



Leadership and Decision-Making in Complex Environment

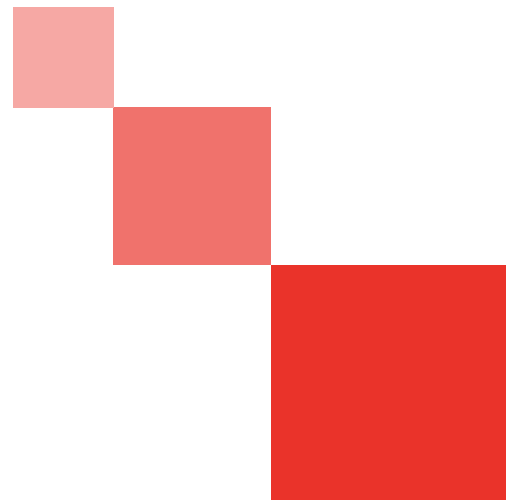
Assignment 1

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Introduction

As the business world today is increasingly volatile. Seeking ways to detect signs of risks, and methods that can help teams cope with turbulence is what every organization's desire. The main issue that this assignment will discuss is about the leadership dilemma that caused by external and internal complexity. It starts with an interview with a leader who has decades of managing experience, and follow by a blog discuss about her main leadership dilemma. After this, the network in today's society will be evaluated. Next, a reflection of a debate will be presented. Finally, this assignment will try to provide some solutions from how can we find clues in this complex environment, and what can teams do about it. Hopefully, it will have some contribution to business world.



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Task 1: Interview

Background Introduction

To provide a whole picture of the interview, so that the reader can have better comprehension on the question design. Here is a brief introduction on the company's background.

The interviewee is a leader in finance department of Zhongke Electric, a listed company in China, which main business is designing and manufacturing electromagnet related products. The company is recently under structure transforming, and it has just finished an acquisition on a subsidiary company in graphene production industry, in 2018. Since then, the group company has two main businesses to organize and integrate.

Interview Questions

The interview question design is based on this background situation. To make a better use of the 30 minutes, I have been familiarized the organization by gathering information from the company's official website and its annual reports. Therefore, introductory questions are eliminated from this question set. The whole interview is consisted of 9 questions, which is listed below:

Q1: Can you please briefly describe the structure of your organization?

Q2: What role do you play in this organization?

Q3: What metaphor would you use to describe your organization?

Q4: What kind of situation is your organization is facing?

Q5: What do you think this transform have brought to your leadership?

Q6: Why do you think this change is important/necessary?

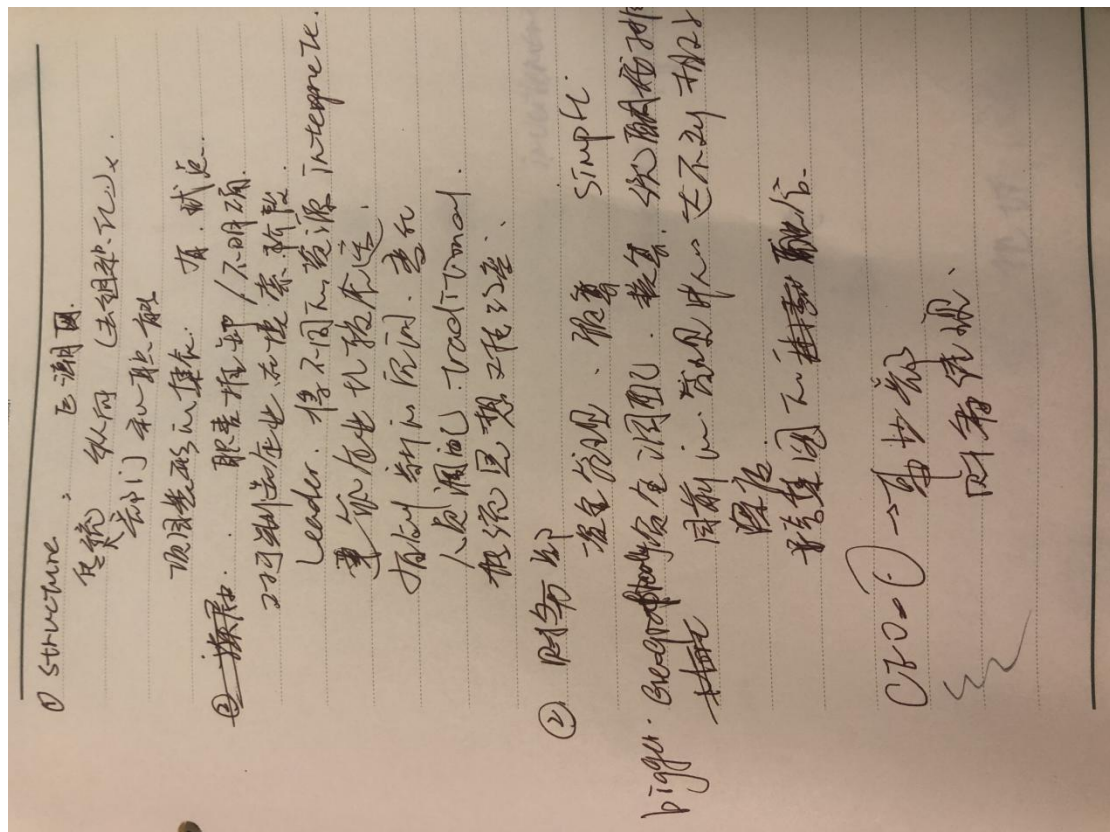
Q7: how did your followers react in this transform?

