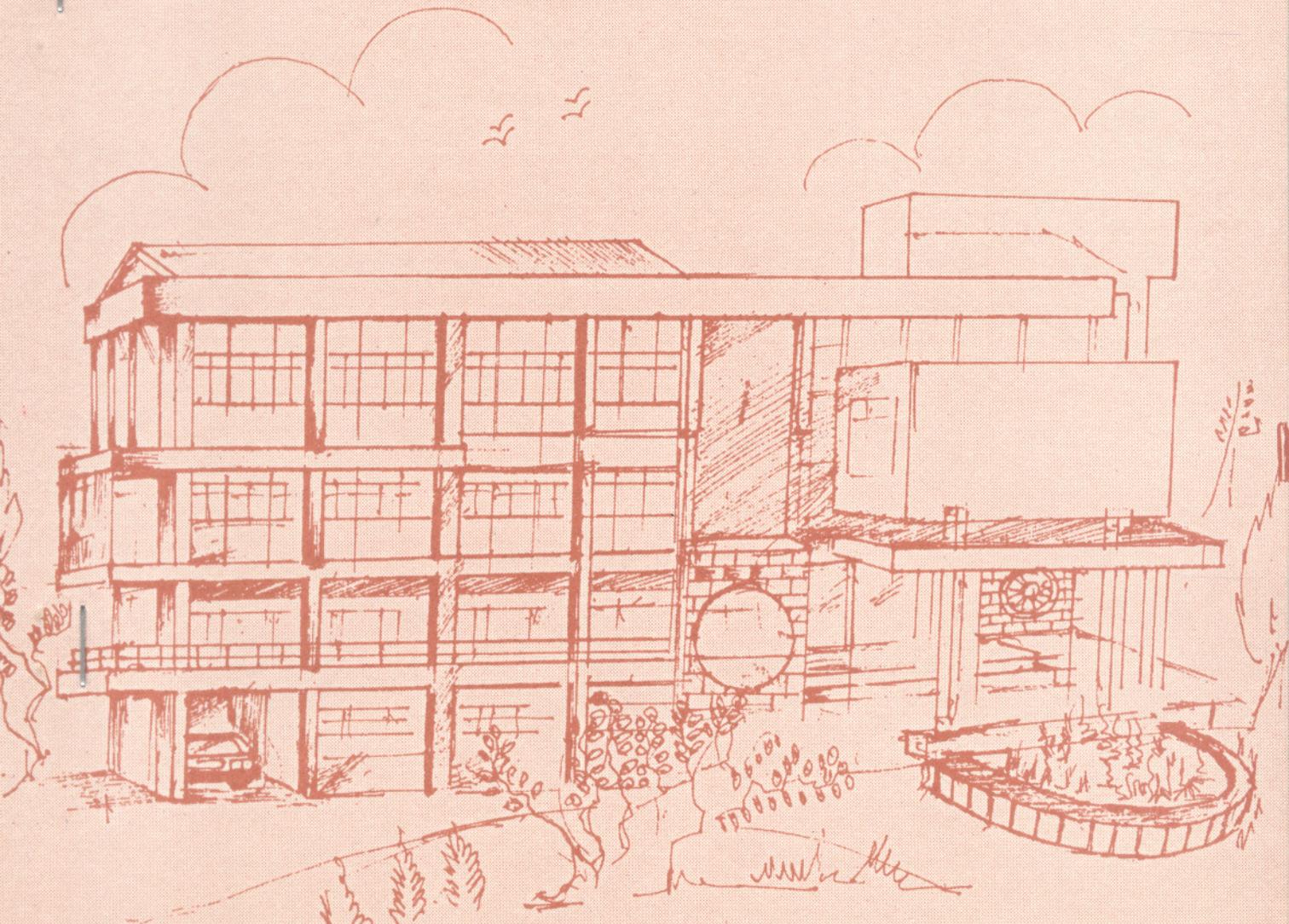




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**Learning Imperatives
through deductive
and descriptive data
collection process**



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Learning Imperatives through deductive and descriptive data collection process

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LEARNING IMPERATIVES THROUGH DEDUCTIVE AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA COLLECTION PROCESS

