

Leadership and Management Conference

University of Worcester

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**“The appropriation of theories, ideas, concepts and models by
management practitioners”.**

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Definitions

Management : ‘Leading and directing an organization’ and ‘getting things done through people’.

Appropriation : ‘Incorporation within a governing framework’ in a ‘stable, assured and comfortable’ way.



Theoretical Insights

- ✓ **Diffusion of innovations**
(Rogers)
- ✓ **Fashion Theory**
(Abrahamson)
- ✓ **Adult Learning**
(Kofka; Schultz; Dewey; Mezirow)



Methodology

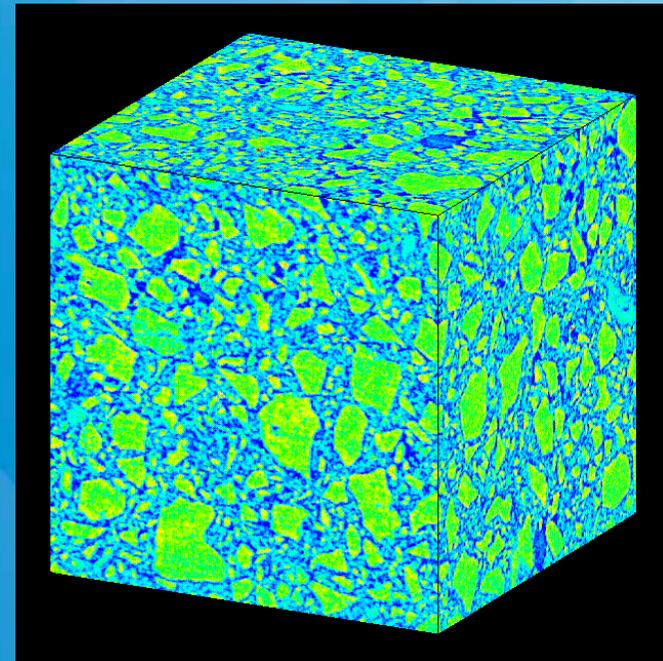
- ✓ **Overarching research philosophy of realism**
- ✓ **Qualitative data**
- ✓ **Inductive reasoning**
- ✓ **Case study strategy**
- ✓ **Data analysis process Eisenhardt**
- ✓ **Critical incident narrative**



Reference : Eisenhardt, K. M. (1989). Building theories from case study research.
Academy of Management Review, 14, 4, 532 -5 50

Initial Data Set

- ✓ **Semi-structured, face to face & telephone, recorded interviews.**
- ✓ **24 senior managers, five organisations, all economic sectors; 15 part time MBA participants.**
- ✓ **Verbatim transcripts, 160 critical incidents, 355,000 words, 34 hours 53 minutes in total.**



Key Findings

× No obvious, direct, conscious usage of formal theory in decision making.

× No classical, decision tree, decision making.

× No predictive utilisation of formal theory.

✓ Retrospective confirmation of pre-existing practices.



Key Findings

✓ **Strong evidence of recognition based decision – taking.**

Described as experience, instinct, experiential, common sense, subconscious, intuitive, informal, reactive, immediate and practical etc.



Key Findings

✓ **Strong evidence of emergent decision – building.**

Described as gradual, evolving, discovering, emergent and considered etc.

Using both self sufficient and collaborative processes.



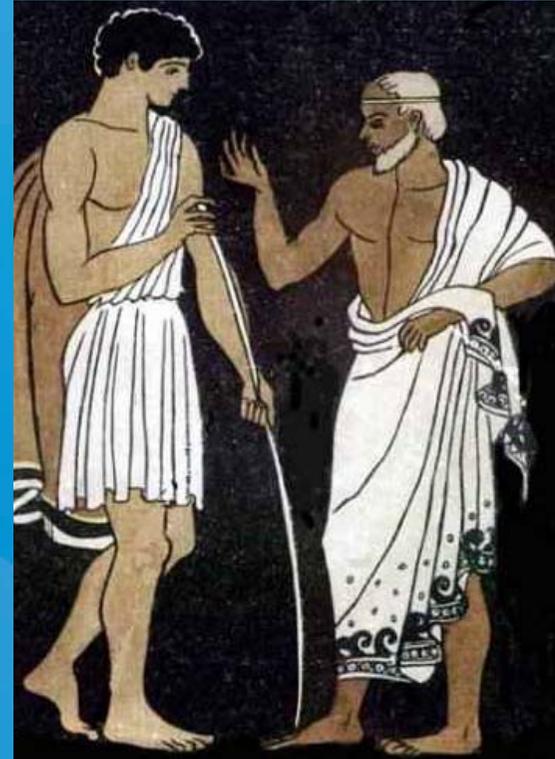
Key Findings

- ✓ **Self sufficient processes included :**
 - (i) unstructured, slightly chaotic personal reflection;**
 - (ii) deconstruction and reconstruction**
 - (iii) strong personal values**
 - (iv) a willingness to utilise trial and error**
 - (v) a willingness to take incremental steps.**



