INPLASY

Explanatory Variables of Organisational Learning in Higher Education Institutions: A Scoping Review Protocol

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INTRODUCTION

Review question / Objective Review Objective: This scoping review aims to identify and categorise the explanatory variables of organisational learning (OL) in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). The objective is to map the existing literature to determine which variables have been studied, how they are grouped, and to propose future research directions that enhance the understanding and implementation of OL in HEIs.
Review Questions: What variables have been studied to explain organisational learning in Higher Education Institutions?
Into what categories can these explanatory variables be grouped?
What future directions can be proposed for further research on organisational learning in HEIs?

Background Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) are key agents in social and economic development through their educational, research, and community outreach functions. In an increasingly dynamic and complex environment, HEIs must demonstrate resilience, adaptability, and the capacity to respond to change. Organisational Learning (OL) emerges as a critical mechanism enabling these institutions to evolve, innovate, and maintain their competitiveness. OL encompasses processes of knowledge generation, sharing, and application that enhance organisational performance and facilitate transformation.

While the literature on OL is extensive, reviews focused specifically on HEIs are limited and often fragmented, addressing isolated dimensions such as leadership, innovation, or performance. Few studies offer a comprehensive overview of the explanatory variables of OL within higher education. Moreover, there is limited understanding of how these variables interact and contribute to institutional development, especially across different geographical and cultural contexts. Existing reviews have not adequately mapped the full range of variables or organised

them into an integrative framework to guide future research and practice.

This scoping review addresses this gap by identifying, classifying, and analysing the explanatory variables of OL in HEIs. It aims to provide a robust conceptual foundation that informs academic inquiry and supports HEIs in developing more effective learning strategies aligned with institutional goals and societal demands.

Rationale   Despite the growing interest in Organisational Learning (OL) as a critical factor for institutional development, most existing literature provides fragmented insights, often limited to specific sectors or variables. In the context of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), which face constant demands for innovation, quality improvement, and social relevance, a comprehensive understanding of the variables that drive OL is essential. However, the body of evidence remains dispersed, and no previous review has systematically mapped the explanatory variables of OL in HEIs or grouped them into an integrative framework.

This scoping review is necessary to bridge this gap by providing a broad, structured overview of the research conducted on OL in HEIs. It identifies, categorises, and synthesises the variables that have been studied, helping to consolidate the current state of knowledge and reveal underexplored areas. Moreover, it supports researchers, institutional leaders, and policymakers in understanding which factors most significantly influence OL and how these can be leveraged to enhance institutional performance.

The review will contribute to academic discourse by clarifying conceptual boundaries and offering future research directions. It will also have practical implications for HEIs seeking to become adaptive, knowledge-driven, and responsive to emerging challenges.

METHODS

Strategy of data synthesis   This scoping review followed the methodological framework of the Joanna Briggs Institute (JBI) and adhered to the PRISMA-ScR (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses extension for Scoping Reviews) guidelines to ensure methodological rigour. The electronic database used for the literature search was SCOPUS, chosen for its comprehensive coverage of peer-reviewed publications in the fields of education, business, management, and social sciences.

The search strategy included a carefully constructed Boolean equation incorporating relevant keywords and their synonyms, such as: TITLE-ABS-KEY (("Organisational Learning" OR "Organizational Learning" OR "Learning Organization" OR "Learning Organisation" OR "Organizational Unlearning") AND ("Higher Education" OR "University" OR "Education Institution" OR "HEI")), limited to the subject areas of SOCI, BUSI, ECON, DECI, ENGI, and PSYC.

The retrieved studies were screened in two phases. In the first phase, titles, abstracts, and keywords were reviewed to exclude irrelevant studies. In the second phase, the full texts of potentially eligible articles were assessed against predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria. Studies not focused on Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), not addressing explanatory variables of organisational learning (OL), or published in languages other than English or Spanish were excluded.

A structured data extraction tool was used to capture key information from each study, including author(s), year, country, sector, methodology, variables related to OL, and findings. The extracted data were analysed thematically and categorised into five domains: Organisational Culture and Change; Leadership and Governance; Learning, Innovation and Performance; Collaboration, Communication and Networks; and Strategy, Management and Technology.