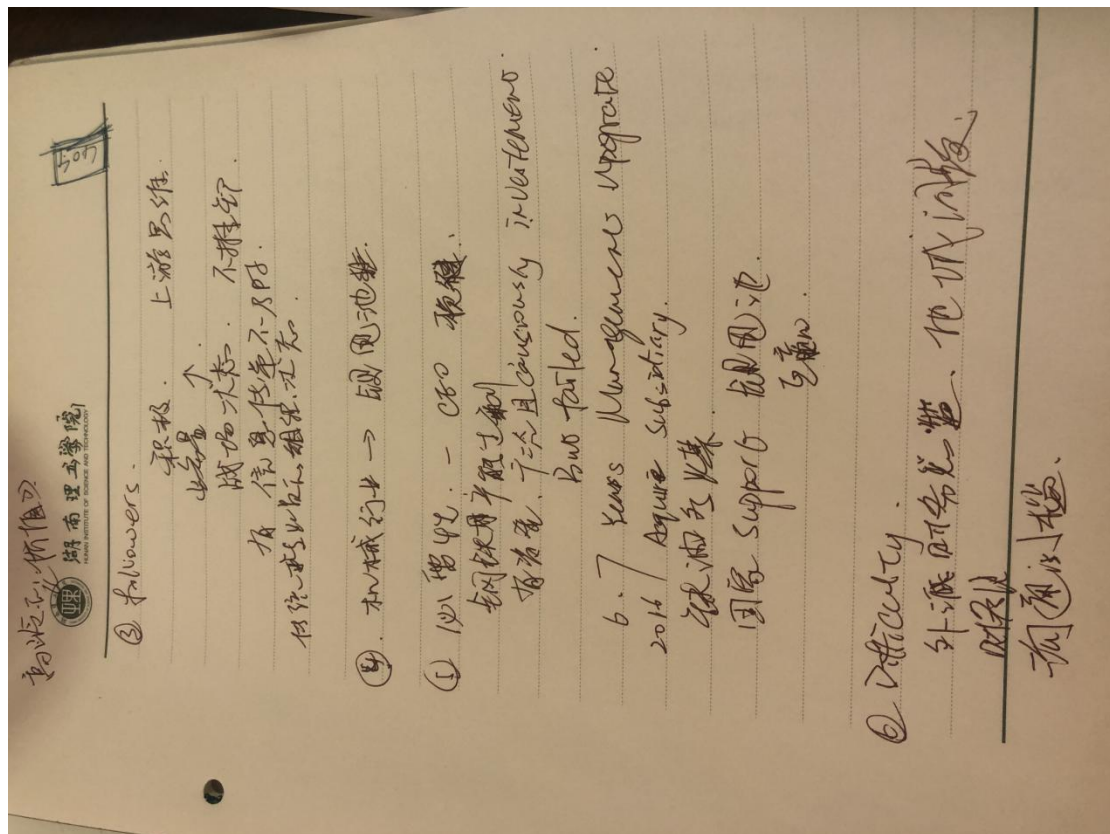
Q8: Is there any difficulties in the process, specifically?

Q9: Do you feel supported by your coworkers/organization?

Interview Records

To prove the interview is really happend, following is the pictures of notes of the interview:





The interview is conducted on the phone, the length of the interview is about 30 minutes. Following the links:

Link 1:

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Link 2:

https://uowtsd-my.sharepoint.com/:u:/g/personal/2000533_student_uwtsd_ac_uk/ESzWwtDor05EkTEw56otZisBlx1npCITrnf9x1MaK06sA?e=SGzcL8

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4. Chapman, C. (2019) From hierarchies to networks: Possibilities and pitfalls for educational reform of the middle tier. *Journal of educational administration*, 57(5), pp. 554-570.
5. Drouin, N., Muller, R., Sankaran, S. and Vaagaasar, A.L. (2018) Balancing vertical and horizontal leadership in projects: Empirical studies from Australia, Canada, Norway and Sweden. *International journal of managing projects in business*, 11(4), pp. 986-1006.
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Task 2: Driving Through Complexity

Word count: 821



“Growth creates complexity, which requires simplify.”

—— Andy Stanley

Since last few decades, concepts like market-oriented economy, energy conservation, emission reduction and CSR report, have been introduced and forcing Chinese businesses developed and transformed into better forms (Zhang et al., 2012). Those who have survived through all these policies changing and market turmoil, are no strangers to volatile environments (Ansell and Trondal, 2018). The adaptive systems are deeply embedded inside of these organizations. The finance manager I have interviewed, Ms. Peng, is also working in a enterprise like this. As of this moment, this company is still in the process of transform in two aspects, executive refreshing

and acquired business integration.

Structure of the Company

According to Ms. Peng, the structure of the company has gone through a certain extent of change during these years since its IPO, in 2009. However, the company is still under a comparatively traditional vertical management structure as it was when it was founded in 2004. Like many other traditional firms, Zhongke has a hierarchy growing inside as it is getting larger (Chapman, 2019). Consequently, the board did aware and realize the inefficiency and redundancy in the process of later management, and a structure reform was needed.

Considering that the board of directors are aiming to upgrade this organization into a more advanced enterprise, the company has been trying to develop new organize approach like delayer the structure, and overall coordinate and manage by projects. Even though it has achieved certain efficiency in communication, providing that the new structure is growing on the old one, which leads ambiguity in responsibility and authority division (Drouin et al., 2018; Stewart, 2019). Although the company is embracing innovation and creativity, according to Ms. Peng, such delayed structure might be more suitable for construction firms. It is true that for a traditional manufacturing enterprise like Zhongke Electric, reforming and implementing a new structure is not something can be achieved in a short time (Heifetz et al., 2009).

