Power relations and complex organisational development

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Abstract: Human interaction is so important because, in the workplace, you always have to work with other people. As a leader, the way in which you and others relate to each other, authentically and inauthentically and use personal- and collective power within those relationships can create positive, enabling workplace environments, or be places of exclusion and negative engagement. Our research was a qualitative study, informed by complexity theory, of the construct of power relations, investigating the lived experiences of leaders within the complexity of the emerging economy of South Africa. It also further explored the challenges of such an approach in terms of the implementation and openness of people within organisations to engage with power relations, and not just to treat it unconsciously. Key features of our research were unpacking the relevance for leaders, as well as the impact of social dynamics, concepts of power, leader attributes, personal traits and organisational features on power relations.

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1 Introduction

1.1 Shifting our understanding

Given an uncontrollable future, with dynamic outcomes, a positivistic orientation appears limited with human relating in the modern workplace. Also, the many industrial organisational (IO) economic-based approaches seem out of touch with contemporary organisational challenges (Kerr and Jermier, 1978). A more realistic view might be that of Stacey's (2005) complex responsive processes of human relating, which recognises authentic individual- and collective narratives (Elias, 1998), the dynamic patterns of interaction between people, as well as their interdependence. According to Stacey (2005, p.21), "… complex responsive processes of human relating consist of three main pillars namely, acts of communication, relations of power and acts of evaluation". Power relations then are integral to the vast number of local interactions that transform global patterns of collective power which emerges in repetitive fashion and at the same time (Stacey and Griffin, 2005). This transformation can be seen as synonymous to organisational change, or development, which is also the change in the patterns of power relations [Sarra, (2005), p.147]. These conceptual relationships are illustrated in Figure 1:

Figure 1 Initial path for organisational development (see online version for colours)
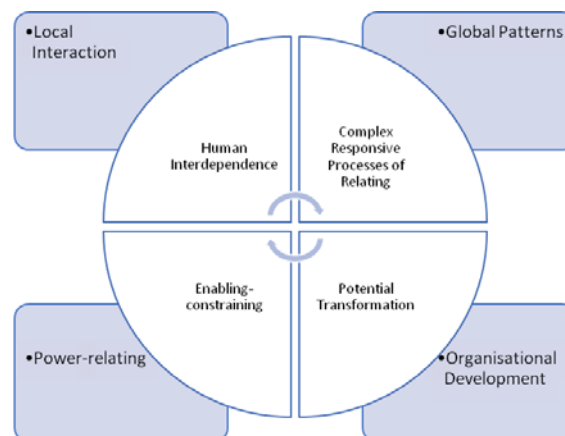
It is therefore significant to attempt to place power-relating as central to an approach of understanding complex organisational processes, human relating and inter-personal communication and feedback, given the pervasiveness of control illusions, the fascination with individualism and the masked projections among ego-immature managers and leaders (April et al., 2013). Over the last three decades, we have seen a slow shift in leadership theory away from Schneider's (2002) managerial authority, and towards a concept referred to as 'complexity theory', already explored by various researchers (Knowles, 2001; Marion, 1999; Marion and Uhl-Bien, 2001; Morrison, 2012; Plowman et al., 2007; Schneider and Somers, 2006; Stacey, 2007; Wheatley, 1994). This shift can be traced to the time when the German philosopher, Hegel (1807), challenged the views of Kant (1790), another German Philosopher, with his view based on a social activities context.

With all these shifts occurring in the leadership field, the basic idea of what leadership is or ought to be, is being fundamentally challenged by the budding view of companies as complex adaptive systems (CAS) (Anderson, 1999; McKelvey, 2001). This complex system perspective is referred to by Stacey (1995) as the third perspective, and is concerned with whole-system dynamics – many agents interacting with each other in unpredictable manners. They fluctuate between stability and instability and, if they approach disequilibrium, they tend toward emergent actions, and they are also dynamic and nonlinear (Plowman et al., 2007). It is further reasoned by Chiles et al. (2004) that imposing a master plan by leadership is not what causes order in self-organising systems, but rather the actions of interdependent people who communicate, take action and live continuous feedback-adapt cycles. Elias (1991) also argues that groups and individuals interact locally, intentionally and in planned ways with each other. They can, however, not foresee the global and widespread consequences of the interplay between these intentions and plans. In fact, global consequences emerge in the long-term.

1.2 Organisation: complex responsive processes of relating

Complexity scientists propose a view where leaders enable and distance themselves from the desire to control (Marion and Uhl-Bien, 2001) and where power is obtained through leaders that allow rather than to direct (Regine and Lewin, 2000), while employees live connected and engaged in the organisation (Knowles, 2001). In addition, enabling leaders utilise the mechanisms of "disrupting existing patterns, encouraging novelty and sense-making of unfolding events for others" [Plowman et al., (2007), p.345]. The non-linear human interaction in companies is described by Thietart and Forgues (1995, p.20) as that which causes unknowable emergent futures: "multiple organisational actors, with diverse agendas, inside and outside the organisation, try to coordinate their actions to exchange information and to interact in other ways and they do all this in a dynamic manner, i.e., yesterday's action activates a reaction today which may lead to a new action tomorrow". Attempts to make plans are powerful gestures, and patterns emerge only in local response to these global gestures; patterns thus emerge in the absence of a plan (Stacey, 2005). Anderson (1999) and McKelvey (2001) also argue that emergent ideas, which result in innovation and creativity, are only possible when organisations move into states of disequilibrium. This does not mean that disorder and anarchy exist, but rather those patterns of self-organisation and emergence form due to individual plans' and intentions' interplay. This complexity theory discourse challenges our way of thinking

about the leadership field (Marion and Uhl-Bien, 2001) and help us see the futility of the idea that individual leaders can create predictable futures.

Elias (1998) mentions two modes of thought, namely, involved (magico-mythical-) and detached (reality congruent) thinking, with various levels of anxiety depending on the level of involvement or objectivity. He also states that thinking always involves a mixture of these two modes, which ultimately result in a paradoxical way of thinking. In the social sciences, as well as in the lived experiences within organisations, it is of course more difficult to think in a detached manner, since we are the phenomena and we depend on each other in the human experience. Stacey (2007, p.297) declares that:

> "… mainstream organisational and management literature, the business schools and the management and leadership development programs of major organisations are all, for the most part, promoting what Elias has called magico-mythic thinking. However, the magico-mythic nature of our explanations of organisational life is covered over by the rational sounding language in which they are presented. They promote the illusion of control so providing social defences against anxiety but in the process distancing us from our actual experience and making rationally invisible what we actually do in organizations. It seems to me that a great many of the explanations of, and prescriptions for, acting in organisations today amount to the construction of a fantasy world so that we can preserve the illusion that someone is in control."

