03-16
D.	CEO	53	2015-03-18
E.	External consultant	32	2015-03-25
F.	Internal change manager	52	2015-03-12
G.	External consultant	44	2015-03-30
H.	General manager	55	2015-04-07
J.	General manager	28	2015-04-07
K.	General manager	33	2015-04-08
L.	CEO	35	2015-04-09
M.	HR Director	39	2015-04-13
N.	External consultant	53	2014-04-15
O.	HR Director	47	2015-04-20
P.	CEO	48	2015-04-22
Q.	Internal change manager	29	2015-04-24
R.	External Consultant	39	2015-05-05
S.	External consultant	41	2015-05-05
T.	General manager	43	2015-05-06
U.	CEO	58	2015-05-08
V.	HR Director	35	2015-05-08