



Jazz of Business and Politics
*Soft Systems View on
The International Association of Business and Parliament*

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ABSTRACT

This research looks into the activities of the International Association of Business and Parliament (IABP) and a realm of relationships between business and politicians, in which the IABP operates. There has never been an attempt to capture the cumulative experience of the IABP, as international network of Business and Parliament schemes, which would strengthen programmes methodologically backing them up with rigorous theories and concepts existing in management discipline.

Based on meta-theoretical position of critical realism, this exploratory research deployed Soft Systems Methodology to understand rather complex relationship between the worlds of business and politics and to build a theory, which would explain the purpose and the intervention of the IABP. The research strategy and design responded to the objective of the research “to promote IABP’s effectiveness and organisational sustainability through delivering the theoretical and methodological basis for its activities with national business and parliament schemes”.

Critical review of literature offered wide range of theoretical perspectives to the research, which enabled explanation of the relationship as well as the IABP work. The report highlights concepts on learning, adaptive organisation, discourse, dialogue, trust and notion of partnership, which has been identified as a central theory of this research.

It suggests that adaptive organisation in partnership act like jazz band having the same theme but freedom of interpretation. By doing this partners achieve highest possible level of creativity and learn from each other. The theory suggests that in the current changing world, there is no rationale of harmonising or achieving alignment among partners, it is better to understand thus value the difference and derive knowledge through dialogue and common meaning. Jazz between musicians is impossible without that very dialogue, a “free flow”, which produces a common meaning. Jazz would perhaps is the best model to describe a desired way of dialogue between Business and Parliament. It has a common

theme, common language and at the same time, a big freedom to maximise mutual learning through creativity and to thrive from reinventing themselves afresh.

This theory built through synthesising various concepts reviewed in the research, offered a methodological basis, which has highlighted the powers and purpose of the IABP. The recommendations deal with a strategic vision of what IABP can do in the future, given the significance of methodologically proven formula, it successfully operates.

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INTRODUCTION

This section introduces the organisation, which was selected as an object¹ of the research. It explains about the pedigree of the non-profit organisation and generally describes its activities. This leads to the need addressed by the research and sets the research objective as well as research questions. The introduction gives brief overview of the activities implemented within this research and highlights the methodological aspects of the project as well as flashes out the structure and internal logic of this report.

Organisation

The International Association of Business and Parliament (IABP) is a not for profit, non-partisan and non-lobbying organisation, which delivers an international protocol, in other words “language” or means of communication, for establishing relationships between business and parliamentary leaders. It seeks to establish and foster principles of good governance and dialogue between businesses and legislators.

The first scheme was established in 1977 in the UK to build mutual understanding, develop trust and form a non-corrupt, transparent relationship between parliamentarians and business people that informs the development of the economy. The approach has been later copied by respective national schemes in Finland, France, Belgium, Spain, the Netherlands, Sweden, USA, Canada and New Zealand. It has also been included as a resource in each of the new Assemblies and Parliament of Northern Ireland, Wales and Scotland.

Recently, the IABP commenced its Emerging Democracies Programme, which supports new democracies to encourage dialogue between businesses and policy makers, by

¹ The report shows, however, that the real object of the research is the work at particular realm, done by organisation and not organisation itself.

setting national schemes within their Parliaments. The pilot programme is being implemented in Georgia with the support of the European Commission.

The IABP, being primarily a parliamentary educational resource, delivers tailored study programmes bringing business actors with parliamentary practitioners of all parties. It covers all business sectors and size of enterprises to be representative of the national economy.

The IABP schemes have become a self consolidating, powerful network of parliamentarians and over 300 major multi-national businesses of all sectors, national ownerships and sizes, which represent a major resource of the IABP.

The national schemes are managed according to internationally recognised standards of transparency, accountability and integrity in the manner which informs policy and business decisions for the public benefit. The IABP has been increasingly recognised as setting the benchmark in the transparent, non-corrupt relationships between business people and parliamentarians.

The national schemes are usually registered, not-for-profit bodies, with a Board of respected parliamentarians and representatives of all sectors of the economy. The secretariat is small and the resource is usually located in the legislature. The significant portion of the IABP's funding is channelled in the form of the in kind contributions from businesses and parliaments.

The IABP's Patron is Pat Cox MEP, President of the European Parliament, the President is The Rt Hon Lord Weatherill (former Speaker of the House of Commons); Vice Presidents are the Rt Hon Bruce George MP, President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly and Sir David Edward KCMG QC (Former Judge of the European Court). The Secretary General of the IABP is Mr. Fredrick R Hyde-Chambers OBE.

Need for the Research

Since the establishment of the first scheme within the Westminster in 1977, the concept went through the remarkable evolution which was accelerated at certain stages by events described in the section “Findings”. The IABP, as a network, has provided a service to thousands of business and political leaders and, in result, the formula of doing this has become robust and efficient. However, there has never been an attempt and opportunity to make the IABP’s work as well as its immensely rich experience, an object of the academic research. It would ideally capture the cumulative experience and would strengthen programmes methodologically backing them up with rigorous theories and concepts existing in management science.

On the recent Board meeting in Helsinki, one of the participants has even made a joke about “bus crush”. If such thing happens whole experience of the Association would be lost and there will be nobody, who would pass the message about how these national schemes operated.

In addition, through using the theories and concepts available in management discipline, a review of the most fundamental principles, according to which the IABP national schemes operate, would lead us to illuminating conclusions. This could explain why things work or do not work and how to make them more predictable and effective.

The activities of each national scheme are unique and diverse, which is a consequence of a loose network and high degree of autonomy of leaders of the national schemes. The organisational knowledge accumulated within the IABP network exists implicitly and intuitively amongst Directors and staff members of the national schemes, who brought the concept and developed it for many years. Almost all national schemes were commenced by single individual – champion, which copied the concept and interpreted it in the way applicable to the national circumstances.

There were other circumstances revealed the need for the research project. Since the Executive Director of the Industry and Parliament Trust (IPT) handed over his

responsibilities to new chief executive and commenced qualitatively new and substantial work for IABP to elevate it to international level, the strategy analysis showed that, the unique capabilities of the national schemes ingrained in the principles and unwritten methodology would be of highest value for newly independent states or, so called, emerging democracies. Indeed, the experience of advanced democracies would be highly relevant and beneficial for new states looking for better ways of establishing their governance and for the development of their economies. This strategy promised to bring the IABP to completely new “emerging markets” and this would make the organisation known to a wider world. Such type of intervention into emerging democracies and transformation into truly international organisation required strengthening the methodological basis of the business and parliament concept.

First, quite successful, attempt to describe and compare the activities of the national scheme was initiated by one of the member organisations VEV (Belgium scheme). High-quality piece of analysis called “International Benchmark – Business and Parliament Schemes” was created in December 2003. It focused on defining the performance indicators of the national schemes, analyse strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats as well as show the development of the concept in dynamic. It gives overview of history, achievements, challenges as well as short-term plans, which itself serves as an effective guide for national schemes. However, the Benchmark did not intend to go into deeper analysis of the methodological aspects. Nonetheless, the document was used effectively in this research as an excellent source of secondary data.

Finally, “capturing the existing knowledge” and “development of the concept”, according to the Secretary General of the IABP were the essential needs which have triggered the research project.

Research Objective and Research Question

The given research project has been initiated in light of the mentioned circumstances. The purpose of the project was defined as to analyse the activities of the IABP in respect to its work with business and parliamentary schemes worldwide, further develop the theoretical

and methodological base for organisation's activities, which would underpin changes in the policies and practices of the organisation.

The research objective was formulated in the following way: to promote IABP's effectiveness and organisational sustainability through delivering the theoretical and methodological basis for its activities with national business and parliament schemes.

To reach this objective, the research should answer a question fundamental for the work of the IABP. "What is going on between business and politics?", answering to which would lead us to "Why IABP does what it does? What is the difference it makes? What is the purpose?" This would finally empower us to answer the questions "How to improve and make it more effective whatever the IABP does for Business and Parliaments?"

The hypothesis underlining the research objective is, that finding answers, or to put it more correctly, in search for answers, we would reach clearer understanding of the system, according to which the IABP operates, and being backed up with the relevant management theories and concepts, we would trigger essential improvement of policies and practices of the organisation.

The outcome of the research project, therefore, supposed to be a report, which would describe the work of the IABP national schemes through various angles and identify the system which would better explain it.

Briefly on Research Approach, Methodology and Structure

This is an exploratory research. The expected outcome of it was thought to be a new theory, which would synthesize existing theories of management science and would make a greater sense to the IABP's work. Being coherent with research approach and strategy as well as meta-theoretical position, the project deployed Soft Systems Methodology, highlighted below. It offered its unique methods for understanding the system, or for answering the questions similar to our research question: "What is going on?", in this case between businesses and politicians.

It should be emphasised that given resource and mainly time limitation, the project was focused on impact the IABP produces for Parliaments. It would be unrealistic to penetrate with the similar detail and at the same degree into the changes the organisation produces on business side².

It is described in a greater a detail in the respective section of the report, that SSM was used as a set of principles to work with particular human activity system as well as a guide to conduct the research. In respect to the structure of this paper, the “Findings” are equivalent of description of ‘perceived real-world problem situation’ by various stakeholders, obtained through interviews or participatory observation. So called analysis one (intervention), two (social) and three (political) are also complimentary parts of the section “Findings”. The application of various ‘worldviews’ or, in other words, the process of thinking of some ‘relevant systems’ which help explaining and making sense of the situation, according to SSM, is given in, and is represented by, the section “Interpretation of the Findings”. Finally, ‘building the conceptual model’, which embodies ‘culturally feasible accommodation’³, represents main material for “Conclusions and Recommendations”.

The research methodology emphasises the practical nature of the research, which aims at reaching the conclusions to trigger changes. At the same time, this is not an action research, which would aim at full involvement of participants and would be predominantly focused on tangible outcome, such as changes in practices and policies of an organisation. It puts together a case study about the IABP and builds the theory about its work, which is dedicated to “bridging” business and Parliament. Therefore, the report is a combination of descriptive piece and practical conclusions and recommendations for strengthening and making more effective a particular aspect of the IABP’s work.

² However part which describes the concept of partnership, highlights equally the perceptions and motivation of businesses and politicians.

³ For those who never used SSM, this language may be unclear, but it is well described in the section “Methodology”

Strategically, it contributes to the IABP as it tries to seek and justify the “fit” according to organisational ecologists. It highlights the purpose and significance of the work it is doing. “We can profitably take the view that our organisation has an appropriate place in a larger system, and that our tasks as managers and leaders is to attune our organisation to its environments in order to discover what our part is and play it. When it plays its part it receives the nourishment it needs; from a system point of view, then, strategic thinking is a search for meaning, rather than a search for advantage” (Harrison, 1983:148).

Irrespective of limitations of such a fit-seeking theory on business strategy, this statement still makes sense and shows that this research paper serves, to certain extent, to “search for meaning” of what the IABP does and show the part and role it is, or suppose to be, playing.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A holistic view of the organisation through the Soft Systems Methodology contributed towards identification of the key theories and concepts, which would help to explain or “make sense” of the IABP’s work. Putting rich picture together required a comprehensive study of existing literature in respect to key issues. Subsequently, a critical review of literature has contributed by discovering new perspectives for interpretation of the given situation.

A theory, elaborated in the frames of this research, represents synthesis of fundamental and valid concepts and hypotheses existing in the management discipline. The key themes for the literature review were change management, partnership, language and dialogue, learning organisation and learning systems, soft systems and communication.

This chapter critically reviews the literature used in the research by subsequently discussing the chain of key issues, identified in the course of the project. It starts from outlining the main perspectives of an organisation in management thinking, which introduces, among others, the notion of adaptive organisation. This leads to the theme of organisational learning and learning organisation. The chapter highlights blockages organisations develop, which inhibit their learning. It introduces dialogue as a unique way of communicative learning.

Language and discourse, which have not got respective space in the research due to time and resource limitations as well as incompatibility with the initially defined research design, have been empirically reviewed and have received an appropriate space in the conclusions. Finally, the theory of partnership emerged as one of the central issues and has been thoroughly discussed.

