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Abstract (limit are 700 words) – Tenho 662

Title: Work incidents information diffusion and training as practices to learning and safety performance development: an exploratory study

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Information diffusion and training as human resources management practices may contribute for the development of organizational safety through learning from past experiences with work incidents and accidents. Nevertheless the role of human resources management practices in organizational learning from work incidents has not being sufficiently explored. Despite of some research pointed out the importance of management practices for learning from accidents (e.g., Koornneef, 2000) and training (e.g., Weick & Sutcliffe, 2001, 2007; Glendon et al, 2006) there are few studies focusing this research problem (e.g., Skjerve, 2008; van Dyck et al, 2005).

Accordingly to the High Reliability Theory (e.g., Weick & Sutcliffe, 2001, 2007; Roberts, 2005) organizations with a high safety performance develop a Mindful culture that allow them to act before the accident occurrence, or if it occurs face and manage the unexpected event decreasing the possible negative effects substantially. Also Reason (1997) emphasized the importance of an organizational informed culture for learning from work accidents. Accordingly to these theories human resources management practices such as information diffusion and training contributes for the development of knowledge between and within organizations.

The aim of this study was to analyze and explore practices of information diffusion and training followed by two different organizations from the chemical industry. These organizations work in a high risk where the occurrence of near misses and incidents are frequent and could have very severe and negative consequences for the workers, the clients and customers, organization and the society in general. These consequences could interfere in health and safety for people, and also lives, but regarding this particular economic activity sector could also interfere in the environment. Besides that, both companies are recognized by a high organizational safety level and performance. Two case studies were developed intended to identify how both companies

implemented and followed practices such as work incidents and accidents information diffusion and safety training.

Data were collected through a long semi-structured interview with key organizational responsible for organizational health and safety and/or human resources management with a duration comprised between two to five hours. Information such as type of training given to workers, channels and organizational levels for information diffusion was collected.

Our results revealed that both companies use the information resulting from work accidents analyses as an input, to other safety management activities as risk evaluation or as a safety performance indicator. This information is diffused to all organizational workers through reports, work and safety meetings or even in information placards and/or by the intranet system. Both companies distinguish between the diffusion of work accidents statistics and the diffusion of information resulting from the process of analyses of work accidents' causes, giving more relevance to this last one. In both companies the occurrence of work accidents is discussed with and between the different hierarchical organizational levels (i.e., management, supervisors and workers).

Nevertheless differences between the practices concerning safety training were found. One of the companies uses the information regarding work accidents analyses on the week meetings focusing on safety issues but not in the training activities. The other organization uses the information about work accidents occurred in all the activities of training.

Our results suggest that practices of information diffusion concerning the occurrence of work accidents are important for learning from that kind of unexpected events. Nevertheless the differences between organizations in terms of high reliability and performance levels may be caused by the differences in the human resources management practices implemented or even in the processes regarding that practices followed by the organizations.

Our study was exploratory and further research focusing this problem is necessary and relevant. In the future there are more studies designed aiming to identify in which terms human resources management practices contribute for learning from work incidents.

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