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Organizational Learning in Projects: An Innovational Approach

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Abstract

Competitive advantage is sustained by companies or organizations working on projects through learning. A conventional project model is usually utilized to manage the patterns and underlying relationships. However, it is not completely useful for studying organizational learning behavior or how it occurs. This problem ought to be solved from the perspective of innovative thinking. This paper studies the different processes and their dynamic interaction to benefit organizations or companies and their organizational learning when working on diverse projects.

Keywords: Project management, Organizational learning, Innovative thinking, Dynamic interaction, Recursiveness.

Introduction

According to the organizational learning theory, learning reacts to external stimuli. That stimulus is mainly related to any potential market or surroundings alteration. The literature regarding innovation and project management claims that learning is an activity that retains and tries to increase innovativeness, productivity and competitiveness in the market and industry (Nawaz & Tian, 2022). In short, continuous learning is a prerequisite for project-oriented companies and organizations.

The cumulative experiences and the descriptive analysis of their outcomes are the limitations of most economists in the field. According to Wiewiora et al. (2020), the need for advancement is unavoidable, going further than the stagnant views of organizations, claiming them to be just groups of resources. He further asserts that learning is a dynamic concept and believes in the continuously changing settings of an organization. He defines learning as an enhanced capability of an organization with analytical views in a broader sense. Various analysis points, including projects, teams, individuals, and companies, are studied under the integrated concept of learning (Ahsan & Tian, 2023).

A never-ending epistemological quest to study the dynamic nature of change in organizational settings is generated by the increasing dissatisfaction associated with the conventional ways of thinking about projects. Temporal evolution, change, movement, activity and events like dynamic phenomena are considered in thinking (Domínguez-Escrig & Mallén-Broch, 2023; Nawaz et al., 2016; Rashwan & Ghaly, 2022). Aggarwal et al. (2024) described them as comprehensively stronger plus weaker sight processes. From this point of view, the performance and measure of the time-lapsed evolution of environments, organizations, projects, and people

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are studied in thinking (Dowson et al., 2024). Mu et al. (2021) expressed it quite well by analyzing how things are made, evolved, reproduced and adapted in projects. They also considered it by considering ontology, as well as by catching reality in flight. Aubry & Lavoie-Tremblay (2018) also expressed it beautifully in organizations. The metaphysics of change is analyzed in the process view, claiming that the metaphysics of substance involving order, stability and permanence is inferior to the metaphysics of change that requires alteration, movement and transformation (Leicht-Deobald et al., 2023). Project-based organizations must connect with things that might be separated in this uncertainty, flux, and ambiguity state. Thus, the self-standing actions are analyzed on a priority basis while focusing on interactions.

Some studies have already been made that are pretty dynamic in the research literature on organizational learning, and that has created an urge to find a comprehensive, viable and acceptable approach for studying organizational learning in the settings of project-based organizations (Conforto & Amaral, 2016; Wiewiora et al., 2020). The process of thinking concept is reviewed in the current paper, and the description of the idea of change, i.e., organizational learning, is done initially. The information regarding this topic is already presented in pursuing the said goals. It is later followed by conceptual and practical analysis, interaction, meaning intervention, sense-making, and designing. The discussion is subsequently completed by focusing on operation “recursivity” related to the time-based exchanges. This paper is thus a humble effort to understand new horizons in organizational learning of project-based companies by exploring the potential of process thinking.

Innovational Thinking Process

The mighty history of the term “innovational thinking,” previously known as “process philosophy or process metaphysics,” is meshed up and wavered in philosophical works of a two-millennia-old lineage (Mazzucato, 2018). The new innovative thinkers are now trying to acknowledge and understand the organization as a creative thinking process (Tsoukas et al., 2024).

The significance of proceedings, e.g., learning, is not decreased; however, after considering the companies or organizations working on projects as an innovative thinking process, they are more keenly studied to unpack the transactions and activities hidden in these, and that contributes to the constitution of the organizations (Van Fenema & Sminia, 2024). In the opinion of Cloutier & Langley (2020), the idea of discrete ‘events’ dissolves into a manifold of processes, which themselves dissolve into further processes. It might be exclaimed that the world’s complexity is reduced if people consider organizations or projects as innovative thinking processes rather than entities. Moreover, this very concept is inspired by the phrase that everything is acknowledged as a relative quantity or relative idea, which is the belief of relational ontology. In Van Fenema & Sminia (2024) opinions, only this can overcome the dualities related to individuality and collectiveness, mind and body, ethics and science.

