Chapter XI

Evaluating an Organisation’s Learning Culture Using Learning Histories

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Abstract

This research describes a recently developed approach to organisational learning known as “learning history”. Learning history involves the analysis and reflection on project experiences and business processes. The learning history of a construction industry organisation is documented and the outcomes of the learning history are used to evaluate the organisation’s methods of acquiring and managing knowledge. This learning history technique is applied in a practical setting to a case study of the Tasmanian State Public Health Sector, Australia. The findings of the learning history are used to evaluate the organisation’s knowledge management in order to evaluate its “learning culture”. The organisation developed new learning capabilities and learning history is a practical tool for organisational learning which can be widely...
used for knowledge transfer. Fostering knowledge management leads, indirectly, to more efficient and effective processes. In order to sustain the organisation’s learning culture then, improvement of its organisational learning style, the learning process (knowledge management), and its organic learning style is necessary.

**Introduction**

The research approach to organisational learning described in this chapter reflects a recent development in this area, known as a *learning history*, the practical application of an organisational learning tool.

The learning history concept was developed in the U.S. at the MIT Center for Organizational Learning. The Center was established in 1990 to apply and test the concepts proposed in Senge’s *The Fifth Discipline* (1990). This new organisational learning tool is applied in a practical setting, and the outcomes of the learning history used to evaluate the learning culture in the Tasmanian State Public Health Sector (Health Co.).

In terms of the research objectives, it is the intention of this chapter to describe, apply, and test an organisational learning tool in order to address the issues associated with promoting organisational learning. Subsequently, the learning history of a construction industry organisation is documented, and the outcomes of the learning history are used to evaluate the organisation’s methods of acquiring and managing knowledge.

**Learning Objectives**

The reader will learn and understand the following objectives from this chapter:

2. The concept of an organisational learning tool known as *learning history*.
3. The application and testing of the learning history tool within a construction organisation.
4. How an organisation’s knowledge management can be evaluated in order to improve efficiency and practice.

**The Concept of Organisational Culture**

Despite being an important concept, there is debate as to the definition of organisational culture. For example, according to Schein (1985), organisational culture is seen as a pattern of basic assumptions invented, discovered, and developed by a given group as
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