Due to the fact that there is a definite gap in research of the Parliaments as service providers within a management framework, the literature search went beyond management discipline and covered the respective sources of the political and social

science. Surprisingly, there have been very few sources mentioning a Parliament from management perspective

There is a definite rationale to review Parliament from management perspective as an organisation, which is obliged to legislate, represent and scrutinise and effectiveness of which significantly determines lives of many people in the country. Therefore, development or increasing effectiveness of a Parliament does make sense.

A Parliament was reviewed as a learning system, the organisation which experiences change by hypothetically being a learning organisation. This emphasises the importance of a dialogue and partnership with business as with one of its constituents. Idea of learning about the environment, which is thoroughly explored in this report, is crucial for any organisation, especially for Parliament. Listening, understanding environment, learning from and representing various groups in society is a direct business of a Parliament. Knowing about environment is vital, given that the outcomes of its service are those policies, which have considerable impact on the very environment. To be learning organisation, in this circumstances, can be seen as a core business of a Parliament.

Perspectives on Organisation

Looking at evolution of thinking about organisations in management literature, we used the work of Morgan (1986), which offers rich account on variety of perspectives, emerged throughout the discipline.

Systems View

In the chapter called “Organisations as organisms”, he introduces the notion of organisation as ‘open system’ and discovers the root of this theory in biological science. “Developed simultaneously on both sides of Atlantic [based on the work of theoretical biologist Ludwig von Bertalanffy] the systems approach builds on the principle that organisations, like organisms, are “open” to their environment and must achieve an appropriate relation with that environment if they are to survive” (Morgan,1986:45).

In the past, Morgan describes: “organisation [was treated] as a ‘closed’ mechanical system and [scientists] became preoccupied with principles of internal design”. This view is very much legitimate in the case of Parliaments, given the fact that the vast majority of capacity building or modernisation programmes are targeted to internal design of these institutions. “An irrational form of “rationality” underlines our attraction to machine bureaucracy” (Mintzberg 1989). Strategic planners are over-rationalists - even “doyen of the strategic planners, Igor Ansoff, said that strategic planning solves only part of the total problem concerned with the maintenance of a viable and effective relationship between the organisation and the environment” (Garratt, 1987). Organisations were “as the rough equivalent of medieval citadels, built on high ground of heavy stone and surrounded by double or triple lines of turreted walls” (Badaracco, 1993: 2). “The open systems view has changed all this suggesting that we should always organise with the environment in mind” (Morgan, 1986). “Seen from a global viewpoint, the organisation exists only as part of a larger reality, supported and nurtured by the larger system on which it depends” (Harrison, 1983).

All this has important implications for organisational practice, stressing the importance of ability to “scan and sense changes in task and contextual environments, of being able to bridge and manage critical boundaries and areas of interdependence and of being able to develop appropriate strategic responses”. Word “interdependence” has particular importance for this research and it is highlighted below.

Perhaps, one of the most remarkable works on open systems is Senge’s “The Fifth Discipline”, reviewed in the text. It suggests to refrain from analysing or breaking apart problems, just because they are seen easier to solve. It argues, that without holistic view of problems we will never understand why solution for one problem becomes the problem itself.

Other Views

A view of 'organisations as brains' presents organisations as information processing entities (Morgan, 1986). "Exploring the parallels between human decision making and organisational decision making, Simon (Nobel Prize Winner in 1950s) argued that organisations can never be perfectly rational, because their members have limited information-processing abilities" This theory leads us to understanding of organisations as 'institutionalised brains'. Although the theory provides number of interesting insights, including on the theme of organisational learning, double loop learning and knowledge management, it has a very limited vision of organisation. It ignores the reality of power, politics and conflict on the workplace and views it from 'scientific' position.

The book also flashes out very strong view of organisations as 'psychic prisons' giving the insight into works of Freud and Jung. Main feature of this view is that the human psyche is presented as not a part of the body, but as a part of a 'collective unconscious', so as the human beings exist in social world and with great degree this forms their psyche. It would make sense to go into direction of holistic understanding of psyche energy and how original 'archetypes' co-exist with [perhaps best described by Webber] bureaucracy of organisations, and how it explains 'collective unconscious' in the inter-organisational context. However, the scope of this research has not allowed to immerse in this world of "organisational shadow" (Morgan, 1986).

Morgan (1986) gives wide range of perspectives and 'images' of organisation, including dialectical change, backed up with postulates of Taoism and *Capital* by Marx.

In this project, it is perhaps worthwhile of noting, the relationship between businesses and politicians has not been viewed from Marxists perspective, as a relationship between different classes of society, or groups having various types of power. Position, which this research does not share would best describe itself by the statement: "Class struggle is a necessary and inherent property of a social system in which the maximization of the profits and power of one class depends upon maximisation of its exploitation and domination of another" (Fairclough, 1989) Carl Marx's ideas were influenced by the

social fabric of his time, which would make it legitimate to characterise the society as dialectical model. However, in modern complex world, in the era of globalisation and of knowledge economy, where there are no clear boundaries between classes (workers are shareholders), nations (in the case of multinationals) and the competitive factors of production, such as capital and land are not of crucial importance any more, Marx's interpretation can be out of date. Therefore, relationship between businesses and politicians has not been discussed from "struggle between classes" perspective, rather than from management perspective. It has looked at relationship, its context and important aspects determining this relationship, as well as factors, underpinning it.

Critique of Systems Approach

Garratt (1987) addressed the 'Learning Organisation' from wider perspective, criticising Peter Senge's 'The Fifth Discipline'. He says about Senge that "his book deals essentially with systems thinking and plays down the social-emotional aspects and the political consequences of learning". Garratt described the way organisation works in knowledge economy and advocated for the need for people to be much more involved in the critical debate about organisational learning. For doing this he offers a novel understanding of organisations as complex adaptive systems, which should learn with the rate equal, or greater, than the change in environment. He, therefore, emphasises the limitations of rationalist approach to management and strategy planning and proves that "complex adaptive systems show patterns which cannot be predicted in advance, no matter how familiar the input". An excellent literature review and the powerful concepts, he uses, help to gain deeper understanding of today's complex and sophisticated organisations.

There were various theories reviewed, which are relatively close with their meta-theoretical basis, but rather distinct in their conclusions. For example, in parallel of systems thinking approaches there has been reviewed the theory of complexity. Although, systems' thinking recognises the existence of "flux" and complexity of the human systems, complexity theory, certainly the bordering 'chaos theory', radically challenges it.

Irrespective of meta-theoretical differences, Stacey et al (2000) are common with Garratt, in criticising Senge's systems approach as well as suggesting that organisations are not predictable. This statement is strengthened by their theory of complexity.

“For us organisation is a process of joint action in which patterns in that action are both repeated to preserve continuity and stability and at the same time opened up to create the possibility of transformation, the truly novel” (Stacey et al., 2000).

According to complexity theorists, despite of later redefinition of boundaries by system thinkers, where they tried to enrich their theory with power, politics and conflict as well as culture and social interaction elements, they find that the root definition of “systems approach” fails to explain an organisation.

With full appreciation of the limitations of system thinking, however, the complexity theory does not offer any better system to us for managing organisations. That's why the given research project has been coherent with the systems approach.

Adaptive Organisation

Garratt (1987:13) critiques mechanistic view of organisation and praises the notion of 'adaptive systems': “complex adaptive systems seem much closer to today's turbulent 'real world' of organisations than the recent but dated Newtonian idea that the world is basically a predictable, clockwork-like mechanism”.

He explains about *Chance as Cause*: “complex adaptive systems show patterns which cannot be predicted in advance, no matter how familiar the input...chance rather than any immutable 'law' is the cause of the outcome”. Likewise, his principle of *Winning as Losing* explains: “Winning is not necessarily winning as many organisations, unable to adapt to changing environment find [themselves] victims of their success...playing a new game well with the old rules does not guarantee success”.

Indeed, in summer 1982, 'In Search of Excellence' was written by Peters and Waterman and "only five years after the book's publication, two thirds of the [excellent] companies studied had slipped from the pinnacle" (Pascale, 1990:16).

Kotter and Heskett (1992) in their '*Corporate Culture and Performance*' offer very comprehensive critical analysis of organisational culture and show how adverse can be the result of strong culture, which losses ability to adapt. It introduces the notion of "contextually or strategically appropriate culture". It challenges the widely held belief that strong corporate cultures create excellent business performance. In some cases, authors show that strong cultures can be characterised by arrogance, inward focus and bureaucracy – features that undermine an organisation's ability to adapt to change. However, it reviews organisational culture as a tool of 'goal alignment'. "In a firm with a strong culture employees tend to march to the same drummer". This represents strong unitarist vision of organisation, which does not allow understanding of how pluralistic is the social interaction, which produces the corporate culture.

"Nonadaptive cultures are usually very bureaucratic. People are reactive, risk averse, and not very creative. Information does not flow quickly and easily throughout the organisation. A widespread emphasis on control dampens motivation and enthusiasm" (Kotter and Heskett, 1992:44).

Mintzberg (1989) in his '*Mintzberg on Management*' explains the nature of managerial work, structure of organisation and its meaning for the society. "Effective Strategies develop in all kind of strange way. They need not be deliberate – they can also emerge".

Therefore, "organisations are driven more by process than structure" according to Garratt. This leads us to the metaphor of 'Jazz Band', which considers "crafting a path idea by idea, step by step, and working with what emerges" (Mintzberg, 1989). It is well described below in the part about 'radically new' partnerships. Stacey et al. (2000) argue that it is only adaptive organisation, which is 'stable and unstable' at the same time can generate new forms of behaviour and innovate. They say that the creative process 'is

inevitably messy' and 'to remove the mess, by inspiring us to follow some common vision, share the same culture, and pull together, is to remove...the raw material of creative activity' (Deering and Murphy 2003: 74). This approach to emergent strategy determines organisation's certain behavioural patterns in partnership.

Learning Organisation

"Accepting that organisations are complex adaptive human systems, not mindless machines...organisation's rate of learning should be equal to, or greater than, the rate of change in their environments...'Learning' is an ancient and interesting word... It means the accumulation of, reflection upon, and use of the complex attitudes, knowledge and skills by which an individual or group acquires the ability to actively adapt to their changing environments" (Garratt 1987:2).

Henry Mintzberg in *The Strategy Safari* suggests that the idea of organisational learning is both the biggest breakthrough in business management thinking of the last few decades and is, most importantly, sustainable.

Learning has been praised by both practitioners and academics. "For organisations...the learning has become essential for survival" (De Geus 1988: 70-74). "Learning has been suggested as the only sustainable source of competitive advantage" (Senge 1991). Learning is the most important quality which can be developed and traded (Garratt 1987).

"At the heart of a learning organisation is a shift of mind – from seeing ourselves as separate from the world, from seeing problems as caused by someone or something "out there", to seeing how our actions create the problems we experience" (Senge 1990: 12-13).

According to Peddler, Burgoyne and Boydell (1999:156) "learning organisation approach argues the merits of achieving a total organisation that is endlessly capable of reinventing itself in response to unpredictable environments". The learning organisation does not have to be made to change and adapt it does it "naturally" as an organism adapts naturally

to changes in environment. Many organisations would share undoubted success of Cosimo de Medici by doing what he did. He did not engage in rational planning but rather “could feel the advantages that his structural positioning in the network offered him, and he learned how to exploit the stream of opportunities that his position kept flowing in his direction”.

While speaking about strengths of adaptive organisation and strategy, Salaman and Asch (2003:155) explained a difference between learning organisation and organisational learning. “The notion of adaptive organization is not necessarily dependent on the achievement of a learning organization; it is dependant of achieving organizational learning, which is a less ambitious and more feasible project”.

According to Peddler, Burgoyne and Boydell (1999) the learning organisation should contain the following preconditions: the learning approach to strategy, strategy and policy are structured as learning processes, participative policy making, informing, formative accounting and control, internal exchange, reward flexibility, enabling structures, boundary workers as environmental scanners, inter-company learning, learning climate, people make time to question their own practice, to analyse, discuss and learn from what happens (there is a general attitude to continuous improvement – always trying to learn and do better and differences of all sorts are recognised and valued positively as essential to learning and creativity) and, finally, self-development opportunities for all.

