

Exploration of the Implementation Path for Capacity Building Management Work from a Project-Based Perspective

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Abstract: Traditional capacity building management relies on annual plans, on-the-job training, and other functional means. Under the dual pressure of dynamic environmental changes and rapid strategic adjustments, it increasingly exposes structural problems such as unclear goals, scattered processes, dispersed resources, and superficial evaluations. This paper adopts the idea of project-based management and systematically demonstrates the internal compatibility logic of the two in terms of goals, processes, resources, and evaluations. Based on this, it designs an implementation path system with goal-oriented, all-process planning and execution as the main line and resource integration and dynamic assessment as the two wings. The research shows that the project-based perspective can prompt capacity building management to transform from decentralized, passive functional behaviors to integrated, proactive governance behaviors. Its theoretical value lies in revealing the possibility of methodological migration of project management tools in non-traditional project fields, and its practical value lies in providing an organized and operational action framework for organizations to solve problems such as mismatch in capacity supply and demand and attenuation of construction effectiveness.

Keywords: Project management; Capacity building; Implementation path

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1. Introduction

Under the dual influence of continuous organizational development and a constantly changing external environment, the management of capacity building has shifted from the original “static configuration” to “dynamic empowerment.” The project-based perspective, due to its characteristics of clear goals, controllable processes, and concentrated resources, has endowed capacity building with a systematic and structured operational framework. This article mainly studies the implementation approaches of capacity building management from a project-based perspective, attempting to construct an integrated analytical model with theoretical explanatory power and practical guiding significance, in order to promote the transformation of

capacity building from functional management to effective project governance.

2. Theoretical foundation of capacity building management work from a project perspective

2.1. The core connotation and characteristics of the project-based management concept

The project-based management concept originated from modern project management theory. Its core idea is to separate one-off and unique tasks within an organization from regular operational activities, and to conduct systematic planning and control in the form of projects ^[1].

The project-based management concept has the following four characteristics. First, there is a rigid constraint based on goals. The project starts from a specific output goal, and time, cost, and quality are the three constraints, forming a result-oriented control logic. Second, it evolves in a phased manner throughout the life cycle. The project has specific deliverables and decision-making nodes at each stage, from start, planning, execution, monitoring, to closure, forming a structured control system. Third, it involves cross-departmental cooperation and coordination. The project organization crosses departmental boundaries and relies on temporary teams to complete the horizontal allocation of knowledge and skills, breaking through the vertical division of labor barriers of the bureaucratic system. The fourth is the involvement of multiple interacting stakeholders. Incorporating external uncertainties into the management perspective enhances the organization's adaptability. It should be noted that project-based management does not replace functional management; instead, it complements functional management. The two complement each other to improve organizational management.

2.2. The intrinsic compatibility logic between the project-based concept and capacity building management

Capacity building management is the process by which an organization identifies, acquires, develops, and optimizes the capabilities required for its members and the organization as a whole in order to achieve its strategic goals. Its essence lies in answering questions such as what kind of capabilities are needed, where they come from, and how they can be continuously enhanced. Traditional capacity building mostly relies on annual plans, job training, and other functional means, featuring fixed cycles and decentralized responsibilities. However, due to the continuous changes in the environment and frequent adjustments in strategies, the demand for capabilities has become increasingly individualized and time-sensitive. This has led to a structural contradiction between the rigidity of functional management and the flexibility of capacity building.

The intrinsic compatibility between the project-oriented concept and the management of capacity building is manifested in many aspects. In terms of goals, each task of capacity building serves a certain strategic intention or business scenario, which is highly consistent with the goal orientation of projects, and can be transformed into clear standards for improvement, completion deadlines, and acceptance conditions, preventing the occurrence of formalism. From the perspective of the process, capacity building is a process of "demand identification—scheme design—resource investment—implementation promotion—effect evaluation," which is consistent with the life cycle of projects. Project management gives the process tools such as work breakdown structure (WBS) and Gantt charts, transforming the process from vague experience into organized control. From the resource perspective, capacity building involves the allocation of many

resources, and a single department cannot complete it alone. Projectization relies on specialized teams and the integration of resource authorities to achieve cross-departmental coordination and scheduling. From the evaluation perspective, the effect of capacity building is lagging. The traditional approach is prone to the situation where the process replaces the result. Project management values the inspection of deliverables, strengthens accountability, and increases the transparency of value. **Table 1** is a comparison table showing the degree of compatibility between traditional functional-based capacity building and project-based capacity building management.

Table 1. The degree of compatibility between traditional functional-based capacity building and project-based capacity building management

Alignment Dimension	Characteristics of Traditional Functional-oriented Capacity Building	Advantages of Project-based Capacity Building Management
Goal Alignment	Annual fixed plan based, vague objectives, prone to formalism	Anchor strategies and jobpost requirements; define clear improvement standards, time limits, and acceptance criteria
Process Alignment	Fragmented workflows, lack of standardized control checkpoints	Align with the full project life cycle; adopt WBS and Gantt charts for standardized end-to-end process control
Resource Alignment	Resources dispersed across departments; high difficulty in cross-department coordination	Setup dedicated teams to centrally coordinate internal and external resources, including trainers, courses, and specialists
Evaluation Alignment	Only assess training satisfaction and written test scores, ignoring practical implementation outcomes	Focus on deliverables; establish a long-term evaluation mechanism to quantify the value of competency improvement

There is no substitution relationship between the two. Project-based management is a supplementary means that emerged to address the shortcomings of traditional functional training, such as poor timeliness and coordination, and inability to achieve dynamic capacity improvement.

