

A Narrative Inquiry into Organizational Intelligence Pedagogy

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Abstract

This study aimed to understand the value perceived by the student-practitioner of the Organizational Intelligence (OQ) Model as an interdisciplinary, pedagogical approach to improving evidence-based management (EBMgt) practices in today's organizations. The most prevalent example of organizational hubris is the assumption that the firm knows "enough" about its stakeholders, competitors, market, and, most significantly, itself. Such a deficiency in organizational knowledge management—intentional or not—can quickly become the underlying cause of organizational failures if new learning is not leveraged into performance improvement. This narrative inquiry took the analytical form of a narrative mode of analysis, conjoining narrative thinking with contextual storytelling from the perspective of individual participants (Kim, 2016; Polkinghorne, 2010). In this case, the interpretation of participant perspectives is examined while assessing how evidence-based practices influence organizational ignorance, learning, and systematic decision-making levels. Findings from this study showed that participants (as leaders in their fields) experienced the benefit of learning to see multiple interpretations of reality and forming interdisciplinary praxis between ignorance, learning, and evidence-informed decisions that enhance organizational outcomes positively. Furthermore, benefits to collateral disciplines include implementation science and interventional research to inform and influence organizational change, policy-making, and other positive outcomes. The OQ pedagogy model advances instructional activities into learned-centered activities, placing the student-practitioner back into the reality of their workplace. It enables the active processing and application of new knowledge to support more effective, applied learning that benefits the student-practitioner and their organization. Findings advocate avoiding 'textbook syndrome' to help the student-practitioner make realistic sense of their situations inside organizations.

Keywords: Narrative Inquiry; Organizational Intelligence; Evidenced-based Management; Organizational Learning; Knowledge Management

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1. Introduction

"Contemporary society is obsessed with knowledge, leaving its less seductive counterpart, ignorance, in the shadows" (Alvesson et al., 2022, abstract)

Studies on organizational management identify several knowledge-processing problems. Adding stakeholder interests to the churn results in a decision-making dynamic highly contextualized with the organization's structure and cultural characteristics, tethering between helping and hindering the situation. Perhaps the most prevalent example of organizational hubris is the assumption that the firm knows "enough" about its stakeholders, competitors, market, and, most significantly, itself. Such a deficiency in organizational knowledge management—intentional or not—can quickly become the underlying cause of organizational failures if new learning is not encouraged and leveraged into performance improvement. This narrative inquiry examined the personal interpretation of participant experiences while assessing the extent to which evidence-based practices influence the levels of organizational ignorance, learning, and evidence-based decision-making at their organization.

Organizational Intelligence (OQ) has long been discussed, studied, poked, and prodded in many forums. In 1967, Wilensky opined in *Organizational Intelligence: Knowledge and Policy in Government and Industry* that as organizations become more complex, they need more and better information, but that, paradoxically, the very characteristics of more mature organizations tend to introduce distortions into the process of acquiring and distributing useful information. Sometimes, organizational structures make it hierarchically tricky for those in charge to act effectively, even when accurate information reaches the decision-maker.

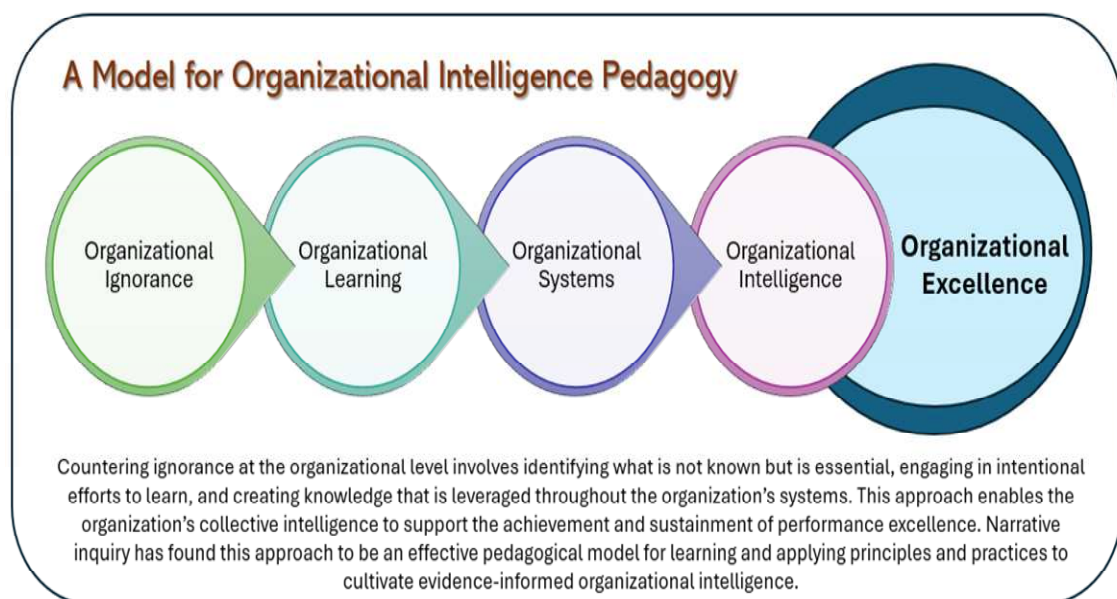
Albrecht (2003) proffers the case for overcoming learned incapacity to collectively generate the best knowledge in a way Banasiewicz (2019) suggests it should be operationalized, serving as the primary source for influencing decisions. Liebowitz (1999) advocates a knowledge management infrastructure, with February (2023) proposing a business intelligence effectiveness model that enhances organizational decision-making by leveraging a technology-driven process. In 2022, the Academy of Management Proceedings convened an expert panel on OQ, concluding that beyond just people, organizational routines, technologies, and distributed attention play critical roles (Boynton., *et al.*, 2022). Under competent, ethical leadership that applies critical reflection in action, an organization must navigate the ignorance continuum to succeed in the strategic pursuit of organizational excellence (Schon, 1983; Kellerman, 2004; Young, 2021). Capturing and sustaining a high-performing Organizational Intelligence (OQ) level is daunting but achievable. Where would a mid-career practitioner studying interdisciplinary leadership and organizational development begin?