Ability not to Learn

According to Argyris (1978), need for radical acquisition of knowledge, which is a precondition to learning organisations is inhibited by politics, deference and resistance.

Organisations acquire patterns of interaction that can make it difficult for the system as a whole to find out about itself and thus to develop. Argyris has referred to these patterns as ‘defensive routines’. “Defensive routines, which are softening the conflicts, work in the sense that they do prevent embarrassment and conflict, but in so doing that also prevent

organisation from learning about challenges which, if faced directly, could lead to new ways of thinking ... [leading] to development” (Dixon 1998:10).

Examples of ‘defensive routines’ are, for example, asking questions in such a way as to get the other person to agree with one’s own view; advocating one’s view in a manner that limits others’ questioning of it, and privately evaluating the other person’s view and attributing causes to it.

”Organisations have institutionalised barriers to the sort of radical learning. They learnt not to learn” (Salaman and Asch, 2003: 158).

To avoid such routines and barriers, Argyris suggests actively inquiring into the other’s views and the reasoning that supports them; advocating one’s own view and reasoning in a way that encourages others to confront it and to help the speaker discover where the view may be mistaken; stating publicly the inferences that one makes about others ...and inviting others to correct the inferences if they are inaccurate. Organisation should identify the learning-limiting behaviours that they currently use, uncover the tacit assumptions that mediate those behaviours, alter those assumptions and design appropriate new behaviours and practice those new behaviours until they become automatic.

We will continue by looking at how organisations should uncover and further deal with their tacit assumptions or ‘theories in use’, according to Bohm (1990).

We will also look at language, which is “one of the most powerful achievements of the human species...shared language that makes abstract communication possible...language enables human societies to live together in harmony and gain advantage from living communally” (Schein 1999: 103). However, this language can create mentioned defensive routines. “Societies [and organisations] evolved a subtle set of rules to govern all face-to-face relationships and make life safe and predictable. Such rules are often labelled “good manners, “etiquette”, or “tact”, but behind such labels lie much deeper

issues of how to make the social environment safe”. By explaining that such language helps to avoid conflict and makes world more ‘safe’, however, Schein contradicts with the point of Argyris, that this ‘mild’ language can become a ‘defensive routine’, which ultimately reduces the pace of so needed change.

Dialogue

Stacey et al. (2000:35) view communication as a mean of innovation and change and assert that “all communication carries the possibility of change”.

Dixon (1998) in *Dialogue At Work*, without advocating to be “brutally honest” and simply say everything in mind, suggests to speak authentically and fully, to tell others your own truth, not *the* truth and this will become the start of the learning and self-development. She, using contribution of other authors, puts together and excellent guide on dialogue and demonstrates how powerful it can be in modern world.

About saying truth, Jung asserts “I can only make direct statements, only ‘tell stories’; whether on not the stories are ‘true’ is not the problem. The only question is whether what I tell is my fable, my truth”.

“Than in talking with others, reflecting an authentic self, the person [as well as an organisation] learns from others about tacit assumptions and, if those assumptions prove to be no longer viable, may choose to change them – to develop...even better - if we can internalise others’ perspectives and integrate their ideas with our own – in this case we have a chance to learn” (Dixon 1998).

According to Dixon, a ‘talk’ is the most frequent activity of managers. Some say that as much as 75 per cent of a manager’s day is spent in conversation.

Edgar Schein (1999) in one of the process consultation books, which explores the area of helping relationship, focuses on the interaction between consultant and advisee. He explains importance of language, its connection to the culture as well as various methods

of communication and relationship building, including dialogue. He mainly sees the dialogue as a means of uncovering hidden or tacit assumptions which then creates basis for learning and mutual understanding. Book is not trying to explore whether these regularities of relationship within human activity systems can be brought to the case of relationship between organisations. Nevertheless it mentions that “one of the most important differences between dialogue and other communication enhancers is that the group size is not arbitrarily limited” (Schein 1999: 205).

“So, before we can even get to the kind of learning... we need to become more conscious of our own tacit assumptions and to recognize that others in the conversation may be operating from different assumptions. Dialogue makes it possible not only to create a climate for more effective interpersonal learning, but also may be the only way to resolve interpersonal conflict when such conflict derives from differing tacit assumptions and different semantic definitions.” (Schein 1999: 202)

He adds: “All human relationships evolve around some form of conversation. It is, in fact the ability to have conversation that makes us distinctly human. Dialogue can be thought of as a form of conversation that makes it possible, even likely, for participants to become aware of some of the hidden and tacit assumptions that derive from our cultural learning, our language, and our psychological makeup”

According to Schein, the dialogue is the way of exploring the thinking process, rather than helps tuning the feelings, and “how our perceptions and cognitions are preformed by our past experiences”.

Bohm (1990) believes that “one of the difficulties is that the thoughts contain all sorts of presuppositions, which limits us and hold us in rigid grooves. What we have to do is discover these presuppositions and get rid of them – get free of them. I don’t think that we can establish conditions for a dialogue, except to say that we both want to make a dialogue”

Bohm (1991:10) suggests that original meaning of dialogue was “a free flow of meaning between people”. Dialogue comes from Greek word *dialogos*, meaning “through”; and it is like stream running between two banks. The banks merely give form to the stream. The stream is analogous to the free flow of meaning between people. “Discussion” on other hand, has the same root word as percussion or concussion, meaning “to break things apart or to analyse”. Discussion leads to separate points of view. Dialogue leads to a shared meaning.

“The purpose of dialogue is to go beyond individual understanding and to become open to flow of larger intelligence; through dialogue a group accesses a larger ‘pool of common meaning’, which cannot be accessed individually” (Senge 1990:240)

“Dialogue is not magic or complex, but is both profound and practical” mentions Bohm (1991:214) and explains “that knowledge is created through social processes characterised by relationship of power. Language and its rules enable us to act together in particular ways to achieve particular ends. In “conversation”, an exchange of power takes place and meanings are arrived at by what it is that conversation enables us to do. In this view, knowledge is not universal truth (or “monologue”) but a set of cultural rules that enables us to do things together”.

In respect to exchange of power, Mezirow (1991) asserts: “the goal of communicative learning is to gain insight and to reach common understanding rather to control”.

About doing things together or achieving a ‘shared meaning’ Bohm (1991) says, “a society [organisation] to work must be based on shared meaning, which should act as cement holding society [organisation] together. At present society has an incoherent meaning - poor quality cement, so it is falling apart”.

Therefore, his guidance for dialogue is minimal: “to create a dialogue requires a group that will meet without purpose or a specified goal so that its members can talk freely...it

is not necessary, that everyone should hold the same opinion for shared meaning to emerge. The joint agreement to apprehend the meaning of others is more important than the content of the opinions and assumptions themselves”.

“So in dialogue everybody’s ideas are held by all. There is a common pool of information. Out of this social intelligence comes something new”. Bohm introduces the notion of “social intelligence”, which helps to create the shared understanding as glue that might better hold together the fragmented society.

Freire (1994) in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* illustrates the elements of dialogue:

Humility

“Dialogue cannot exist without humility... the naming of the world, through which people constantly re-create that world, cannot be an act of arrogance... How can I dialogue if I always project ignorance onto others and never perceive my own? . . . Someone who cannot acknowledge himself to be as mortal as everyone else still has a long way to go before he can reach the point of encounter. At the point of encounter there are neither utter ignoramuses nor perfect sages, there are only people who are attempting together, to learn more than they now know”.

Love

According to Freire the dialogue is the creation and re-creation of meaning and suggests that creation is an act of love. “Love is at the same time the foundation of dialogue and dialogue itself”.

Faith

Faith in man[kind] is an a priori requirement for dialogue; the ‘dialogical man’ believes in other men even before he meets them face to face . . . without this faith in man, dialogue is a farce which inevitably degenerates into paternalistic manipulation.

Hope

Hopelessness begets silence, not dialogue. If individuals do not expect anything to happen as a result of their dialogue, the dialogue will be empty and meaningless.

Critical Thinking

Finally the dialogue requires individuals to engage in critical thinking. Freire differentiates critical thinking from naïve thinking. The naïve thinker's focus is on accommodation to the anticipated future, which is seen as inevitable. The critic, by contrast, is focuses on the continued transformation of reality.

In conclusion, the dialogue helps to uncover assumptions, people are unaware of and afford them testing the validity of those assumptions, which act as a unique form of learning.

Discourse

As was mentioned, language as discourse has great importance in understanding “what’s going on” in organisations. “Discourse is a language as a form of social practice” (Fairclough 1989: 22).

The author explains the dialectics of language and social reality, which depend one upon each other: “Language is a part of society; linguistic phenomena are social phenomena of a special sort, and social phenomena are (in part) linguistic phenomena” (p 23) and “discourse has effects upon societal structures, as well as being determined by them, and so contributes to social continuity and social change” (p 17).

When we review different social structures, such as business and politicians, differences in their discourse, thus their socially construct reality are evident. “It is easy enough to demonstrate that meanings vary between *social dialects*, but they also vary ideologically; one respect in which discourse types differ is their meaning systems” (Fairclough 1989: 93).

Therefore to assemble the desired common social structure [for example, effective partnership between business and politics] from various ‘social dialects’, it is necessary to initiate a common discourse.

One [very important] dimension of ‘common sense’ is the [system of] meaning of words. “Discourse, power and ideology is at the centre of the social practice of language”. It would be worthwhile of describing relationship on the level of power and language. “Power *in* discourse and power *behind* discourse” are interesting concepts introduced by Fairclough, as he shows power in “face-to-face” spoken discourse, power in cross-cultural discourse and ‘hidden power’, which exist, for instance, in the discourse of mass media. However, due to time and resource limitations as well as incompatibility with the initially defined research design, this theme has not been further developed.

Trust

Before going into bringing more evidence from literature on Partnership, notion of Trust attracted our attention both within the participatory observation and interviews as well as literature review.

Raj Persaud (2004) in FT Magazine suggests looking at very extraordinary aspect of trust. This [light] theory is not in line with the selected research strategy, but offers fresh and additional look at the factors underpinning existence of trust.

The article suggests that “after looking at a wide variety of biological correlates” that this is a particular hormone – *oxytocin* in our bodies strongly predicts how much we are willing to trust others.

Groups, which have ability to trust thus work together and derive pleasure from the cooperation rather than competition, are more successful. Economies with low level of trust suffer. “Proponents of the theory predict that those communities where there is deeper trust will flourish more than those where distrust is rife”.

Paul Zak, a neuroscientist at the Center for Neuroeconomic Studies at Claremont Graduate University in California emphasises the neurological basis to trust, by which he explains why economists cannot explain human deviations from economical models. “The most astonishing [at such degree perhaps for positivists] result from his research is this: the degree to which we are willing to trust others is influenced by forces that operate below conscious control, and may not be as amendable to rational or conscious direction as we like to believe.”

“As our brain’s receptors for oxytocin are confined to relatively primitive areas not linked to conscious control, judgement or planning, it would seem that trust in our species is driven by an emotional sense of what to do, rather than a conscious determination”

Steve Knack, a senior economist in the World Bank’s Development Research Group, argues that Trust is one of the most powerful factors affecting a country’s economic health. “Where trust is low ... organisations are wary of engaging in ... transactions, an emotional state which directly discourages economic growth”.

The most illuminating finding in the stream of thinking for this research was that “it seems we love to be trusted – we find it deeply rewarding, and tend to reciprocate with generosity and more trust”.

Therefore, trust is self-consolidating and powerful basis, which encourages cooperation, dialogue, which itself maximises trust and understanding.

Johnson DW and Johnson RT (1989) described a spiral in which trust is needed to achieve cooperation, but “co-operation also leads to increased trust, which in turn leads to increased co-operation”.

Assuming that “collective trust”, which is constructed from the discourse and perceptions of individual, having certain levels of individual trust, is not manageable due to it being beyond our conscious control, only way to tackle lack of trust is by bringing individuals

or groups together and by allowing them to do something positive, which will generate so needed trust.

