

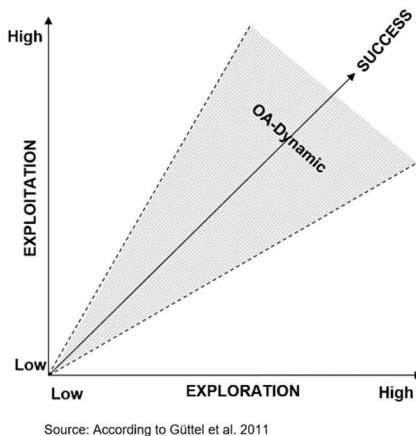
The Dynamics of Organizational Ambidexterity in Distributed Organizations

by Elena Krause, M.A.

Background and Research Gap

Successful organizations in dynamic environments are ambidextrous organizations. Faced with growing complexity and uncertainty, organizations need to be efficient in their management of today's business and need to drive change and innovation. The approach in this context is 'Organizational Ambidexterity' (OA). Despite the wide attention that has been devoted to this topic and the prevalent acceptance that OA leads to sustainable success, the majority of prior studies have frequently taken a static perspective on ambidexterity and almost always adopted a cross-sectional research design and thereby failed to explain how organizations adapt their exploration-exploitation balance over time to respond to varying boundary conditions. However, understanding the dynamics of ambidexterity in practice is pivotal in times of increasing complexity and turbulent environments where organizations constantly have to adapt to varying boundary conditions. To investigate how organizations, adapt and develop ambidextrous structures, contexts, and leadership patterns, a process perspective is needed. A process perspective enables researchers to investigate ambidexterity over time (Raisch & Birkinshaw, 2008).

The purpose of this dissertation is to explore the dynamics of organizational ambidexterity and in particular to analyse how distributed organizations change their exploration-exploitation balance over time. From this perspective, OA can get valuable impulses for an emerging theory. The definition by Luger, Raisch, & Schimmer (2013) guides this study's research design: Dynamic OA describes the ability of an organization to adapt its exploration-exploitation balance over time.



Source: According to Güttel et al. 2011

Research Aim

The overall goal of this dissertation is to enhance the understanding of (dynamic) ambidexterity in organizations in order to promote an emerging theory of ambidexterity (Raisch & Birkinshaw, 2008). This study aims to extend previous empirical findings with an empirically-grounded mixed-method multi-level analysis in the tertiary higher education sector, answering the question how the dynamics of ambidexterity could be influenced in distributed organizations. More specifically, the study explores the processes on how organizations adapt and develop ambidextrous structures, contexts, and leadership patterns over time – and the extent through which antecedents such as organizational identity (and possibly identity formation) can become important aspects in the context of distributed (former independent) organizations to achieve organizational ambidexterity and to adapt the exploration-exploitation balance over time. Working assumption: firms have to constantly adapt their exploration-exploitation balance to adapt to varying boundary conditions.

Object of research

- Data will be collected from different levels (Corporate Organization, Business Unit, Group and Individual) during different time periods in a German multiple-campus university undergoing large-scale organizational change (3 years real-time, 10 historical).

Research question(s)

Meta-Question:

How can the dynamics of Organizational ambidexterity in distributed organizations be influenced?

Research-Question (s):

What are the drivers of dynamic ambidexterity?

