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Record of lessons learned: Information Literacy as a requirement for the search for consensus in project teams

Registro de lições aprendidas: a Competência em Informação como requisito para a busca do consenso nas equipes de projetos

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Resumo: A Gestão de Projetos é baseada no aprimoramento do conhecimento por meio de experiências, nos conhecimentos tácito e explícito e nas práticas formais de compartilhamento de conhecimento. Uma dessas práticas é registrar lições aprendidas, que representam conhecimentos relevantes resultantes da síntese de experiências vivenciadas nos projetos. Estas lições são registradas a partir do consenso entre os membros de equipes de projetos, que se reúnem casualmente para identificar e analisar informações sobre fatos classificados como prejudiciais aos seus projetos. Diante disso, mediante uma pesquisa de abordagem qualitativa, natureza básica, objetivos exploratórios e procedimentos bibliográficos, o artigo visa verificar se os preceitos da Competência em Informação podem contribuir para formar um ambiente colaborativo nas equipes de projetos. Neste sentido, o resultado indica que aplicar esses preceitos pode contribuir para o consenso ao se registrar lições aprendidas e, por consequência, a gestão do conhecimento e gestão de projetos nas organizações.

Palavras-chave: colaboração; competência em informação; gestão do conhecimento; lições aprendidas; projeto.

Abstract: *Project Management is based on improving knowledge through experiences, tacit and explicit knowledge, and formal knowledge-sharing practices. One of these practices is to record lessons learned, which represent relevant knowledge resulting from experiences synthesis lived in the projects. Lessons learned are recorded based on a consensus among project team members, who meet casually to identify and analyze information about facts classified as harmful to their projects. Therefore, through research with a qualitative approach, basic nature, exploratory objectives, and bibliographic procedures, the article aims to verify if the precepts of Information Literacy can contribute to forming a collaborative environment in project teams. In this sense, the result indicates that applying these precepts can contribute to consensus by recording lessons learned and, consequently, knowledge management and project management in organizations.*

Keywords: *collaboration; information literacy; knowledge management; lessons learned; project.*

Introduction

A project represents a continuous effort collectively organized according to specific knowledge and aiming for a sole human enterprise realization. In this way, Project Management is based on knowledge improvement through experiences, tacit and explicit knowledge, and formal practices of knowledge sharing. One of these practices is to record lessons learned, which represent relevant knowledge resulting from significant experiences synthesis lived during the life cycle of projects. Lessons learned are one of the best-added values that can be gained in the projects (Walker, 2008), a success factor in managing projects (Besteiro, 2012) (Association for Project Management [APM], 2012).

In general, lessons learned are recorded based on a consensus (Axelos, 2017) (Project Management Association of Japan [PMAJ], 2017) (Project Management Institute [PMI], 2017) obtained among project team members, who meet casually to identify and analyze information on facts classified as harmful to the execution of projects under their responsibility. Recognizing the need to comply with costs, scope, and deadlines planned in projects, some authors claim that this is a practice that demands considerable effort (Bost, 2018) (Barbosa et al., 2021) and time (Rhodes

& Dawson, 2013) to be effectively performed, which requires the creation of a collaborative environment among those involved (Veronese, 2014) (Corin Stig, 2015).

In the context of Knowledge Management, knowledge transfer, relationships and communities are its three primary factors (Spangler, Skovira & Kohun, 2015). Given this, as suggested by their socio-cognitive perspectives, the Theory of Communicative Action and Information Literacy represent theoretical foundations that jointly can contribute to establishing a collaborative environment conducive to consensus. For Habermas (2015, p. 7), a consensus can be considered as an agreement established by a group of interacting individuals who, through critical validity claims, recognize that a given piece of knowledge, as it satisfies certain rigorous conditions, is valid among them, binding them.

The Theory of Communicative Action is based on the assumption that individuals when seeking to carry out their actions in the social environment, do so rationally and jointly, through language and aiming at understanding (Habermas, 1988). In this sense, rationality manifests itself mainly in two ways: through the use of non-communicative knowledge aimed at self-assertion in the objective world through the ability to manipulate information and adapt to current conditions (strategic action) or through the communicative knowledge use shared intersubjectively and aiming at the production of consensus through argumentation (communicative action) (Habermas, 1988) (Ponchirolli, 2002).

In turn, Information Literacy is “the set of integrated abilities encompassing the reflective discovery of information, the understanding of how information is produced and valued, and the use of information in creating new knowledge and participating ethically in communities of learning” (Association of College and Research Libraries [ACRL], 2016, p. 8). The Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education presents a set of principles, practices (that indicate ways to acquire knowledge), and dispositions (that establish dimensions of learning about these principles) from a perspective in which information creators and consumers can successfully participate in collaborative spaces since there is an affective, cognitive, and behavioral commitment (ACRL, 2016, pp. 7-8).