From the above information, Zhongke can be identified as a complex adaptive system that characterized by Arrow: shows complex behavior, actively respond to the

changing condition, and actants are interrelated to be functional (2000).

Role of the Finance Manager

Providing that Zhongke has just done an acquisition in 2018, this has left the company have two main businesses to manage and integrate. The challenges on the integration financially and outside questioning, make Ms. Peng's job facing decision-making and other difficulties frequently.

Before the acquisition, Ms. Peng's position was the manager of the finance department, and her job consist of capital management, budgeting etc. After the acquisition is finished, a new department called Finance Management Centre of Zhongke Group was created for capital allocating, consolidated accounting, systematic planning and budgeting and more. She is the leader of this new department, and answer directly to CEO. The changing role, increasing responsibilities and interacting within team members (agents) would be increasing complexity behaviors (Kovacs & Corrie, 2017).

Challenges as a Leader

When Ms. Peng was asked about is there any challenges or dilemmas during or after the structure transformed, she admitted that the main challenges are the detailed work within the integration of the two businesses. As the top management have reached an agreement that in the near future their original business will be facing a narrow-downed market, and they are looking for a new growth area and driving force

for the company. In this process, as it's been claimed by Barker, details like assets appraisal, contract terms negotiating, personnel assignments etc. are the main challenges during and after the acquisition (2017). Within all these difficulties, one of the most significant challenge, is caused by geography. The subsidiary the firm acquired, Star City Graphene, is in another city. As Zhongke has purchased over 97% of shareholding, a proper way to facilitate a smooth transition, is to assign professional executives like financial controller to supervise the related issues.

As for the reaction of followers, Ms. Peng speaks highly of her team. Even though they face challenges frequently, they respond to emergence positively. She describe her team as they feel like they are under battlefield mode, everyone has been able to take responsibility actively. Hence the Group Finance Centre that lead by her is also a CAS (Ramos-Villagrase, 2018). Though there were delay of information transfer occasionally, they would retrospect the process and adjust the communication way as a team.

Conclusion

Internal complexity might bring challenges to leaders, in the case of Zhongke Group, the difficulties are doubled during such unsettled period. However, this organization as well as the finance management centre have shown a great adaptability in this situation. Besides of competent ability of each member in the team, the trust builds between them and each of them are empowered with certain authorities have made the team a CAS, which can conquer difficulties as a whole. Therefore, lets arm our teams

with trust, and let each member fulfill their potential.

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Task 3: Reflection on Tweets

Word count: 532

Posts	Replies	
As a department/team leader in an organization, collaborate with other departments or even people far from your network in the organization is vital. However, other than the leader's ability of boundary spanning it also depends on the organization structure and how agents interact with each other. #bmdbleadershipdilemmas	Jacky	Energy of a leader is limited, so it might be helpful to justify efficiency of collaborations by different structures of coporations.
	Jenny	considering the relationship between human and nonhuman will become a significant topic for every leader to overcome dilemmas.
	Lin Ling	In my opnion, organisation structure could be the horizontal aspects of boundary spanning capability of leaders, don't you think so?
One thing about complexity is that it exists in both external environment as well as internal structure. When the two meet, it can be a threat, but also an opportunity for a leader. #bmdbleadershipdilemmas#Ashby's law	William	positive thinking to see it in opportunity
	Jenny	yes, Ashby's law pointed out complexity copes with complexity, so that we need to think about the balance between internal and external rewards, also, we need to control the complexity.
	Lin Ling	yes, it is true, organisations and people always could have SWOT analysis
For me, maintaining a business functional network is exhausting. My social network is rather small and weak connected. I wonder if there is any leader like me. And how is their leadership dilemma different from other 'normal' leaders. #bmdbleadershipdilemmas#leadershipnetwork	Jacky	Hahahaha. here is some real stuff. I feel the same.
	Maggie	maybe that's why guanxi is a basic quality and capital of a successful business man.
	Lin Lin	that would be the significance of actor network theory, which provides a useful framework for us to think deeper and further
As the current business environment constantly change, leaders should be sensitive to the external condition change as well as internal stucture's transforming to adapt. This is especially difficult for a traditional corporations with large size. #bmdleadershipdilemmas#	Jenny	this post recalls me the ANT, interdisciplinary ideas will be useful for CAS
	Lin Ling	yes, can we imagine that the management is without managers? This managment miracle indeed happens in Semco! Fabulous! And even the other corporations would like to imitate, it did not work by completly copy, but have to adapt and innovate based on their own situations.
As there can be multiple networks within an organization, formal ones as well as informal ones. Other than the formal ones, Leaders might need to observe and find out how members are interact within the informal ones. #bmdbleadershipdilemmas#leadershipnetwork	Jenny	yes, Ashby's law is also important concept for leader to balance complex network.

Along with the development of social network theory, scholars are provided one more perspective to explain the existing societal, economic, and managerial phenomenon (Battilana and Casciaro, 2012; Westaby and Parr, 2020). Being a part of this group, actor-network theory (ANT) plays a significant role as information technology developing.

Description

As we are required to write a series of ‘tweet’ style social media posts to address leadership dilemma. Being limited in using certain social networking software, the students of this module are mainly post and respond through the *leadershipdilemmas* channel on Teams.

