Project Knowledge Management and the Challenges of Rising Complexity and Uncertainty: Creating Learning Projects in Contemporary Transitions

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The Aim and Scope of this Special Issue

In the prevailing post-industrial society, knowledge and knowledge-intensive industries drive innovation, which in turn drives economic growth and the development of solutions to the complex global challenges that we increasingly face (Hislop et al., 2018). Projects and project-based work are at the forefront of capturing, using, creating, aggregating, and disseminating knowledge (Brady & Davies, 2004; Hanisch et al., 2009; Prencipe & Tell, 2001). Knowledge in the context of projects serves two basic functions. First, it serves as a critical resource that enables team members to carry out their assigned tasks effectively and to generate innovative solutions to ongoing project problems (Sergeeva & Duryan, 2021). Second, it serves as an outcome of projects, which is typically enshrined explicitly in the form of lessons learned and good practices as well as tacitly in the form of accumulated expertise by key project resources and participants (Sergeeva & Zanello, 2018). This knowledge contributes to the institutional memory of the parent organization, which can subsequently be utilized as an input by successive projects and for lineage management (Berggren, 2019; Kock & Gemünden, 2019; Maniak & Midler, 2014).

Though the domain of project learning is not new, however, the current context calls for new research efforts, due to the disruptive, uncertain, and urgent nature of ongoing unprecedented transitions. The aim of this special issue is to focus on the consequences of this new context on project knowledge management. Specifically, we highlight its role as a potentially strategic competency that would enable projects and participating organizations to better manage the challenges of increasing complexity and uncertainty in business environments. Building on this tradition of research on learning in, across, and through projects, how can we create and manage learning projects and programs within disruptive and open-ended firm transition strategies? Furthermore, does the ongoing context open new possibilities for renewed practices in terms of project governance, project organization and control, and project evaluation? Drawing on the concept of the learning organization (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995; Senge, 1990), learning projects and programs can be defined as those projects and programs that continuously create, acquire, and transfer knowledge, and are able to leverage this knowledge to quickly adapt to changes in their internal and external environments (Garvin et al., 2008). In the context of permanent organizations, this learning process primarily occurs internally. However, in the context of projects, this refers to both learning within projects and programs, which corresponds to the view of knowledge as a resource in projects, as well as learning between projects and the parent organization, which corresponds to the view of knowledge as an outcome of projects.

Potential Topics of Interest

The submissions for this special issue may focus on any concepts relating to knowledge management and learning in the context of projects. These concepts may be examined within individual projects, between concurrent or sequential projects, or at the interface between projects and the parent organization. We welcome a broad range of
methodologies and encourage interdisciplinary contributions, theories, and models. We also welcome qualitative case-based research, conceptual papers, quantitative studies, and papers using multimehtod or mixed-methods approaches. Some topic ideas are presented below.

**Knowledge management and learning within projects (knowledge as a resource):**

- Leading a learning project team and fostering team members’ learning orientation
- Socialization, externalization, combination, and internalization processes in projects
- Promoting knowledge-sharing behaviors and mitigating knowledge-hiding and knowledge-hoarding behaviors
- Knowledge translation processes in interdisciplinary project teams
- Explorative and exploitative learning strategies in projects
- Enabling roles of social capital in knowledge sourcing and acquisition
- Definition and development of the project-level absorptive capacity concept
- Leveraging design thinking for innovative solutions to project problems
- Collaborative and transparent learning and innovation in interorganizational projects
- Impact of knowledge management processes on individual, team-level, and project-level outcomes

**Knowledge management and learning between projects and the parent organization (knowledge as an outcome):**

- Knowledge-governance and goal-directed learning through projects
- Capturing and converting tacit project knowledge into lessons learned
- Organizational factors influencing knowledge transfer intention among projects
- Human resource (HR) practices and organizational climate nurturing the learning in projects
- Facilitating learning among concurrent projects
- Organizing sequential project lineage management within the firm
- Managing knowledge transfer within projects in ambidextrous organization
- Impact of cultural factors on cross-project learning
- Knowledge synthesis and integration in multiproject learning initiatives
- Two-way learning transfer between projects and the parent organization
- Multilevel knowledge transfer and learning processes in projects

**Knowledge management fostering creativity and innovation in projects**

- Various forms of knowledge management capabilities enhancing organizational social capital and innovation in projects
- Developing holistic systems of interproject and organizational learning

**Submission Process and Time Lines for the Special Issue**

Authors are required to submit a long abstract (700 words maximum) summarizing the key points of the work to the guest editors by 1 October 2022. Selection of the final invited papers will be based on the abstracts; the submitted abstract should cover these four components of the research in order to be considered:

1. Relevance of the problem (description of the real-world phenomena and need for research);
2. Theoretical underpinning of the research;
3. Methodology (clear steps of research design and description of the data); and
4. Contributions to the discipline of project studies and temporary organizing or to the broader field of business and management research.

Additionally, authors must highlight the interdisciplinary links and contributions from other fields to the scholarly field of project studies.

Upon acceptance, authors will be invited to submit a full paper online (https://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/pmj). Authors should carefully review and follow the PMJ® author guidelines (https://journals.sagepub.com/authorinstructions/PMX) and indicate the publication category special issue: “Project Knowledge Management and the Challenges of Rising Complexity and Uncertainty: Creating Learning Projects in Contemporary Transitions.” Submitted papers will be subject to the routine PMJ® anonymized review process with multiple reviewers. We expect authors and reviewers to work in a timely manner in order to comply with the anticipated time lines outlined below. If you have any additional questions, please consult any of the guest editors.

- Submission of a one-page abstract: 1 October 2022
- Submission of full paper after acceptance of abstract: 1 April 2023
- Approximate online acceptance: 1 January 2024
- Approximate online publication: 1 May 2024
References