Therefore, this article aims to verify whether the Information Competence precepts application can contribute to a collaborative environment foundation among those involved in recording lessons learned in projects. Thus, in addition to presenting this introduction, the article describes its methodological path and the results obtained, which led to a discussion based on the references finally listed.

Methodology

The research which sustains that article has a qualitative approach, basic nature, exploratory objectives, and bibliographic procedures, and follows a methodological path based on Habermas's Theory of Communicative Action and the Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education of The Association of College and Research Libraries.

To demonstrate that the Information Competence precepts can contribute to a collaborative environment in project teams, was considered that collaborative practice is a voluntary and structured process that aims, through a non-adversarial and interdisciplinary approach to managing conflicts, to establish a negotiation in good faith between individuals committed to considering the interests of all (Instituto Brasileiro de Práticas Colaborativas [IBPC], 2020). Then, knowledge practices and dispositions of this framework have been identified and aligned with at least one of the following collaborative practices (IBPC, 2020):

1. Collaboration: Involvement of all in the creation process and the solution, sharing their points of view, knowledge, agendas, themes, and, most importantly, being concerned with the result for the involved.
2. Consensuality: everyone's commitment to seek to establish agreements without impositions and observing the principles of non-litigation and non-opposition
3. Transparency: attitude, conduct, or action of an individual or legal entity that hides nothing, revealing all information, documents, and materials, whether requested or not, as well as to answer to all substantiated requests for information.
4. Information: guaranteeing access to the necessary information so that individuals can reach a consensus by their own will and consciously establish an agreement.

As a premise, it was considered a project team is a community of practice, an informal and self-managed group of individuals with a common interest in learning about a given subject, where a leader acts as a facilitator in capturing, organizing, and disseminating knowledge obtained through the sharing of tools,

experiences, and instruments (Veronese, 2014). Therefore, it assumes the characteristics of a discursive community, a community kind in which communication is organized and demarcated (Hørland, 2002).

Results

According to ACRL (2016), Information Literacy is structured from knowledge practices and dispositions established by the following principles:

1. Authority Is Constructed and Contextual.
2. Information Creation as a Process.
3. Information Has Value.
4. Research as Inquiry.
5. Scholarship as Conversation.
6. Searching as Strategic Exploration.

The context of Information Literacy develops from its relationship with Information Science, which is concerned with “the problems of effective communication of knowledge and its records between human beings, in the social, institutional or individual context of the use of needs of information” (Saracevic, 1996, p. 47). By extension, it also develops from its relationship with Philosophy (search for knowledge), Education (encouragement of continuous training, including technical training, for life), and Sociology (social groups and the forms of interaction of their members, such as cooperation, competition, and conflict) (Vitorino & Piantola, 2020).

Through Philosophy and Education, Information Literacy establishes a relationship with Knowledge Management and, consequently, the record of lessons learned. In turn, as communities of practice and discursive communities, project teams assume their sociological bias, assumptions that enable their approach through the Theory of Communicative Action. Thus, the link between this theory and Information Literacy has been established, which made it possible to identify the knowledge practices and dispositions capable of contributing to a collaborative environment in project teams, as shown in Table 1:

Table 1 – Information Literacy knowledge practices and dispositions related to collaborative practices

Information Literacy	COLLABORATIVE PRACTICES			
	Collaboration	Consensuality	Transparency	Information
KNOWLEDGE PRACTICES	understand the increasingly social nature of the information ecosystem where authorities actively connect with one another and sources develop over time	define different types of authority, such as subject expertise (e.g., scholarship), societal position (e.g., public office or title), or special experience (e.g., participating in a historic event)	use research tools and indicators of authority to determine the credibility of sources, understanding the elements that might temper this credibility	draw reasonable conclusions based on the analysis and interpretation of information
	recognize that acting in a specific area develops one's own authority and that it carries responsibilities, including seeking reliability, accuracy and participation in communities of practice			assess the fit between an information product's creation process and a particular information need
	give credit to the original ideas of others through proper attribution and citation			recognize that information may be perceived differently based on the format in which it is packaged
	understand how and why some individuals or groups of individuals may be underrepresented or systematically marginalized within the systems that produce and disseminate information			monitor the value that is placed upon different types of information products in varying contexts
	critically evaluate contributions made by others in participatory information environments			develop, in their own creation processes, an understanding that their choices impact the purposes for which the information product will be used and the message it conveys
				recognize issues of access or lack of access to information sources
				identify interested parties who might produce information about a topic and then determine how to access that information
				utilize divergent (e.g., brainstorming) and convergent (e.g., selecting the best source) thinking when searching
				use different types of searching language (e.g., controlled vocabulary, keywords, natural language) appropriately