Rhythm imposes unanimity upon the divergent
Yehudi Menuhin

Abstract

The paper explains in detail about the methodology adopted to carry out a survey in a large field setting consisting of several live organizations. The core content of this paper revolves around generating field data sheets which are authentic, original and inferred meaning from the perception, observation, reflection and writing competence of the students. It also illustrates the manner of classifying and converting the abstract content input into application relevant output. The three pertinent elements documented from the field experience of the students are: Team Building & Team culture, Mentor Model and Work place – Design, culture & climate in the context of formal organizations

Key words: Field book/diary, learning imperatives, Deductive and descriptive research

Research Problem

Organizations are many things at once. They are complex and multifaceted. They are paradoxical (1). Understanding organizations through survey, using field diary record is an interesting research route (2). Is it feasible to induct an individual into the method of recording daily image, impression and visuals, later codify the data into a set of strands linking with the formative concepts imparted inside the class room. 141 individuals visiting 141 formal organizational locations forms a critical mass to collect field based data. The conversion of tacit data and information into cognitive knowledge is equal to an exploration of a gold mine. Using the field diary method, the project aimed to generate authentic data, documentation of the output after classifying the raw information into selected modes.

Input --- > Process -----→ Output Model

I = Field Data collection framework

P= Field Diary data classification and Documentation

O= Deducted inferences on team, team dynamics, mentor mode, design and culture aspects

This qualitative research is carried out by influencing an adult to capture the field data through a systematic recording. It involved enabling a group of eight or nine to convert the tacit data and information into knowledge and the validation of a few fundamental principles imparted though class room transaction.

LEARNING IMPERATIVES THROUGH DEDUCTIVE AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA COLLECTION PROCESS

INTRODUCTION

The working paper is prepared to share the methodology adopted to convert an abstract data and information mine into a structured learning construct. It also authenticates the scientific inquiry made possible in a vast mass such as 141 students and varied number of project sites. The paper substantiates the normal concern in exploratory research that the primary data collection by people of the people and dynamic processes is a complex and time consuming phase. The inertia and non clarity as maintained by the students prior to this documentation, is the natural phenomenon. By recording this experience, we fondly hope that anyone undertaking similar approach to collate widespread data and information will be helped to test this method. Two critical elements to be noted in this work is the pre guideline for field recording by the individual student and empowering the large group of eight to assess the content and quality of gathered data before finalizing a framework of documentation that ensured the desired result. The factor that will guarantee the authentic record of field experience is the induction of a scheme or discipline to pen down the entire happenings. Of course selling this method was feasible on account of the mutual benefit for the course facilitators and the individual student to codify and understand the decision making style in real life organizations.

Research Phases:

Learning is an ever ending process. In a setting such as a business school, facilitating learning through structured and open-ended means is the advantage. The traditional notion that teaching and learning can happen only inside the class room gets

completely disproved by the pedagogy that promotes field research, field project and action learning. Hence, the initiative taken by the faculty team to capitalize the summer project phase and direct the students to document the learning is to be regarded as first step (See Annexure I) in any scientific inquiry.

To enable the students to adhere to simple and systematic method of observation, reflection, and perception and write down a gist of each day, a format was given in advance. This is the second step towards standardizing the documentation by the students.

Third step: Once they returned from the Summer Project phase, collating, compiling the field notes, was carried out through one direct class room session by the entire batch.

Fourth step: To co-ordinate the documentation and evolve a comprehensive and complete output, an anchor person was identified from each associate group. 16 students along with the faculty members became the team responsible for documenting the learning inferences.

Fifth step: Each individual student profiled the firm/company/corporate by indicating the sector and his/her project guide as mentor. They also gave a brief extract of the learning from the field visit.

Sixth step: The entire learning was classified into three dimensions:

- Evidence of Team & Team culture in work-place.
- Mentor Model – Managerial and leadership inferences (Problem Analysis, Problem Solving, Decision Making, Conflict Resolution, Organizing, Administration, Time Management, Communication Efficiency).
- Work Place Dynamics – Design, culture, climate issues.

Seventh Step: Each student added value to the documentation process by elaborating on any one of the above three dimensions. Each group produced crystallized report containing the details of ‘Mentor’ and work place processes, team building and team culture.

