

Organizational learning and Learning organizations: concepts and challenges

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ABSTRACT : Faced with a highly competitive market, to ensure a competitive advantage, organizations need to present efficient and effective solutions. Through skills, techniques and management tools, they must improve their processes in order to maintain continuous learning. The present work aims to approach the article organizational learning versus organizations that learn, from a critical perspective. These two major aspects are discussed separately and an interaction approach between them. The topics will be analyzed and related to other works already existing in the literature, including case studies. In this context, the formation of strategic alliances and integration are evident as strategic solutions for organizations to be able to create, acquire and transfer knowledge. In this way, it is possible to observe the advantages of the learning process and the issues to be trained as a learning organization, and the levels of uncertainty that surround such themes.

KEYWORDS learning, organizations, strategies, integration, knowledge..

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I. INTRODUCTION

Analyzing the learning processes in organizational contexts has been an important way to understand the company-rial strategy. There is a growing interest in analyzing the processes that lead to organizational learning or in describing the characteristics of organizations that learn (BASTOS; LOIOLA, 2003).

Faced with the uncertainties of the world scenario, organizations face difficulties to remain strong and competitive, in an increasingly informed and demanding market. Therefore, there is a large number of researches and speculations that seek to translate into systematic methods the way most successful companies deal with their experiences and learn from them in order to mitigate their uncertainties and daily problems.

Organizational learning is mainly based on empiricism and involves the process of how the organization learns. It is about understanding the culture, structure, people management, skills, capable of promoting knowledge and consequently business competitiveness. Therefore, based on successful practical experiences, we seek to establish the methods that must be developed for organizational transformation.

In order to understand the theme that involves this work, each theme, organizations that learn and organizational learning will be approached in a first part, and then their interconnection points will be highlighted.

II. ORGANIZATIONAL LEARNING

The concept of organizational learning gained notoriety in the 90's and the emphasis was given to the strong explanatory value it presents for change processes. It is taken into account that the concern to promote learning emerges from a competitive need in which innovation in processes and products is fundamental for its survival (SOUZA, 2004).

It comprises skills and processes necessary to ensure knowledge at the individual and institutional level, which depends on communication, transparency and integration. In this way, from the sharing of experiences, mutual learning is created in which individuals and corporations learn to improve their capacity and performance. The lessons learned can be positive or negative and are conditioned to the experience and

culture of each organization. However, the result of using information is always beneficial in terms of competitive performance (NORO; ABBADE; JOSENDE, 2009).

On the other hand, it is necessary to internalize the need for unlearning, which is fundamental to the processes of knowledge construction, since institutionalized routines can interfere with decision making. The organizational learning process arises precisely from this relationship between order and disorder, when it becomes possible to perceive what is effectively convenient for corporate survival. Moments and situations of learning opportunities should be sought, in this sense, work meetings can be considered as attenuating the transmission of knowledge (SOUZA, 2004).

Learning governance is a way of understanding knowledge mechanisms and processes, from individual, group and organizational, in the search for the growth and development of the organization. With this, four components must be considered: dynamic capacity and self-organization; reliable information; shared vision and common goals; and shared mental model (RIZZATTI, 2020).

There is a need for adaptive and multilevel governance and social learning in the search for the integration of learning produced by the various collective interactions and layers of learning, so that social capital, traditional and scientific knowledge can be mutually valued (KANGERSKI *et al.*, 2021).

III. LEARNING ORGANIZATIONS

Organizations that learn is an expression used to describe the successful organization, that is, the one that has the ability to put changes into practice and demonstrate management design and models, which are currently considered the most adequate (BASTOS; GONDIM; LOIOLA, 2004).

Mastery of five basic learning disciplines is essential for learning organizations:

- Personal Mastery: is the discipline that brings the possibility of continually clarifying and deepening our personal vision, that is, learning to expand our personal capabilities, with the objective of obtaining desired results and developing a business environment in which all employees are encouraged. participants to achieve certain goals.

- Mental models: this discipline consists of reflecting, continuously seeking clarification and improving the image that each one has of the world, in order to verify how acts and decisions should be shaped.

- Shared vision: it is to stimulate the interest of the group in relation to the future that it seeks to create, and to develop the principles and guidelines that will make it possible to reach that future. With this, leaders cannot want to dictate a vision, believing that it will be assimilated automatically.

- Team learning: occurs through the transformation of collective aptitudes related to thinking and communication, in a way that allows groups of people to develop intelligence and capabilities greater than the combination of individual talents.

- Systems thinking: it is developing a way of analyzing, a language for describing and understanding the forces and interrelationships that shape the behavior of systems. With this, things can be viewed as part of a whole, and not as isolated pieces, as well as creating and modifying their reality (RICHE; ALTO, 2001; SENGE, 1998).

All these learning disciplines are encompassed by systems thinking, which makes an interrelation of the elements in an organization. And this interaction is not linear, as it does not only seek to aggregate the different functions, but to achieve greater results (OLOBIA, 2021).

However, only these disciplines do not guarantee an organization focused on learning, it is also necessary to integrate innovations, methods and tools. In summary, one of the main prerequisites for being a learning organization is having an understanding of reality, through different perspectives in which it can present itself (BASTOS; GONDIM; LOIOLA, 2004).