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The term student-practitioner was chosen explicitly for research reports in professional education. For the transfer of knowledge to the practice setting, the student and practitioner identities require varying levels of integration (McSweeney, 2012). Successful integration of those roles offers a greater likelihood of knowledge and supporting behaviors transferring across the situation. When consistency between the individual's self-view and the view of others results in verification, self-esteem and self-efficacy increase (McSweeney, 2012). The use of the term student-practitioner is formalized in the practice of law. The Law Insider (2024) defines the student practitioner as a University student actively participating in professional practice (duties and functions) under agency employees' direct supervision and instruction. The District of Columbia Courts System and nearly all the United States District Courts authorize legal assistance by law students in practice (Georgetown Law Library, 2023).

While there are commonalities between models and frameworks, developing a model was preferred. Both offer benefits in facilitating collaborative communication, gaining a common language, alignment of objectives, and efficiency by avoiding reinventing the wheel (Pamplona, 2024). Risks exist from both models and frameworks, including oversimplification in establishing defined boundaries as ridged structures where static framing is inflexible to dynamic changes.

Figure 1: Depicting a model for organizational intelligence pedagogy



As a model, this approach guides translating science via evidence-based practices (e.g., problem-solving, decision-making, resource allocation, and change implementation) into applied leadership and organizational management. As Nilsen (2015) proffers, the rational, linear process models are being replaced with an emphasis on the context in which research findings are implemented. As such, it emphasizes the interdisciplinary

nature. Figure 1 illustrates how the continuum transitions from ignorance to learning into systems that can cultivate and steward organizational intelligence. A pivot to the benefits of organizational excellence is a desirable journey.

2. Literature Review: A musing in organizational intelligence

OQ fits within the established framework of systems theory and systems thinking, particularly during the shift into the knowledge age (Careda, 2020; Uhl-Bien *et al.*, 2007). OQ is strategy-level thinking that drives decision-making by identifying how the different pieces of a situation internally fit together and how the organization operates externally within its ecosphere. Bilgen and Elci (2022) go beyond advocating qualitative methods by institutional researchers, emphasizing the requirement for frequent application to achieve beneficial levels of organizational intelligence.

With the overarching objective being organizational excellence, the OQ Model evolves from knowing what needs to be known by overcoming ignorance through deliberate organizational learning and leveraging such new knowledge throughout organizational systems. *System* is a word that has Greek roots, meaning the *whole* (Espejo and Reyes, 2011). The literature maps the course where the notion of organizational systems culminated. Understanding that organizational systems are more than just hardware and software technical solutions is critical. An organization's culture is a system. Its leadership pipeline is a system. The formal and informal processes of knowledge management, strategic planning, and finance are systems. The informal and formal relationships with stakeholders are a system. Organizational systems can be considered a system-of-systems that link the pieces to produce an efficient and effective enterprise (Young, 2023).

Shared sense-making, interpretation, and storytelling serve as mechanisms in organizational development. Banasiewicz (2019) speaks to subjective evaluations, sense-making heuristics, and circumventing cognitive biases to draw more rational judgments. Issues with bounded rationality play a role in team dynamics regarding decision-making. Some decisional situations are highly uncertain, characterized by an unknown number and nature of potential consequences, and unpredictability of what constitutes a 'good' or 'desirable' outcome. Latham (2018) suggests errors should be encouraged, emphasizing that mistakes lead to learning successes, not performance failures. Leaders who think and behave with the traditional, mechanical organizational paradigm will not create a learning organization (Bilgen and Elci, 2022). Through sharing ideas and best practices, collaborative ecosystems serve as catalysts for learning, facilitating the adoption of new ideas and approaches. If leaders are to create original learning organizations, they need to adopt a new perspective, a new paradigm, or a realism-based mental model (Young, 2021; Shelton and Darling, 2003).