Documentation process required considerable time frame and several stages of briefing, brain storming and discussion. To a great extent, validation and widespread discussion on facets of manager, leader, team culture, decision making styles were facilitated with practical data support. Initially, many students were puzzled about the method of crystallizing, gradually they aligned and created an extensive document to the size of 120 pages. Personal credibility of a project guide, nature of organizational design and the cultural dynamics evolved with spontaneous reconstructing their experiences.

The wealth of data is on account of the wide coverage of organizations drawn from various business sectors and also located in major geographical centres. The magnitude and multitude of inferences paved way for healthy deliberation among the students and carved insight into the cross section of the work place and personalities as mentors. Those students who had marketing, sales projects spent considerable time outside the firm, still they returned with the image and impression of the real life setting based on the perception and communication from customer, distributors and the general public. Similarly some students got attached with one project guide from the beginning to end and had ample scope to understand the nuances of work processes and the access to style and skills of their mentor. On the contrary in some situation, the project guide was frequently changed that they have to be satisfied with limited exposure to the internal matters of the organization. Some of the students had a very senior executive identified as project guide due to which they had one or two occasional sittings with them. Despite various constraints, individual students appeared to have made their best attempt to learn maximum in due course of their stay

Description

Totally 16 working groups prevail of a batch of 141 students. The working group is a facilitation and a system design that operates from the inception into the curriculum mode, in order to think, analyze and deliberate on an issue or problem collectively. Similarly, for the purpose of collating the varied experience and expressions from the summer project mode, the groups got together and prepared documents. The extract is a summary from the report produced by each group.

Group 1

The firms visited included a bank, knowledge firms, a Petrol Refinery, and a Consumer goods company. Two chose to describe the project guide as the mentor. They have benchmarked about the planning, time management, people relations aspects. The contrast design issue between a public sector bank and a private product selling firm emerged in the record.

Group 2

The firms visited included a bank, private watch making company, a consumer care company, an air service company, and a knowledge firm. The group has recorded the contrast features of a closed, hierarchical working place to an open empowered and self managing team culture.

Group 3

The firms visited comprised of a bank, large footwear company, hotel, market research firm, Telecommunications firm, mutual fund, insurance firm. The design and culture aspects explained reveal the formalization and standardization elements in a formal set up. The functional team and product team structure evidence is recorded. The mentor personality is viewed from both strong and weak points. Decision making process and style of a manager is considered as the most complex process to codify in real setting.

Group 4

The firms visited include a two wheeler sales firm, healthcare firm, public sector bank, manufacturing and consulting firm. Technical competence of the mentor is acknowledged as immense source of inspiration. Also the personal credibility factors such as hard work, humility, integrity are recorded by the group.

Group 5

The firms comprised of a health care, steel company, diary products, knowledge firms, bank, logistics and manufacturing units. Decision-making styles have a close correlation with the design and cultural characteristics of the organization. Leadership and

managerial styles indicate a blend of authoritarian and consultative mode. Downward communication is predominant in bureaucratic setting.

Group 6

The group dealt with bank, distribution firm, financial subsidiary, knowledge enterprise, pharmaceutical company. Matrix design is an intriguing discovery by a group member. The ease with team members shared information, conducted crucial meetings and took decisions is reported as evidence for emerging open work group design. Many have dealt in great length about the influence of the project mentor upon their impressions of a professional skill set.

Group 7

The group firm set comprises of a bank, a pharmaceutical company, a paint distributor, an insurance company, and a knowledge enterprise. Product division and team structure helps people to put across new ideas and validate the same internally. Learning and development is a continuous exercise to keep people update in the latest trend in the business. Managing change and innovation is also another area of importance for responding to the competition from the market.

Group 8

The firms interacted by the group are Information technology, consulting, knowledge services, telecommunication service, central bank and research centre. Formal, rational design is important to manage government owned organizations. To nurture creative talent of the people, CEO in private and profit motto setting, encourage people to think and act independently. Cross functional team and self managing team are formulated to help people to share the responsibility of business.

Group 9

The cluster consisted of a hotel, a bank, manufacturing units, a finance company, an IT firm and a consulting organization. The tall vertical and rigid structure is prevalent in old firms. Flat, open, lean and team based design and culture is promoted in new settings. The challenge for the individual is to produce result under high degree of uncertainty.