The assumption of external constraints is not the cause of concern for recent innovative thinking processes. Still, the point is to study organizations or projects working in the challenges of the world of flux, ambiguity, and uncertainty (Mazzucato, 2018). The analysis of continuously changing and evolving characteristics of an organization or project without the variables of sense-making and human actions is the actual focus of the study (Muhammad Hafiz et al., 2019; Nawaz et al., 2019). In the dictionary of innovative thinking and process metaphysics, change is prevalent and undeniably constitutive of the world. Anything that happens to reconfigure and

alter the character of a pre-established pattern; thus, every event counts and has a profound effect should not be ignored (Berente, 2020).

Some processes, including initiating, planning, executing, and closing, constitute a characteristic project model in the project management literature. Still, these models represent only the high-level innovative thinking processes (Nawaz et al., 2024; Pinto, 2019). The incomplete image of the world provided by the traditional project model does not manage the role of time and assumes an equilibrium state. Thus, we need to practice a more extensive innovative thinking process and apply this model to dependent variables like the competitive advantage of a project-based company (Tsoukas et al., 2024).

Many variables and things are changing continuously in the context of project work. These things include new projects, teams, problems, solutions, etc. It is a mistake or a faulty analysis to perceive and treat them as fixed in quality and quantity. In addition, all these changes are the source of new knowledge by triggering the individuals' interpretations. It is thus proposed that While a traditional project model clarifies, the project surrounded relationship patterns but cannot manage the temporally embedded accounts and their creation plan. Therefore, there is a dire need to practice an extensive innovative thinking process. Al Khajeh (2018) claims it is necessary to think beyond the static views that render the organization just bundles of resources. A macro-level change process is perceived and discussed in the opinion of an organization in the following section.

Organizational Learning as a Change Process

The project-based companies now need gradual improvement in their skills and knowledge that will allow them to survive and progress in the competitive environment rather than only focusing on problem-solving (Wiewiora et al., 2020). The sustainable competitive advantage for project-based companies is learning and competing with rival market organizations. It can be said that learning from project-based companies is an important activity.

Most psychology textbooks define learning as a change in behavior, and it is aimed at the learning process ending in the learning outcome (Ahsan & Tian, 2023; Hovland, 2020). This approach highlights the difference, but the nature and depth may differ.

The responses of some adult students regarding the process of learning have been compiled into five categories by Richardson (2015):

- Deciphering and understanding the unique face of reality: Learning is a method by which the world and its information are grasped and understood in a unique and novel way (Hovland, 2020).
- Relating and abstracting meaning: It is a way to describe and compare portions of the topic to one another and this present reality.
- Conservation of essential and workable realities, abilities, and techniques.
- Retention of data: Learning is putting away data that can be repeated.
- Data expansion: Learning is securing data or knowing a great deal.

In the opinion of Richardson (2015), his first three ideas are considered less complex and qualitatively different than the fourth and fifth. He explains that the teacher performs

organizational learning on the individual and considers it external. At the same time, a personal and internal facet of learning is seen in the last two conceptions that declare learning to be an effort by the learner to understand the outside world.

Informal, formal, and non-formal learning are the three types of organizational learning categorized by companies based on their opinions (Aramo-Immonen et al., 2015). The manner of conducting the work is the crux of Informal learning. It might include new things and processes that are eventually learned and add up to the efficiency of the work process at various levels. The tacit knowledge is part of informal learning, is unplanned, and involves abrupt accumulation of experience. It is a form of practical and experience-based knowledge. The part of any curriculum cannot be spoon-fed to the employees. In addition, informal learning is often acquired outside the routine activities of the companies. The employees also require professional training in updating, continuation, and formal learning.

Informal learning is a continuous process, which might include the learning that is going on while running a home or parenting the children. It is concrete, immediate and confined to a specific activity; it is not concerned with general principles (Cesário et al., 2017). Rajalahti et al. (2020) are the authors who infer that informal learning is implicit or unconscious, while Cesário et al. (2017) suggested that it should be called consciousness of the task. His argument is supported by the fact that team members of a project have a grasp on their work or the task they are performing, and they will not be conscious of the learning going along with that particular task.

Formal learning is a more traditional aspect of learning that is voluntary and needs proper facilitation of learning that is educative and not just an accretion of experience. Some tasks require pre-training, special education, or a diploma, and people performing that task are directed to get that before working over the task. Formal learning is planned and requires good episodes of guidance. Learning itself is a task. Formalized learning makes learning more conscious and enhances it (Cesário et al., 2017).