Feelings

As I have rarely share anything in public, I feel like I don’t know the first thing about it, not even the meaning and function of a ‘#’. I started with struggling with how should I construct my sentences to express my thoughts on leadership dilemma, as I was so aware that this is not a personal diary, and it is for everyone in the group. This feeling gets less noticeable when I get some thumb-ups and positive responds. Instead I start to appreciate that my group members were being so supportive.

Evaluation

As this channel on Teams is not completely opened to the public, on one hand, I was more comfortable sharing opinions on it. On the other hand, the audiences in this group is not as big and diverse as the real public, the responds and feedback are limited. Moreover, being students in the same module, the information we get from the sessions are same with each other, therefore the contents we posted might lack of diversity (Chou, et al., 2013; Coll, 2014).

Analysis

Although I was not particular satisfied with some of my posts, I understand that they are not pieces of works that I need to pursue a perfection. If we consider this task as a kind of communication and connections within a particular network, then these comments I made about leadership just fulfill an information transfer purpose, so that group members (actors) can engage in topics (be connected) according to Latour's view (2007). From this perspective, for this network working, each element in it should be valued, students and teachers, as well as computers and social media software. Hence, I can feel the satisfaction of output and being respond is contributed by those who replied as well as internet connection (Sage et al., 2020).

Conclusion

As these non-human actors played in the small network of DBA module, we can receive knowledge and inspire each other. Without technology, or even just without knowledge or information play in it, traditional human social networks were limited.

In retrospect, I could have post thoughts and ideas more often, being more active in the group, so that my classmates (human actors) can be more familiar with each other, this would achieve a better communication in the group (Sage et al., 2020).

Action Plan

From this experience of sharing thoughts and getting responds through an open platform, I have better understanding of social network. For the future action, I should

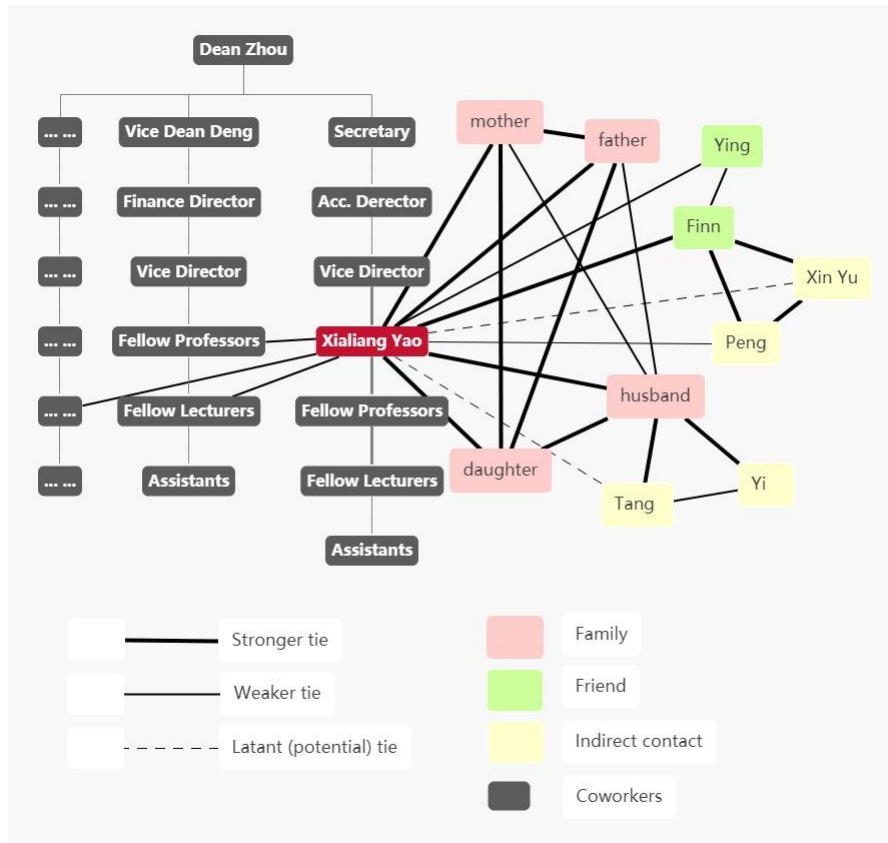
try register a more opened platform like LinkedIn, to see if this stage (non-human actor) can facilitate a different result or not.

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Task 4: Network Improvement

Word count: 570



“Everything you want in life is a relationship away.”

——Idowu Koyenikan

Before these sessions, I did not consider that network is crucial for my career. There will be a good result if I do my job well, I do not I think I need anyone else. However, it requires certain range of resources to do a good business or management research. Hence, spanning boundaries and building up functional network is critical.

Current Network

The current network I have, as it shows in the graph above, consist of two components. On the left, is my network in university (formal network). The

connection I have with my colleagues are comparatively weaker than the right side (a informal network that includes friends and families).

Providing the working environment and atmosphere of a university is different from a hospital or a factory (Lane and Sweeny, 2018), most of teachers do not have an office in campus, they leave after they finish teaching of the day, and they do not see each other often. Which fits the description of an open network, one of the three qualities of good networks, that made by Willburn and Cullen (2014).

From leaders' perspective, being in such network, they are in a position of getting new information ahead. For me, a non-leader in an open network, the advantage is that I can get new information and useful knowledge from colleagues in other research offices every time I communicate with them. The opportunities of such communication is not so frequent, therefore, I only have deep, quality relationship with a small portion of them.