In order to move away from the above-mentioned magico-mythic thinking, Stacey (1995, 2005, 2007) proposes that we should take serious our interdependence and ordinary, everyday experiences of aggression, greed, love, compassion and care. Thinking of our organisational lives, in such ways, will lead us to very different views on practicality. This is exactly what Stacey's (2007, p.7) organisational "perspective of complex responsive processes" tries to achieve – the interaction experience which simply produces more interaction, and causes us to think of organisations as inter-human interaction patterns that are continually iterated in each present. A move can therefore be observed from thinking in spatial metaphors to thinking in ways of temporal processes (of human relating). Organisations can, consequently, be seen as "… processes of human relating, and it is in the simultaneously cooperative-consensual and conflictual-competitive relating between people that they perpetually construct their future together in the present" [Stacey, (2007), p.299].

Complex responsive processes of relating (CRPR) can be understood as acts of communication, relations of power, and the interplay between peoples' choices arising in acts of evaluation [Stacey, (2005), p.7]. In thinking about acts of communication, it is useful to consider the work of Mead (1934) who discussed the gesture-response social act and taking up of the attitude of the generalised other. Communication then relates to CRPR in that it is a dynamic self-formation process of meaning which emerges socially in society-wide patterns. In a similar manner, when we draw from the work of Elias (1939), we understand that "processes of human relating form, and are formed by, individual and collective identities, which inevitably reflect complex patterns of power-relating" [Stacey, (2007), p.299]. While individuals partake in these acts of communication and power-relating, they continually make choices based on ideology, which is based on norms and values – integral aspects of self-identity formation.

Similar to CAS, the themes that emerge from the patterns are understood to be complex, self-organising and emergent and evolving (properties of CRPR). Also the implications of taking the CRPR perspective is that "one cannot step outside interaction

to design this interaction, and that there is no overall design or blueprint for the organisation as a whole" [Stacey, (2007), p.297]. So while it is impossible to design global patterns of order, it can emerge as a consequence of people's responses to gestures in their local interactions. Taking all of this into account, what is the leader's role then in the organisation if a CRPR perspective is assumed?

1.3   Power relating

Sarra (2005) discusses the view of power from a complexity theory perspective, to be based on reciprocal relationship, and it is therefore not a property, but a dynamic. He continues to state that 'diversity' and 'difference' are intrinsic qualities in the process of power-relating, which then allow for the potential emergence of novelty. In addition, it is suggested that "our adaptive and adjusting strategies [and choices], which are the processes of power-relating, must change as we encounter difference and conflict" [Sarra, (2005), p.177].

Foucault (1975, 1977) writes about the intangibility of the nature of power and claims that power relations' effects are internalised as historical processes. Elias' (1998) theory of power as a multi-relational figuration, adds to this, although he makes it clear that power is not in possession of any individual, but rather a structural characteristic of all human relationships (so that you cannot simply do what you want when entering into a relationship).

Elias (1991) illustrates how power figurations are formed from power-relations, which also entails the tilting of the balance of power in favour of some, and against others. Some individuals are included in these groupings and others are not, which lead to powerful emotions of belonging (an individual's 'we' identity) or exclusion. Tajfel (2010) interestingly claims that the ingredients of effective counter-power are having the 'presence of an external alternative' and 'exiting from the power relation' which can be promising, but at the same time problematic.

Elias (1939) additionally explores 'gossip', which is a feature of interaction that expresses insider and outsider identities, establishes a particular power ratio that favours the gossiper, and fosters group cohesiveness. Groupings are also formed and sustained in specific contextual processes of inclusion and exclusion, with views of each other through processes of gossip where charisma and stigma are assigned. Gossip is relevant to the organisation since it represents layers in the ongoing conversational processes at work, and may even tilt the power balance to a particular individual's group (primal contest).

April (1999) claimed that communication and power relations are integrally connected to a sense of belonging (common good) and that dialogue can expose, with possible resistance, the manner of power-relating and potentially change an individual's, and ultimately an organisation's, status quo. Communication difficulties point to issues of letting go, inauthenticity, immature vulnerability, insensitivity, and underdeveloped ego maturity (April et al., 2013).

Expanding on Stacey's (2005) CRPR perspective, 'society' is seen to be made up of enabling-constraining communicative interactions, as well as power-relating between individuals that constitute 'mind' and 'self-identity'. This society, mind and self are all evolving patterns of interaction that can be thought of as narrative themes, which in turn organises the experience of togetherness as figurations, social objects or cult values. In the myriad local interactions, it can be observed that global patterns of collective power

and economic relations "emerge as repetition and potential transformation at the same time" (p.47).

As the third pillar of CRPR, evaluative choice-making utilises 'values' and 'norms' as criteria to choose between desires and actions. These values and norms make up ideology and, in turn, unconsciously sustain power configurations and power relations. Local interaction, difference (diversity), conflict and negotiation, reflexivity, discourse and narrative patterning of experience and sense-making of experience together reflects an ideology of certain idealisations which justifies particular approaches to researching human action through providing evaluative criteria. Ideology is a social object and can be found in the human experience of interaction, while also being sustained by 'gossip' and 'shame'.

The discussion around complexity theory and what it means for how we view organisations and leadership has been approached from many different avenues. It has been observed that a link exists between power relations and the global patterns that form from the myriad local interactions through the perspective of CRPR. In these global patterns that emerge from organisations, the potential for individual- and collective transformation, combined with learning and development, is held. This leads to the research questions we sought to answer in our research, namely:

- 'What could an approach to organisational development look like when it is viewed from the perspective of power relations being central to this approach?' and
  'What are the main challenges for the implementation of this power relations-central approach in industry?'

2 Research methodology

This research followed an exploratory, qualitative approach which also employed inductivist-, interpretivist- (epistemological position) and constructionist (ontological position) views (Bryman and Bell, 2011). Twenty-three semi-structured interviews were conducted against a pre-developed interview guide (based on the literature review), with strategic leaders within South Africa – five were conducted in the English language, while 18 interviews were conducted in the Afrikaans language (being most convenient for those participants), and part of the transcription process therefore included translation of the transcribed interviews. Participants for this research were selected from one population group that consisted of top executives that were involved with strategic leadership daily, such as CEO's, executive committee- and board members of organisations. Age and ethnicity were not considered as selection criteria. In this sense then, the sampling was purposeful. The majority of participants were based in the Western-Cape province, although all of these leaders are frequent travellers due to their involvement with national and international business. The research took on an exploratory approach to the lived experiences of the participants, due to the phenomenological nature of this research (Leedy and Ormrod, 2010). The main focus of the research was to expand on the meaning and nature of power-relating, as a concept (Foucault, 1975, 1977), as a characteristic of all human relations (Elias, 1998), as an enabling and constraining agent (Stacey, 2007), its grouping characteristics (power figurations) (Elias, 1991), its link to communication (Sarra, 2005), as well as authentic interaction (April et al., 2000). The interviews lasted one hour on average and with

participant consent were recorded on a digital recording device (Bryman and Bell, 2011; Leedy and Ormrod, 2010). All interviews were conducted face-to-face (Rudestam, 1992), except for participant eighteen who had to be interviewed by telephone. Interviews were transcribed as soon as possible after the interview, in order to mitigate the risk of losing any information gained through observation of the participant and note-making during the interview.