The possible effects and outputs of learning as a change process are identified in the five categories of Richardson (2015). It might be a process by which behavior changes due to experience (Mohammad Damra, 2022). The extent of consciousness or awareness of the individuals involved in the learning towards its significance and productivity is evident. Somehow, these questions are debatable and cannot be answered as such.

Ultimately, the accomplishment of change is not always actually traced. Rajalahti et al. (2020) indicated that the change accomplishment is never traced precisely as it was done, even though we have the explanation of in what way and why an organization stirred from one position to another. The adaptation, modification and change in the action plans and their accomplishment on the grounds are not always easy to trace on paper. In the opinion of Dziubińska (2023), the organizational routines seem to be the actual emergent accomplishments that are later changed into actions after interacting perpetually, and the seeds of change are present in how individuals execute.

Walker et al. (2017) is an innovative process-oriented thinker who believes that change is not the property of an organization, but the organization itself is the emergent property of change. The ontology field declares that an organization's possibility and identity are under change; thus, change is before the organization. The organization is an orderly arrangement of an intrinsic flux of human action. The new experiences and the interactions design the individual, beliefs and

activities from the beginning changes. It also determines the course of steps and a proper ending, generalizing and institutionalizing particular rules.

Sense-Making and Negotiation of Meaning

The pragmatist tradition of philosophy founded by Olteanu (2015) states that meaning and experience are cornerstones in the innovative thinking process. The identity values and norms are not the sources of the meaning, but the process is the actual source of meaning. Therefore, understanding the organizations from a process perspective requires a centralized position of sense-making, making meaning an ongoing activity (Schildt et al., 2020).

Sense-Making

Hällgren et al. (2018) defined sense-making as intentional agents faced with equivocality. The process makes the construction, interpretation, and recognition of the word sense-making (Maitlis & Christianson, 2014). Sense-making involves the retrospective development of plausible images that rationalize people's actions (Schildt et al., 2020). It is also called comprehending, understanding, explaining, attributing, extrapolating and predicting (Hällgren et al., 2018). Maitlis & Christianson (2014) also states that sense-making is retrospective. It requires the experience necessary for sense-making before attending.

People are eager to produce a negotiated and sustained shared sense of meaning in organizational settings. Sense-making creates an inter-subjective sense under nonverbal behavior and conversation. Thus, it states that sense-making is a continuous process in an organization (Wang et al., 2019). The future is planned and oriented with sense-making by constructing intersubjective meanings, schemes and images. It is known as Future-oriented sense-making. The project entities are also understood by their intentions. The past and present orientations are the sources that create histories and context to design future-oriented sense-making. In Williams et al. (2017) opinion, a setting where the future is more or less critical requires future-oriented sense-making.

Negotiation of Meaning

Graf et al. (2023) enforced that actual, potentiality, and the real and possible are only differentiated by meaning. Some actual experiences are often connected to possible experiences and can be quickly clarified from the vision of a dynamic perspective. The momentarily exact thing could soon become actual (Michaela & Hubert Knoblauch, 2019). Therefore, it could be said that meaning appears and disappears suddenly and abruptly. Often, it has a temporal existence, but another thing that comes in the way usually follows it. The subsequent events and instability combine to create a specific dynamic of meaning, as often, the meaning event ends by generating another event that is a continuation of itself.

The daily procedures or routine matters and their mechanical realization are not just experiencing meaning as people are often engaged in various patterns. The changed presentation of these patterns gives an experience of meaning. Past events are usually said and done repeatedly, but often in new adventures, impressions, or situations. A modified, reinterpreted, and redirected version of past events is frequently said and done by the people. Therefore, it can be concluded that the negotiation of meaning is continuously going on in the lives of individuals in one sense or another (Benachio et al., 2020).

Moreover, it is crucial to understand that in the opinion that meaning is a socially constructed

phenomenon, it cannot be claimed as unavoidably subjective. Still, somehow, the individuals and their goals manage to mean. The organization and its members ascribe the framework of meaning that creates action and understanding (Kirchherr et al., 2017; Schulte, 2023).