Individual, team, and organizational learning occurs independently, interdependently, and simultaneously. Through the organizational systems lens, the process of learning and remembering (Banasiewicz, 2019) and unlearning as a part of learning (Anderson, 2021) align with Garvan's (1997) earlier research showing evidence of tangible improvement in organizational learning would derive from measuring cognitive and behavioral changes.

One of the first challenges for organizations is accepting that data management is not information management and that, in turn, is not knowledge management. These are not interchangeable terms. Each represents the extent to which correlating context and processes are embedded into the systems that make up the enterprise. Simply hiring intelligent people will not automatically evaluate an organization's intelligence. Albrecht's (2003) Law comes to mind: "Intelligent people, when assembled into an organization, will tend toward collective stupidity" (p. 4). Developing and sustaining OQ requires effort.

Adopting the notion that organizations are living social enterprises supports an interdisciplinary perspective. This genre-blurring began in the 1970s when social scientists realized they were not obligated to imitate other empirical scientists when generating social theory (Kim, 2016). Akin to social theory, the same thinking can extend to organizational theory. Knights and Willmott (1999) describe how instructional textbooks commonly portray organizations and their employees in an abstract, rational, almost disembodied way, without the nuances and emotions. Such textbook syndrome focuses instead on the lived reality of managing in organizations today, leading to being saturated with competing models, theories, and the exhaustive summary of bullet points. Today, sense-making and corporate storytelling are skills in demand to bring realist relevance and understanding to the situation.

One benefit from practices in OQ is a fuller understanding of the organization's position in its ecosphere. The practice can begin by drawing evidence-based insights from aggregated operational data. Banasiewicz (2019) explains that operational data is any data or information generated during the performance of various organizational activities that can produce insights. Such insights can offer opportunities for continual improvement in equivocality and a clearer understanding of ambiguity, risk, and uncertainty (Young, 2021). Whether from Banasiewicz's (2019) exploratory data analysis, Garvan's (1997) foundational perspective on building momentum of the organizational learning curve, or Nonaka's (1994) pivotal findings on managing the creation and practical application of organizational knowledge, the wholistic intention is to systematically learn, continuously improve, and change course as warranted by the evidence. Doing so enables progression away from the less productive end of the ignorance continuum.

There are instances where organizational members make conscious choices to ignore or, more accurately, avoid knowing. McGoey (2007) finds that the intentional tactic of obfuscating information and disregarding knowledge serves well to preserve routines and protect the status quo from disruption. Willful ignorance makes sense if the enterprise's leadership desires to sustain its familiar bureaucracy. However, such "collective stupidity" and its subsequent byproduct, entropy, induce the waste of resources (Albrecht, 2003, p.7). It is difficult to be agile when change is avoided.

Another advantage of efforts to mature organizational intelligence is the correlation between leadership and innovative employee behavior. OQ studies have shown benefits that contribute to shared organizational vision, renewal processes, and positive strategic direction for the enterprise (Liebowitz, 1999). OQ serves as a mediating role in the relationship between innovation, leadership, and learning (Bilgen and Elci, 2022).

Collecting, analyzing, and applying the best evidence available in a conscientious, explicit, and judicious means when making important decisions is the very definition of evidence-based management or EBMgt (Young, 2021; Barends and Rousseau, 2018). As Banasiewicz (2019) emphasizes, evidence from the four sources (scientific literature, organizational data, expert practitioners, and stakeholders) does require scrutiny and validation. Expanding the sources of data and information as evidence before proffering a solution to a strategic challenge while recognizing that evidence alone will not persuade others (Young, 2022). Sharing the findings from organizational learning, both successes and failures, brings the evidence closer to the shared reality and ideally transitions into an organizational routine. Using evidence to baseline an organization's current learning and knowledge-sharing often begins with a diagnostic assessment. Such evaluation would explore aspects of the learning curve, reflexivity, organizational memory, and the extent to which experience reflection makes its way into action planning to capitalize on what the organization knows or needs to know. Underscoring the importance of reliable evidence to inform decisions, evidence-based change processes overcome the notional reality that learning to manage change using experience alone is faulty (Rousseau and ten Have, 2022). Lastly, applying good evidence-based knowledge and insight generates better outcomes than ideology or managerial capriciousness (Young, 2022; Barends and Rousseau, 2018). Such an approach bolsters organizational intelligence.

3. Context of the study

3.1. Participants

This study intended to gather perspectives that serve as evidence to produce a refined portrayal of organizational intelligence through the lens of newly minted, critically

reflective student practitioners. The participants were sixteen students with 5-25 years of experience working in the education, ministry, management consulting, health care, or social services fields, enrolled in a doctoral program, and completing a course on organizational systems (last in the Organizational Intelligence Track). The cohort underwent 23 weeks of instruction (divided into three 8-week courses) in organizational ignorance, organizational learning, and organizational systems. In the final week of the third course, participants were asked four questions involving evidence-based practices. These questions were randomly selected from a comprehensive international survey on managerial attitudes and perceived barriers regarding evidence-based practice conducted by Barends et al. (2017).