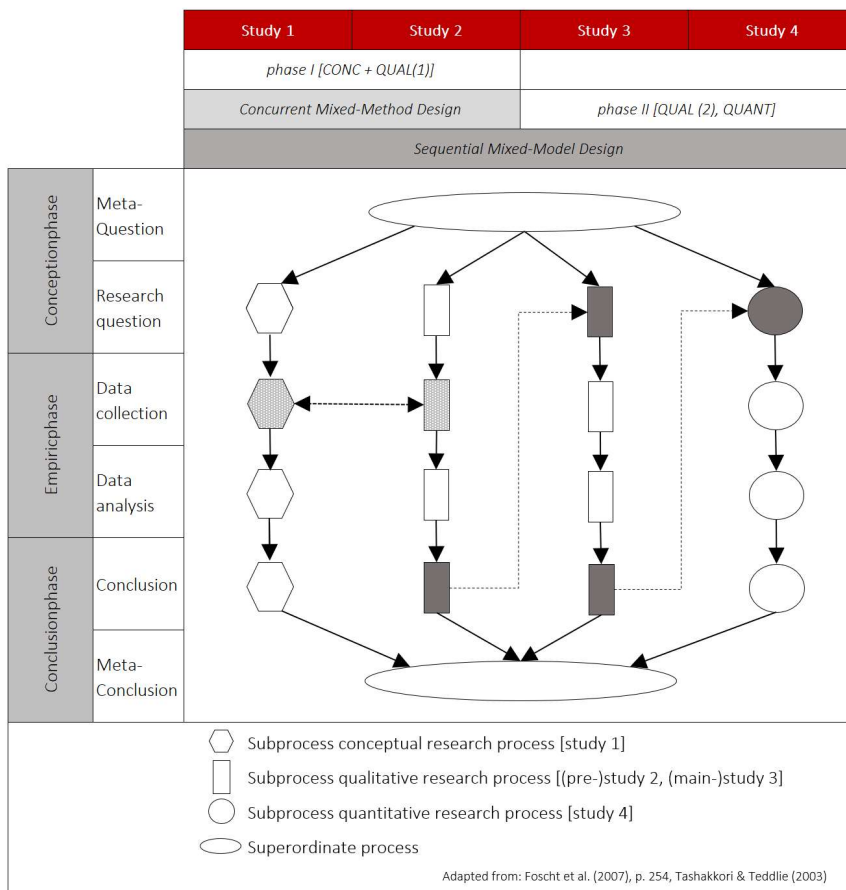
How do distributed organizations adjust its exploration-exploitation balance at multiple levels over time?

References

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Methodology

In order to meet the complexity of the research field and to gain a higher level of knowledge a multi-methods case study approach is planned. The empirical approach is designed as concurrent mixed-method design (study 1 and 2) and as sequential mixed-model Design (study 3 and 4) according to Kuckartz (2014) and Creswell et al. (2003). This dissertation includes one theoretical paper (study 1) and three empirical papers (studies 2, 3 and 4). The methodology in the theoretical paper is systematic literature review. The qualitative pre-study follows an ethnographic approach and is mainly based on participatory observation, field notes and unstructured interviews and conducted to inform the qualitative main study – designed as longitudinal qualitative in-depth case study (iterative research strategy with data derived from semi-structured interviews, participatory observation, historical document search and supplementary literature) following the Gioia methodology as a “systematic approach to new concept development and grounded theory articulation” (Gioia et al, 2012). The methodology in the fourth paper uses a quantitative large-scale data collection form to test hypotheses (possibly derived from online-survey in multiple-campus university/universities in Germany).



Theory and Research Paradigms

- Ambidexterity is seen through the lens of paradox theory (Papachroni, Heracleous, & Paroutis, 2015).
- This research follows a subjectivist (also known as social constructionism or interpretivism) view.

Multi-Method Case Study Design

Research Approaches (CONCEPT – QUAL – QUANT – Papers in this PhD-research)

- The 4 studies are conducted to explore OA from a process-perspective to answer the question on how the dynamics of ambidexterity can be influenced in distributed organizational contexts [Meta-Question].
 - **Study 1: Systematic literature review (Conceptual Paper)**
 - ❖ Peer-reviewed academic articles, ABI/ INFORM, EBSCOhost
 - **Study 2: Exploratory ethnographic pre-study (Qual. Paper I)**
 - ❖ Participatory observation, field notes and unstructured interviews
 - **Study 3: Longitudinal in-depth case study (Qual. Paper II, Inductive concept development)**
 - ❖ Semi-structured interviews, participatory observation, historical document search and supplementary literature
 - **Study 4: Quantitative research**
 - ❖ large-scale, survey study

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