

VI. Conclusions and adjustment of the proposed 'learning organization' model

Although innovative art/cultural organizations are successful not only at adapting to new trends but also in trying to anticipate future tendencies in art and culture, its main innovation tend to be predominantly concentrated on content¹ and seems to come always from the organization top or external agents. Thus, internal innovation is concentrated on adapting to these external or top ideas in what could be described as a 'reactive innovation'. There is no doubt that every department tend to accumulate knowledge about its particular tasks, trying to adapt its practices to these new requirements; however, this knowledge is mostly tacit², kept encapsulated in each department and is people-embedded. This is mainly due to a project-based culture that makes it especially difficult to transfer practical experience from one project to another due to time pressure, uniqueness and the temporary nature of projects. In addition, reflection on new environmental circumstances and internal organization issues and decision-making processes are perceived as a top management task; and real participation, although it is wished, is judged to be incompatible with environmental organization conditions. Moreover, these organizations do not seem to foster appropriately formal and informal reflection inside every work process; and communication and information systems are not adequately supporting the re-use of stored knowledge. Therefore, although there is learning in the sense of obtaining knowledge, most of art/cultural organizations cannot be described as a LO according to the proposed model.

However, their analysis raises important questions that have not been taken into consideration by LO theory or in the initial model proposed in this paper. Learning organization theory

¹ Exhibitions and projects.

² It is hardly documented or codified.

presumes that lean structures are better than hierarchies to promote organizational learning, and so champions a movement against bureaucracies and hierarchies. This position is due to the fact that LO authors are mostly focused on the business sector, where the company can freely decide about its structure and has virtually no external obligation. However, this literature does not discuss public non-profit organizations where legal dispositions can determine their structure and can impose other legal responsibilities that can affect the implementation of the LO model. It has also been noted in this section that public and administrative law concerning personnel and finances can impose restrictions for implementing LO strategies such as a reward system or an appropriate contract policy. It does not take into account either how the coexistence of tendencies to bureaucratization and flexible structures can have influence in learning strategies. Similarly, LO theory does not consider either how an organization can be forced by political decisions³ to implement measures, i.e. downsizing, that can block learning processes in the organization. Public and non-profit organizations are continuously subjected to these political pressures and can do little but comply with these external compulsory decisions. In addition, LO theory does not consider those organizations that are mainly project-based and their particular qualities that should be taken into consideration when implementing the LO model. Cultural organizations, in general, and art organizations in particular, are mostly project-based nowadays. This condition creates new challenges to LO concept, such as, for example, people-embedded knowledge and heterogeneous mixture of external and internal organization members. These issues should be considered when a practitioner managing a public non-profit art organization reflects on how he could implement systems to store and codify knowledge, for example.

Consequently, the previous LO model⁴ has to be adapted and therefore, two new factors must be included: a) the political, economical and legal environment, which is concerned with political and legal constraints that particularly public non-profit organizations have to withstand; and b) organizational dimension (functional and/or project-based dimensions),

³ Due to economical and social factors.

⁴ See Figure 2, p.68.

which touches on the way that organizations choose to organize their activities.⁵ These factors are not considered LO pillars but two influences (one external and the other internal) that have to be taken into account in LO implementation. As the political and legal environment affects private organizations as well (although to a lesser extent) this model, then, is proposed to be applicable in both public and private sectors.



Figure 2 The final model

⁵ Either ascribing them to a functional structure or to a project-based framework.