

Summary:

Discourses in the development of shared workspaces

This study investigates the discursive dynamics in bus companies attempting to reduce stress and absenteeism among bus drivers. Six interviews of individual actors in bus companies have been analysed, examining how the actors positioned themselves discursively vis-à-vis others. This analysis led to the detection of two discourses in the organisations, which are termed the discourse of blame and the discourse of problem solving. It is shown how these discourses offer subject positions, but also how the discourses are interrelated and thus produce an array of coping strategies. Furthermore, the interviews were examined with regard to underlying discourses embedded in the wider structure of society. A dominant discourse of efficiency was found, however, this discourse is resisted by a discourse of rapid change. This discourse is quite prevalent and can no longer be marginalised by the discourse of efficiency.

In its pure form, the discourse of blame involves an individualistic representation of self and other, and a reified conception of organisation (as noun or structure). This discourse employs a static language of observation. The discourse of problem solving is more attuned to a postmodern understanding of organising (as verb or process). This discourse is facilitated by a language of action and access. In order to develop shared workspaces in the bus companies, a transition from a discourse of blame towards a discourse of problem solving is required. This involves an increased understanding of the relational and emergent aspects of organising.