The first step in the data analysis method was that of open coding, reducing the data to a small set of themes [Leedy and Ormrod, (2010), p.143]. The data was categorised according to common attributes or characteristics. The "process of axial coding involved putting the open-coded data back together by grouping the codes together that could form part of the same axial category" [Boudreau and Robey, (2005), p.7]. The axial categories that were created were: 'context of complexity', 'concepts of power', 'power groupings', 'usefulness of power-relating', 'concerns of power-relating', 'social dynamics of power-relating', 'leadership contribution', 'personal traits' contribution', 'organisational features' impact' and 'challenges'. These axial categories, and their interconnections, were combined to form a story line/overall description of the researched phenomena according to the participants' experiences (Leedy and Ormrod, 2010). In order to make sense of the relationships between the categories, a conditional relationship guide was utilised (Scott, 2004, 2008). The coding process utilised the computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) (Lee and Fielding, 1991), namely, Atlas/ti. Atlas/ti took away the need for the manual labour around "writing marginal codes, making photocopies of transcripts, cutting out all chunks of text relating to a code, and pasting them together" [Bryman and Bell, (2011), p.593]. The researchers however, still had to interpret the data and codes in order to draw meaningful conclusions. Leedy and Ormrod (2010) describe the 'data analysis spiral' approach (Creswell, 1998) which was used in this research study with the following steps:

- organising the data: the transcribed interviews were reviewed, labelled and uploaded onto Atlas/ti for the data analysis to commence

- perusing the data and coding: the interviews were coded and resulted in 1,418 codes that were identified from 725 quotations

- identify general categories or themes: the created codes were grouped into categories which resulted in 74 family codes

- integrate and summarise the data for your readers: the 74 family codes were further organised and linked according to themes which resulted in ten super family codes.

3   Research findings

Ninety-one family codes emerged during the interview process, of which the following 26 family codes were mentioned the most.

Table 1 The 26 most frequently encountered family codes

Family code	Frequency
Leader actions and abilities	226
Complexity	92
People actions and reactions	89
Power-relating	89
Power play	73
Human interaction	70
Communication	69
Strategy	66
Developmental ways and handling	58
Developmental drivers and stumbling blocks	53
Handling teams	48
Company culture	46
Company characteristics	42
Complexity theory	37
Structure	35
Change and adapt	34
Control	32
Leadership style	32
Enable	30
Goals and objectives	29
Challenges	28
People essentials	26
Power groupings	23
Motivation	22
Knowledge	21
Gossip	18

From the family codes, the following ten super family codes emerged during the selective coding grouping process (shown in Figure 2).

Figure 2 Compiled grouping layout of family- and super codes (see online version for colours)

Predictability and unpredictability								Informality	
Relevance of Complexity Theory		Ignorance towards groupings					Knowledge	Developmental ways and handling	
Familiarity with Complexity Theory		Observation and Intervention	Conditions that assists				People's essentials	Developmental drivers and stumbling blocks	
Defining Complexity Theory		Drivers of group formation	Being cognisant of the effect	Negative effects on power-relating	Networks of relations	Goals and objectives	Trust	Organisational characteristics	Time
Handling complexity	Gossip between individuals and groups	Structural characteristics' effect	Taking on an enabling role	Self-characteristics' interference	Expectations of people	Optimal leadership style	Motivation	Organisational culture	Human nature
Defining complexity	Awareness of power-relating	Importance in the organisation	Attitude that assists	Ignorance and Misconceptions around power-relating	Inclusivity	Enabling	Changing and adapting	Strategy	People's openness and ability to develop
Causes of complexity	Knowledge about power-relating	People Intervention effects	Empowerment of individuals	Overcoming the level divide	Communication	Controlling	People's actions and reactions	Teams	Intra-organisational activities
Awareness of complexity	Power play and power struggle	Organisation phase effect	Ability to reach people	Motives for taking part	Human interaction	Leader actions and abilities	Personality	Structure	Finances of organisation
									Resources required
Context of complexity	Concepts of power	Power groupings	Usefulness of power-relating	Concerns of power-relating	Social dynamics of power-relating	Leadership contribution	Personal traits' contribution	Organisational features' impact	Challenges
8	4	7	8	6	5	5	7	8	6

Row labels (left margin): Family Codes and Super Codes (upper block); Super-Family Code (the row beginning "Context of complexity"); Family Codes and Super Codes (the numeric row).

Given the constraints of trying to capture some of the results in a paper, we will only focus on the content of the super family codes to do with power and power-relating.

3.1   Concepts of power

The super family code 'concepts of power' captures the variety of perspectives that business practitioners hold about the concept of power, their ideas around power-relating, as well as the phenomenon of gossip in the organisation which is closely related to power. Table 2 summarises the frequency of each family- and super code.

Table 2   Family- and super codes for Concepts of power

Concepts of power	Frequency
Power play and power struggle	73
Knowledge about power-relating	26
Awareness of power-relating	17
Gossip between individuals and groups	18
Total count	134

'Power play' and 'power struggles' are important terms that come to mind as 'concepts of power' and mostly contribute to the negative interpretation of power. It was clear that business practitioners held a vast amount of views on the notion of power play (strategies to increase own power and influence) and the struggle for who is in control (power struggle). Participants explained that power in the organisation was closely related to structure, discussed the negative effects that restructuring events had on the organisational dynamics in terms of politics at executive management level. Participant eight commented on the visibility and presence of power struggles in the organisation:

> "At some point it is the survival of the fittest … and while they maintain this very cordial relationship, deep down there is still this power struggle. Everyone is struggling to grasp that next bit of power that they can get, so it is definitely prevalent in all organisations. But I think in any type of human interaction." [P8-8:14 (39:39)]

Before power-relating can be used in any form of organisational transformation, certain 'knowledge' and 'awareness' of power-relating must exist for business practitioners. It was clear that while many participants offered some definitions for power-relating, most were not well versed with this concept. Participants pointed to the enabling and constraining dynamics of power-relating that occur in team interactions, the role of personality types in same-level human interaction, the purposeful use of power-relating at the local interaction level in the organisation to achieve some global pattern, and the enabling of persons in the power-relating phenomena that could be from all levels of organisational life:

> "Seniority does not always count, it could also be knowledge. If there is a problem, it could be an expert on a lower level that is called upon … so he becomes the one strumming the guitar and then he is the person in front. So the situation determines what that power relation is, as well as how far you can push it in determining what role you will play, or whether you will be called upon again, in the future." [P21-21:15 (47:47)]

'Awareness' of power-relating was illustrated in the following quote:

> "It is part of people's nature … it is part of interactions and it will always be there. It would be unusual for an individual in a stronger position to not make use of the power available to him … often, to wield such power over others. It would also be difficult for the person in a weaker organisational position, and who is conscious about the role of power and the context in which he finds himself, to not be constrained thereby. So, it is part of our everyday life … not just in business. In business it is perhaps more pronounced." [P14-14:10 (24:24)]

'Gossip' between individuals and groups affects feelings of belonging (inclusion) and exclusion, and thereby tilts the power balance in organisations. Participant 8 confirmed that in an organisational environment:

> "There is always gossip. Gossip arises when there is limited communication from management or leadership, particularly in how individuals will be affected by organisational change initiatives. When people are unsure, they start talking amongst themselves and create their own stories of truth of what could happen and is going to happen … resulting in negative influence and demotivated employees. I think that if you proactively create a culture of all-inclusive, open and honest communication, you will be able to eliminate a lot of these issues." [P8-8:19 (48:48)]

3.2 Power groupings

Groupings point to the fact that power-relating and power balance do not only exist between individuals, but also between groups of individuals in an organisation. 'Power groupings' links strongly with the super family code of 'concepts of power' and involved the super codes listed in Table 3.

Table 3 Super codes for power groupings

Power groupings	Frequency
Organisation phase effect	2
People intervention effects	3
Importance in the organisation	4
Structural characteristics' effect	2
Drivers of group formation	4
Observation and intervention	3
Ignorance towards groupings	2
Total count	20

'Organisation phase effect' points to the impact that the specific growth phase of a business has on the formation of power groupings. Additionally, hierarchy and team structure in an organisation play a role:

> "At our company, we grew, had so many opportunities and we were so busy, that there was very little time for office politics, power-play and group formation. There was so much that one had to achieve each day that there was not time for gossip and office politics. As you get bigger and reach the company Chair, you get more of that." [P19-19:16 (22:22)]

Participant 12 also noted that power groupings could form when a company merges with another and is trying to form a new and integrated identity. Furthermore, our participants highlighted the fact that an organisation's structure can have a significant effect on the power groupings in the business environment, i.e., when either geographically spread in different offices or in the co-location of different business units in one office building.

Also highlighted was the possibility of power 'group formation' through the use of communication media, particularly when it happens in non-face-to-face environments and distrust could arise. 'Culture, religion and ethnicity' were also mentioned (participant 17):

> "It is most visible for me when [power] groups form, for example, when the Muslims, Hindu's, Afrikaners, etc., sit together in the cafeteria and form groups even though they will work together integrally on an hour-to-hour basis."

Participant 17 further claimed that:

> "[Power] groupings also form according to how career-driven people are. People who are ambitious will normally group together and compete on how to further advance. The important thing here is for the leader to ensure that these groupings do not cause division in the company." [P17-17:10 (26:26)]

Participant 11 cautions leaders to know when to intervene, particularly if negative effects are experienced:

> "I think you must keep an eye on it … conflict is good, and it brings people out of their comfort zones and that is what these power groups do, but if it gets too overbearing then it can become a problem." [P11-11:34 (198:198)]

Participant 11 further urges that leaders monitor whether power groupings work with or against the company's direction and vision:

> "… sub-consciously you make the decision on where you are going, and decide how you will influence the power grouping. You know what you want… it is a very subtle thing." [P11-11:35 (206:206)]

'Intervention' by people could have an effect on the group forming dynamics, and connecting with the right strategic people could help win over a group as was experienced by participant 13:

> "… they can form a powerhouse, and it is one of the things that you cannot foresee. But if you do not get involved with them, you could lose them. The same thing can happen when you come to another region and there is an opinion-former, and that person is able to sway the views of people around them. One must not be afraid to tackle that person one-on-one and win them over, because if you can do that you will automatically get the rest to follow." [P13-13:12 (24:24)]

Power groupings were also thought to be useful when utilised in the top management of an organisation:

> "… the CEO of a company must understand that he carries huge gravitas, but he is hanging on a piece of piano wire. It is a strong wire and he hangs in there, but the Board has a pair of side cutters which they can use at any time … the power disappears immediately, as fast as the gravity that pulls him down. And it is as it should be – there must be a circle of power, otherwise it is too easy for corruption to get in at the top." [P16-16:21 (21:21)]

The antithesis of seeing the importance of power groupings also exist as 'ignorance' toward power groupings, illustrated by business practitioners in some environments who were not aware of power groupings in their organisation even though not oblivious to the possibility that they might simply not be seeing it as such, as described by participant 9:

> "No, not really … I long ago found out that I do not know everything. If one sits for a while in the ivory tower, or do not often go to direction meetings in the company, you lose track with what happens there and who matters." [P9-9:21 (83:83)]

Nevertheless, power groupings are present in organisations and almost all leaders get in contact with it and could choose to harness the potential that power groupings have in power-relating.

3.3 Usefulness of power-relating

The 'usefulness of power-relating' encompasses the super codes listed in Table 4.

Table 4   Super codes for usefulness of power-relating

Usefulness of power-relating	Frequency
Ability to reach people	2
Empowerment of individuals	16
Attitude that assists	5
Taking on an enabling role	4
Being cognisant of the effect	6
Conditions that assists	2
Total count	35

Knowing about the positive effects of power-relating is of paramount importance if power-relating is to become a convincingly strong parameter in the approach to understanding and developing organisational processes. The tilting power ratio between a business and its suppliers, with resulting power-relating, is important and complex at the same time according to participant 5:

> "My power relationships are absolutely part of why I was consulted, but also part of the day-to-day business of a typical fruit export company. You must get fruit from a producer. Now, there is a power relationship because in some cases they are major producers and they feel that they do not need you, so the power sits with them, and you have to promote your services to them from the back foot. You may also have another producer that would very much like to work with you, and then the power is on your side again." [P5-5:23 (69:69)]

In addition, participant 15 felt so strong about the role of power-relating in the organisation that she was of the opinion it must be enforced. The positive in all the related examples were that the individuals were aware of power-relating albeit according to their own understanding, and this contributes to an environment where power-relating could be useful.

Power-relating is all about human interdependence and interaction and therefore the 'ability to reach people' speaks directly to this. Participant 11 speaks to the innate capability to reach people through power-relating:

> "… there are those people who do it [power-relating] more subtly and who are also less aware that they are doing it. I think, it is just who you are and it is much more authentic … and you can reach more people through power-relating than self-taught behaviour. I believe that some people have that gift to do it." [P11-11:28 (165:165)]

Participant 16 contrasted many of the CEO' perspectives with the mention of reaching people at the bottom of the company structure, which usually is a challenging task for top management. It was suggested that 'empowering-relating' was a better term for 'power-relating' and more descriptive of the positive light in which it should be seen:

> "It is important to let people decide for themselves when it comes to small things in the organisations. It is important to allow people to make mistakes to grow… small mistakes where a person can learn is of great value. That person will also later thank you for that learning … something that they will never forget. Then you have a person that is of greater value also to the company … a better asset to the company." [P17-17:9 (24:24)]

Sixteen of our research participants were positive about the empowerment of individuals (which is at the heart of power-relating) and had some ideas as to how that should be done, e.g., such as creation of an action-feedback-learn environment.