3.2. Methodology

A narrative mode of inquiry and analysis was applied after a period of interdisciplinary instruction in organizational awareness, learning, knowledge building, stakeholder relationships, cognitive bias, organizational systems, and evidence-based management practices, collectively categorized as organizational intelligence (OQ). Data collection using applied narrative in the form of four questions identified semiotic cycles by verifying and making sense or meaning by the participants in the relevant context of their organizations (Jones et al., 2017; Scollon and de Saint-Georges, 2011). Narrative inquiry allows for a deeper exploration of the personal and contextual nuances that quantitative methods might overlook, which is crucial for understanding the complex nature of organizational intelligence. After applying an assessment tool, participants posted semi-structured, written text sharing individual stories of perspective. The written text was collected for analytic use. The benefit of this approach, based on Charmaz's (2000) perspective on grounded theory, is that it enabled the collection of language data to be a constructivist process. The constructivist view of learning advocates that the teacher should do less telling while the students should explore more in the continuance of knowledge construction (Weimer, 2002; Gipps and MacGilchrist, 1999). As suggested by Mills and Gay (2018), the data analysis generated findings from personal experience, encouraging the instructors (as researchers) to personalize interpretation based on an intimate knowledge of the research setting. As Creswell (2002) opined, narrative research can facilitate the researcher forging a bond with participants. These mutually constructed relationships, as Connelly and Clandinin (1990) suggest, are characterized by caring, respectfulness, and equity of voice, balancing between researcher and participant. This is why participants' narrative responses were kept intact, as presented.

As Kim (2016) describes the premise of narrative thinking as a storytelling tactic, there are three components. The first is the participant's narrative scheme (organizing essential information achieved by directing attention to the four research questions), prior knowledge and prior experience (achieved in the participants' role inside the

organization), and the third component, cognitive strategy (taking form from skills used in comparing and reorganizing prior knowledge and experience driven by new applied learning). Interpreting data from a narrative follows Polkinghorne's (2010) methods, opining that "practical knowledge involves narrative thinking about how the effect of actions, happenings, and events affect the occurrence of ends" (p. 395).

In this study, the protracted instructional engagement with the participants was integrated with the researchers' expertise in the curriculum content and qualitative research methodology. Efforts were made to support Creswell's (2002) caution to ensure the participant's story is told rather than the researcher's. For this reason, narratives were kept intact as presented, and investigator triangulation was applied.

3.3. The roles of reflexivity and reflection

Reflexivity on the part of the researchers extends to conscientious self-awareness, recognizing how language, structure, and tone can influence the reporting (Delve and Limpaecher, 2020) and subsequent follow-up actions in response to the analytical findings. Understanding bracketing in qualitative research is essential. As Fischer (2009) opines:

"As researchers, we want to contribute to a shared, if always evolving, body of understanding. Hence, an additional purpose of identifying and describing one's background and perspectives is so that readers can take the researcher's perspective and find that it opens them to new understandings" (p. 584)

Those new understandings feed into the pedagogical approach to building student-practitioner knowledge in evidence-based practices as a precursor to organizational intelligence. Reflexivity on the part of the participants (as a student-practitioner) involves learning to question those "taken-for-granted assumptions, practices, policies, and so on," as framed by Cunliffe (2020, p. 65) while experientially developing an informed critical perspective. Such a change in individual-level perspective can begin an organization's journey to become more effective and efficient. Normalizing the routine of using evidence-informed practices to cultivate learning and leveraging systems will lead to becoming more intelligent. As an added benefit, when people are "stuck" (Cunliffe, 2002), reflexive learning can trigger the individuals "to make sense of an experience" (Corlett, 2013, p. 456). Such emphasis can improve individual and organizational readiness to embrace new methodologies, technologies, and practices, highlighting the importance of being agile and responsive to changes. Moreover, in bracketing narrative reflexivity, caution was applied to ensure the researchers remained objective in describing the stories reported by participants (Delve and Limpaecher, 2020; Fischer, 2009).

The application of reflexive thematic analysis, where the researchers' subjective expertise was beneficial, enabled the adoption of research questions originating in a previous international study being narrowed to three coded themes: (1) Organizational learning, (2) Organization adaptation and adoption, and (3) knowledge-informed change efforts. Further supporting this alignment of thematic codes is Veryard's (2023) description of an intelligent organization as having four collective capabilities: (1) an ability to make sense of complex situations and act effectively; (2) an ability to interpret and act upon relevant events and signals in the environment, (3) an ability to develop, share and use knowledge relevant to its business purpose, and lastly (4) an ability to reflect and learn from experience. Lastly, McKeown's (2019) run loop requires recognition, understanding, and adaptation, which aligns with the premise that organizational intelligence requires learning, adaptation, and knowledge to inform change efforts.

Being enlightened by different interpretative paradigms generates an understanding of human action through interpretation versus prediction and control (Kim, 2016). Connelly and Clandinin (1990) were the first to introduce the premise of narrative inquiry in educational research. With the study of narrative, the path to studying how humans experience the world is richer and made more personally meaningful (Connelly and Clandinin, 2006). By comparing and contrasting the varying perspectives, researchers can surface similarities and variations in how experiences are interpreted (Polkinghorne, 2005).