An organization's meaning is often disseminated through nonverbal and verbal means, including simple interaction, sign language, eye contact, pictures, sounds, writings and graphics. Thus, sense-making and negotiation of meaning are ongoing processes in project-based companies. Their roles are influential in the projects in which organizational learning occurs through problem-solving activities (Hagen et al., 2023). Interaction and planning are critical components discussed in the following sections to facilitate organizational learning.

Interaction

Interaction is a two-way process that couldn't be done with a one-week causal effect; it is communication among two or more components that somehow affect one another. Interconnectivity is also associated with the interaction but is enclosed within a system. It is said that many surprising emergent phenomena can take place with the combination of multiple interactions.

Chen et al. (2024) found interaction to be a confusing concept. It connects two very different phenomena between people, computers, and people through various networks, software and hardware. The initial type is an interaction among people, and the latter is between computers and people. Our interest is social interaction as society is run under this primary process. It is the phenomenon that can run project-based companies and their associated processes.

Interaction is not simply a medium characteristic, as quoted by Hua (2024). To Rafaeli, interaction phenomena are related to communicated exchanges and messages. According to Schleidgen et al. (2023), interaction is a natural attribute of face-to-face conversation; it mediates communication among individuals. It is a process-related construct of communication (Hua, 2024). Interaction can be said to be reciprocity and cannot be just exclaimed as a simple reaction, as people can change their opinion and often move inward at 180 degrees.

Learning in project-based companies has a lot to do with interaction. Several interactions occur between companies, within companies, between the company and the customer and on the customer end. The arrangement management and integration associated with communication with the right party are often done through interaction in a project-based company. Daily problem-solving memos, sales calls, meetings, and conversations contribute directly or indirectly to organizational learning.

Planning

Future orientation, organizational plans and planning also involve corporate documents (Ekengren, 2024; Tangney et al., 2023). Tangney et al. (2023) infer that plans are how organizations know what the future will entail.

Symbolic and functional planning are the two types of planning that Ekengren (2024) has journalized. A meaningful history in Functional planning estimates the probability of events. The people's hope is the source of these imaginative fantasy documents, and often, people are unaware of the possibility of these events happening and the practical implementation of those plans. Thus, fantasy documents are a form of rhetoric, tools designed to convince audiences they ought to believe what an organization says (Tangney et al., 2023). Reducing uncertainty and

better control are the events that lead to the creation of plans. It is a fact that organizations and managers trust these plans to manage and later legitimately control future happenings. They are often task-oriented to manage future-related events and resources linked to projects.

The experts who are good at predicting things and events make these documents compelling. It is often built on the people's and experts' historical knowledge and interests. Ekengren (2024) assumes that these plans are designed to compel and persuade other people's opinions; thus, some create search fantasy documents that are near to reality and are acceptable to all the stakeholders. These fantasy documents are set to shield the responsibility from the organization's side in the long run. The extreme critics in their argument also create these to mask the problems and counter the objections. Somehow, fantasy documents could be more symbolic as a source of extended control and planning (Bowman & Parks, 2024).

Thus, interaction and planning are necessary to enhance and facilitate organizational learning in project-based companies. In other words, organizational learning can hardly occur without interaction and planning.

In the opinion of Bossink (2018), the structure and production of a company are different as the structure is stable and production is a process, so they cannot interact. Their theoretical projects and virtue epistemology differ, so they are distinct entities. Project-based companies often demand that these two things be analyzed at different organizational levels. This relative analysis of the process at various levels is helpful in the settings of an organization, making it more efficient. The micro-macro problems will be discussed in this paper.

Micro–Macro Problem

Recursivity is the operation by which the process and stability interact, in the opinion of (Stones, 2020). Recursivity permits the interactions of production and structure of a company over time. The persistence and development of an organization are often answered by a recursive view (Bossink, 2018; Wiener et al., 2020). The need for new learning and the oldness of a company's present knowledge leads to recursivity in an organization. Future production is related to the production of knowledge in project-based companies. The tense competition between action and structure, as well as organizational structure and output, makes space for recursivity, according to Stones (2020). Therefore, it can be inferred that an organization's network and production depend on recursivity.

The context for production and the production itself interact in recursivity. People often believe that nothing in an organization remains unaffected by the changes in production, so production is recursive. It is further claimed that there exists a level above the production level. On other levels, they are often influenced by production, and in return, they affect production.

Very often, the knowledge structure of a company is created right after its construction, but it is kept suitable for production for a very long time. It is exclaimed that understanding the future without understanding the past is impossible. It is often possible that the structures created long ago may cause problems in production or limit the potential of a company's output.

