Cultural Learning Organizations: A Model

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VII. Recommendations

The implementation of LO ideas must be the result of a collective process and decision, that although it has to be boosted by top managers, must be felt as something deeply ingrained in all organization members' will. That is why no 'magic tools' are recommended here. The LO model I propose aims to be a collective reflection tool for all organization members who, in a process of cooperative and public participation, must decide jointly what learning strategies should be implemented in the organization and how to put them into practice. Having that model in mind and their different components, organization individuals themselves should think about organization vision and systems of communication, information, individual development and participative decision-making that adjust appropriately to their own organization and sector.

So, it is up to each organization to decide if it wishes to put into action a complete change in the organization leading towards the LO vision or just to improve some processes in order to facilitate certain learning. Most of art/cultural organizations already put into practice certain systems of information storage and communication, but they should be improved to encourage real organizational learning. But communication and information systems can be much more effective if there is a shared idea about their purpose within the whole common organization vision. Therefore, any improvement in those systems should be the consequence of a communal effort inside the organization[1] which should focus first on vision and values that are the bottom layer over which those systems and processes must be built. Once this is done the organization

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[1] It should be decided if it is necessary to include members of both boards and diverse stakeholders. Due to the fact that there is already a statutory mission that is protected by the boards, it might not be necessary to open the debate externally. What is more necessary, in my opinion, is to try to make all organizations members join in a common spirit.

will be prepared to decide how to improve organizational structures, systems and processes in order to reach that vision, having in mind organization collective values. Organization culture has some values that can help in this course of action: members' will towards participation, collaboration and cooperation spirit, search for innovation and engagement with the organization. Moreover, a proactive organization which is trying to be innovative in all its activities should consider being innovative and pioneering in its management. LO model is a tool for this creative management.

Nevertheless, I would add some recommendations concerning these actual systems in order to make them more appropriate to encourage people and learning. In most of art/cultural organizations knowledge is project-based, directly linked to people (people-embedded knowledge character) and shared mostly through person-to-person contact. Moreover, different activities are difficult to codify due to project pressures. Taking those circumstances into account, it would therefore be advisable to adopt a main 'personalization strategy' (Hansen et al., 1999) in knowledge-management systems, that is to say, information systems which store project members, roles and tasks and foster the building of networks of people. These systems would facilitate tacit project-based knowledge being shared. However, it is also desirable to combine this system with a certain degree of codification based on a structured integration of existing systems and inclusion of written process guidelines.[2] Additionally, the implementation of a policy of transparency and clarity[3] and the improvement of member participation in decision and action processes would improve trust and importantly ameliorate communication within the organization.

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[2] I am not meaning a process manual. I think this would not be compatible with artistic/creative culture. What I mean is a simple scheme that could be used by organization members to know in every work process (exhibitions, events, publications, research etc) which departments and people have to intervene and be informed. This would help to solve one of the most repeated employees' complains.

[3] Which could imply to publish the organizational chart, budget and annual reports; to communicate openly and timely exhibition subject and planning and meeting content of Board of Directors; to set up a clear structure of meeting groups and their purposes and to make a patent effort for fostering meeting efficiency (making decisions and put them into action), memory (minutes) and member participation.

In addition, I would recommend the creation of a position that would be in charge of fostering reflection and learning inside these organizations. This professional could act as a facilitator of this communal reflection process. Additionally, he/she could coordinate the introduction of individual development plans and the review of communication and information systems and decision-making processes and whether after collective deliberation, they are judged to be improved.