'Taking on an enabling power-relating role' is fundamental to the manner in which interactions could be enhanced. This enabling role a leader should assume is knit together with the empowerment of individuals and contributes greatly to the usefulness of power-relating. Participant 3 mentioned that after he started to give his team the freedom to come with solutions themselves, his role moved to being the one that needed to selectively say 'yes' to the right opportunities that came across his desk. An excitement and strong belief in the business systems of an organisation also assists in taking up the role of enabling, according to participant 13, and while these participants caution against losing focus of the business' needs, there should be no need for neglect, but rather symbiosis between successful business and enabling of individuals.

A certain 'attitude' is required in power-relating which converges around a collaborative and helpful attitude towards the other person(s) in the relationship, seeking the end goal of reaching a certain desired state together:

> "You must have the right bodies with you, because you cannot do it with a guy who continually confronts you" [P24-24:20 (56:56)] and "Not any person is going to get this right, and especially if you are a kind of authoritarian animal … then it is quite likely not going to work. So the game is probably to select the right people." [P24-24:19 (52:52)]

Furthermore, there are 'conditions that assist' the positive application of power-relating, which include different roles and profiles of the people involved. Participant 21 claims:

> "…in team power relations there must be a combination of different kinds of profiles, some people who can lead and some who can support… also certain levels of knowledge, but also resources. It does not help to only have all the right people there; you also need money, you need a budget, you need support from the side, you need someone who is there to protect… people who can take the thing on, and who are not necessarily always the CEO. Someone must also empower the CEO to be able to do certain things." [P21-21:24 (81:81)]

Honesty, openness and transparency are some of the conditions around power-relating that participant 23 deemed important and visible in the people around her. These attitudes and conditions all assist in power-relating, but at the same time it is also useful for being in, and contributing to, society.

3.4 Concerns of power-relating

Concerns of power-relating are a clustering of business practitioners apprehensions toward the concept and raised awareness of the possible hurdles that could be encountered in power-relating dynamics (Table 5).

Table 5 Super codes for concerns of power-relating

Concerns of power-relating	Frequency
Motives for taking part	2
Overcoming the level divide	2
Ignorance and misconceptions around power-relating	9
Self-characteristics' interference	3
Negative effects on power-relating	4
Total count	20

The 'motives for taking part' in power-relating need to be investigated and reflected upon since it is not always positive, and might be transactionally used to merely gain something from the other involved party:

> "Merits are one thing, but then 'how' and 'to what degree' you interact with those people determine whether you progress in the company, and I think that is very unhealthy." [P2-2:39 (24:24)]

As part of the introspection that seems to be required with power-relating, the interference of a person's self-characteristics needs to be taken into account. These self-characteristics could manifest in various ways, such as the ego that participant 5 referred to:

> "But as the egos begin to intrude on the influence of power relations, then those things can go badly skew." [P5-5:27 (84:84)]

Ethnic discrimination was mentioned by participant 22 to be an issue in many SA business environments he encountered:

> "In this country of ours, there is also frequently a racist undertone in relationships. So you typically have a foreman who is white, or who is in any event a different race, maybe brown, and the workers are all black. Or he has a higher status and the workers all have a lower status than him, and he tells them what to do and expects them to act without question … based on the power of his position." [P22-22:13 (44:44)]

Similarly to the previous quote about status levels, 'Overcoming the level divide' is both a practical-, as well as an ideological, consideration when people enter into, and take part in, power-relating. It speaks about the accessibility of leaders or powerful individuals, and can be a significant obstruction to healthy enabling and constraining in power-relating. Participant 22 remarked about the tension of different levels of commitment, involvement and responsibility:

> "… on a higher level it is even more difficult, because people have stronger opinions and you have people with more leadership ability, with more forceful personalities, and who stand by their ideas. They also have strong opinions on how something must be done. In order to be a team player, which is difficult, sometimes you're your side you must reach out to these guys … forgetting about the few guys who are purposefully causing problems." [P22-22:29 (92:92)]

Not a lot of participants showed ignorance toward power-relating, however, participant 1 confidently ventured:

> "I think power relations has to a great extent vanished," [P1-1:6 (4:4)] "So power relations does not exist" [P1-1:12 (4:4)] and "From what it sounds to me, power relations almost sounds like a swear word." [P1-1:16 (4:4)]

Some further misconceptions around power-relating led to participant 4 feeling that power-relating are a stumbling block:

> "That whole power-relation thing is one of the stumbling blocks towards, let us say, development in a company on a personal level." [P4-4:18 (39:39)]

Participant 6 told a story about a time when people went to great lengths to please one of the previous state presidents, and he then related this negative 'desire to please' to the business world. Negative political power play, improper communication and organisational hierarchy were some of the triggers that participant 16 mentioned which could have a negative effect on power-relating:

> "By accident, in my experience, I was always more positive towards the power aspect and tried to do it in an honourable way, as you defined it. I was sometimes surprised, at this stage of my life, to notice naivety in myself because I did not realise the extent of the negative, political power-play that goes on behind one's back, not necessarily towards oneself, but in that part of the company where the upper echelon's decisions come down to the lower levels … like the 'broken telephone' game. It becomes totally twisted, because the people that have the negative power have used it to their advantage. My way of bridging that divide was to have as few ranks as possible in an organisation, and to get discussion going at the lowest level of the company as possible. Also to get it applied as best as possible and then, as leader, to move between all echelons. In other words, you move almost constantly on the lowest level … that has a positive and a negative power aspect." [P16-16:17 (20:20)]

The willingness of a leader to engage in local interaction of the organisation on all levels has been highlighted.

3.5   Social dynamics of power-relating

Perspectives and views that business practitioners hold about the social building blocks of power-relating are listed in Table 6.