However, the article by Persaud fails to link its core concept with other theories of human behaviour which makes the validity of some of conclusions weak and premature. Nevertheless, the biological and neurological data of the research is worthwhile of being further explored.

We tend to trust to the species of our own tribe more than others. We tend to do things together as a group and tend to compete and distrust to others. Likewise, businesses and politicians having their own distinct cultures would understand and trust much easier those whom they know and by doing this can control rather than those who are so different and strange for them. From the childhood they are learnt not to ‘trust strangers’.

Partnership

Partnership is a relatively new topic in management discipline. There are number of authors, which suggest their views on the notion of partnerships. For example, Kanter (1994) says that for good partnerships groups require “a dense web of interpersonal connections and internal infrastructures that enhance learning”. He argues that ‘Collaborative Advantage’ is key corporate asset.

Partnerships should be structured as “learning platforms” (Lei, 1993). Badaracco (1993: 10) suggests that “alliances are both a cause and an effect of knowledge intensive competition”.

Deering and Murphy (2003) in “The Partnering Imperative” offer new vision of partnership cultures and set six basic types of partnership. They are defined by two variables: by ‘ambition’ to partner and by ‘attitude to difference’, which helps to understand individual and collective perception of partners. “Perceptions are not facts, but a set of perceptions can reveal the differences between partners and, by illuminating a

relationship, help partners understand each other better and work together more effectively” (p 42).

“Given ... complexity, volatility and diversity, it is impractical to seek ideal relationships. Companies [as well as business and politicians] must recognise the intrinsic imperfectability of their relationships. They must devote less time and energy to harmonising and aligning and more to *understanding* their partners and using this understanding to find *common ground*” (p 16).

This paragraph vigorously introduces the vision of good relationships and emphasises the need for understanding and common ground.

This perspective turned out to be very illuminating in respect to the relationship between businesses and politicians and suggested relevant theories for building the partnership between them.

Authors put together the principles, which help understanding partnership. Firstly, marginalisation, not conflict is what prevents partnerships from succeeding. The presence of conflict is not a sign of impending failure and neither is its absence a guarantee of success.

Secondly, things in partnership are rarely what they seem. Expectations, perceptions and assumptions are the stuff of partnerships and it is complex interplay between them that determines whether a partnership succeeds or fails.

Finally, partners usually see difference itself, rather than their response to it, as the underlying cause of conflict. But difference can also be a powerful source of creativity and transformation. In many cases it is the attempt to minimise difference and achieve alignment that creates conflict – not difference itself.

Authors make an excellent conclusion, that “the modern environment is shifting towards a position where all have to work with difference and where those who can make a virtue of this necessity and value difference will have a significant competitive advantage”. This statement reinforces above mentioned ideas about existence of ‘social dialects’ and the need for exploring the ‘common meaning’. It also links the idea of partnership with trust as a vital ingredient for survival. Finally, the notion of dialogue, which considers variety of opinions and worldviews, contributes to building shared meaning thus create conditions for partnership to happen, without trying to control or change a partner.

The book speaks about a dialogue, that “the first imperative for partners is to make the invisible visible – you cannot steer what you cannot define and you cannot define what you cannot talk about” (p 22).

There are six versions of partnership suggested by authors, which is based on the perception by partners.

Command and Control

This partnership does not tolerate difference and tries to eliminate, or at any rate minimizes differences in values, objectives, processes and behaviours, typically by constructing standards and rules and requiring all parties to comply with them. Such partnerships are usually managed or safeguarded by people of static professions like accountants and lawyers [or in case of business and politics – taxmen]. It characterises very hierarchical, structural and defensive organisations. “What this approach can never deliver, however, is the sort of innovative agility required in rapidly changing environment” (p 24).

Hearts and Minds

Here the difference is minimised by a search for sameness and alignment, rather than by an imposed structure. Everybody assume that if all partners feel and think alike and share the same culture, they will be able to achieve success.

Arm's Length

In this case difference is tolerated through agreement that difference on certain issues is allowed, which gives partners the space they need to pursue their objectives. This usually means that any move to get closer is viewed with suspicion. It leads to the focus on clarity of communication where meanings and implications are checked and double-checked. Good communication includes periodic checks on understanding and is regarded as vital for partnership. In this option, partners tolerate each other but make a little effort of establishing mutual trust and thus fail to exploit their full potential. "What is never on the agenda cannot be turned into value" (p 30).

Do and Review

In this partnership, there is an ethic of collaboration and cooperation and there is an assumption that partnership is long-term. A relationship tolerates difference and aspires to constantly improve and develop it. Partners focus on learning and continuous improvement in all the partnership's processes and systems. "Explicit efforts to understand each other's positions and priorities strengthens the durability of the relationship and widens the opportunity set for joint projects" (p 31).

Gridlock

In this partnership the difference between partners are both respectfully acknowledged and rigorously avoided. Partners in this context tend to vote for compromise, not by their actions but by the inertia born of their sense of powerlessness and fragmented purpose. The partnerships are so constrained by their extreme political instability that they often feel incapable of acting for fear of sinking the boat. Gridlock occurs when power is widely distributed. This is unstable position, which leads either to arm's length or event command and control or in the case, if creative potential is realised and the relationship adopts a more ambitious purpose, it moves to radically new.

Radically New

Partners seek actively for differences of all kinds: operational, professional and cultural and make it work. It involves often highly innovative and creative partnerships, “this radically new approach puts a premium on challenge, dialogue and democracy” (p 35).

In ‘radically new’ partnership “this is not defined, it is allowed to emerge from the day-to-day experience of working together” (p 36).

Organisations with developed intellectual and cultural agility to thrive in such circumstances are usually compelled by their business contexts to reinvent themselves afresh.

Deering and Murphy gives an example of government and business: “the interconnected nature of the issues faced by both governments and business in times of discontinuity means that unless the complex interplay of accountabilities, rights and obligations is addressed in radically new ways, partnering efforts will fragment into gridlock, not into action” (p 37).

Authors mention that the quality which drives vertical, which represent positive, movement from one to another partnership, is trust. However, “Trust is like that – the more one focuses on it, the more elusive it becomes” (p 49), which confirms the unconscious nature of trust, which is not really under control of our collective cognition.

Finally, authors offer excellent suggestions on how to generate trust, allow space for difference, and produce the common meaning. Leadership is crucial and should “accept, reveal, validate and celebrate difference, by seeking it out and making it part of the common ground...leaders should take nothing for granted, challenge all assumptions, question motives (including your own)... and trust people, because only trusted become trustworthy” (p 112). In conclusion, “if change is needed [in the partnership], change the way you see the difference” (Deering and Murphy 2003: 51).

This chapter of the report collected thoughts of various commentators to review existing literature on the perspectives of organisation, organisational learning, dialogue, discourse, trust and partnership. It critically assesses each of position and states why research selected open systems approach among others. With full appreciation of limitation of the systems thinking, which has developed significantly since it first emerged though, it seems to be the most plausible theory among others. Besides, the most important criteria of being coherent with this theory, was the meta-theory highlighted in the 'Methodology'. Open systems view is congruent perspective to the critical realists' approach. Finally, given the practical nature of the project and desire of triggering changes in policies and practices of the organisation, this approach, in contrast to sociologists' view, offers set of manageable suggestions.

METHODOLOGY

Research methodology, as a “logos”, principles, meaning of the method, explains why particular methods were deployed in this research and what the assumptions were, which underpinned the thinking. It starts from very philosophical discussion which states how researcher sees the world and explains important positions on reality and the way of knowledge is obtained about it. Based on this worldview, this section explains the research approach, strategy and the dynamics as well as presents methods used to collect and process data. It gives brief overview of Soft Systems Methodology, which was effectively used throughout the project and sets the language which helps describe findings and explain conclusions.

In the management research, which, according to British Academy of Management, has trans-disciplinary nature, there is a special emphasis on “prediction of the future”⁴ or, in other words, on the practical consequence of the research. We need to know and understand phenomenon in order to foresee it and be able to manage it better in the future. According to Easterby-Smith et al (2002), “This means it needs to contain the potential for taking some form of action”. Indeed, the objective this research has contains element of “change in policies and practices” of the organisation as well as doing things more effectively in the future.

To explain the process of shaping the research methodology and in order to present the final research design, it is vitally important to lay down explicitly the foundations of thinking about the world and “the way [we] think about the development of knowledge” (Saunders et al., 2003), which implies to the meta-theoretical perspective, this project has been grounded on.

⁴ With full acknowledgment of the idea that absolute prediction is impossible, because of world’s complexity and itself very unpredictable nature of future.

Meta-Theory

Before we explain something about the objects of the research, it is necessary to spell out what we pre-suppose about entities or generally about the world, how we perceive a reality and how do we know what exist. “Starting point of any view is metaphysical and only beyond that initial leap of faith it is based on logic and science...we have to have enough faith in our world-view to work from it, but not that much faith that we think it’s the final answer” (Bohm 1990). Operating in the realm of a social science, we cannot explain, understand and, by doing this, predict events and processes, by simply analysing them. This approach, incredibly effective and perhaps indispensable in natural sciences, implies to splitting research object into atoms as well as to understanding statistical regularities of a given phenomena.

“From a very early age, we are taught to break apart problems, to fragments the world. This apparently makes complex tasks and subjects more manageable, but we pay a hidden, enormous price ... we lose our intrinsic sense of connection to a larger whole” (Senge, 1990 p 3).

Looking slightly ahead into choosing appropriate methods, it is evident that quantitative methods, such as analysing event probabilities and various sets of statistical data, are unable to explain multi-facet human activity systems. We can discover some correlations between events. However, it hardly proves their causality. To build a theory in social science, it is not sufficient to analyse past events and, in result, generalise the finding, without holistic and qualitative explanation of why those events had place. Therefore, such theory will not be valid and will not help to predict the future. Despite of a cumulative nature of this research approach, the majority of scientists’ past efforts of “number-crunching” and modelling human behaviour failed in making right prediction. The usual excuses are either the lack of information, or capacity of machine is not sufficient to process this information or “we need more variables” to put in the formula and than it will work. May be it will never work, because the way we have chosen may not be appropriate. In result, we cannot approach this research from ‘scientific’ (Fleetwood, Lecture Notes 2004) perspective.

Neither, we can presuppose that everything that exists around us is merely socially constructed, and there is nothing which exists beyond or without our language or discourse. We should certainly admit that, there is a reality at the same time, which exist without us realising and knowing about it. However, in the social world, we should agree that the way of looking, understanding or interpreting this reality can vary.

Critical realism offers comfortable compromise to this philosophical dilemma by recognising different modes of reality, such as material, ideal, artefactual and socially constructed (Fleetwood, Lecture Notes 2004). In addition, it does not rule out, which is crucially important, the socially construct nature of a respective reality, which is generated through interaction and therefore, can be interpreted in different ways.

Research Approach

Approach to research, in terms of inductive-deductive, was combined. Given the context and circumstances of the research, as well as a time frame allowed, it represents snapshot cross-sectional study of the particular organisation. The research went approximately through the following path: it started with gathering data without any theory in mind (induction) and putting rich picture in place, then it arrived at certain number of theories which explained or “gave sense” to the picture; whereas last stage of research involved good deal of triangulation and deduction, in order to verify that constructed theory is valid, applicable and does make sense.

It was important to have theory building element in the research approach, as the induction allows many alternative explanations, interpretations and views to get to “What is going on?” and later start questioning the reason and understanding “Why?”. Considering the nature of the research questions, a deductive approach would not give sufficiently convincing answer as it would rule out multiple positions and various interpretations of the research object. “Avoidance of a predetermined theoretical basis in this type of approach is related to the desire to search for and recognise meaning in the

data and to understand the social context and perceptions of research participants.” (Saunders et al., 2003:394).

Research Strategy

The research strategy was combined and multiple. It involved, at the different stages of the project, different strategies, such as grounded theory, case study and action research.

It had partly a shape of action research as the participants were actively involved in building theory and motivated in putting it into the practice, thus undertaking the change in result of the process. According to Eden and Huxham (1996:75), the finding of the action research is derived from the involvement with members of an organisation over the matter of their genuine interest or concern. However, it was not purely action research as it did not aim at obvious change within the organisation, rather than strengthening its methodological basis, which would improve the organisational knowledge, make it explicit and possibly, but not necessarily, allow triggering some changes.