As our school have operating projects with local government and other organizations, it does provide a path for teachers doing research in society. However, like many other colleagues I am not included inside. Therefore, the overlapping zone of my network with the university's is not diverse enough (Ernst & Chrobot-Mason, 2010).

Path to Improve

As it is been analyzed above, there is a significant space for me to improve my network to facilitate my research project. By benchmarking CCL's qualities of good networks, I am already in an open network. What is left is to increase its diversity and

depth of connection.

To create a more diverse network, I shall develop my boundary spanning capability. As my research in about the role of accountants in decision making process of an organization. This might require me to do fieldwork inside of several businesses, and I need to span some boundaries in both of my formal and informal networks (Yip, Ernst & Campbell, 2016). Considering that the contacts (senior executives in their organization) that I intend to reach to are in my informal network, and the distance is not far from, the challenge here is controllable. However, it is also necessary to collaborate with coworkers in other research offices in school, and the introduction and resource allocate from the dean is also vital to my research. Hence, boundary span vertically and horizontally are both required.

For a deeper connection with the nodes in my network, as my relationship with coworkers are latent, I shall create more opportunities to interact and work with them. Moreover, to connect with more valuable contacts outside of the school network can make me a social network structural hole that can provide connection to others (Liu, 2017). Although these ties are weaker right now, they can create spaces for valuable resources transferring, as they have more differences than stronger ties (Liu, 2017).

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Task 5: Debate

Word count: 644

Not long ago, I had a the second debate in my life, the first one was in high school. The debate was taken online, which made my experience even more awkward and unforgettable.

Description

Our topic was A robot is coming for your job. As Jenny and I took the affirmative side, we have spent two days to find evidence on many different kind of our jobs are taking place by machine/robots/AI, and why. Evidence from machines had come for handicrafts-men's job hundreds years ago to AI replace jobs in law firm in recent years. I started my argument confidently, as I believed I had a thorough preparation before the debate. However, after we had finished our closing statements, the comments we got is well evidenced but not critical enough.

Feelings

We were excited when we were assigned the topic, as we considered that this is an interesting topic that close to our life. Even when I heard my opponents' arguments, I felt confident about the points and supportive evidence of our side are stronger. Therefore, I was so surprised when I heard our debate was not critical enough. This made me think there might be other things we over looked other than just providing and supporting our own arguments. I have also felt nervous right before the debate. As

our debate starts this feeling of nervous turned into another kind of tension, which allowed me to focus on the opponents' statements.

Evaluation

Although there were several aspects that we have done well, there were also some inadequacies that we might need to pay attention. As this is a group work, I will explain from my own perspective as well as it of the group.

First, even though we had done a lot of work in gathering and integrate information to arguments, we lack of experience of debate, especially in an academic scenario. However, none of us has done any research academic debate, and study its requirements. This inadequate preparation leads us to present an unpolished work in front of the audiences (Antilla-Garza and Cook-Gumperz, 2015; Majidi, 2021).

Second, due to the insufficient understanding on academic debates, our preparation to it had only one object, to collect as many evidence as we can to build our arguments, we ended up with more information than we can present in thirty minutes. Therefore, in the whole debate there were more like opposite statements presenting on each side, other than an interactive debate and rebuttals. This can be solved by a proper time management (Van Emden, 2016).

Analysis

During the debate, we should pay more attention to time in each section. In a debate time is crucial, we need to use it on our best argument. Moreover, a debate is not just

idea presenting, it should be critical, and inspire audiences to think (Souza and Mixter, 2016), being able to argue critically is essential to a debate (Butt, 2010).

Conclusion

Considering this an online debate I have never done before, a rehearsal with my partner would be help on structure building and time planning. Moreover, a rehearsal might also ease the emotion during the debate (Ignacio et al. 2017), and have a better control during different sections. This has been proved in other fields (cocks et al., 2014).

In addition, more researches, even just watch a video, on formal academic debates would help us in understanding the purpose of it, and perform a better result.

Action Plan

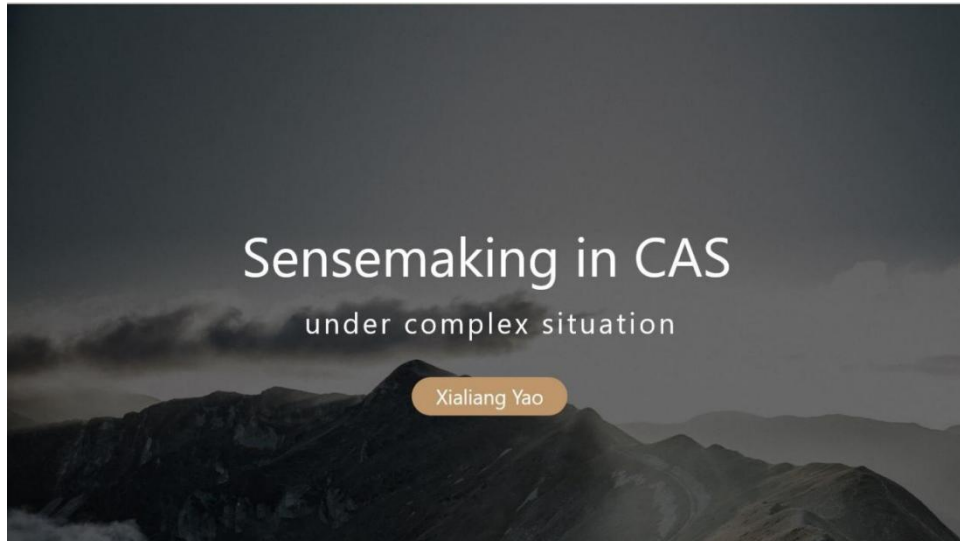
In future, I will study the requirements of the debate first, to understand exactly what kind of work we are asked to perform. Secondly, other than researching for debate arguments, I also need to clear things that I do not understand in the requirements. After constructing the full arguments, it is better to rehearse with someone, for the purpose of debate process, time and emotion control.

