

A methodology of assessment based on the interaction between practice-based paths and standardized enquiring instruments

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The object of this paper is to describe an intervention conducted using specific assessment tools created after an analysis of work practices, carried out specifically for this purpose, simultaneously using standardized instruments to gain more integrated results. This experience can be seen as an example of how instruments derived from a qualitative analysis can be used together with statistically based instruments for creating an integrated system of assessment and feedback for organizations.

The experience was carried out at a company managing an important commercial portyard in Italy, and in this paper the authors also present the reasons underlying the intervention request and a brief explanation of the specific context in which this company operates.

This study outlines how a combination of methods can be more powerful for providing explanations and predictions, than just one methodological perspective. On the practical side, actually, there is a general need of obtaining information and drawing conclusions both of qualitative type, therefore particular and somehow unrepeatable, and of quantitative type, hence objective and controllable by the specialists' community.

After a description of the main steps taken to inquire the work practices on the field, the article continues explaining how, starting from the results of the study about the practices, the authors have created specific assessment techniques tailored for these particular situations. Such techniques consist of focus groups and role playing, expressly adapted to the context. A tool for evaluation, namely a grid containing different indicators of the participants, has also been created on the basis of the company needs and of the results which have emerged from the inquiry. At the same time, authors chose a set of standardized instruments with the aim of using them for integrating the qualitative results. These instruments were the M.P.P. test (Multidimensional Personality Profile) and some Organizational Citizenship scales. The set of instruments was well integrated to provide the company with a broader and more exhaustive set of information, in which the two types of tools gave a different contribution.

The complexity of the problems at stake makes the choice of a qualitative approach necessary. As it is known, this is unique and non-repeatable. For this reason it is important to make it sounder by adding objective data, in order to gain new and strong elements for sustaining the argumentations and making the conclusions usable and controllable by the company and the scientific community.

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