The research strategy would also have an element of case study approach, which implies to “an empirical investigation of a particular contemporary phenomenon within its real life context using multiple sources of evidence” (Saunders et al., 2003 p 93). However, the research went beyond the ambitions of the case study, which is merely to describe or tell a plausible story of the contemporary phenomenon. It did tell plausible story by putting together the well-constructed case, but furthermore, it challenged the case through the prism of various theories leading to a new hypothesis. Therefore, the research strategy would be best described by grounded theory. It should “allow a good fit to develop between the social reality of the research participants and the theory that emerges – it will be “grounded” in this reality” (Saunders at al., 2003:393).

Methods

Everything mentioned above was done to justify the methods used in the project to answer research questions. Given particular meta-theory and research strategy, the project deployed multi-method approach.

It was a combination of semi-structured interviews, participant observation and work with secondary sources. There were 12 interviews conducted, out of which 4 with politicians, mainly Members of the British and Georgian Parliament, 4 with business people and the rest of them with staff and the Board of the IABP and the national schemes. Instead of having structured questions, the interview was conducted by having prepared the areas of interest and keeping in mind the more general research questions and objective. This deliberate flexibility in the design of the interview allowed fresh issues to emerge and helped to go towards completely new areas.

Throughout the project, the researcher was engaged in a daily work of the organisation as a participant observer. “The researcher attempts to participate fully in the lives and activities of subjects and thus becomes a member of their group, organisation, community. This enables the researcher to share their experiences by not merely observing what is happening but also feeling it” (Gill and Johnson, 1997:113)

According to Delbridge and Kirkpatrick (1994:37), in the participant observation the researcher is “attempting to learn the [respondents’] symbolic world” (Saunders et al., 2003: 222). Learning the symbolic code and discourse of the research object would lead us to other school known in sociology as symbolic interactionism. In fact, understanding individual’s identity from his or her interaction and communication with others and observing the organisation from the viewpoint of how behaviours and meanings are “negotiated”, helped to make Analysis 2 and 3 of the SSM. It is about socio-political and cultural aspects of the system. However, given the critical realists’ philosophical approach, the research could not be based on description of symbols and discourse only, due to the fact that critical realism implies to the existence of other, than solely socially construct, realities, those which exist beyond “merely” discourse.

Therefore, the symbols were discovered and studied not for the sake of symbols themselves rather than to understand the meaning and ideas conveyed by those symbols.

Finally, the research used existing sources of the secondary data. “International Benchmarking” document created in 2003 was a well-structured account and comparative study of the work of national schemes. There have been IABP’s other materials and documents analysed to get more understanding of processes and their meaning.

It is remarkable, that all these methods were utilised in the framework of SSM, which helped to integrate the whole methodology and to make it doable for the researcher, taking into account the hurdles related to complexity.

Soft Systems Methodology

History and Brief Overview of SSM

SSM emerged in a programme of research of real-world problem situations. It investigates whether or not the use of ‘hard’ systems engineering could be extended to ‘soft’, messy, ill-structured real world problem situations. This led to a fundamental rethinking of systems thinking (Checkland and Scholes, 1990).

SSM reviews organisation, ‘purposeful human activity system’, as a whole entity, which similarly to biologic cell, is characterised by emergent properties (it is for something, it produces the impact), a layered structure (hierarchy) and process of communication and control. “Such an entity may be able to adapt and survive in an environment which is delivering shocks to it” (Checkland 2001).

SSM suggests looking at object of a research not as precisely defined problems, but as ‘*perceived* real-world problem situations’. Indeed, in human situations it is hard and, in most of cases, impossible to define *the* problem through logical cause and effect analysis. Researcher can use ‘rich picture’ method to depict the situation in the way which allows

maximum complexity and richness to be reflected. This should be done in the manner, which, at this stage, prevents researcher making conclusions and building concepts. SSM mentions about three levels of analysis. First deals with the 'intervention' or how the perceived problem situation is tackled by 'problem solver'. Second urges analysis of roles, 'formal and informal social positions', norms, 'expected behaviour of those in roles' and values, 'criteria by which behaviour is judged as good or bad'. Third level of analysis deals with politics and power in organisation. Analysis Two and Three, social and political, is never complete, because we can never reach absolute understanding or a hundred per cent reading of social and cultural traits as well as political dynamics of human systems.

At the next stage, the SSM offers comparison of depicted problem situation with the theories we are aware of. On this stage, through inquiring, we think of some 'relevant systems, which explain what is going on and help us to name a *worldview* they encapsulate. *Worldview*, given as *Weltanschauung*, has crucial importance in this methodology, as it is embodied by the description of a system and it makes sense and helps us to understand the system as seen from particular *Weltanschauung*.

The SSM suggests to build the models associated with various worldviews using stakeholder analysis and 'thinking in layers' approaches. Finally, it helps to design, invent or find a 'system', which offers systematically desirable (based on the described models) and culturally feasible (considering people and the history of the problem situation) accommodation.

Why SSM?

The research project drew immensely on the principles of the Soft Systems Methodology. It reviews organisation or any other purposeful human activity system as an open system. Despite of a criticism that this approach is not paying appropriate attention to a culture and politics, it was a deliberate choice because of two reasons mentioned elsewhere. The first was a compatibility with the meta-theoretical position and the second - potential of offering 'doable' suggestions.

We can learn by looking at organisation as a 'live cell' and understand how things are interconnected and how this *whole* interacts with its environment (*greater whole* or *larger system*). However, it is fair to criticise open systems approach for comparing organisations with cells, because, as it seems from the first glance, even this unique vision of organisation does not embody the social, cultural and political processes so strongly present in human systems. Surprisingly, it does. Critical realist would say that there is a reality and it is socially constructed, thus interpreted in different ways by different people having distinct worldviews. This resolves a problem with open systems approach. It agrees, that there are many realities, which are constructed by people with various worldviews, it even prescribes using stakeholders analysis. But at the same time SSM suggests looking at those 'realities' as systems, which can be explained as such by worldviews of certain groups of people in the organisation. Finally, it suggests (how can it be more culturally and politically sensitive?!) designing of a conceptual model – a 'better system', which offers *culturally* feasible accommodation for every stakeholder involved. Indeed, the SSM helps to search, read and design 'open systems' within the socially construct realities of the purposeful human activity system.

From one perspective, the research seems unable to use fully the Soft Systems Methodology, because of incompatibility with the context. A system to analyse was neither a small part nor the whole organisation. It was even more complex than such a sophisticated and huge structure as NHS, described by Checkland (2001). Indeed, the object was pretty virtual field of relationships between businesses and politicians without specifically defined geographical or particular cultural context. Nevertheless the research certainly used great deal of elements and principles of the SSM, which helped to answer the questions. Remarkable fact is that the SSM is congruent with the strategy and approach of the research as well as with the critical realist's philosophy, therefore it helped to carry consistent and robust research action.

At the same time, SSM by its definition is user-dependant and situation-specific (Checkland 1999), which means it is up to a researcher how the methodology is tailored

to the situation. The research should certainly embody the principles of the SSM, which was thoroughly followed in the course of the project.

SSM in This Research

SSM proves to be ideal in the organisational context with existing problem situation, which requires identification of “culturally feasible accommodation” of this problem situation given the history and perception of the stakeholders. In case of this particular research, the object was not an organisation, but one of the “systems” (programmes and projects) performed by this organisation internationally, which represents significant part of its business.

The relationship between businesses and Parliaments, the scene, where IABP operates, itself was seen as a ‘purposeful human activity system’. Therefore, it was not personalised or analysed in the specific geographical context (for example in the case of Finnish Parliament and businesses) rather than it was seen as a system operating in various cultural and organisational settings around the world. Looking at the IABP’s work, bridging business and Parliaments, one can observe that this “system” is a logical and distinctive response to externally existing large “problem situation”. In this case the large problem situation exists in relationship between businesses and politicians and not within the boundaries of specific organisation. As IABP’s work is a reaction oriented towards transforming this “large problem situation”. Therefore, understanding the root metaphor as well as relevant world view, would help us to explain why and how this system works to transform and deals with problem situation. Ultimately, it would show us the ways to improve the IABP’s work, which is equivalent of a “conceptual model” using the SSM language, making it more efficacious, efficient and effective (3 Es). In conclusion, the purposeful human activity system in this research project, which it has been conducted in, was not the IABP, rather than it was a realm where IABP manages its programmes – the relationship between businesses and Parliaments.

As it was mentioned in Introduction, the time scale and resources available for this research project did not allow analysing in the equally detailed way the impact of the relationship between businesses and Parliaments from both sides. Therefore, this report focuses more on the implication for the Parliaments as organisations, where it limits itself in explaining what sorts of transformations are experienced by businesses.

Learning from SSM

Finally, the LUMAS model of the SSM shows how L (learning) is generated by using the methodology. “Here a user, U, appreciating a methodology M as a coherent set of principles, and perceiving a problem situation S, ask himself/herself: *What can I do?* He or she then tailors from M (methodology) a specific approach, A, regarded as appropriate for S [problem situation], and uses it to improve the situation. This generates L, (learning), which may both change U (user) and his or her appreciation of the methodology M” (Checkland 1999). This mean that process of learning or inquiring about real-world situations using methodology is a learning process, which changes us and our appreciation of theories. This, itself, allows understanding of the real-world situation from new perspective. LUMAS model was used to demonstrate learning points of the research project in the section “Critical Reflections”.

In conclusion, the given section of the paper explained the “logos” of methods used in this research and the assumptions, which underpinned the thinking and determined the meta-theoretical basis for the project. It flashes out the Soft Systems Methodology, justifies appropriateness of particular research strategy and approach as well as consolidates all layers of theories and methods into a robust design of the research project.

FINDINGS

This section includes the results of inquiry into the ‘perceived real-world problem situation’, which exists in the relationships between businesses and politicians. “Findings”, at this stage without their interpretation, demonstrates what is going on in the realm of business-politics relationship, given the history and current position of stakeholder. It shows how differently stakeholders perceive the [problem] situation as well as what is the ‘intervention’ and how the IABP does it. It also presents some evidence on social and cultural aspects of relationship between two parties.

‘Rich Picture’

Government and, more exactly, Parliament can seriously impact environment, which businesses exist in, by policies they adopt. Regulation as well as economic policy, including fiscal and monetary, are crucial determinants of firms’ success in the economy, which itself leads to well-being and prosperity of its citizens. Businesses usually influence policy by lobbying.

Revealingly, the relationships between businesses and politicians are not static and simple. They are, in contrast, very complex and dynamic. From outside view, it is open to misinterpretation. Even in very transparent situations, there is an inherent suspicion of media and public about the relationship between businesses and politicians.

Lobbying is “an integral and important part any democracy, especially in Anglo-American culture”, according to the Rt Hon Bruce George MP, but it is not sufficient for modern parliamentarians and for quality of laws they legislate. Reason is that lobbying does not address the problem of understanding, it does not inform policy, does not build common ground. Therefore, parliamentarians are increasingly in need of getting exposure to different ‘learning’ experiences, which would ‘inform the policy’ (Nigel Evans MP).

Interview with Steven Johnson, founder of a large reemployment company in the UK, called Right Coutts (subsidiary of Manpower), has offered generally perceived description of the problem by businesses: “We speak different languages...and we think differently”. ‘Lack of understanding’ between businesses and politicians was described in various ways. Certain interviewed businesses explained it by difference in goals and agendas of business or political leaders. From representatives of quite large businesses in Georgia, in the course of participatory observation, there were ‘frank’ adjectives regarding politicians expressed: “arrogant...when elections are closer, they will stand in cues here, otherwise do not want to speak with us” or “they think they know everything and they do not need to learn any more”. There were more thoughtful (less emotional) comment of one of the senior managers of BP, who emphasised the message “you never win with them” while describing how much BP does for being transparent and ethical social partner having been accused either not doing it sufficiently or doing it too much, thus substituting government.