Balancing between professional profile and personal rapport building approach of the mentor is an intriguing aspect for many.

Group 10

The group visited a consumer finance company, a watch manufacturer, a dairy & beer products, bank and electrical manufacturer. The distinct difference between the old large organizations and the new information technology dependent firms is indicated. The new firms operate with open, flexible networked structure. The traditional design still relies on the distribution of positional power and the reporting system. Lean organization structure against multi layered design is described by the each member.

Group 11

The firms visited by the group are a BPO, a manufacturing company, a consumer goods services firm, and a non-government organization. The mentors demonstrated perseverance, patience, tolerance, integrity and hard work. Some of the effective managers combined task orientation and result orientation in getting work done from others. The report focused on a grid with goal, process, task and result orientation.

Group 12

The firms visited by the group are a bank, a food solutions company, Business processing centre, research institution, dairy and knowledge product firms, manufacturing unit and software firm. The internal structure and culture of a recently set knowledge economy firms appear to be encouraging people to be informal, cool and interact with each other in equal terms. Whereas the work place in a bank or old manufacturing organizations rely on positional power of the person and there is high degree of dependence on the wisdom of senior management. Experience holds key to power rather than the technical expertise or domain knowledge.

Group 13

The set of organizations represented by the group are drawn from manufacturing, banking and insurance, and hospitality sectors. The rule prone functional structure was encountered by several members. Only one unit operating with a parent organization of a

multi national presence, reported to have a matrix formation. Otherwise both the descriptions of the mentor and culture of the work place reveal bureaucratic context.

Group 14

The cross section of firms described by the group are a bank, knowledge enterprises, a manufacturing unit, a paint selling company, and a healthcare unit. The members had a peep into large, medium and small size organizations. The classification of the human resource as idle or benched waiting for lucrative project is a emerging syndrome in IT/ knowledge firms is recorded powerfully. The humility and patience of the mentor is reemphasized.

Group 15

The group visited a set of manufacturing firms, pharmaceuticals, telecom, food packaging and processing, and a bank. The formal, standard work procedure to ensure uniformity is observed across the firms. Creativity scope for individual is provided but with the final decision making is with the senior managers. Well accepted mentor is one who is known for his listening ability, empathy and participative mode of grooming subordinates.

Group 16

The firms comprised of a two wheeler manufacturing, Infotech subsidiaries of two major reputed companies, multinational software company, hotel, hospital and health care unit. Attention to detail is given in work place, decision making a complex and collaborative process, the design and climate aspects govern the motivation of people to produce results. Team building and empowering an individual are tough challenges. The person designated as leader or manager has to stretch himself to influence others and utilize all resources at his disposal.

Deduction

The inferences deducted from the data compiled, pertain to the various managerial and organizational processes.

1. Negotiation skills and political skills are essential to deal with real life situations.
2. In real life place, data and information is not easily available, one has to mull through various sources to build data.

3. Soft skills such as managing self, managing relationship with others understood as critical, by and large people resist to acquire the same through formal training.
4. Properly laid down systems is important to take speedy decisions.
5. To be self sufficient and willing to learn continuously appears to be the survival strategy.
6. The importance of scheduling and prioritizing work and time as a critical resource
7. It is important to know the peer in a hierarchy in order to learn several aspects of a job
8. It is difficult to integrate the interests of the organization with the interests of the employees.
9. Motivating people to work towards common goal is not an easy way.
10. Temper, mood and feelings require to be regulated when one is working in a formal organizational context.
11. Trust is hard to build in public and hierarchical organization. Everyone is secretive about one' own work, files and data.
12. To discover one's own potential in real life organization, one has to be willing to take initiative, be self motivated.
13. Though people have inherent traits and capabilities, they have to mould self to be suitable to the work place.
14. Most of the organizations operate through vertical design, wherein the senior executives control the flow of data and information and decision making is done at the top level.
15. Organic and matrix design reference is apparent in the new Information Technology enabled organizations, however the efficiency of the team work and team culture depends on the style and informal relationship of the people.
16. Repetitive work component is high in any typical role.
17. Creative energy is utilized in different organizations in different manner.
18. Hard work and humility are the two predominant virtues of a successful executive.
19. Patience and perseverance are required to set target and get the results achieved.
20. Participative culture depends upon the personal ability of a leader and the trust built over a period.