Narrative inquiry influenced research methodology with the *theory-practice-reflection* cycle of inquiry (Smith, 2008). To develop reflective practitioners, formal instruction, supplemented with cumulative organizational and personal knowledge and practices (Schon, 1983), enhances the personal and professional experience to understand best the complex dynamics that unfold inside organizations today. Such an approach fosters "learning in and from experience" (Cunliffe, 2020, p. 65).

3.4. Research questions

Participants were asked to loosely evaluate their organization on a scale of 1 (LOW), representing *rarely, if ever*, and 5 (HIGH) reflecting *always, even required*. Due to the number of participants choosing to apply narrative descriptions rather than quantification, statistical analysis would not be as helpful in understanding and interpreting responses. The research questions are: (1) To what extent does your organization believe adopting new and cutting-edge practices is essential? (2) To what extent is consideration given to the decision-effectiveness of other organizations? (3) To what extent is internal data systematically evaluated to understand a problem better? (4) To what extent is the effectiveness of new policies and practices evaluated after implementation?

4. Findings

As Caredda (2020) summarized, many organizations can be labeled, in a kind yet definite way, as non-intelligent. In earlier work, Young (2022) found that practitioners face challenges seeing the relevance of evidence-based approaches to solving strategic challenges. The basis for the claim is the noticeable and evidenced existence of at least one of the following three conditions supported by participant analysis.

4.1 Stifled Learning

When an organization learns, the exponential value is more significant than the sum of its parts. Diminished formal learning results in the misalignment of organizational systems and perpetuates a mindset with corresponding behaviors reflecting an attitude of *we don't know what we don't know, and we don't care because we already know best*. Such is the case when leaders rely upon their non-expert intuitions rather than seek to supplement their perspectives with data, information, or other perspectives when challenged by new obstacles (Young, 2022). There needs to be more room for reflection and learning from experiences or trying to make sense of complex conditions in which the enterprise finds itself. In learning-deficient organizations, errors are frowned upon rather than viewed as learning opportunities.

Furthermore, a void in the action learning that would otherwise enable a challenge to the intractability of the status quo is lost. Schon (1983) defined *reflection-on-action* as the retrospective assessment of a decision, event, or behavior considering what happened, why it happened, and what improvement can be garnered. Reflection is absent in organizations with deficient knowledge systems. An organizational culture that fails at learning will falter in the development of OQ (Kucharska and Bedford, 2020). A consensus has emerged around the importance of engaging in continuous learning and improvement cycles, fostering a culture of innovation and evidence-based practices. Participant perspectives supported the finding that diminished learning is an adverse factor:

“Without employee input, policies developed solely at the senior management level might lead to resistance and hinder successful implementation. Creating a platform for open dialogue and involving teams in the policy-making process can foster a culture of collaboration and acceptance (P#1).”

“The Abbreviated Assessment of Evidence-Based Management Practices within Organizations reiterates the cultural value and meaning of evidence across a complex system by providing a scaled instrument to assess where on the spectrum of evidence-based management and individual views the organization. This scale could

play a part in implementing a systems and evidence-based management approach to making decisions (P#3)."

"... the organization could benefit from doing more to examine what other organizations are doing and how it works for them. This could involve conducting formal benchmarking studies, participating in industry associations, or focusing on the latest trends in the field. However, while learning from others is valuable, balancing external insights with the organization's unique context and needs is essential (P#4)."

"I understand that sometimes we don't have the luxury of time to make a sound decision, but if we only took the time to implement some evidence-based practices—to find the solution before the problem occurred—we'd be in a much better position overall (P#5)."

"When completing the assessment, I found that my organization makes decisions by examining what other organizations are doing and how it works for them. This is a collaborative effort also to create unity within the [anonymized] industry. They also do a great job systematically evaluating internal data to understand the nature of the problem. This contributes to the development of the quality improvement committee (P#6)."

"I have a congregation of people who are wide open to new and innovative ways of doing church! We just haven't figured out what that means for us (P#7)."

"In order to make informed decisions, it is imperative to evaluate internal data to understand problems thoroughly. However, this approach must be consistently applied in understanding issues and evaluating the outcomes of solutions implemented. Every decision and its impact are interconnected in complex systems. Enhanced data analysis can reveal these connections, allowing for predicting and managing unintended consequences (P#8)."

"The organization scored 14 out of 20. This indicates that my organization may have some room for improvement to minimize any threats of biases toward acceptable social norms for or against top performance and gender (P#10)."

“Organizations must assess perception to understand where improvements are needed and how staff values current evidence-based practices. The scoring presented is clear and concise, making it easier for individuals to assess their evidence-based systems. Understanding your organization's scoring can provide insight into whether evidence-based practices are valued and taken seriously (P#11).”

“Organizations must assess perception to understand where improvements are needed and how staff value current evidence-based practices (P#12).”

“It’s important for organizations to analyze data and understand specific challenges (P#15).”