The most shocking was the pessimism of businesses in regards to the possibility of dialogue and ‘making good things together’ with politicians. Pessimism can be read from above mentioned “you never win with them” as well as from genuine assessment by businessman in Georgia: “they will never change, because this is their mindset”.

Most of politicians views business as wealth generator. But due to public misconception, if politicians show their genuine support to business, this can almost automatically affect their reputation in a negative way.

It was surprising to discover mutually existent prejudices among businesses and politicians. Later ones would characterise businesses as closed and arrogant (the same word used to describe MPs) culture, oriented on quick personal gains and insufficiently accountable; whereas businesses would agree to the description of politicians as being inefficient and having ‘no understanding of an economy’.

One Georgian businessman captured the difference of politicians' worldview and presented it in his short story about comment made by one of the politicians on the TV about the increase of a particular local tax. The argument, politician used for explaining why tax would rise several times quicker for enterprises compare to individuals, was that "they [businesses] are rich enough to pay more". Businessman said that he would be happier if politician explained the policy change, for example, with the need for greater spending by local government.

British businessman illustrated example of how superficial are political decisions of government which have huge economic consequences: "Without knowing at all how much it cost to London, they approved construction of new underground link". His conclusion was that decisions are not made on pure economic justification; in contrast, they have no economic rationale and are entirely dependant on the expectations of political gains. He also mentioned about the difference between "polls [as a measure of popularity and perceptions] and reality".

Brief History

Since establishment of the first UK scheme, Industry and Parliament Trust, in 1977, the Business and Parliament concept evolved and developed.

According to the "International Benchmarking" (Mees, December 2003) "in contrast to general growth strategy of the 'golden sixties'...government interventions [in eighties] became more detailed and more imperative. [This] was followed by the oil crisis in 1973...with a decline of economic growth and huge increase of unemployment...This was a period the business community became more aware of the great impact of politics on business life...there was little or no contact between both worlds".

"It is worth remembering that when the IPT was founded there was profound suspicion by then the Labour Government that this business and parliament scheme was a front for the UK employers' organisation. There was distrust of the private sector. Some of the schemes have experienced similar reactions either from individuals or more broadly,

but over the years they have become established in their countries...Because of the Code of Principles on which they are based and way they are managed have each established a reputation, standing and credibility in their own country” (Secretary General’s Report, June 2004).

Report asserts about two cases determined significant developments of the concept: “Spain and Northern Ireland were significant for the ...concept’s development. In the case of Spain the scheme was seen as helping to consolidate democracy and help parliamentarians understand business issues when the parliamentarians with business experience had been reduced following the development of democracy. In the case of Northern Ireland it was essential that Members quickly understood economic issues, and the schemes potential value in building trust and dialogue were realised, in a way which had previously been taken for granted”.

Today the IABP network includes 17 countries (various types of membership), which agree on Common Code of Principles and promote dialogue between businesses and politicians. Based on rich experience of national schemes, the IABP launched the Emerging Democracies Programme. It aims at supporting new democracies in establishing transparent and non-corrupt relationship between business and parliamentary practitioners, which will inform policy, change attitudes and support economic growth and good governance.

Intervention Analysis

The Analysis One of the SSM deals with the ‘intervention’ of a ‘problem-solver’. In our case, the problem-solver is the IABP and its national schemes operating in various countries with businesses and parliaments. The ‘intervention’ was described in various ways by all stakeholders. Answers about ‘What IABP does?’ are as follows.

According to Steven Johnson: “What [IABP] does is - it builds trust, which is absolutely important”. The programme of a Georgian Business and Parliament Scheme emphasises

“building non-corrupt and transparent relationships between business and political leaders” and “changing attitudes of politicians... seeing businesses not simply as tax payers, but as wealth generators”. Therefore, the business of the IABP, in this particular case, is to accomplish attitudinal changes among policy makers.

David Brown of Motorola UK explained IABP’s ‘intervention’ as ‘protocol of relationship’ between businesses and politicians. This evidently engineering term implies to the language shared by two objects, which supposedly speak different languages.

Neil Kinnock, the Vice President of the EU Commission assessed the IABP’s work as a ‘quality benchmark’ for the relationship between businesses and politicians. This means that the business of the IABP is to ensure the high standard of the relationship between business and political leaders is maintained.

Julian Priestley, Secretary General of the European Parliament mentioned about the importance of the “learning experiences” politicians acquire during the programmes organised by the national schemes of the IABP. In this case, it is seen from the perspective of training provider using experiential learning technique.

“Bridging the gap between the business community and the political world” is mentioned as a purpose of their work by Nina Mees, Director of the Flemish (Belgium) scheme, in the International Benchmark paper (2003).

Staff member of the UK national scheme – Industry and Parliament Trust Anita Schaper compared her work with MPs to the senior human resource development activity in business companies. It would also partly serve as career development instrument for professional politicians.

Business and Parliament scheme was described as *ad hoc* and just in time training provider for MPs. According to Alistair Burt MP “as soon as we elect MP and, furthermore appoint him or her as a Minister, we think that he or she knows everything.

Reality is quite different...for those without previous parliamentary or ministerial experience, it takes months to really understand things...that is why services of the [Business and Parliament] schemes are appreciated". Given the 'professionalisation of politics' it is becoming increasingly important for Parliamentarian to use all available learning opportunities. He emphasised, that the learning experience obtained on the IABP's programmes gives MPs a competitive edge compared to their colleagues. "Westminster encourages learning...furthermore you [being an MP] will not survive without active learning".

The Secretary General of the IABP, in addition, compared service of Business and Parliament Scheme to the Parliamentary Library which operates with the same principles. Similarly to them, IABP would respond in the most professional and diligent manner [of Parliamentary Officer] to the specific request of the Member, but rather than sending a report or publication, the IABP would organise a particular tailored study programme designed with the principles and approaches of the IABP.

Another illuminating perspective on the purpose of the IABP's activities was that it helps to transfer so needed business skills, approaches and the 'way of thinking' into the work, practices and culture of a Parliament. The Industry and Parliament Trust (Westminster-based scheme) organises business seminars for MPs and Parliamentary staff. For example, Coutts provided training on HR practices, Pfizer on "Aggression Management" for the constituency staff of MPs, Connaco on "Managing media" and "Customer Care" by M&S.

In the interview one of Parliamentarians gave practical examples of why business approaches are important in political activity and explained how effective politician can use the concept of 'brand building', 'unique sales point' and 'effective salesman'.

On the question on ‘How the IABP does its business?’ - there was a wide range of answers identified.

‘Learning Experiences’

“Tell me and I forget; Show me and I remember; Involve me and I understand “- this Chinese adage is one of the main principles which IABP uses in delivering its core study programmes. Rather than providing knowledge through publications, training or other type of educational events, the most frequent form of study is actual involvement in activities. “Involvement into their daily life is only way for MP to genuinely understand the thinking and concerns of business. If you ‘tell’ them, they will forget” mentions the Secretary General.

‘Practitioner to Practitioner’

Another important principle observed across the activities of the organisation is ‘Practitioner to Practitioner’ approach. It is perhaps the most cost-effective way of generating “learning experiences”. The approach helps to build trust and contributes to effective learning through peer-to-peer interaction. “Usually the working together goes excellent”, according to the staff. In addition, this principle is a creative way of getting rid of the problem related to cultural feasibility. Due to the position level and social status of those, IABP working with, it would make it rather complicated to ensure full involvement of MPs and businesses into ‘ordinary’ learning activities. Although, this is not an issues with many of politicians and business people.

Study programmes are completely tailored to the need and the level of knowledge of participants. In the case of MPs, there are series of meetings conducted with interested Member to find out about his or her interest more precisely and thus design the whole study programme according to identified needs. Parliamentarians and government officials (they are involved too in some programmes) are usually “quick absorbers of information and they are excellent in relating to people. Reason is perhaps their profession”.

Common Code of Principles

IABP's national schemes operate according to principles of transparency, neutrality and non-partisan approach. IABP, as an organisation established by national schemes, developed a Code of Common Principles, signed up, maintained and adhered by national schemes. It acts as a guarantee of integrity and non-lobbying nature of the programmes. Therefore, IABP acts as a medium of self-regulation by schemes, where they have agreed to common principles internationally and set up an Association which would ensure the quality of programmes and maintenance of integrity.

This Code will make obligatory for MP and businesses to make certain undertakings and abide by the rules. For example, the MP signs up to a document which spells out the objective of the study programme, that he or she does not have any business interest in the host company and will not use the exercise for partisan purposes and keep any sensitive information confidential. The MPs will guarantee his or her time commitment. Similarly, the company agrees to commit time and undertakes not to use the programme for lobbying purposes. Parliamentarians are declaring their business study interests and expressing the intent of entering a transparent relationship in line with the rule of law.

Non-lobbying

As mentioned, IABP schemes are non-lobbying and non-partisan. According to IABP's definition, "conducting non-partisan analysis and research and disseminating the results to the decision makers and general public as well as programmes designed to increase awareness, knowledge and information about the issue of concern without using influencing actions is not lobbying". Although, the IABP is not offering lobbying services, it does offer a neutral forum for businesses and politicians to discuss the issues of policy and regulation and, at the same time, a transparent and non-corrupt platform for lobbying. The IABP actively encourages such transparent and open forms of lobbying the business interests can ensure that interests of business groups are fully met without undermining interests of the larger unrepresented groups.

Structure of the Boards

National schemes usually exist in the domain of parliaments and therefore it involves MPs in the development of the structure and strategy. Where the Board of the IABP generally includes the Directors of the national schemes, the Boards of the national schemes are comprised of leading political and business practitioners. In this case, the cross-party approach is kept effective. It suggests that there should be equal representation of all parties present in the Parliament. Likewise, there are limits of how much business pays the membership fee. In fact, a membership is not bought, rather than there is an election of new corporate members by a Board. Usually, the corporate members are chosen in the manner, which closely represent the sectors of national economy. Special emphasis is done of small business, as in majority of cases the voice of small business is heard much weaker in economy.

'Dating Agency' approach

On many occasions, the IABP work involves analysing potential match of personalities from business and parliamentary side. For example, those involved in company programmes, peer-to-peer support among parliamentarians and various attachments. It is crucially important to achieve 'personal chemistry', according to the IABP and therefore it effectively should act as a good 'dating agency'.

Professional Ethics

Staff of schemes act with the best principles of parliamentary officers, which obliges them to be politically neutral and keep the information of respective nature confidential. They are usually widely trusted by Parliamentarian across the network, which is crucially important for their effective learning. 'Confession of ignorance' characterised by Alistair Burt MP as a fundamental step for any parliamentarian to enter in learning experience. Such 'confession', according to him, was easier to make with people managing the scheme. "They would react appropriately, ensure their support and would address the [lack of knowledge] in a very good way during the programmes".

Secretary General, characterising the most important qualities of the staff, emphasised empathetic and leadership qualities, executive level human resource development, knowledge of the culture of a Parliament, known as not very political person as well as self-motivated and organised.

Pockets of Good Practice

The study programmes are generally designed in the way to target both attitudes and behaviours of the members. The approach is that offering conditions to encourage better behaviour contributes towards improved attitude, whereas right attitude impacts right behaviours. Neither of them is effective by their own, but together changed attitudes and behaviours can ideally advance the values of Parliaments as organisations.

Majority of schemes have been started either by a businessman or parliamentarian. IABP, by focusing on key members of parliamentary committees as well as parliamentary staff, aims to encourage “pockets of good practice” within an institution. This approach considers the initiation of change in small parts of organisation (Parliament), which sets new best practice in terms of processes and systems and provides a role model for the rest of organisation.

Hidden Motivators

It is understandable that the Parliamentarians’ main motivator of putting portion of their time into the activities of the Business and Parliament Scheme is mainly underpinned with the need for knowledge acquisition. However, it is combined with (one again proves complex nature of the organisation) other personal interests, such as career opportunities, personal spheres of interest and way of getting good publicity.

In respect to business participants, besides core motivators, such as be more effective in the relationship with parliamentarians and ability to influence policy, business people generally appreciate the company of politicians. “Parliament is sexy” and it helps people to get engaged.

