

Knowledge and Its production in construction domain: The Sri Lankan context

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Knowledge, during the last few decades, has become the central capital, the cost centre and the crucial resource of the economy. A strategic asset is valuable to an organization's ability to innovate and compete. It exists within the individual employees, and in a composite sense within the organization. There is strong and compelling evidence that the effective management of an organization's knowledge sources and capabilities is vital for improving organizational competitiveness.

Production of new knowledge is 'a series of transformations, by which standard sources, which are available in open markets [or contained within the organizations], are used and combined within the organizational context in order to produce [competences and] capabilities'.

The construction industry is a knowledge-based industry and the production of knowledge is vital for projects and organizations. Organizations need to exploit a variety of sources, which they can draw upon for knowledge production. The identification of appropriate sources is important. This research has attempted to identify the specific features of the knowledge profile of the construction industry. It achieved its aim by conducting an initial industrial survey in order to identify the key types of knowledge sources, main triggers of knowledge production and establishing the impact of project as well as industry characteristics and organizational culture on knowledge production. The results of initial survey were justified by doing case studies in actual projects.

Experience of individual, Other individuals (i.e. staff), Work studies and Analysis, Project routines, Project teams and Feedbacks from site management have been identified as the most useful internal knowledge sources and also Other external individuals, Repositories were the most useful external sources in the industry. Problem solving, Project Management and Administration, Innovation, Managing change and Marketing were identified as the main triggers of knowledge production. Organizations should focus more on these issues and consider appropriate strategies for dealing with them. In the main, there appear to be no formal and systematic approach to the production of new knowledge. Formalizing the knowledge production approaches, where appropriate and necessary, may increase the organization's knowledge production capability. Organizations may be better served if more articulation of knowledge production capability is considered.

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