References:

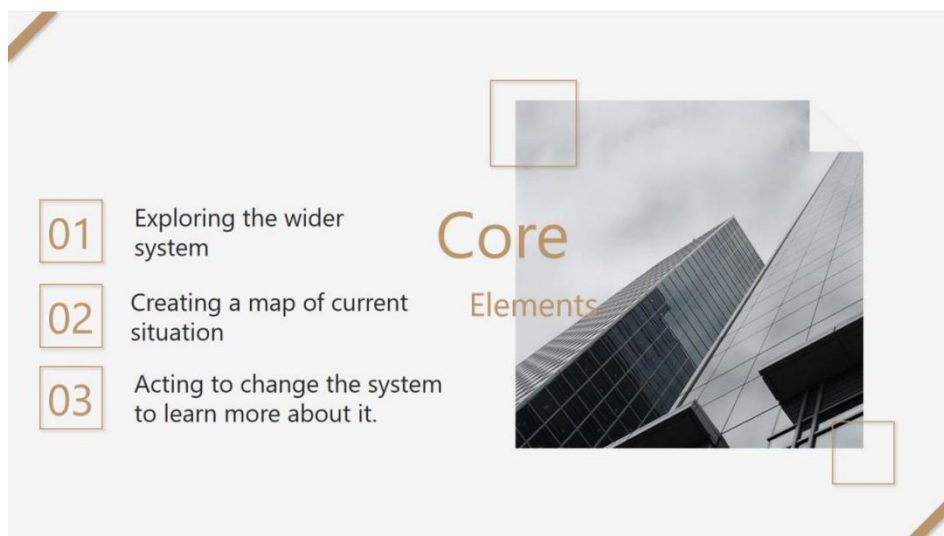
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Task 6: Sensemaking in CAS

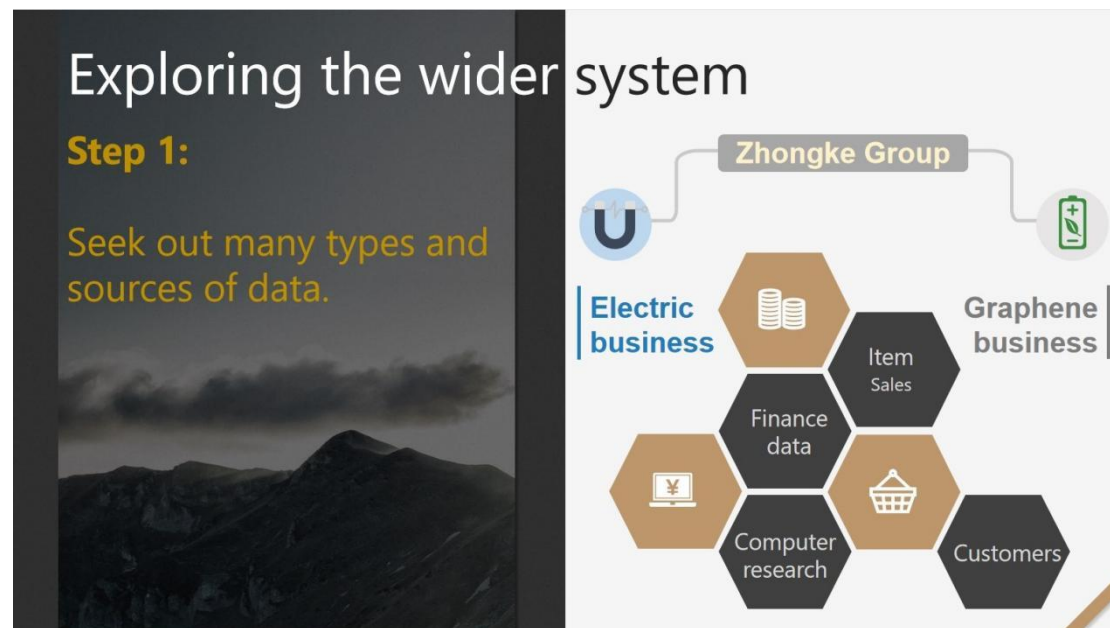
Word count: 655



Providing the strong ties between sensemaking and organizing (Sandberg and Tsoukas, 2015), even though concept like Cynefin is also a model that simplify complexity, for a organization structure problem in a group company, sensemaking might be a more suitable choice. Also according to Anderson (2006), this perspective attracts less criticism from scholars.