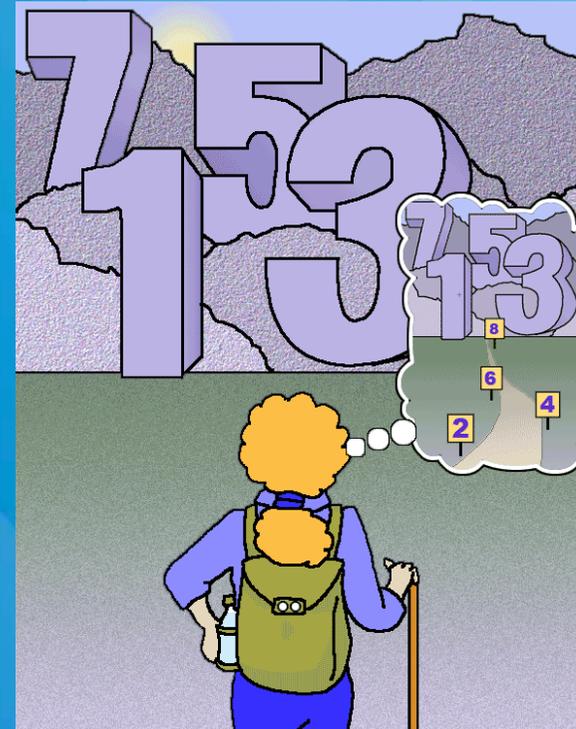
Key Findings

- ✓ **Collaboration involved :**
 - (i) peers, subordinates, bosses, former colleagues, established mentors, and role models;**
 - (ii) organisationally appointed facilitators and as a last resort**
 - (iii) paid consultants with a proven track record as a recent practitioner.**



Key Findings

- ✓ The exceptions were :
(i) where barriers prevented collaboration; (ii) the coincidental attendance at an event (iii) metaphorical usage to describe the future and (iv) those whose role was to facilitate changes in managerial approach.

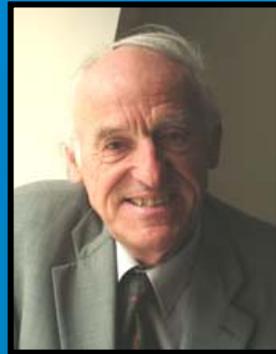


The Guru's

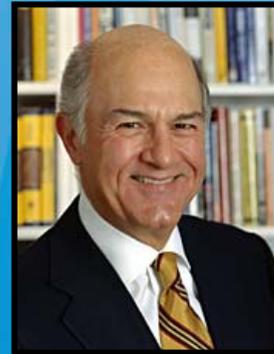
Charles Handy



Meredith Belbin



Jim Kouzes



&

Barry Posner



Ken Blanchard



&

Paul Hersey



Katharine Cook Briggs



&

Isabel Briggs Myers



The Theories

Myers Briggs type indicator
(Myers Briggs)

Belbin Team Roles
(Belbin)

Situational Leadership
(Hersey & Blanchard)

Team Development Stages
(Tuckman)



The 'Missing' Guru's

John Adair

Chris Argyris

Warren Bennis

James Champy

Alfred Chandler

Phillip Crosby

Edwards Deming

Peter Drucker

Henri Fayol

Gary Hammel

Michael Hammer

Frederick Herzberg

Elton Mayo

Joseph Juran

Rosabeth Moss Kanter

Robert Kaplan

John Kotter

David Norton

Douglas McGregor

Abraham Maslow

Henry Mintzberg

Tom Peters

Robert Waterman

Michael Porter

Reg Revans

Edgar Schein

Peter Senge

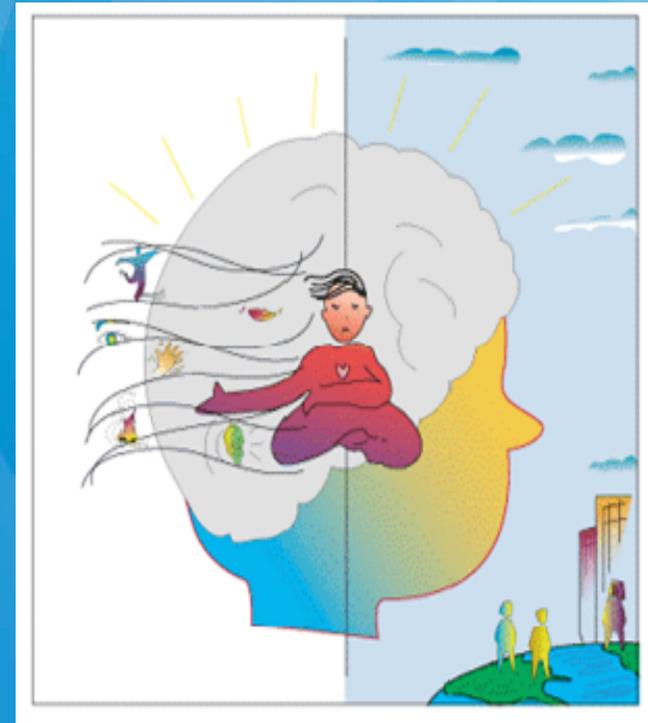


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Key Findings

✓ The assertion of practitioners that they ‘must be’ drawing upon the more formal, more academic ideas, theories, concepts and models in some kind of subtle, indirect, subconscious, or even subliminal way.



The Possibilities

1. That appropriation is a genuinely rare and wholly exceptional occurrence.
2. That appropriation is a more frequent, but wholly tacit phenomenon.
3. That appropriation is explicit, but that the knowledge becomes tacit over time.



An Alpine Story



Thanks !



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