Results and future course of research

Field survey work is a laborious process and codifying the raw data into a set of application oriented knowledge is the major output of this collaborative effort. The detailed documentation is a testimony for the power of an individual's intellect or mind

that can be programmed to carry out numerous functions. Typically, during summer project moment, individual student will be anxious to align with the expectations of the officials of the firm. The primary data collection mode is often regarded as an abstract unstructured way. In the midst of one's own uncertainty, ambiguity and anxiety to deal with the challenges of the project phase, volunteering or making a commitment to record systematic data in the format suggested is a gamble. It is evident, inspite the students have managed to generate adequate visual images, impressions representing the real life dynamics. The caricature of a project guide as an inspirational model and constructing their learning through a managerial grid or personality mapping is noteworthy. Similarly, the group collectively gained by documenting their learning as they codified the work design, culture and mentor model in old, large, public and private multi sector organizations and as well as new, information technology knowledge firms. This exercise revealed the nuances and Polaris viewpoints of mechanistic and organic structures. The paradigm shift that is been referred in academic and practitioners' reference about the entrepreneurial matrix, empowered individual employee, self managed team and collective ownership based design and culture model appears to be a reality. The cross section representation in terms of sector, locations of the firm or the field has added immense value to the learning imperatives churned out from this document.

In future effort, the field diary guidelines can be customized to specific organizations. Emphasis can be to submit a copy of the field diary to the respective project guide to integrate the content with the advanced stage of MIP work.

Annexure 1

April 2006

Background note for the summer assignment

Managerial Leadership (Mapping a live person)

Every one of you will be allocated a project guide by the company. Generally such individual will be holding a functional position in the organization. Accordingly it could be a man/woman executive belonging to any of the desk: systems, finance, marketing, sales, Human resource, Research & Development,

Production, Operations, quality. From day one of your induction in the organization to the day last, you will be having abundant opportunities to observe the person in action. It will be worthwhile to learn in depth about the managerial and leadership perspectives of the executive. The crux of this learning is designing a document or record during your stay. On return to TAPMI you will classify the content and draw inferences for further learning and application.

Guidelines

1. Log Book: Chronological notes on your own understanding of the person who is providing guidance of the project
2. What aspects to observe and record?
 - a. Project Guides Skills: Communication, Time Plan, Defining the work to you, Coordination of the work, Support (Administrative, Information)
 - b. Project Guide's style: Other aspects of his work life (Pure observation made by you) and the facts that impressed you the most about this person (personal and interpersonal, decision making arena)
 - c. Project Guide's image /impression: Descriptive expressions about your project guide as you sail through different stages of the work
3. Why document systematically?

The real life situation is momentary. Daily you must devote 30 minutes at the end of the day to list at least a few points of learning. When you are aiming to capture the potential of a person in terms of his managerial and leadership caliber, the script will be comprehensive only when you record systematically. It is almost taking a snapshot of the multiple perspectives of an individual. Hence use the log book and scribble few lines daily and develop your final product.

Creative or indigenous Approach

There are managers who work with one or more of specific orientations, which will be apparent as you observe keenly. You can evolve any scheme of your original construct and develop an authentic document about the project guide or a

mentor who showed you direction for completing the summer project at the firm/
company/organization.

Caveats

1. Make it in a way that it is natural.
2. Mention the critical incidents which you felt very important for learning and documentation.
3. Uniqueness of the executive (any) note.
4. Anything that struck your mind as worthy point to share with others.

Benchmarking Organizational, Managerial process and style set

1st Learning set: Values, virtues (personal credibility factors of the project guide)

2nd Learning set: Work Place Competencies (Technical, Managerial and Behavioral Dimensions)

3rd learning Set: Managerial Grid (Task Orientation, Goal Orientation, People Orientation, Process orientation, People Orientation)

4th Learning Set: Efficiency & Effectiveness Facts (Administration, Organizing Mode, Planning, Creativity)

5th Learning set: Self Management (Emotional Display, Wit & Wisdom Combination, natural tendency, Stress Management, Time Management)

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