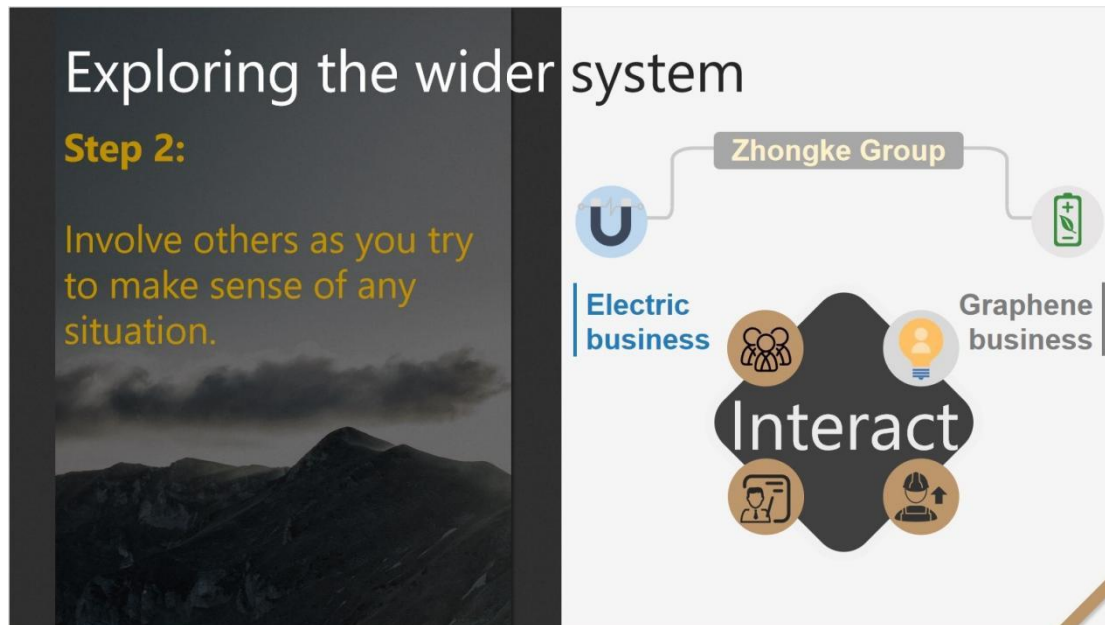


The core elements in sensemaking are developed in researches and implementing in organization studies, since it has been introduced by Karl Weick. One of the researchers Ancona has developed nine steps within three core elements, which demonstrate in following slides.



For a better understanding on how sensemaking solve the internal complexity of an organization, it will be applied on Zhongke Group as it has been discussed in Task 2. The first core element of sensemaking is exploring wider system. As Ancona has stressed, in this stage being open minded is crucial (2018). The first step in this stage is gathering as much different kind of information as possible. In the case of Zhongke Group, the dilemma of its CFO, Ms. Peng, is to integrate the newly acquired graphene business into the original electric business financially. In practice of solving this dilemma, one should realize that it is not just a finance problem, but also a organizing problem that relates to the internal structure of the group business. Therefore, other than financial information, Ms. Peng and her team should gather information in all different kinds, such as production data, clients' requests and sales numbers etc. from

two companies. They also need to search for information, knowledge and even other firms' experiences outside of their organization to form a full picture of the situation (Weick, 1995).



After information collection, the leader should involve valuable people outside of the team, like salesman, manufacturing supervisor, and bank clerk, and discuss the issues and interact with them, so that her mindset to the situation and problem can be tempered repeatedly to generate ideas contributing valuable consequences (Sutcliffe and Vogus, 2003).

Exploring the wider system



Step 3:
Move beyond stereotypes.

Step 4:
Be very sensitive to operations.





To be more specific, step 3 and 4 are not processes that leaders need to complete, but mindsets that leaders are required to have during exploring the wider system. They should not make prejudice the situation with stereotype, and it is more benefit for them to understand being sensitive to the operation of the firm. In Zhongke's case, the CFO should be sensitive about the number change of inventory, productive, account receivable in both firms, as well as substitute technology and market change, so that she can detect and predict risks ahead that might increase the complexity even more.

Map/Story Creating

Step 5:
Let the appropriate map or framework emerge from your understanding of the situation.




Step 6:
Put the emerging situation into a new framework to provide organizational members with order.



As enough information and opinions are collected, the next stage is to create a map/story from them. This is the stage that seeking senses in wide ranged and complex information. Leaders can generally follow two steps in this phase. First, as the current situation might unique from before, leaders should organize and classify information into structured frameworks. After this, try to merge the framework with the existing situation, to see if it can be consolidated and simplified with key elements. This might be a challenge processes as it requires understanding the full situation to capture the right sense when (re)structure the framework (Weick et al., 2005).

