

Chapter 9

To Be on the Edge of Chaos with Organizational Intelligence and Health

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ABSTRACT

This chapter examines how organizations act as self-adapting, complex systems, and how they manage to creatively maintain their existence on the edge of chaos, foster complexity, and renew themselves. The overall shift in academic thought that has given rise to these theories, and this terminology is also examined, with an emphasis on the ways various terms have been used in previous literature. The chapter also reviews the literature on, and develops working definitions of four main characteristic dimensions of organizations: organizational intelligence, organizational stupidity, psychological organizational health, and physical organizational health. Finally, the chapter gives information about research currently being conducted by the authors. This research will attempt to produce a model that represents how organizations are able to exist on the edge of chaos, based on concrete measurements of the four dimensions mentioned above, taken over certain limited time spans.

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INTRODUCTION

Time for a New Way of Speaking

Everything in a clear place, operation and order, like a freshly constructed watch... Definite, rule-based, without contradiction, stable, mechanical, unanimous and resolute, simple, comfortable and safe.

For around three centuries

This has been our conception of the universe, nature and human beings.

Lack of clarity, anarchy, contradiction, dynamism, variability, variety and indecisiveness have alarmed, frightened and worried us.

We have been fighting with the universe, with nature and with ourselves.

Now it is time for reconciliation, time for universal, natural and human insights,

In the words of Prigogine, it is time for a new way of speaking (Erçetin, 2001a, pp.24).

This poetic introduction was included on the cover of Erçetin's book, "Yönetimde Yeni Yaklaşımlar-New Approaches to Management". After three years of preparation, the book examined new scientific paradigms and attempted to outline a profile of the futuristic approaches of 3rd millennium organizations. The book mentions that it is thought in academic circles that "using examples and models from fields like physics, chemistry, biology and chemistry in the field of management is not easy." This is to be expected, since very few academics in the 1990's were discussing concepts like shifts in management paradigms, chaos, complexity, fractals, self-organizing systems, irregular structures or self-adapting chaotic systems.

In everyday language, the terms chaos and complexity have taken on a meaning of unsolvabil-

ity, confusion and uncontrollability. Interestingly, experiences from everyday life, like traffic, were not perceived as examples of chaos in the everyday sense. However, they were seen as examples of dynamic and self-adaptive natural processes in systems that are not at equilibrium. The same natural processes inspired works like McClure (2005) book "Putting a New Spin on Groups: The Science of Chaos," and especially its first chapter, "Self-Organization and Chaos: Driving in Turkey" (p.1-3). It can now certainly be said that many experiences in daily life in Turkey can be analyzed as changes in non-equilibrium systems, or self-adapting natural processes.

In the past few years, the scope of the subject matter of "Yönetimde Yeni Yaklaşımlar (New Approaches to Management)" has expanded and developed, and more and more people are asking whether a new edition will be published. As of 2012, there have been new paradigm changes, new examples from other scientific fields, and an increasingly lively discussion about how these models should be used in the field of management.

If we look at what is going on in everyday speech, we see that today, chaos is often associated with unsolvability, confusion and uncontrollability. At the same time, we see that in the private sector as well as in public, the ever-day lives of managers and those in management positions include experiences with complex information, and these managers utilize and deal with chaotic concepts in a highly skilled fashion. The authors of this work have come to this conclusion after around two years of collaborative research, and in the following chapters we will share our findings and demonstrate how they support our conclusions.

The paragraphs that follow attempt to add depth and substance to the new way of speaking mentioned above, as well as to present some of the results of our new research as of 2012. We have two main goals: First, we will analyze how organizations can exist on the edge of chaos in terms of the four dimensions of organizational intelligence, organizational stupidity, psychological organizational health and physiological

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