These comments highlight a significant deficiency in organizational learning: the absence of engagement and contributions from various levels within the organization leads to the stifled application of learned insights.

4.2. Insufficient Adaptation and Adoption

When organizations fail to take fully effective measures to navigate the ignorance spectrum, it can be the result of insufficient adaptation or inadequate adoption. Organizations are social entities composed of people, processes, and systems. Interconnectedness is an obligation, as demonstrated in McKowen's (2018) Run Loop, illustrating the enterprise's formal process for recognizing, understanding, and executing the necessary adaptation to influence the firm's future. Findings by Bilgen and Elci (2022) confirmed that leadership and OQ affect employees' innovative behaviors positively and significantly and that OQ has a mediator effect between leaders and innovative employees. New paths to solutions can be plowed with new learning that enables systems to adopt and adapt – if the organization's culture allows for change. Descriptions of difficulties in adopting and effectively implementing new policies underscored systematic barriers to EBMgt adoption.

Participants highlighted significant challenges in systematically evaluating and utilizing data for informed decision-making, pointing to a gap between the value placed on EBMgt and its practical application. Narratives supported the premise that the failure to adapt and adopt is a factor:

“I recently undertook the Abbreviated Assessment of Evidence-Based Management Practices within Organizations test, which shed light on crucial aspects of our organizational dynamics. The results underscore the need for a strategic reevaluation of our approach to adopting new practices, decision-making processes, data utilization,

and policy implementation. Our reluctance to collaborate with similar institutions could limit our growth potential and hinder the exchange of valuable resources (P#1)."

"Reflecting on these findings, it is evident that our leadership team has a deep self-awareness to score their evidence-based practices transparently but may need help with systematically implementing and evaluating these practices. This could suggest a need for more structured approaches to data analysis and review processes, ensuring decisions are informed by comprehensive internal evidence (the facts and the feels) and that the impact of new policies is thoroughly understood. The reflection on the assessment underlines a critical need for further development in EBM within our organization. This development, however, hinges on a prerequisite: a cultural shift in beliefs about evidence management (P#2)."

"As a smaller entity, relying on gut feel might have sufficed initially, but such an approach lacks scalability. Real progress in EBM practices demands a foundational change in how evidence and data-driven decision-making are valued and integrated into daily operations. This cultural evolution is essential for sustaining growth and enhancing decision-making processes as the organization expands (P#2)."

"For my organization to flourish, it is imperative to acknowledge its nature as a complex system, demanding careful consideration of its dynamics. Decisions in one area can have ripple effects across multiple departments and teams. Also, different backgrounds, experiences, and viewpoints can spark innovation and create more comprehensive solutions. Consequently, it is time to move beyond a siloed mindset and embrace a more interconnected and collaborative approach. Using evidence-based management to drive decisions within my organization could strengthen buy-in from staff and stakeholders (P#4)."

"Some decisions are made using bias. However, evidence-based decision-making eliminates the use of bias through the use of data. Statistics and input from various areas support decisions made using these practices to give a rationale. Using evidence also allows for more understanding of the significance of decisions. Staff members are more likely to feel safe when transparent data is shared regarding

decision-making. Beyond this, presenting the data in understandable ways across the entire organization is beneficial in simplifying the complexity of systems (P#4)."

"We do not adopt new or cutting-edge practices. The new programs and resources we have adopted are not done with fidelity and become entangled with the old systems we should be ending. For example, we adopted a new curriculum for math and reading for lower grades. Instead of using these programs as they were intended, my network adapted them to mix with some of the old systems. We could also influence this piece by examining other organizations and see how to better implement pieces based on what is working across trends (P#12)."

"This week's discussion post has been incredibly eye-opening as it relates to my organization to observe evidence-based management techniques in business. As such, we base our utilization review decisions on evidence-based guidelines to help reduce waste, cut costs, and mitigate the use of radiation when possible. Ironically, the same organization has failed miserably at creating and implementing evidence-based practices for navigating complex systems across our organization, leading to a breakdown in communication and ineffective strategies across teams. I would score my organization at three because many areas are disjointed and misaligned in this area. In addition, stakeholders are not often consulted on the next best course of action, leading to overlapping policies and procedures (P#14)."

"Adaptability is vital for navigating through uncertainties and seizing opportunities effectively. A prime example of this within our school district was during COVID-19. During this time of uncertainty, we had to shift across the district as well as within our department. Resource allocation can be challenging in complex systems due to competing demands and emerging priorities. Evidence based decision making provides a systematic means of prioritizing investments and optimizing resource allocation. By allocating resources to areas with the highest potential for impact, organizations can enhance their efficiency and effectiveness with complex systems. At times, some of these shifts hurt some teams more than others and caused some strain on teams. Leveraging evidence-based management practices can empower organizations to navigate the intricacies of complex systems

more effectively. As we continue to understand the complexities of our organizational ecosystem, integrating evidence-based decision-making will be important in achieving sustained success (P#14)."

