

An Examination Of The Nature And Type Of ‘Organizational Learning Infrastructure’ That Supports Interproject Learning In Swedish Consultancy Firms

Wise Mainga*

Past researches has identified project-learning as crucial to the long-term market success of project-based firms (PBFs). Project success is partly dependant on the ability of project teams to be able to extract as much new knowledge acquired from past projects undertaken by the firm and transferring the new knowledge gained to other (current and future) projects. Despite the growing awareness of the importance of project learning to firm-level competitiveness, relatively fewer firms have institutionalized mechanisms to systematically capture new project-knowledge and re-use it to improve the execution of subsequent projects. For systematic interproject learning to take place in any project-based organization, there must be deliberate systems put in place to facilitate and support learning related activities. The primary aim of this research paper is to explore, describe and analyze the various components of ‘organizational learning infrastructure’ that have been developed by a sample of consultancy firms in Sweden to support and enhance interproject leaning. The study examines what type of learning infrastructure, systems, procedures, and routines have been built-up to support and promote organizational-wide interproject learning in consultancy firms in Sweden. The research paper interrogates the ‘perceptions’ of key informed project management practitioners, who have experience of managing consulting projects. The study finds that most respondents indicate that their firms had good or strong practices related to the following; implementation of multi-disciplinary self-managing project teams, removal of organizational/functional boundaries, and having deliberate processes to capture, document, store and distribute new project knowledge. However, some of the basic learning-supporting infrastructure necessary to support project learning were not fully developed (i.e., explicit scheduling of time to do ‘reflections’ during and after project execution, emergency of a ‘no blame’ culture, instilling a culture of experimentations, and emphasizing the importance of rapid and regular circulation of paper-based reports that described new learning being generated from ongoing project activities). Such underutilized practices provide greater opportunities for future improvements. A number of recommendations are outlined in light of research findings.

Keywords: Interproject learning, organizational learning infrastructure, project competencies, project-based firms, consultancy sector.

* College of Business Administration, Ajman University of Science & Technology, United Arab Emirates. Email: w.mainga@ajman.ac.ae or wmainga@yahoo.com