In result, the perspectives of different stakeholders, accumulated through participant observation and series of interviews, helped to put together a rich picture of the IABP activities. Relationship between business and political worlds went through significant evolution during last 30 years. Despite of a huge step in building appropriate relationship, it cannot be seen now as a simple and well-managed one. There are mutual prejudices, marginalisation, miscommunication, which leads to the lack of understanding and trust. It has been shown from various perspectives how IABP national schemes react on the current 'real-world problem situation', what is the 'intervention' and how it is done. To understand this system holistically, as a part of larger environment, there should be done a comprehensive inquiry into the system. In the next Chapter "Interpretation of the Findings" the report offers 'thinking about relevant systems', which explains the work of the IABP in the realm of a business-parliament relationship.

INTERPRETATION OF THE FINDINGS

Previous chapter shows how diverse and multi-facet is the perception of relationship between business and political world. It demonstrates the variety of ways, in which stakeholders describe the activities of the IABP. This section gives an account of the outcome, produced by inquiring and questioning the body of findings.

This is a stage of ‘thinking about relevant systems’, in other words, relevant worldviews. Each of the possible worldviews, associated with this particular human activity system, offers its own unique understanding, reading or sense-making of the situation. Each of such systems represents transformation (P- Question ‘What?’), where there is an input and an output. A system has ‘emerging properties’, which implies to the outcomes and impact, which emerges from particular transformation (next layer or superior system: Q – Question ‘For?’). Finally, each transformation is possible by implementing a set of activities (R – Question ‘How?’)⁵. All this is consolidated in a particular *Weltanschauung*.

The chapter will demonstrate part of the relevant systems identified during the interpretation of the findings, but it focuses its attention on one of them – the most relevant system. As it was noted in the Methodology, the open systems encourage ‘thinking in layers’. Each next layer is the description of a greater system, which emerges from the transformation, occurring in the particular, lower system. This chapter present eight layers relevant to the given context.

Afterwards, the research tries to justify a choice of the layer, out of eight layers, which represents a ‘doable’ transformation given the *power* of a ‘problem-solver’ in this particular case – the IABP. So, what IABP does indeed? Which is the layer it operates on? Why is this level ‘doable’? These questions are addressed below.

⁵ PQR is a component of the SSM by Checkland (1999)

Finally, the “Interpretations of Findings” gives an in-depth presentation of the worldview (*Weltanschauung*), which is encapsulated by a selected relevant system. Furthermore, it synthesises interpretation with theories from literature as well as goes back and tries to establish a link between the system and the meta-theoretical position of the research.

Various Systems

Every element of rich picture given in “Findings” can be interpreted from the perspective of ‘a Parliament as an organisation with or without set of business skills and competencies’. In this case, the IABP’s intervention would support transformation of a Parliament from the organisation without vital business skills to one with appropriate skills and competencies. These competencies include, among others, strategic thinking, operations management, human resource development, managing by culture, change management, communication, building alliances, marketing and so on. Indeed, looking from this perspective, IABP through its study or exchange programmes between business and parliamentary practitioners can ensure transference of knowledge and competencies.

Another system, which would make sense of the situation, is a ‘system, which helps MPs to learn, thus develop their political career and contribute towards effective business policies’. In this case, the ‘input’ into the system is a Member of the Parliament without adequate knowledge of economy, business and without skills and competencies he or she ought to have for career advancement. The output will be the same MP with all necessary skills. The IABP in this case would use its Business and Parliament programmes as ‘senior human resource development’ vehicle. This was mentioned by part of stakeholders in “Findings”. This system evidently has got different worldview, inputs, transformation and outcomes.

Third example of the relevant system is, more topic-based or area-specific, a system, which contributes to better or higher-quality lobbying. This considers the IABP building solid ground and representative networks for fair and accessible lobbying. There are might be discussed many other systems, such as ‘a system which changes culture of Parliament bringing to it more business character’. In the Emerging Democracies

Programme, there is a dominance of a ‘system, which helps to build new non-corrupt and transparent relationship between businesses and politicians’. It might be seen by certain stakeholders as a ‘system, which helps to the development of transparent and predictable policies concerning trade and investment’.

The Relevant System

There might be drawn much more examples of worldviews and respective systems relevant to the IABP. However, the objective of this research is to name the most relevant system to answer the initially formulated research questions and produce the outcomes, which will underpin changes in the policies and practices of organisation. To make the IABP more effective and sustainable is the overall ultimate objective of the research.

The most relevant system would be best named in the following way: ‘a system, which improves relationship and develops partnership between business and parliament’.

Using the theory of Deering and Murphy (2003) on partnership, we can generally say that real-world problem situation is that, due to the combination of reasons, there is an inappropriate partnership between business and politicians. “Given ... complexity, volatility and diversity, it is impractical to seek ideal relationships...[business and politicians] must recognise the intrinsic imperfectability of their relationships”. The partnership between them is located in the positions of either ‘gridlock’, ‘arm’s length’ (possibly one in the UK and other developed democracies) or least desirable ‘command and control’ (in emerging democracies). By the way, the most undesirable position is marginalisation or absence of any type of relationship. Whatever the initial position of partnership is the inclination is to move it towards more desirable one, for instance ‘do and review’ or ‘radically new’. Authors suggest that navigation across the grid is not an easy matter.

What are the conditions in which development of partnership happens? According to Deering and Murphy there should be, one hand “accept, reveal, validate and celebrate *difference*” (p 112), and other hand, increased willingness, ambition or desire to partner.

So the layer underlying transformation from worse partnership to better partnership is ‘building desire to partner and valuing difference’. How should input ‘law desire and avoidance of difference’ be transformed into ‘ambition to partner and understand, tolerate or even better - value the difference’? Authors suggest “by seeking [difference] out and making it part of the common ground...leaders should take nothing for granted, challenge all assumptions, question motives (including your own)”.

Challenge tacit and taken-for-granted assumption is possible by dialogue. Edgar Schein (1999) sees the dialogue as a means of uncovering hidden or tacit assumptions which then creates basis for learning and mutual understanding. “The first imperative for partners is to make the invisible visible – you cannot steer what you cannot define and you cannot define what you cannot talk about” (Deering and Murphy 2003:22).

Bohm (1990) argues that “what we have to do is discover these presuppositions [and tacit assumptions] and get rid of them – get free of them. I don’t think that we can establish conditions for a dialogue, except to say that we both want to make a dialogue”

Therefore one layer below the system ‘building desire to partner and valuing difference’ is ‘generate dialogue’. It can be interpreted as transforming mere talk, or conversation, or discussion to dialogue. Bohm (1991:10) reminds the original meaning of dialogue “a free flow of meaning between people” and suggests difference between it and discussion. “Discussion” ... has the same root word as percussion or concussion, meaning “to break things apart or to analyse”. Discussion leads to separate points of view. Dialogue leads to shared meaning”.

Going further a layer down there is a lower transformation, by which dialogue ‘emerges’ as ‘emergent property’. It is what literally IABP does on the daily basis: involvement of businesses and parliamentarians in joint educational inter-change and appropriate environment for free speech. “Than in talking with others, reflecting an authentic self, the person [as well as organisation] learns from others about tacit assumptions and, if those

assumptions prove to be no longer viable, may choose to change them – to develop...even better - if we can internalise others' perspectives and integrate their ideas with our own – in this case we have a chance to learn” (Dixon 1998).

This is a transformation, which produces opportunity of ‘joint involvement and free talk’. IABP’s activities and programmes are methods how this transformation is possible. In result, the input is ‘no joint involvement’ to ‘involvement and free talk’. It becomes clear that ‘Practitioner to Practitioner’ and ‘Involve Me’ principles of IABP Common Code are contributing to joint involvement, whereas ‘non-lobbying’ and other protection mechanisms are in place to make talk free.

Bohm’s (1991) guidance for dialogue is similar: “to create a dialogue requires ... talk freely...it is not necessary, that everyone should hold the same opinion for shared meaning to emerge”. In this process trust is a determinant and the result. It is reciprocated with joint action. The higher is trust the bigger is cooperation and vice versa. Trust, or willingness to trust, which is based on faith, is sort of minimal condition, which brings parties together. “Without this faith in man, dialogue is a farce which inevitably degenerates into paternalistic manipulation” Freire (1994).

Going up to the chain from basic systems to more superior ones, it is clear how first layer of (1) ‘joint involvement and free talk’ produces (2) ‘generate dialogue’. The emergent property of later one is next system (3) ‘building desire to partner and valuing difference’, which has got its own emergent property – a larger system (4) ‘a system which improves relationship and develops partnership between business and parliament’.

It is good to see what the emergent properties of partnership system are. If organisation or any other human activity system (Parliament, business) reaches ‘radically new’ partnership, where they can ‘thrive...from [mutual learning and] reinventing themselves afresh’ it has got a pre-condition to become a learning system. Learning organisation, as a relatively superior system, is a wide concept and depends on many other sub-systems. One of such sub-systems or lower systems is ‘radically new’ type of partnerships. Indeed,

part of organisational learning is derived from vibrant relationship with the environment. In the case of IABP, the learning is derived from the relationship between business and Parliament. The later to become a learning organisation should develop number of small systems, but one of them, in respect to learning about business, is 'radically new' partnership with business.

Other potential sub-systems to achieve learning organisation, for example, can be 'a system by which Parliament learns to be a learning organisation' or 'a system for getting rid of defensive routines' (Argyris and Schon, 1978).

Therefore, (5) 'a learning organisation system' is emerging from (4) 'a system which improves relationship and develops partnerships between business and parliament'.

Looking further, it can be observed how (5) 'learning organisation system' produces (6) 'adaptive organisation system'. Garratt (1987) offers a novel understanding of organisations as complex adaptive systems, which should learn with the rate equal, or greater, than the change in environment. Adaptive system in the case of Parliament can react on any changes in dynamic relationship with business and learn instantly from it. By being adaptive organisation is creases a basis for next greater system (7) 'system which makes Parliament an effective legislature promoting business', which on its own contributes towards (8) 'a system to improve environment for business development'.

Appropriate Layer of Intervention

Next stage of interpretation is to select appropriate layer of intervention 'doable' for the problem-solver. Given its history, power and socio-political realities, the layer of intervention for IABP is (2) 'generate a dialogue'. Reason for this choice is the feasibility and potential of the IABP to manage this transformation. To give illustration, it will help comparing this with higher layer (3) 'building desire to partner and valuing difference', which would depend on other sub-systems beyond the power and control of the problem-solver.

Using SSM terms (CATWOE) in the given system ‘Client’ and ‘Owner’ is Parliament⁶, ‘Actor’ is the IABP, ‘Transformation’ is ‘generate dialogue’ and ‘Environmental constraint’ is an appropriate physical space and time commitment to engage in joint activity.

In the Literature Review it was described “organisation are driven more by process than structure” according to Garratt. This leads us to the metaphor of ‘Jazz Band’, which considers “crafting a path idea by idea, step by step, and working with what emerges” (Mintzberg 1989). Adaptive organisation in partnership act like jazz band having the same theme but freedom of interpretation. By doing this they achieve highest possible level of creativity and learn from each other. Jazz between musicians, however, is impossible without that very dialogue, a “free flow”, described above, which produces a common meaning. Jazz would perhaps is the best model to describe desired way of dialogue between Business and Parliament. It has a common theme, common language and at the same time, a big freedom to maximise mutual learning through creativity and to thrive from reinventing themselves afresh.

In conclusion, ‘What does IABP really does?’ is - it generates dialogue by creating conditions for joint involvement and free flow of ideas, which contributes towards appreciation of difference and greater desire to partner. It operates a system, which considers the transforming mere talk or discussion into dialogue, which is more symbolic process of uncovering tacit assumptions and allowing ‘flow of common meaning’. Finally, this layer is doable for IABP as it has got all competencies and principles of Code of Conduct in place to support a dialogue.

Worldview of the Relevant System

The worldview, the given system base on, is that it is possible to shift from discussion or mere talk to dialogue by creating conditions for free flow of ideas and opportunity of involvement in mutually educational activities.

⁶ In the Introduction and Methodology was mentioned that, due to the limitations, the research focuses more on the outcomes for Parliament, while recognising that IABP produces impact for both Parliament and Business.