Table 6 Family codes for social dynamics of power-relating

Social dynamics of power-relating	Frequency
Human interaction	70
Communication	69
Inclusivity	8
Expectations of people	8
Networks of relations	8
Total count	163

'Communication' enables people to interact with each other while sharing messages of inspiration, vision and motivation, and is therefore crucial for power-relating. There are many ways of communicating that people utilise in their day-to-day engagements. Some of these were listed:

> "… critical to leadership is constant communication. People do not like uncertainty and inconsequentiality. You must say what you are going to do, do it, and stick to it. That is the kind of thing that works so that people are not unsure – it gives them a framework in which each person can make their own choices" [P21-21:12 (41:41)];

and,

> "Firstly one must develop a culture and spirit of free communication and discussion. One must be courageous enough to make suggestions or comments … it should be encouraged." [P19-19:17 (24:24)]

There are clearly various ways to communicate, but the important thing is that it is made priority. 'Inclusivity' in an organisation can easily be affected by power-relating and a culture of individual credibility, no matter your difference, should be promoted in organisations according to participant 8:

> "If you create a culture of open and honest communication, of proactive communication, of all-inclusive communication, you will be able to eliminate a lot of these issues. Remember, people just want to feel comfortable, want to belong, want to be acknowledged for whom they are, and people just want to know that they will be okay, irrespective of what the changes are." [P8-8:19 (48:48)]

Participant 23 shared her experiences of the lack of an inclusive culture in the public sector and she also reflected on the tensions of the main management style in the organisation versus her inclusive style:

> "Now that you mentioned it to me I realised that that may be one of the reasons why an 'us and them' culture exists, because my management style is an inclusive one [as opposed to the rest of the organisation]." [P23-23:3 (18:18)]

It was clear that the concept of human interaction was better understood by business practitioners merely by observing the family code frequency of occurrence (seventy times). The importance of human interaction was emphasised by participant 12:

> "You want cross-pollination and multidisciplinary interaction, rather than silos." [P12-12:21 (34:34)]

Participant 4 discussed the topic of conflict as part of human interaction, and commented on how people reacted toward this:

> "For me, conflict is quite an interesting subject. It is everywhere. Whatever you do, there is a conflict. My experience of the Northern-European companies is that they do not manage conflict very well. People do not say, 'Stop'. But I have actually experienced this in South Africa as well. Maybe that is a global thing in all companies – people try to avoid conflict at any cost." [P4-4:21 (41:41)]

He further linked personal relationships with organisational development:

> "I think everyone wants to be acknowledged and recognised and that you do that through personal relationships and I think that by not taking that into account, companies would struggle and not be able to implement development programmes or develop going forward." [P4-4:23 (43:43)]

Human interaction, specifically where leaders within a hierarchical structure interact with the rest of the organisation was mentioned. Furthermore, unlocking of people's talent and the subsequent, willing sharing of their talents were important elements to organisational success, according to Participant 8:

> "Human interaction is so important because you always have to work with other people and, as a leader, you are able to use this power-relating in a positive way … I view that as unlocking the talent of each person. Sometimes people do not even know what their talents are. Most people have talents but do not know what it is. Often it actually takes someone from the outside to raise awareness and help them identify their talent so that they are able to nurture it … once identified, they are then able to spread it and share it in a positive way … If you are able to get a team that gels together, that complements each other in terms of the skills that they have, you are going to have an organisation that is flourishing." [P8-8:16 (42:42)]

Nurturing 'networks of relations' could be very beneficial for power-relating and assist individuals and leaders to expand their mental constructs, by potentially coming into contact with unique ideas or unique sense-making:

> "… even senior executives should attend conferences or take short courses, because it is stimulating. It helps to broaden your outlook and puts you in contact with other people and ideas." [P19-19:17 (24:24)]

'Expectations of people' are often not communicated clearly, robbing individuals of assuming personal accountability. Participant 14 noticed that a certain behavioural pattern emerged when expectations were set for people:

> "So, in terms of the initial expectations that you set for people, the 'why' and the 'how', you know … it sets the base for a certain behavioural pattern to emerge. And the intention is not necessarily to predict what happens, since very often there are unintended consequences." [P14-14:7 (20:20)]

Consideration should be given to people's circumstances and how that could relate to the expectations set for them:

> "People also bring complexity – their various backgrounds, home situations, personal values, beliefs, experiences, etc. Also, you can have a lot of individuals at work doing the same job, but their personal circumstances that they bring to work on an emotional level adds a lot of complexity to the workplace. I have a term for this, 'people realism' … which basically relates to having realistic expectations of the people in your company. You have to

understand a person and what they bring with them in terms of skill, background, perspective, openness to others and importantly, emotions." [P17-17:2 (5:5)]

4 Analyses and discussion

In order to answer the question of how the ten super family- and family codes of this research are interrelated, the researchers created an illustrative interrelationship diagram. In the case when the arrows pointing to it exceeded the arrows pointing out from it, the super family- or family code would be labelled a 'driver'. If the arrows pointing away from the super family- or family code exceeded the arrows pointing to it, it would be labelled an 'outcome'. The product of these activities is the illustrative interrelationship diagram shown below.

It is clear from this diagram that the drivers of the power-relating central approach to organisational development is considered to be 'context of complexity', 'personal traits' contribution', 'social dynamics of power-relating', 'usefulness of power-relating', 'organisational features impact' and 'leadership contribution'. 'challenges', 'concepts of power', 'power groupings' and 'concerns of power-relating' were labelled as the outcomes.

Figure 3 Illustrative interrelationship diagram of the power-relating central approach to organisational development (see online version for colours)
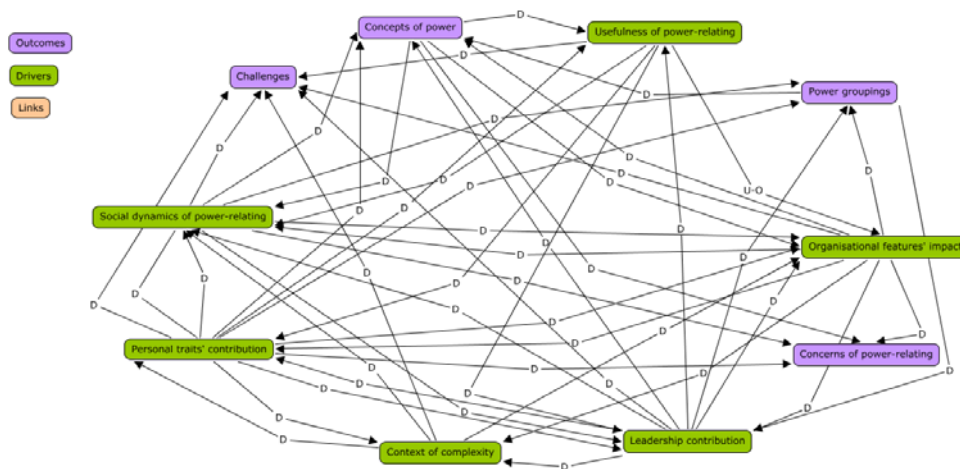
The super family code of 'context of complexity' sets the background for this research and can be related back to the definition of complexity: "… all complex systems are networks of many interdependent parts" [Baets, (2014), para. 1], as well as the definitions of complexity by Stacey (1995, 2007). The family code of 'predictability and unpredictability' can specifically be related back to the concept of 'dynamic complexity' of Senge (1990), as well as the premise of complexity theory (Eve et al., 1997). Participants experienced this unpredictability while they were trying to make sense of suitable systems for an organisation, pondering the 'predictability of relationships', the 'unpredictability of giving responsibility', the 'unpredictability of outcomes' and the

'unintended unpredictable outcomes of leadership programmes'. The tension of unpredictability and the striving for predictability is therefore part of our everyday lives in organisations.