Information Literacy	COLLABORATIVE PRACTICES			
	Collaboration	Consensuality	Transparency	Information
DISPOSITIONS	<p>respect the original ideas of others</p> <p>value the skills, time, and effort needed to produce knowledge</p> <p>see themselves as contributors to the information marketplace rather than only consumers of it</p> <p>value intellectual curiosity in developing questions and learning new investigative methods</p> <p>value persistence, adaptability, and flexibility and recognize that ambiguity can benefit the research process</p> <p>seek multiple perspectives during information gathering and assessment</p> <p>demonstrate intellectual humility</p> <p>understand the responsibility that comes with entering the conversation through participatory channels</p> <p>recognize that systems privilege authorities and that not having a fluency in the language and process of a discipline disempowers their ability to participate and engage</p> <p>seek guidance from experts</p> <p>question traditional notions of granting authority and recognize the value of diverse ideas and worldviews</p> <p>develop and maintain an open mind when encountering varied and sometimes conflicting perspectives</p> <p>maintain an open mind and a critical stance</p>	<p>accept the ambiguity surrounding the potential value of information creation expressed in emerging formats or modes</p> <p>follow ethical and legal guidelines in gathering and using information</p> <p>accept that the creation of information may begin initially through communicating in a range of formats or modes</p>	<p>understand that different methods of information dissemination with different purposes are available for their use</p>	<p>value the process of matching an information need with an appropriate product</p> <p>value user-generated content and evaluate contributions made by others</p>

Note: Adapted from *Framework for information literacy for higher education*, by ACRL 2016, pp. 12-23.

When analyzing Table 1, it is clear that these Information Literacy knowledge practices and dispositions represent the four basic categories of competence related to information, according to Wood Júnior & Picarelli Filho (1999): interaction (working productively in a collective way), resolution problem solving (identifying, designing and executing solution innovations), enabling (recognizing that change is needed and doing so) and communication (communicating efficiently and effectively).

For Habermas (1988), the fundamental categories are the world of life (where consensus is established through communication), the subsystems driven by power or currency (where listeners submitted to a speech of strategic purpose seek a helpful behavior), and the relations of mutual influence established between the world of life and the subsystems. That's the Theory of Communicative Action development context, where "an action can be understood as carrying out an action plan, which is based on an interpretation of the situation" (Habermas, 2015, p. 7).

Strategic action arises from intervention processes to carry out successful manipulation, through the transmission of information and influence of some individuals over others and the action of the situation itself, inducing the conduct (Ponchirolli, 2002). In turn, communicative action arises from the application of rationality in processes of understanding where language shows its potential to stimulate convictions and consensus (Ponchirolli, 2002), and according to the belief that "things have pretensions of validity and that they go through a process of validation until they acquire validity" (Gonçalves & Lima, 2014, p. 180).

Among the individuals involved in an action, consensus can be obtained through the reciprocity of their convictions, allowing the creation of a bond between them based on agreement and not on the influence of one over the other, which would characterize something forced that would reduce the effectiveness of the bond. At least from the participants' perspectives, agreement and influence are mutually exclusive elements of coordination of action (Habermas, 2015, p. 7).

Those involved in communicative actions seek, based on an established feeling of mutual solidarity, to obtain an understanding between them to elaborate a consensual perspective on something inserted in the world of life. Strategic actions, in turn, occur within subsystems and oppose communicative actions because they disregard this feeling (Habermas, 1988). However, it is worth mentioning that

both types of actions must coexist in the organization since they are inherent and indispensable to organizational strategic planning (Ponchirolli, 2002).

Discussion

From the perspective of the Theory of Communicative Action and aiming at effective management of knowledge in projects, the lessons learned recording must be performed as a communicative action, not a strategic one. Organizational knowledge develops through consensus established in communities of practice (or discursive communities) and from a collaborative environment in which information (regardless of its format and origin) circulates transparently to be analyzed and valued.

In a world of life threatened by individualism, subsystems in general oriented by the pursuit of power and money (such as capitalist organizations) need to establish the primacy of a dialectic that understands the existence of conflicts, using them in their favor through dialogue and negotiation between stakeholders. In this scenario, due to its ability to contribute to reconciling the informational needs of organizations in general, improving information literacy can be a viable way to establish this dialectic.

The record of lessons learned should represent a positive result of this dialectic. Cost, scope, and time constraints are inherent to projects and should serve as a stimulus (not an obstacle) to creating a collaborative environment to be shared by all project stakeholders.

In this way, projects are initiatives of a strategic nature that depend on the high-added-value of knowledge and collaboration to achieve their objectives. In the organizations that carry them out, projects follow one another, which demands continuous improvement of the individual skills of those involved in their activities. In this sense, with its principles, knowledge practices and collaborative bias provisions, Information Literacy contributes to a collaborative environment suitable for recording lessons learned by project teams, which makes it a critical success factor for knowledge management and of projects.

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