These narratives convey a prevailing message: systemic change is essential to embrace evidence-based practices fully. Implementing new methods and technologies goes beyond policy changes and necessitates a profound cultural shift that prioritizes and integrates data-driven decision-making at all levels. This transformation is imperative for organizations striving to maintain competitiveness and responsiveness in a swiftly evolving landscape.

4.3. Failing at knowledge-informed change

When no attempt is made to increase the value an organization introduces itself to its ecosystem, and stasis sets in. This lapse in change means no or little effort exists to manage risks or capitalize on opportunities, often presenting as the status quo scenario. Relying on the most appropriate evidence to support change helps guard against the tendency to conform to others in the group, even when doing so is less effective or counterproductive (Barends and Rousseau, 2018). In these scenarios, interdisciplinary reflexivity to shape organizational realities through member engagements (Cunliffe, 2020) is underdeveloped or non-existent, leaving assumptions and inferences unchallenged. This lack of reflexivity in practice compounds when complexity spins up during change efforts. The resulting chaos is not constructive. This theme illustrates how decisions, policies, and practices grounded in empirical data guide the organization's direction, ensuring that actions are based on actionable intelligence rather than conjecture. Participant narratives underscore the need for a cultural transformation to integrate evidence-based decision-making across organizational practices. This cultural shift is vital for organizations to effectively use knowledge in guiding change efforts:

"Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) can serve as dynamic tools for measuring actionable metrics and driving continuous improvement. Furthermore, the institution needs to consider dismantling barriers or silos. Dismantling barriers requires adept navigation of relationships, particularly those influenced by fixed mindset leadership (P#2)."

"This development, however, hinges on a prerequisite: a cultural shift in beliefs about evidence-based management (P#3)."

“We must speak truth to power and confront ignorance with facts. Demonstrating a commitment to truth and factual accuracy builds credibility, which is essential for continuous improvement (P#4).”

“My organization scored a ten after I completed the Abbreviated EBMgt Assessment. We scored lowest in the areas of evaluating the internal data to understand the problem before deciding on a direction (1) and assessing the effectiveness of new policies and practices (2). Our company could use evidence-based decisions to positively impact our systems. Sounds simple enough, right? Unfortunately, it doesn't always happen in this way. We often make decisions by evaluating one problem without fully understanding how that "fix" will impact another thing or how that solution, while good for the business, may impact the customer's experience (P#5).”

“When leaders are on the same page, the rest will follow. Creating this will help move the agency forward (P#7).”

“To improve, we would need to ensure that the systematic evaluation of internal data is comprehensive and includes diverse perspectives. We must maintain a robust feedback loop to improve policies consistently. We can break down data loss and ensure timely, relevant data is readily available across the organization for informed decision-making. We should also invest in user-friendly data visualization tools to enhance data utilization (P#4).”

“We often make decisions by evaluating one problem without fully understanding how that "fix" will impact another thing or how that solution, while good for the business, may impact the customer's experience (P#5).”

“It is critical to note that evaluating the effectiveness of new policies and practices was scored at a 2, making it an area for improvement. Adopting new practices is only as effective as their evaluation, yet my organization often needs to reevaluate its effectiveness to implement policies and practices. By implementing systematic evaluation, it becomes easier to determine if practices are effective or need to be adjusted or discontinued. Regular reviews, feedback loops, and adjusting strategies based on outcomes can significantly enhance an organization's ability to evolve and respond effectively to complex system dynamics (P#8).”

“If we truly want to make changes within our organization, it is essential to understand the repetitiveness that got us to the state we are in and understand that change will not be able to be implemented overnight. Through significant research, adaptability, and planning, those evidence-based decisions can be made that will, in turn, provide a positive outcome for the organizations as a whole (P#9).”

“By adopting a more systematic and collaborative approach to EBM, informed by the principles of simplicity in complex systems, [removed] can move beyond reactive decision-making and build a stronger foundation for long-term success across our entire school system (P#16).”

“This spring, we tried a different acceptance process, which quickly turned out to be a big headache. We should have realized that changing our organizational structure may impact communication flows, decision-making processes, and employee and student morale. We did not think that changing one thing would create a ripple effect on the outcomes; however, it is all interconnected. Where we went wrong was changing the parts but not looking at the whole interconnected process (P#13).”

The narratives highlight a common challenge: the need for a shift in organizational culture to embrace and integrate evidence-based decision-making fully. Emphasizing systematic evaluation, continuous improvement, and the strategic use of data, these changes are crucial for organizations aiming to break away from stagnation and evolve into more dynamic, responsive entities. This cultural evolution is essential for enhancing the organization's capacity to manage change effectively and optimize overall performance.

5. Discussion and conclusions

This narrative inquiry examined the individual interpretation of participant experiences inside their workplaces while assessing the extent to which evidence-based practices influence organizational ignorance, learning, and knowledge-informed decision-making as part of a system. Findings from this study showed that participants benefitted from learning to see multiple interpretations of reality when forming interdisciplinary praxis between ignorance, learning, and systematic intelligence decisions. Furthermore, benefits to collateral disciplines include implementation science, strengthening the adoption of research findings as a managerial routine, and

interventional research to identify the most substantial levels of evidence to influence organizational change, policy-making, and other positive outcomes.