Act to change the system to learn from it



learning dynamics

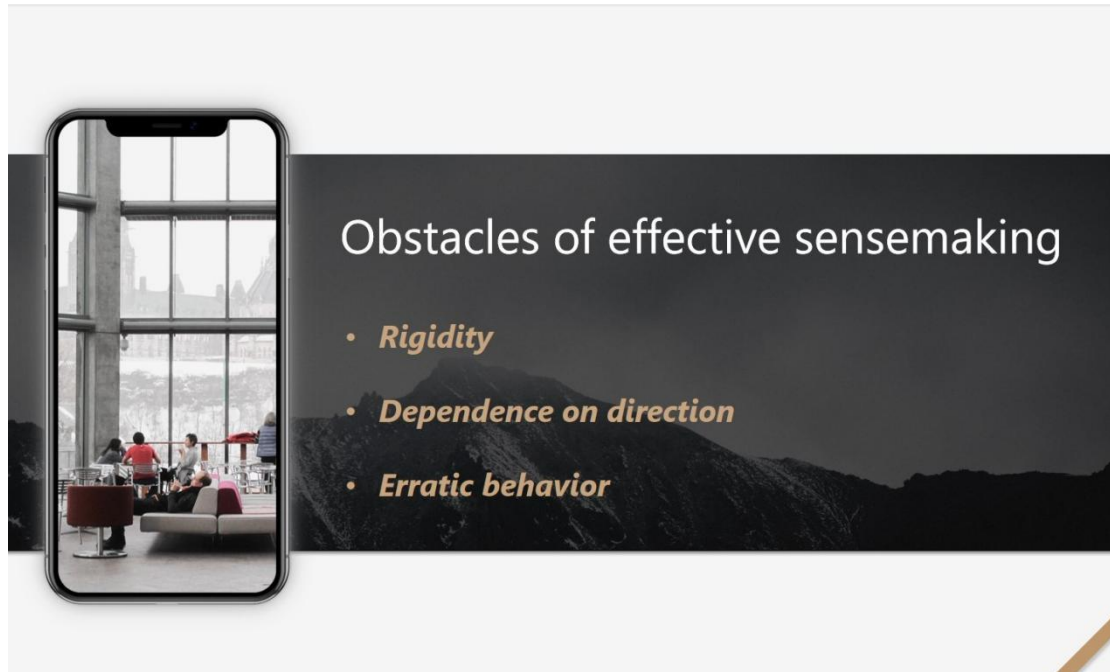
learn from small experiments

OPERATION SITE



Be aware of the environment that you created

The final stage is taking action. As the sense is developed in a complex environment, to ensure that the framework can be correctly applied in reality, it need to be tested repeatedly and develop into a proper form. However, due to the environment is not static, leaders might need to stay alert of being constrained by the framework they created.



As practical as sensemaking can be, there are several behaviors might be obstacles of sensemaking, rigidity, dependence on direction and erratic behavior. According to Ancona, the three behavior are triggered by threat and fear (2012). Therefore, leaders should use their fears to detect risks and fight against threats, so that they can perform an effective sensemaking to change the system.

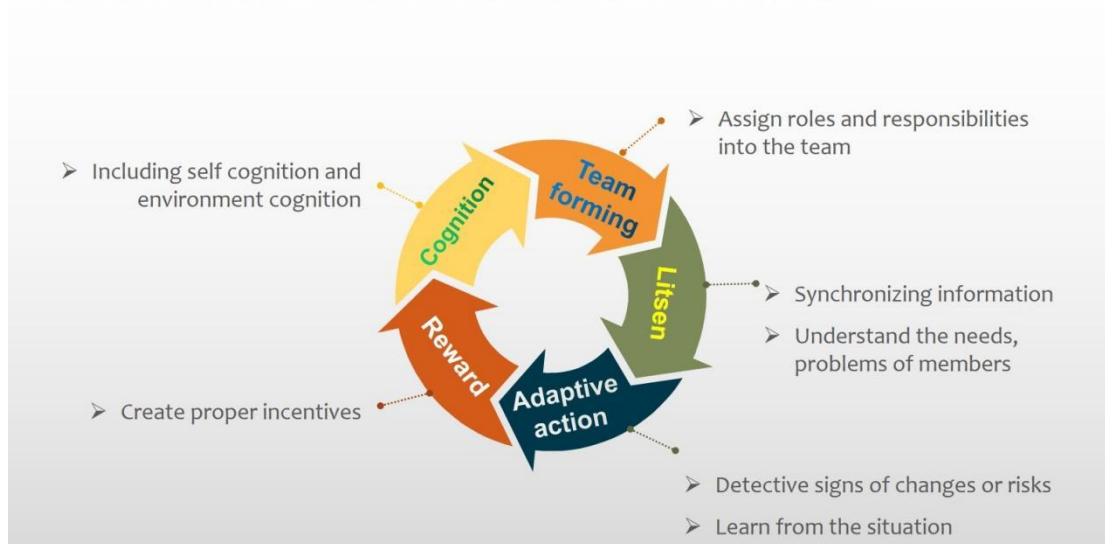
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Task 7: Leadership in CAS

Word count: 365

LEADERSHIP MODEL IN ADAPTIVE TEAM



Providing that the current environment is driven by forces from different parties, the increasing volatility making prediction even harder. Consequently, leading a team that adaptable to the environment is required in business world today.

The above model try to capture the key elements of leading adaptable team through complexity. To lead an adaptive team, the cognition of the leader is critical. This includes a) self cognition of team members have to themselves and to the advantages and disadvantages of their teams as a whole; b) synchronized environment cognition to the situation and its reasons and trends (Lacerenza et al., 2018).

In an adaptive team, it is not that vital whether there is a team member change, as long as the roles and the responsibilities are well allocated. Due to it has been reached a consensus on the goal of the project, when facing a turbulent, members of the team do not have to be fixed in one position (Santos et al., 2021). Therefore, the second

element, team forming, is not about recruiting members, but sharing understanding of the project and allocating responsibilities and how they can coordinate in these responsibilities (Rico et al., 2008).

The third element is listening. Considering the position of leaders, followers might under pressure when communicating with them. A leader who is also a good listener can create mutual trust among team members (Pyrko et al, 2018). This would assist leaders to understand the needs of members or problems they encounter, which consequently facilitates the next element, adaptive action. With the information can be synchronized in time, tasks and resources can be redeployed during the process, the plan and direction can be adjusted rapidly (Grote et al., 2018).

When the team has achieved successful completion of a project, all members are deserved to be rewarded. Hence, creating proper incentives is just as important as other elements. However, leaders should be careful to use punishment for making mistake in an adaptive team. Adaptability and agile response are important to this kind of group, members would have better performance in an pressure-free situation.

The five elements of the model are not prioritized. Other than linear process, these elements are interrelated with each other.

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