This worldview shares that free and open talk, ability to say your own truth and being authentic can create basis for learning about tacit assumptions (including own). This is the basis for dialogue, which is a source of shared meaning and, according to Senge (1991), allows to access the pool of common knowledge and larger intelligence. Given that “a discourse has effects upon societal structures, as well as being determined by them, and so contributes to social continuity and social change” (Fairclough 1989:17), it is possible to construct a social reality called dialogue. This creates greater understanding, appreciation of differences and willingness to partner. Subsequently, right form of partnerships is one of the pillars of learning organisation, which tends to become an adaptive organisation. This is a basis for Parliament to reach highest level of effectiveness and contribute to favourable environment for business development.

This Chapter explained the IABP through interpretation of the findings using soft systems approach. It is in line with the critical realists’ philosophical position. This sort of interpretation, which cannot claim to be the truth, rather than just an interpretation of given researcher, allows more practical and doable suggestions to formulate. This will be at the end translated into actions though changing policies of the organisation.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This section will integrate the interpretation of findings into the conclusions, which will answer the research questions and lead to the recommendations. Drawing parallel with SSM, a formulating recommendations is an equivalent of building a conceptual model, which in “seven plus or minus two” steps, as prescribed by the SMM, will offer ‘systematically desirable’ and ‘culturally feasible’ (for the human activity system, given the history of the situation) accommodation. In “Conclusions” it is time to go back to the initial research questions and answer them based on the research outcomes.

“What is going on between business and politics?”

At the moment, there is no sufficient understanding between businesses and politicians. This relationship has inherently got a set of preconceptions and prejudices. It is not simple and static. In contrast, it is complex and very dynamic. Miscommunication is a common feature of this relationship. This is true for any almost all countries, in which the IABP operates, of course acknowledging that the degree of problem situation may vary from country to country.

From partnership perspective, this relationship can be described as either ‘gridlock’, ‘arm’s length’ (possibly one in the UK and other developed democracies) or least desirable ‘command and control’ (in emerging democracies). Last one can lead to complete marginalisation.

This is a reason of having mutually limited understanding of world of business and politics. Avoidance of dialogue contributes towards greater marginalisation and misleading preconceptions, which on its way is either detrimental or ineffective for the development of economy and well-being of its citizens. Furthermore, given the complexity and volatility of the environment, businesses and politicians must recognise the intrinsic imperfectability of the relationships. Therefore, we face a constant need of revising and improving the partnership between business and political worlds.

“Why IABP does what it does? What is the difference it makes? What is the purpose?”

The IABP responds to this fundamental problem of relationship between business and politics in the most creative and logical way. Given the ‘problem situation’ the work IABP does can be best described as a ‘system, which improves relationship and develops partnership between business and parliament [or generally politicians]’.

The IABP via its national schemes through wide range of programmes provides business and parliamentary practitioners with non-lobbying, transparent learning environment, using ‘practitioner to practitioner’ approach where knowledge is derived from the direct involvement and free communication.

This is a basis for dialogue, according to theory suggested in this report. Building trust and generating dialogue are crucially important conditions to uncover and questions tacit assumptions, hidden misperceptions, which creates a basis for shared language. When common ground exists and there is a minimal amount of trust involved, it is much easier to understand each other as well see and appreciate differences. “Accept, reveal, validate and celebrate *difference*” is main message here (Deering and Murphy 2003:112).

This is a fundamental point to realise, that harmonising relationship or making ‘them like us’ is not a way forward firstly because of intrinsic difference in the nature of each ‘world’, and secondly it does not make sense to reduce the difference, when in modern economy it can be used as a unique resource for innovation and creativity as well as incredible source of knowledge. This perspective shows the difference as a resource and not a feature, we have to get rid of. In this case, organisations with developed intellectual and cultural agility to thrive in such circumstances are usually compelled by their business contexts to reinvent themselves afresh.

This leads us to the metaphor of ‘Jazz Band’. IABP works to manage the relationship between business and politicians as of them being jazz musicians. By acting this way

both can build the 'radically new' effective partnerships which offers considerable degree of freedom, appreciation of difference and the partnership itself becomes a significant source of knowledge, innovation and creativity. "Crafting a path idea by idea, step by step, and working with what emerges" (Mintzberg 1989) is aspired vision of partnerships business and politics.

On the Parliament side of the IABP work, it is revealing how significant can be the contribution of the IABP as a relatively small player in strengthening organisational learning element of the Parliament. Partnerships, which are the source of knowledge about environment, are important pillars of learning organisation concept. Through effective knowledge management a Parliament can become adaptive organisation, which is in constant touch with its environment and pace of learning about environment is higher than actual changes in it.

The IABP brings business and political leaders together and in both cases involves them in the work of each other. Very important in this process that the IABP deals with leaders, who have got power and language, which is heard and which relatively strongly affects the socially construct realities around us.

The work of IABP does fill the gaps existing in partnership and moreover its role is very important in setting conditions for equal, free and rigorously educational exchange. Involvement of the IABP provides to this relationship a transparent basis which reduces public misperceptions of business and political relationships. It is done professionally and intelligently.

“How to improve and make it more effective whatever the IABP does for Business and Parliaments?”

Drawing parallel with SSM, this is a stage of asking questions “How to do it better”, which his possible after we compared the relevant system with theories. This position

allows us to formulate the conceptual model, in other words the recommendations for the future action.

It is worthwhile of repeating, that majority of these recommendations were developed in the course of the project and ideas came from the leadership of the IABP itself, being engaged in this partly 'action research'. These are not presented as a steps or sequence of actions, as suggested by the SSM, rather than they include important areas to be worked on further to make the IABP more effective and efficient organisation.

1. The outcomes of the research show the serious potential of the IABP and its national schemes. While comparing with current scope of work, it becomes very clear that there is evident space and genuine need to develop, upscale the organisation and establish itself as significant actor both nationally and internationally. This implies to rethinking of the positioning of the IABP and the national schemes in the 'minds' of their clients and communicate a clear message about the role and importance of the IABP work.
2. Considering the methodological robustness of the formula, shown in this research, solid experience and organisation's unique resources, it is possible to use the core competencies of the IABP for establishing business and parliament programmes in new counties, especially emerging democracies for which the marginal value of good relationships between business and politicians is far greater than in the advanced democracies. The main reason is that it addresses fundamental problem related to lack of good governance, corruption and legacies from previous regimes. This can form the basis for Emerging Democracies Programme.
3. Realise and put together a strategy for maximising impact of the large network of parliamentary and business practitioners in addressing the current issues of concern. This can underlie the Corporate Governance programme, which tries to achieve better understanding and common ground in the rather hard-to-define issues of Corporate Governance.

4. Given the results of the project, which partly has clarified purpose and offered methodologically proven perspective to the IABP, it makes sense to spread this knowledge more widely. It is necessary to strengthen the communication capabilities of the network to ensure that knowledge and ideas are transferable and the IABP uses 'best practices' of the learning organisation. This is a basis to derive benefits from synergies in international cooperation and interchange between business and parliamentary leaders.
5. Keeping in mind the powers of good partnership, vividly highlighted in the paper, to formulate objectives and design of new programmes, which will specifically address an opportunity that skills and competencies can be transferred from the partnership between business people to politicians. This is equivalent of maximising learning from good partnership, which is based on full appreciation of differences between parties. IABP can bring more business thinking and knowledge about, for example, organisational learning, adaptive organisation and change management, to Parliaments as well as use the experience of politicians to transfer into business, which increasingly realises the existence of politics and relevance of knowledge about conflict and power in organisation.

Certainly, the given recommendations are not the final and absolutely defined true strategies to follow. The SSM suggests to make organisational learning and inquiring into the 'system' as a regular activity. This will enable to derive new knowledge every time a new perspective emerges. The technicalities of this approach are described as LUMAS model in Methodology.

This section of the report provided conclusions of the research which have answered the initially defined research questions. Based on the new perspectives identified during the research there have been recommendations drawn on how to make the IABP more effective and stronger organisation.

CRITICAL REFLECTIONS

In this section there have been highlighted an extent to which the research project acted as educational exercise for the researcher, learning points in result, challenges confronted with in the process as well as ideas for the future. This part also reflects on the organisational learning process and how the IABP is going to utilise the output of this research.

The research project was a significant educational exercise. It allowed to apply the SSM in practice as well as to draw parallels with various concepts. LUMAS model, described in Methodology, flashes out the mechanism of how researcher or manager can learn from inquiring or questioning real-world problem situation. “Here a user, U, appreciating a methodology M as a coherent set of principles, and perceiving a problem situation S, ask himself/herself: *What can I do?* He or she then tailors from M (methodology) a specific approach, A, regarded as appropriate for S [problem situation], and uses it to improve the situation. This generates L, (learning), which may both change U (user) and his or her appreciation of the methodology M” (Checkland 1999). During this project this circle was accomplished several times, but it is impossible to say how many times would be sufficient to learn everything about the situation.

After the first contact with the IABP, the system emerged in mind was - the IABP as an actor helping Parliaments to become more business-like and obtain business skills. Despite of the fact that the methodological design did not suggest making interpretations at earlier stage there was an inclination to associate the IABP work with certain activity. For long time the idea of IABP managing change in Parliaments was dominant. However, it was too early to make conclusions.

Process of putting rich picture together took the most part of the allowed time. There was a temptation to go in depth and immerse in the analysis of such vast topics as culture of the Parliament or discourse of businesses and politicians. However, it was clear that it

would be sensible to focus on the research objectives and questions. Nevertheless, part of research was dedicated to cultural assessment as well as discourse.

Initially the project was thought as a case study, which considered putting plausible story together about the organisation. But in the process it has been developed to more complex research approach involving some elements of action research and mainly grounded theory.

Literature review turned out to be extremely helpful in comparing findings with what was read. This gave a lot of perspectives on the situation, however the most significant impression was left by the work of Deering and Murphy “Partnering Imperative”. This book was not written with partnership between business and politics in mind, but the concept was incredibly illuminating for the IABP’s case. It was obvious that ‘partnership’ would be useful concept for this project.

This led research to respective literature on learning organisation, adaptive systems, dialogue, discourse, communication and strategy.

It has come to surprise that quite quickly in the process of literature review there has been certain circle of writers identified who would be equally relevant to the given case. It included both prescriptive and descriptive literature. Each piece of literature was assessed against meta-theoretical and methodological approach and has undergone the critical review process.

It is really remarkable that SSM demanded both creative or soft thinking and very rigorous logic to achieve some result. Soft thinking was important to have holistic understanding of the rich picture as well as for identifying different perspectives. Work on each system, however, involved rational designing and construction of conceptual models.

Interviews were semi-structured and aimed at answering certain questions, but at the same time allowing new themes to emerge. The process of interviewing was very informal and was as much as possible conducted in the form of free conversation. Because each interview was full of information for researcher it was reflected upon and put together into the rich picture. However, there have not been voice recordings kept. This became problematic when literature review brought the research to the theme of discourse. There were small pieces of evidence from interviews, and it would not provide with sufficient material. Therefore, the reason for not going into discourse research was partly a commitment to initial principles, according to which methodology was formed, but also due to the lack of data. It is clear, that further analysis of discourse is worthwhile to be done, as it can give new perspectives on targeted relationships as well as support or weaken the particular conclusions of the research.

As it was confirmed by the IABP, this research was relevant as learning experience for organisation. It helped to reveal some competencies, developed during last twenty five years, and attached to them methodological basis. This contributed to reading and explicit communication of intuitive and tacit knowledge of the members. As mentioned in the part on Methodology, this project addressed the concern of management about the need for recording the experience, which has never been the object of academic research. It partly described the organisation and this report is just a start of academic reflections on the work accomplished by this organisation.

The first attempt of describing the IABP work from the perspective of the management discipline was also aimed at transferring the knowledge across the network. This report will be distributed among the national schemes, interested political and business practitioners, who may find it relevant for their daily activities.

Finally, the recommendations of this report are not ones developed autonomously by researcher. Those have naturally emerged from the process and internalised by the management. This creates greater sense of ownership, which will increase opportunity that the suggestions will be translated into new policies and practices of the IABP.

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