Analytical insight representing evidence emerges from trends, correlations, and patterns drawn from objective, multi-sourced data. Findings from student-practitioner assessments using an instrument to assess organizational conditions associated with applying evidence as an organizational routine. These conditions are interrelated, with each embracing the interdependent nodes that lead to systematic development, sharing, and use of data, information, and knowledge to bolster an organization's progress to excellence exponentially. Other disciplines, for instance, organizational design, evidence-based management (EBMgt), enterprise architecture, change management, stakeholder relationships, leadership, and decision-making, contribute to tailored operating models and systems that cultivate organizational success. Interdisciplinary approaches are beneficial for building capabilities in organizational intelligence. OQ has grown from an exciting topic in theoretical conversations and academic towers to the pragmatic realism of an organizational necessity for significance.

The application of Polkinghorne's (1995) narrative mode of analysis was most helpful, having noticed the differences, similarities, and diversity of perceptions. As Kim (2016) elaborates upon Polkinghorne's proposition, the narrative mode of analysis focuses well on the series of learning sequences in this case and surfacing data elements to show the significance of the learning experience to the participants' real world. In the same vein, practitioners may adhere to the evidence in hand or seek out new evidence. As Barends and Rousseau (2018) suggest, it is critical to recognize differences in higher-quality and lower-quality evidence. Instruction in evidence-based management, coupled with applying sound practices that help decipher a scenario and offer higher-quality evidence, can promote higher-quality outcomes.

The OQ Model advances the transition from instructor-led to learner-centered activities and culminates in an activity with the student-practitioner back in the workplace, applying critical reflexivity. Critically reflexive practitioners are those whom Cunliffe (2016) describes, critically appraise assumptions and inferences underlying actions, the impact of those actions, and, more broadly, "what passes as good management practice" (p. 748). Such an approach enables active processing and application of new knowledge to support deep, long-term, applied independent learning that benefits both the student-practitioner and their organization (Offstein and Chory, 2019; Elan *et al.*, 2007).

Findings suggest attributes of critical pedagogy where the instructor and the student learn together that curriculum building blocks were taught in sequence so skills could be mastered and measured by frequent testing (Nerantzi and Chatzidamianos, 2020),

with motivation provided by reward and positive reinforcement. This model of organizational intelligence pedagogy leveraging action learning facilitates the student-practitioner becoming more reflective, as Cunliffe (2020) suggested. This model goes deeper by embracing more subjectivist, social constructionist ontology, recognizing that people shape and maintain their social and organizational realities in interactions, conversations, and narratives.

As Pratt *et al.* (2019) posit, instructors make informed decisions relevant to instruction based on the intended consequences: students. Most significantly - good teaching requires the ability to interpret and respond to dynamic patterns of significance using frames of reference. Findings from participants underscore the juxtaposition – good learning requires interpreting the connection between theory and applying that understanding through adapted innovative practice.

Pedagogically innovative classification requires an increased educational sense of belonging and engagement, as suggested by Palmer and Giering (2023). The intended and consequential outcomes of the curriculum were achieved through an augmented degree of innovation based on the findings using their taxonomy of pedagogical innovations in higher education. Additionally, the use of the active learning advocated by Fernandes *et al.* (2024), leveraging a mix of problem/project-based learning (PBL) and challenge-based learning (CBL), emphasized self-directed inquiry focused the student-practitioner to a real-world, authentic workplace challenge. Such findings offer pedagogical validity as the holistic form of consequential validity of the teaching. From the practitioner's vantage point, exposure to this model allows one to grow an individual perspective.

There are limitations to this research beyond the often-identified generalizability of qualitatively anchored research. This research population was limited to doctoral candidates who are accomplished practitioners, resulting in non-probabilistic sampling being narrowed to participants in a cohort undergoing advanced formal instruction. The findings of this study should be interpreted with this limitation in mind. At the same time, this limitation offers opportunities for future research to (1) examine the continued use of evidence-based practices by the participants in this study, (2) case study research following individual participants to assess the extent to which the implemented evidence-based practices evolved into organizational routines and a part of a system, and (3) once converted to a framework, this model's utility may offer value to organizations interested in building organizational intelligence capacity.

This study concludes that building knowledge, skills, and abilities in the interdisciplinary approaches enabling organizational intelligence will offer dividends that bolster the firm's knowledge management capabilities and influence a more

productive, efficient, and effective enterprise. Literature in organizational intelligence and evidence-based management portrays that when evidence-based practices are contextually organized and set into motion through learning, technical, and operational systems, decision-makers will have the information needed to make informative, optimal decisions. For that reason, these findings offer positive implications for practice. It emphasizes that leaders are crucial to navigating and implementing changes, championing data and evidence use in decision-making, and transforming organizational culture to value evidence-based management practice, culminating in a higher level of organizational intelligence. This model for understanding and applying those factors that feed into the concept of organizational intelligence offers foundational-level knowledge. Organizations prioritizing innovative changes are better equipped to adopt new approaches that enhance operations and sharpen the competitive edge.

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