The super family code of 'social dynamics of power-relating' can be linked to the central theme of interdependence and relationships ('human interaction' and 'networks of relations'). Complexity theory states that it is a "… move away from the modern notion of self as the autonomous individual to a notion of interdependent people whose individual selves are constituted in their interaction with each other" [Stacey, (2007), p.294]. Participants reflected on their beliefs that interactions with people were the most important thing for them, and also that they could see power-relating work in a positive way such that team members' talents could be unlocked. This 'unlocking of talent' can be seen as a position of equality and the opposite of the discrimination dynamic, described by Tajfel (2010).

The 'communication' family code makes an important linkage between the super family code 'social dynamics of power-relating' and the family code of 'concerns of power-relating'. This is due to the various comments from participants in which they highlighted the daily need for constant communication, appropriate structures of communication, as well as clarity and relevant communication cultures to ensure an inclusive environment. Literature supports this through the experiential work of Sarra (2005) and April (1999), which showed that open conversation can expose the manner of power-relating and, on the other hand, communication difficulties point to issues of power and control and obscures a complex form of power-relating that can constrain sense-making. Lots of open and clear communication can therefore assist in positive power-relating due to less hidden agendas and information access, which makes people feel at ease and part of a bigger whole.

The link between the super family codes of 'personal traits' contribution' and 'context of complexity' becomes clearer by understanding the family codes of 'personality' and 'people's actions and reactions'. Participants had various interesting comments to share: surrounding oneself with different personalities (diversity), complex interaction brings creativity, operating out of silos and crossing boundaries, companies attract particular personalities, the effects of different levels of ambition on organisational life, as well as personality tensions. In addition to these, some necessary actions of people were described: sensitivity to the changing environment; getting rid of traditional, preconceived ideas; having a sharing attitude; being maturely vulnerable as a leader; and, passion for work linked to confidence. These personal traits are integral to the human interdependence experience (Stacey, 2007) and contributes to rich, but complex, workplace environments. Nicholson and Carroll (2013, p.1227) also stated that individuals understand themselves through "technologies of production, of sign systems, of power and of the self". The last of these are of interest here.

The 'changing and adapting' family code was brought to light through understanding the necessity to be agile in abruptly needing to change a way of conducting meetings, the ever-changing business environment, inculcating adaptability within individuals and leaders, ensuring the rapid transfer of information, being adept at change management to suit new circumstances and the pursuant flexibility required, the benefits of proactive change as opposed to reactive/forced change, and the ability to work with resistant people through change imperatives. The link with the super family code of 'organisational features' impact' is made by relating back to the definition of the organisation as a complex adaptive system (Anderson, 1999; McKelvey, 2001).

It can also be reasoned that in such CAS, individuals are required to be able to change and adapt on an almost continuous basis, thereby leading to a specific type of organisational structure, as one participant stated:

> "My experience is that there is an optimum dynamic structure that allows the company to adjust to changing external factors continually." [P2-2:28 (16:16)]

Within the context of unknowable global patterns (Stacey, 2007), the family codes of developmental drivers and stumbling blocks, as well as developmental ways and handling, sheds light on the futility of strategic planning master plans (Chiles et al., 2004) and the importance of local interaction intent (Elias, 1991).

Even though this transformative or developmental process cannot always deliver the desired outcomes, it can prove to be worthwhile if we consider the main developmental drivers identified: 'everything revolves around your only enabling resource, your people', 'strong leadership', 'training and practical everyday experience', 'the organisational bottom-line', 'developmental function or mandate given to line management rather than hr', 'knowing yourself', 'development should fit in with the overall strategy', 'team communication' and 'development is a function of the situation a company finds itself in'. On the other hand, the main stumbling blocks were identified as: 'limiting finances (organisational bottom-line)', 'personnel with no self-motivation', 'information-based developmental decisions by HR', 'time and energy required', 'lack of clarity as to what the strategy or business plan is' and 'people's ego development and personality'.

Some comments of participants with regard to the family code of 'Structure' included: too much structure causes power issues; most organisational structures are triangular and requires power games to get to the top; dynamic, flatter structures enable quick adjustments; bigger organisations with bigger hierarchy results in more power play; hierarchy diminishes through regular and open communication; flat hierarchy enables more interaction; and, the top-down approach should change in companies. The overarching theme that emerged here is therefore that hierarchical structure negatively affects power-relating in an organisation. These ideas provide the link to the super family code, 'concepts of power' with 'organisational features impact'.

The 'concepts of power' super family code, and specifically the family codes of 'power play and power struggle', as well as 'gossip between individuals and groups', can be related back to the power play in exchange relationships (Hingley, 2005) and the exploration of gossip by Elias (1939). Participants shared their experiences around this and touched on breaching of gossip and power play by being one team, not being naïve about negative power play behind peoples' backs, email/technological communication power play, intra-company politics adding to complexity, gossip existing where power misuse is present, knowledge elevating individual and group power, and people pursuing common goals decreases the power-issues and power struggles that exist under cordial relationships. The family codes of 'knowledge about power-relating' and 'awareness of power-relating' are grounded in literature of Elias (1991), Stacey (2007) and Sarra (2005).

One participant stated that:

> "What you actually want is a positive outcome, and in that organisation it is the power relations and how you manage and grow them, that are actually the real inputs. It is the means to an end … that entire process: input, output and outcome, must all be well managed so that you know precisely what is happening." [P21-21:22 (73:73)]

This use of power-relating as inputs to organisational processes that are expected to deliver desired outcomes provides the link to the family code of 'usefulness of power-relating'. The super codes of 'ability to reach people', 'empowering of individuals' and 'taking on an enabling role' can be related to Stacey's (2005) CRPR perspective: "In the myriad local interactions, it can be observed that global patterns of collective power and economic relations emerge as repetition and potential transformation at the same time" (p.47) and Stacey's (2007, p.299) "enabling-constraining relationships" definition of power-relating. Participants' experiences entailed: authentic power-relating reaches people; a good CEO can work with all levels of people instead of enriching him- or herself only; empower-relating is about allowing growing people and allowing them to learn from their mistakes; regret after not properly empowering others; empowering by delegation and the freedom to implement strategy; choosing a successful team over brilliant individuals; and the critical link between empowering and self-examination/awareness. Power-relating can therefore be useful to others if a leader or another person can enable discretionary motivation concept and responsibility taking by employees. This form of enablement can potentially have a chain effect, bringing about the total transformation of an organisation.