In summary, the project-based concept provides a methodology toolkit and process control framework for capacity building. The combination of the two has theoretical compatibility and practical urgency. Essentially, it transforms capacity building from a scattered, passive functional behavior to an integrated, proactive governance behavior, which is conducive to improving accuracy, timeliness, and effectiveness.

3. Path design for capacity building management under the project-based perspective

3.1. Full-process planning and execution of goal-oriented capacity-building projects

From a project-oriented perspective, the first step is to complete the transformation from a functional mindset to a project mindset, and then implement it throughout the entire process of planning and execution. The goal-oriented theory holds that one must first determine the goals, then take action, followed by planning, execution, monitoring, and closure^[2].

The initiation stage mainly involves determining the project's goals and scope, establishing a two-way identification mechanism for demands, that is, decomposing key capability requirements from the top down based on strategies, and summarizing improvement demands from the bottom up based on job competency and performance gaps, forming a project charter, and determining the project goals, deliverables, milestones, budget, and team composition. The planning stage uses the work breakdown structure to divide the project into manageable work packages (such as demand research, course development, training implementation,

effect evaluation, etc.), define responsibilities, project timeline, resources, and acceptance criteria; and develop risk mitigation plans to address issues such as low participant engagement or inconsistent content. During the execution and supervision phase, coordinate resources—including instructors, courses, and venues—and establish a flexible allocation mechanism; monitor the process across three dimensions—timeline, cost, and quality—by holding progress meetings and phase review sessions, with a focus on evaluating process quality indicators such as participant feedback and outcome translation. The closing stage is an important part of the course’s conclusion, through outcome verification, submitting the final report, verifying the achievement of goals, analyzing the reasons for not reaching the goals, archiving course materials, assessment data, and other knowledge assets, and shaping an organizational knowledge base that can be reused.

3.2. Construction of the resource integration and dynamic evaluation guarantee mechanism

Capacity building management requires a supporting guarantee mechanism. Resource integration and dynamic evaluation become the two main pillars, respectively addressing the issues of what to do and how to do it. They complement each other.

Resource integration should be promoted through both internal revamping and external introduction. Internally, establish a “resource bank” and a “resource map,” code experts, courses, cases, platforms, etc., and make dynamic updates. Break through departmental barriers and clarify the rules for cross-departmental resource borrowing and sharing. From an external perspective, collaborate with universities, consulting institutions, online education platforms, etc., based on the project’s requirements, to introduce the latest knowledge and external intellectual support. Resource integration runs through the entire process. At the initiation stage, determine the requirements; in the planning stage, coordinate and match; in the execution stage, conduct dynamic scheduling; and in the closing stage, recover and reuse.

Dynamic evaluation should break through the traditional satisfaction questionnaires and examination scores model, and establish a multi-level, multi-time point, and multi-faceted system. Referring to Kirkpatrick’s four-level model from the aspects of response level, learning level, behavior level, and result level, it is necessary to attach importance to subjective feelings, knowledge acquisition, as well as work behavior transformation and business contribution. In terms of time points, combined with pre-tests and post-tests, baseline measurements are conducted before the project starts, evaluations are made at the end of the project, and tracking of persistence and conversion rate is carried out at nodes such as three months and six months. In terms of dimensions, in addition to the effect of ability improvement, process indicators such as execution rate and cost control rate should also be evaluated. The evaluation should be embedded in the entire process; checkpoints are set at milestones, stage results are reviewed in a timely manner, deviations are identified, and adjustments are made. The evaluation results form a closed-loop feedback, providing a basis for improvement for the project team, strategic planning data for the superior decision-making layer, guidance for the current ability status and development direction for the trainees, and stimulating internal motivation ^[3].

In summary, the capacity building management from a project-oriented perspective is an organic synergy system that integrates the goal-oriented overall planning and execution as the main line, and resource integration and dynamic evaluation as the two wings. It absorbs the core technologies of project management

and also conforms to the special laws of capacity building. It provides a feasible path for the organization to systematically and scientifically promote capacity building work.

4. Conclusion

The core conclusions of this article are three. Project-based management and capacity building share a deep structural isomorphism in the four dimensions of goals, processes, resources, and evaluations. Integration is an inherent echo of the management logic. The “one main and two wings” path design provides an operational solution that can be implemented for the transition of capacity building from functional behavior to governance behavior. Project-based capacity building does not replace the traditional functional model; instead, it is a functional improvement characterized by governance orientation and complementary functions within the project. The limitations of the research lie in that the proposed path is only a normative framework design without empirical verification, and the contingency adaptation conditions for different types of organizations also deserve further study. Future research can test the validity boundaries of this framework in dynamic contexts through case studies or quasi-experimental designs.

Disclosure statement

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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