

Organisational Culture and Its Effects on Knowledge Acquisition and Application in the Workplace: A Survey of the Literature

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Abstract

Workplace learning is crucial for the success of both employees and organisations. This literature review examines how organisational culture affects learning and knowledge processes within companies. It explores the role of cultural values, norms, attitudes, and assumptions in fostering spontaneous learning among employees. The paper provides a taxonomy of informal on-the-job learning, distinguishing between individual and organisational knowledge. Additionally, it explains how social capital facilitates knowledge sharing through social interactions among workers.

Keywords: Organisational culture, workplace learning, knowledge acquisition, knowledge application, cultural values, norms, attitudes, informal learning, formal learning, social capital, knowledge sharing, employee productivity, employee engagement

Introduction

Workplace learning is crucial to employee productivity, engagement, and retention. Organisations that invest in continuous learning opportunities enhance their workforce's skills, breed loyalty, and improve retention rates. This paper hypothesises that an organisation's culture significantly impacts learning and knowledge processes. By examining the role of cultural values, norms, attitudes, and assumptions, this literature review aims to assess how organisational culture influences spontaneous learning among employees.

Theoretical Framework

Organisational Culture

The principles, convictions, and procedures that everyone follows make up the culture of a business. It affects how workers communicate, make choices, and do their jobs. It is possible to get some insight into the multifaceted character of organisational culture by consulting theoretical frameworks like Schein's (2010) model, which incorporates artifacts, professed ideals, and fundamental presumptions.

Workplace Learning

Workplace learning includes formal and informal learning activities within the work environment. Formal learning is structured and often involves training programs and workshops, while informal learning is unstructured and occurs through everyday interactions and experiences. The idea of lifelong learning stresses the significance of consistently improving one's skill set through one's working life. (Marsick & Watkins, 2001).

Knowledge Management

Knowledge handling encompasses all aspects of the information within an organisation's lifecycle, including its generation, sharing, and usage. Explicit knowledge capture is a part of it. (documented information) and tacit knowledge (personal know-how) (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995). Effective knowledge management is essential for fostering innovation and maintaining a competitive edge.

Impact of Organizational Culture on Learning and Knowledge Processes

Values and Norms

Organisational values and norms shape the expectations for behaviour within a company. A culture that values learning and development encourages employees to seek and engage in learning opportunities. Norms that promote collaboration and knowledge sharing facilitate the flow of information and skills across the organisation (Hofstede, 2001).

Attitudes and Assumptions

Employees' attitudes towards learning and their assumptions about the benefits of knowledge sharing are influenced by organisational culture. A positive attitude towards continuous improvement and a belief in the value of shared knowledge enhance the effectiveness of workplace learning initiatives (Argyris & Schön, 1978).

Informal On-the-Job Learning

Informal learning occurs naturally as employees interact and share experiences. It is often spontaneous and can include activities such as mentoring, coaching, and peer-to-peer learning. Informal learning is crucial for adapting to new challenges and acquiring practical skills not covered in formal training programs (Eraut, 2004).

Taxonomy of Informal Learning

1. **Mentoring and Coaching:** Experienced employees guide and support less experienced colleagues.
2. **Peer Learning:** Colleagues share knowledge and skills through collaboration and teamwork.
3. **Observation and Imitation:** Employees learn by observing the behaviours and practices of others.
4. **Problem Solving:** Employees develop skills by tackling real-world problems and challenges.

Individual vs. Organisational Knowledge

Individual knowledge refers to the skills and expertise possessed by an individual employee. On the other hand, organisational knowledge is the collective knowledge embedded in the organisation's processes, routines, and culture. Effective knowledge management requires mechanisms to transform individual knowledge into organisational knowledge and vice versa (Grant, 1996).

How Social Capital Affects Information Exchange

Social Capital

"Social capital" is the sum of the corporation's employees' personal and professional networks. Cooperative and collaborative norms, such as trust and reciprocity, are part of it. The ability to share and benefit from one another's expertise depends heavily on social capital (Putnam, 2000).

Knowledge Sharing through Social Interaction

Social interactions among employees create opportunities for knowledge exchange. Informal networks, communities of practice, and social learning platforms effectively foster knowledge sharing. Trust and intense interpersonal relationships are essential for encouraging employees to freely share their expertise and insights (Wenger, 1998).

Discussion

Influence of Culture on Spontaneous Learning

A supportive organisational culture that values learning and knowledge sharing encourages spontaneous learning among employees. Such a culture fosters an environment where employees feel comfortable seeking learning opportunities and sharing their knowledge. Conversely, a culture that does not prioritise learning may hinder the development of new skills and the disseminating of knowledge.

Enhancing Employee Retention through Learning Opportunities

Companies that give their workers chances to learn new things are likelier to hold on to them. Programs for career growth and education show workers that their employer cares about their personal and professional development. As a result, employee loyalty increases and turnover decreases.

Strategies for Fostering a Learning Culture

1. **Leadership Commitment:** Leaders should model a commitment to learning and development.
2. **Incentives and Rewards:** Implementing incentive programs that reward continuous learning and knowledge sharing can motivate employees.
3. **Collaborative Environment:** Creating spaces and opportunities for collaboration can enhance informal learning.
4. **Access to Resources:** Providing access to learning resources, such as online courses and training materials, supports employee development.

Conclusion

When it comes to how a company learns and shares information, company culture is king. Employees' practices of spontaneous learning and information sharing are shaped by the values, norms, attitudes, and assumptions inside the firm. Organisations may increase involvement, efficiency, and loyalty by creating a welcoming environment that values education and uses social capital. The significance of company culture in promoting effective knowledge handling and learning in place of employment is highlighted in this literature analysis.

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