The 'enabling' family code of the 'leadership contribution' super family code can be related to the concept of leaders that enable rather than control (Marion and Uhl-Bien, 2001; Regine and Lewin, 2000; Knowles, 2001) – employees living connected (belonging and sense of community) and engaged in the organisation. Participants' experiences of the leader's role illuminate these points:

> "I think that this is what differentiates your leaders from management … your leaders are your enablers. Leaders have the ability to enable others to be the best that they can be; to unlock their secret hidden talents; to strive for a common good" [P8-8:12 (25:25)[and "Different people want to be enabled differently. So it demands once again that you must understand your diversity and really know your people well." [P23-23:29 (127:127)]

Some other important themes were: acknowledgement and recognition of people; agreeing to disagree; getting the right people connected and networked; always being consistent to create stable internal environments among the external chaos; develop a particular culture that suits the organisational direction and vision; being selective about new appointees; being willing to break out of traditional habits and being courageous in your creativity; creating appropriate opportunities for the right people; ensuring congruence between leaders' words and deeds; and leaders taking time out to grow others to previously unimagined heights. So while the leader definitely has the most influential position in the organisation, it comes with great responsibility to self and others.

Through the super codes of 'motives for taking part', 'negative effects on power-relating' and 'overcoming the level divide', the family code of 'concerns of power-relating' can be linked with the super family codes of 'organisational features' impact', 'personal traits contribution' and 'social dynamics of power-relating'. Participants shared the following ideas: one cannot be overly philanthropic about power-relating in the workplace; egos contribute to power-relating; there is ignorance with respect to power-relating; misconceptions exist about power-relating; and individual intent and motives are illustrative of the self-characteristics of individuals. Some of the greatest concerns have to do with the ignorance and misconceptions around power-relating, since it is easily confused with traditional power play and not seen for the enabling human interaction that it really is.

The family code of 'power groupings', and especially the super codes of 'organisation phase effect', 'people intervention effect' and 'drivers of group formation', can be related back to the definitions of Elias (1991; 1934) – particularly his earlier ideas around power groupings being sustained in processes of inclusion and exclusion, as well as the ingredients of counter-power (Tajfel, 2010). The main insights shared by participants were: a circle of legitimate power prevents corruption; divisional structure and division diversity add to power groupings; groupings happen according to ambition; culture, religion and ethnicity can enhance groupings; a leader should intervene if negative effects are experienced due to particular power grouping combinations; power groupings can be sources of exclusion; diverse but effective teams are more desirable mere power groupings; and, strong opinionated individuals affect power groupings. It is therefore clear that people want to fit in and belong, and this need often causes them to include or exclude others in the process.

This research therefore answers the first research question of 'What could an approach to organisational development look like when it is viewed from the perspective of power relations being central to this approach?' by way of explanation of the interrelationship of the main themes that emerged in this research, viz., 'context of complexity', 'concepts of power', 'power groupings', 'usefulness of power-relating', 'concerns of power-relating', 'social dynamics of power-relating', 'leadership contribution', 'personal traits contribution' and 'organisational features impact'. The expansion, with additional insights, into each of these themes also contributes to the richness of each theme. If a leader can be sensitive to these themes and consider each of them in the process of developing an organisation, the end result is bound to be positive. It should also be clearer now what role power relations play in this approach and, even though it forms a central part in the developmental process, it is by no means the only key to this approach.

The research answers the second research question of 'What are the main challenges for the implementation of this power relations-central approach in industry?' – the following elements were the main challenges according to the participants of this research study:

- *Resources required:* normal resources such as budget and finding the right people for the jobs are crucial; loss of experienced individuals has negative effects; and, communication platforms' complexity.

- *Finances of organisation:* financial situation of the organisation, especially in an economy in recession, as well as executive remuneration that troubles shareholders.

- *Intra-organisational activities:* multi-division integration (getting rid of silo-mentalities in large corporates) and functional synergy inside organisations.

- *People's openness and ability to develop:* unwillingness to share information and knowledge, and the ability to learn from mistakes.

- *Human nature:* trusting people, personal motivation and personality clashes even though it is assumed that people automatically work well together.

- *Time is a major constraint in organisational life due to the drive for making sustainable profit.*

5   Research conclusions

> "Human interaction is so important because you always have to work with other people and, as a leader, you are able to use this power-relating in a positive way … essentially unlocking the talent of each person." [P8-8:16 (42:42)]

A leader's position comes with great responsibility but, at the same time, with great opportunity. Power-relating is an empowering tool with the enabling of others at the heart of it and, if used effectively by a leader, it can yield significant effect. With people being the most important part of any organisation, it would be unwise to not put in the utmost effort to unlock the potential of every person under one's leadership. From this perspective, the development of an organisation, which starts with the people of the organisation, can be approached in a meaningful manner.

This research set out to explore what an approach to organisational development would look like if power-relating was to be central to this approach. In addition, this research also continued to explore the challenges related to such a human-interaction-centric approach. The researchers were also interested in understanding this topic better within the context of complexity, which is the environment every leader faces each day.

This was achieved by conducting a qualitative, phenomenological research approach which enabled the researchers to discover, from the participants, the experiences and encounters of power relations in a complex organisational environment. The researchers conducted a thorough literature review on complexity, the organisation and power relations. Twenty-three semi-structured, voluntary interviews were then conducted with Senior Executive leaders from a wide range of business industries. The collected data from the interviews were then coded and analysed with CAQDAS, specifically Atlas/ti.

From these analyses, 74 family codes emerged which were then categorised into ten super-family codes and formed the initial themes for this research. The super-family codes were: 'context of complexity', 'concepts of power', 'power groupings', 'usefulness of power-relating', 'concerns of power-relating', 'social dynamics of power-relating', 'leadership contribution', 'personal traits contribution', 'organisational features impact' and 'challenges'. The last and final step in the research was to use the related data from the participants, and to analyse and discuss it. The main findings of this research were:

- An approach to organisational development from the perspective that power relations are central to this approach, were found in the interrelationship of the main themes that emerged in this research, namely: 'context of complexity', 'concepts of power', 'power groupings', 'usefulness of power-relating', 'concerns of power-relating', 'social dynamics of power-relating', 'leadership contribution', 'personal traits' contribution' and 'organisational features' impact'.

- In this approach, the drivers were: 'context of complexity', 'personal traits' contribution', 'social dynamics of power-relating', 'usefulness of power-relating', 'organisational features' impact' and 'leadership contribution'. The outcomes were: 'challenges', 'concepts of power', 'power groupings' and 'concerns of power-relating'.

- The extent of a leader's sensitivity towards the themes of the approach stated above will determine the successful utilisation of power relations.

- It was also found that although the role of power relations is now clearer in this approach and, even though it forms a central part in the developmental process, it is by no means the only key to this approach.

- The main challenges in the implementation of a power relations-central approach were found to be 'resources required', 'finances of the organisation', 'intra-organisational activities', human nature' and 'time'.

Despite the limitations of this research, the research contributed valuable insight to this field of power-relations and its implementation in the complex environment of the organisation.

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