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### Implicit Logic in Managerial Discourse. A Case Study in Choice of Selection Criteria

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<td>A grande maioria das teorias de selecção têm dado pouco atenção ao modo como gestores como seleccionadores identificam e justificam critérios de selecção e até que ponto existem evidências para a sua consistência e lógica. Este artigo, na base de um quadro conceptual sócio-cognitivo, propõe uma reflexão sobre estas questões. Foi desenvolvido um código de análise para explicar o discurso utilizado por 22 gestores no que se refere à justificação de critérios de selecção para operadores de câmara numa empresa europeia de comunicação social. Os resultados do estudo evidenciam, ainda que se trate de uma função técnica, que os gestores com experiência na função para a qual os candidatos estão a ser seleccionados se manifestam mais preocupados com valores, crenças e personalidade; e que estes critérios, independentemente do nível de hierarquia na gestão e da experiência em entrevistas de selecção, todos os gestores estão mais preocupados com a articulação pessoa-organização para necessidades presentes e futuras da organização do que com a especificidade pessoa-trabalho para o desempenho imediato. A consistência dos resultados sugere a existência de uma ‘lógica implícita’ no modo como os gestores justificam critérios que resultam de uma aprendizagem implícita e conhecimento tácito de ambas as experiências organizacionais e operacionais.</td>
<td>La théorie de la sélection n’a pas tellement approfondi les justifications avancées par les selectors en termes de choix des critères de sélection des candidats, ou ni s’il y a en évidence une logique ou une cohérence dans ces procédures. Cet article analyse ces questions dans un cadre socio-cognitif. On avance une nouvelle méthodologie de codification pour analyser et expliquer le discours de 22 managers en ce qui concerne la justification des critères de sélection de techniciens dans une station de radio et télévision en évolution permanente. Même pour un poste de travail de haut niveau technique, on trouve que les managers sont surtout concernés par les valeurs, les convictions et la personnalité des candidats. De plus, indépendamment de leur niveau de responsabilité et expérience de sélection ou de recrutement, tous les managers donnent priorité aux critères concernant l’adaptation des candidats aux besoins futurs et actuels de l’organisation plutôt qu’à leur adaption au poste. La cohérence de ces conclusions suggère la présence d’une ‘logique implicite’ dans la façon par laquelle les managers adoptent des critères dérivés d’un apprentissage implicite et d’une connaissance tacite de l’expérience en même temps opérationnelle et organisationnelle.</td>
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**JEL Classification:** M12; M51
Throughout management studies there is an increasing concern that explicit, inferential paradigms are not capturing what really counts for managers in a world of increasing competitive pressures. In his Managers Not MBAs (2004), Henry Mintzberg claims that: ‘Organizations are complex phenomena. Managing them is a difficult nuanced business, requiring all kinds of tacit understanding that can only be gained in context” (Mintzberg, 2004:9). Nonaka (1994; 1998), giving examples from NEC, Sharp, Canon, Matsushita, Honda and other companies, had claimed that it is when tacit and explicit knowledge interact that: ‘something powerful happens’, and that: ‘It is precisely this exchange between tacit and explicit knowledge that Japanese companies are good at developing… What’s more, as new explicit knowledge is shared throughout an organization, other employees begin to internalize it – that is, they use it to broaden, extend and reframe their own tacit knowledge’ (Nonaka, 1998: 29-31). Although not even mentioned by Michael Porter (1980; 1990; 1998), tacit knowledge already has a wide resonance in management theory as a key basis of competitive advantage (e.g. Baumard, 1999; Ambrosini and Bowman, 2001; Edmonson, Winslow, Bohmer and Pisano, 2003). And this is precisely because tacit knowing or know-how is not readily identifiable and replicable in the manner of explicit knowledge, such as a formula for a process, a patent, or licence.

Fincham and Rhodes (2005), contrast explicit knowledge as formally expressed in some form that can be ‘codified’ and manipulated by logical reasoning, with tacit knowledge as a kind of knowing that cannot be easily transmitted or interpreted without a ‘knowing subject’. Yet such ‘knowing’ by individuals or groups is central to Nonaka’s (1998) case on interfacing the tacit and explicit. Does this then limit the operability of the concept of tacit knowledge? Or, are there methodologies that can offset Fincham and Rhodes’ (2005) claims and that could explicate, classify and code such knowledge in a consistent manner? For instance, are Ambrosini and Bowman (2001) claim that identifying and enhancing tacit knowledge within organisations may not be as difficult as widely presumed since, in large part, knowledge, abilities or skills may be tacit simply because “people never thought of what they were doing, they never asked themselves what they were doing, and nobody else ever asked it either”? (2001: 816).

This case study addresses such issues in one of the most vital areas for any organization: personnel selection. It introduces the still dominant ‘normative’ selection theory paradigm which claims that only explicit criteria should be adopted in selection (e.g. Guion, 1965, 1997; Dipboye, 1994, 1997; Anderson, 1997; Anderson and Shackleton, 1990, 1993) and that managers should be trained and experienced in such techniques if they are to be able to interview rationally and well. It then considers the socio-cognitive basis of theories of tacit knowledge; suggests that insights into this may be gained from Ignacio Matte Blanco’s (1975; 1988) concept of ‘unconscious logic’, and introduces the concept of ‘implicit logic’ in discourse analysis. In explaining and advocating the methodology of a ‘grounded theory’ approach it relates this to the debate within management literature between those who espouse a ‘critical realist’ approach to discourse (e.g. Reed, 2005) and those following Derrida (1978) who claim that discourse is only a ‘social construction’ (e.g. Gergen, 1994, 2000; Contu and Wilmott, 2005). In introducing the case study, it describes the method of a newly developed coding system for analysis of managers’ discourse concerning choice of selection criteria in a major service organization. It then presents and discusses the findings on which criteria managers implicitly prioritise and sets of criteria in their discourse on what is important for choice of candidates in selection before drawing conclusions on what may be the wider relevance of such findings to how organisations need to adapt to changing operational needs and competitive pressures.

* I am grateful to an anonymous reviewer of a draft of this article for comments which much helped to focus key features of the argument.