IV. ORGANIZATIONAL LEARNING X LEARNING ORGANIZATIONS

Organizations are always in a learning process, however this is only possible if there is an enabling and encouraging environment. The two aspects present antagonistic conceptions regarding the phenomenon of learning, while organizational learning refers to the process of understanding and analyzing, organizations that learn involve systematization and actions of change. However, they are complementary to ensure organizational growth. Some differences between organizational learning and organizations that learn can be seen in Table 1.

Table I: Differences between the learning organization and organizational learning

| Topics | Organizational learning | Learning organizational |
|-----------------------|--|--|
| Outcome | Potential organizational change | Organizational improvement |
| Motive | Organizational evolution | Competitive advantage |
| Writings | Descriptive | Prescriptive |
| Objective of writings | Theory building | Intervention |
| Stimulus | Emergent | Planned |
| Targeting audience | Academic | Practice |
| Scientific background | Decisions theories, organizational studies | Organizational development, strategic management |

Source: Adapted Huysman (2000)

The learning cycle encompasses promoting knowledge, apprehending it, applying it and sharing it. When knowledge is disseminated, an individual challenge is proposed to review concepts and adapt to changes, at the same time, at the organizational level, efforts must be made to promote motivating systems, continually expanding their ability to create results. Learning indicators can provide relevant analysis when there is a purpose of intervention and change.

As a suggestion to foster the various organizational processes that drive competitiveness, it is possible to refer to the creation of business networks. These strategic alliances consist of grouping companies with common goals in order to make opportunities viable and that agree to work together to discuss ideas, knowledge and technologies, maintaining their autonomy and specific interests. The case study of real estate network, a partnership between 10 companies in the state of Rio Grande do Sul, for the purchase and sale of real estate, aims to increase the volume of business. They acquire knowledge through lectures, congresses, benchmarking and share information through meetings, emails, training and informal conversations. As benefits of the organizational learning process, planning for the future, continuous learning, understanding through experiences and ensuring competitive advantages stand out (NORO; ABBADE; JOSENDE, 2009).

With the objective of knowing more about the management of the corporate human resources unit of power company, a case study was carried out, in which this management was compared with the characteristics and variables proposed in the conceptual model of the organizations that they learn, mainly using the subjects proposed by Peter Senge (2004). In this study, a questionnaire with 18 objective questions was applied, which should be answered using the Likert scale (a type of psychometric response scale, which is commonly used in questionnaires, and through this, the respondents, when making a statement, specify their level of agreement). The questions in the questionnaire were organized into six blocks with variables referring to the five disciplines of Senge (2004) and a sixth discipline, Connectivity (ABREU; VIEIRA, 2014; GONÇALVES; RODRIGUEZ, 2008):

- BLOCK 1: Personal Domain (Skills, Recruitment and Selection Policy, Personal Goals)
- BLOCK 2: Mental Models (Structure, Reflection and Inquiry, Change Generation)
- BLOCK 3: Shared Vision (Training Result, Strategy, Internal Communication)
- BLOCK 4: Team Learning (Learning Environment, Knowledge Sharing, Joint Skill)
- BLOCK 05: Systems Thinking (Learning, Training, Interdisciplinary Competence)
- BLOCK 6: Connectivity (Human, Functional, Organizational)

Twenty-five employees of the corporate human resources unit responded to the questionnaire, one being an executive manager and twenty-four managers and coordinators of the largest energy company in Brazil and Latin America. And with the analysis of these answers, it can be observed that in relation to the six disciplines that were approached, the ones that were closer to the proposed conceptual model of the organizations that learn were Systems Thinking and Connectivity. With this, it became evident that power company practices collective thinking and a systemic vision on an ongoing basis, through a learning process that is shared among all. And in relation to connectivity in its three dimensions, it can be seen that the Company makes an effort to systematically apply its concepts and practices throughout the organizational structure. And there is also the continuous promotion and encouragement of the interaction of the internal and external environment (GONÇALVES; RODRIGUEZ, 2008).

The integration and interaction of all employees, functions and departments are considered a competitive advantage by everyone in the organization, and in the pursuit of organizational excellence they can

be positive differentials. However, in the Energy Company, much needs to be done in relation to knowledge sharing, according to what was visualized through the analysis of the results referring to the variables Internal Communication and Training Result. And these improvements will help in the constant search for high competitiveness and corporate excellence (GONÇALVES; RODRIGUEZ, 2008).

V. CONCLUSION

The present work sought to analyze the conceptual and practical construction of organizational learning paradigms and organizations that learn, highlighting their points of dependence. It was found that when it comes to theory, both err due to the non-existence of a consensus on a more conceptual level. In view of the research and case studies analyzed for the construction of this work, it is understood that although organizational learning is a great way to achieve a good level of competence and proactivity on the part of an organization's employees, it is not so easy to install an environment that effectively promotes the sharing of these learnings. When it comes to organizations that learn, the challenge is to promote a culture that encompasses the entire organization and encourages the emergence of ideas and suggestions that can help improve services and products. Finally, it is understood that in the face of a business scenario where there are continuous variations of technologies, products and processes, it is not enough to focus efforts only on learning in a systematic way or on copying processes of successful organizations, all this in a systematic way isolated. In order to achieve sustainable competitive advantage, it is necessary to learn to manage uncertainties inside and outside the company, in every scenario in which it operates, with a focus on learning from each experience.

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