

CHAPTER 5: RESEARCH IMPLICATIONS, LIMITATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The present research study took the form of a case study in the South African call centre environment; it attempted to investigate call centre employees' perceptions of performance management from various organizational levels through the use of metaphors. The present research study is not without its limitations that are discussed below.

The emergent research implications from the results suggest that overall performance management is viewed as a necessary process despite how employees were experiencing it. Several themes emerged as critical for performance management to move beyond purely measurement which was seen in a very negative and punitive light, this transition would need trust, feedback, goal direction linked to strategy, a good agent-supervisor relationship, motivation that isn't purely monetary, motivation, control, as well as growth and development.

Several limitations associated with the use of metaphors have been identified in previous research, one of these limitations being that they are considered to be potentially misleading and result in a lack of clarity. This is due to the fact that they focus only on certain interpretations of a situation (Oswick and Montgomery, 1999). However in the current research where the aim was to determine individual's interpretations, images held of performance management and where they feel the focus currently lies or should lie, this may serve as a strength.

A problem proposed about metaphors from a perspective that is traditionally scientific is that it is not possible to translate them into more definite objective language, thus escaping exact measurement and testing (Alvesson, 2002). The aim however of this research is not for rigorous measurement and testing but rather for a better understanding of perceptions and connotations of images and

metaphors employed to describe performance management. The role of metaphor in relation to performance management in the organisation is the main focus of the current case study.

The current research is qualitative and as such was composed of a relatively small sample scale of supervisors and managers in relation to agents. Getting an even sample of all three levels of employees may have allowed for a more even comparison of perceptions rather than generalising from such a small sample group.

For future research it is suggested that a greater sample be obtained in order to allow for the possibility of the development and validation of an instrument to determine metaphors and their meanings, which may be used so as to gather quantitative data. This would allow for the comparison of a large scale of information gathered as well as for the comparison to be more standardised.

This case study was of the call centre environment in general, for future research it may be interesting to do a comparison of various call centres instead of combining responses, in this way information could be gathered with regards to determining if differences exist in perceptions with call centres from different environments or length of operation, also to determine what factors emerge from different call centres as contributors of positive or negative perceptions.

Lakoff and Johnson (1980) note the possibility for metaphors variances across different cultures; it would be interesting for future research to determine if there are variances in metaphors used across the various cultural groups in South Africa. With images such as Big Brother and Robben Island emerging in the current research it would be interesting to see if other such images emerged and the depth to which they would go.

The growth of call centres in South Africa has been extensive and will continue to grow with performance management being a crucial factor and metaphors unique tools, thus the possibilities of future research appear to be very positive.