A new production opportunity is directly linked to new production. People involved in a project-based company encounter new opportunities when planning a new project is done in a project-based company. Somehow, they are linked to the earlier finished production. The potential relationships and various ways between the company's production and knowledge are well

represented by recursivity in a comprehensive and improved manner. The change, no change policy, and the market transformations equally affect the companies and manage their future insights and inputs (Wiener et al., 2020).

Cerezo-Narváez et al. (2021) believe that it is possible to collapse various organizational levels, so they should study individuals collectively and with the hierarchized and non-hierarchized attributes, as this is the manner of understanding the “strange loops.” These strange loops are responsible for threatening the stability of a hierarchy. There is always a substitute or replacement for every objective in unstoppable oscillation (Wiener et al., 2020).

Knowledge is necessary for implementing a project for a company’s people, even though the company is not very dependent on individuals. Organizational learning in a company is directly related to the cognitive activities going through in the minds of the company’s people. There are different outputs and outlooks of individuals regarding the interpretation of events, solutions, and possible problems, so it can be said that sharing people’s interpretations also plays an essential role in the company’s organizational learning. There is an increase in organizational learning if personal knowledge is shared and managed correctly in the company.

The company presupposes interaction around these constituents and stabilizes expectations among those participating in these activities. Thus, a project-based company binds different components (e.g., pieces of knowledge forming an organization’s knowledge structure) over time. It is inconceivable that a project-based company can exist without such bonds. It is equally unthinkable that a project-based company should exist without production. In the absence of production, there is nothing to inform companies, so they cannot reproduce themselves. Thus, a project-based company’s remembering and production are mutual media for one another in recursive processes.

Discussion

The metaphysics process is this paper’s inspiration, which sees the world from the prospectus of the innovative approach rather than substance. The process worldview involves determinism, destruction, disruption, creativity, and change. There is a sharp priority of change over persistence, activity over product, expression overdetermination and novelty over continuity.

Among the other standard learning processes, implementing projects is essential in constituting a project-based company. Different subprocesses in the project-based company define it as the primary process. A company is a continuously changing organization comprised of some experiences that are unaffected by some incidents. A company cannot stay untouched by the experiences it is going through (Huang, 2021).

The “unfreeze–change–refreeze” model suggested by Cummings et al. (2016) proposes stepwise change as not the only change while talking about sense-making. An “infinite” number of processes are going on in a project-based company, which influence the process of learning, including negotiation of meaning and sense-making. The experience gained by the project-based company changes its behavior in the context of organizational learning even though the company cannot own the change as it was ontologically before the organization. Still, it is an evolving property of change, and change is mandatory for the company’s identity and goodwill. Sense-making involves the ongoing retrospective development of plausible images that rationalize people’s actions (Whittle et al., 2023).

Project-based companies have past experiences managing possible future opportunities, which makes up the meaning. Innovative processes like sense-making and negotiation of meaning play a significant role in project-based companies' organizational learning. The constitution of the project-based companies is based on the method of communication that is going on among their members, so it can be exclaimed that enhancement of learning in project-based companies is entirely dependent on planning and interaction.

Conclusively, it is claimed that organizational learning is one of the processes continuously going on in companies, as quoted by the process thinking approach. The perspective recursively differentiates the company's past, present, and future, and no defined boundaries exist between organizational learning. One cannot define learning as part of the past, present, and future, as the three are interconnected and influence one another in a company. During the journey of various innovative processes and projects, there are marks off old projects on the new ones that influence might not wholly mask the actual project. The latest projects are based on the old projects, with many improvements and changes. Still, experience counts a lot.

Conclusions

In various approaches and perspectives related to project-based companies, one can assume that organizational learning is a continuous and fundamental matter in the history of project-based companies. With the help of the innovative thinking process approach, the project-based companies understood the dynamics of organizational learning.

We have made these claims:

The exact patterns of the temporarily embedded accounts are not provided under the traditional project model, although it is beneficial in graving the patterns of relationships that are going on in our project; thus, the state is a keen requirement of a complete process thinking approach.

In project-based companies, the negotiation of meaning and Sense-making is an ongoing and continuous process as they are significant for solving complex issues in project-based organizations.

Organizational learning is facilitated and enhanced by continuous planning and interaction.

The knowledge structure of a project-based company and its production are interdependent in recursive processes.

Continuing and improving change in a project-based company is emphasized by the process of Organizational learning.

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