This synthesis enabled the identification of research patterns, frequently studied variables, underexplored areas, and future research directions. It also facilitated the development of a conceptual framework to understand OL in HEIs.

Eligibility criteria   To ensure the relevance and quality of the included studies, specific eligibility criteria were established. Only studies conducted within the context of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) were considered eligible. Research focused on other types of organisations or educational contexts outside higher education was excluded. The review specifically included studies that addressed variables related to organisational learning (OL) in HEIs. Studies that did not provide clear information on explanatory variables of OL were excluded.

Publications were eligible if they were written in English or Spanish, considering the research

team's language proficiency and access to full-text documents. Studies published in other languages were excluded due to limitations in translation and analysis capacity.

These eligibility criteria were defined to ensure that the included studies contributed directly to identifying, describing, or analysing explanatory variables of OL in HEIs, thereby supporting the objectives of the review.

Source of evidence screening and selection

The selection of sources of evidence was conducted using a systematic and structured process to ensure relevance and quality. Since the search was limited to the SCOPUS database, a deduplication phase was not necessary.

In the first screening phase, two reviewers independently assessed the titles, abstracts, and keywords of all retrieved documents. Studies that did not address the central topic of organisational learning (OL) in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), or that adopted unrelated approaches, were excluded. In total, 949 documents were excluded at this stage.

In the second phase, full-text documents were reviewed to determine final eligibility. Studies were excluded if they did not explain the relationship between variables and OL, were not published in English or Spanish, or did not focus on the HEI context. A total of 24 documents were excluded in this phase.

Disagreements between reviewers during the selection process were resolved through discussion and consensus. This rigorous process ensured the inclusion of studies that directly contributed to identifying explanatory variables of OL in HEIs.

Data management

The data management process followed a structured and standardised approach to ensure the organisation, consistency, and reliability of the information. All selected studies were imported into a customised spreadsheet designed for data extraction. The spreadsheet included predefined fields such as study title, authors, year of publication, country, research sector, methodological approach, population or data source, variables related to organisational learning (OL), and key findings.

Two reviewers independently extracted the data to ensure accuracy and minimise bias. An iterative process of data comparison and discussion was applied to resolve discrepancies and refine the dataset. This process ensured consistency and facilitated the thematic analysis and synthesis of the variables studied across different contexts.

The final dataset was securely stored and backed up to preserve data integrity throughout the review..

Reporting results / Analysis of the evidence

The results were reported through a thematic and categorical synthesis of the evidence. Studies were grouped according to the explanatory variables of organisational learning (OL) in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and classified into five thematic categories: Organisational Culture and Change; Leadership and Governance; Learning, Innovation and Performance; Collaboration, Communication and Networks; and Strategy, Management and Technology.

The analysis included the identification of patterns in how variables influence OL, the frequency with which variables appeared across studies, and the relationships established between variables and institutional performance. Special attention was given to highlighting research gaps, underexplored areas, and opportunities for future investigation.

The results are presented using tables, conceptual frameworks, and descriptive summaries to enhance clarity and comparability.

Presentation of the results

The results of the scoping review will be presented using a combination of descriptive statistics, thematic summaries, and visual representations. A PRISMA-ScR flow diagram will illustrate the study selection process, including the number of records identified, screened, excluded, and included at each stage.

The explanatory variables of organisational learning (OL) in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) will be categorised into five thematic domains: Organisational Culture and Change; Leadership and Governance; Learning, Innovation and Performance; Collaboration, Communication and Networks; and Strategy, Management and Technology. Each category will be presented in a structured table listing the variables, authors, and key findings.

Additional tables will summarise the characteristics of the included studies, such as publication year, country, methodology, and sector. A conceptual framework will be developed to visually synthesise the relationships among variables and their relevance to OL in HEIs. Bibliometric trends, such as keyword co-occurrence and distribution by

journal quartile, will also be presented using charts.

This multi-format approach will ensure clarity and facilitate interpretation for researchers, policymakers, and institutional leaders.

Language restriction Only studies published in English and Spanish were included.

Country(ies) involved Colombia.

Other relevant information This review is part of a doctoral research project on organizational learning and workforce diversity in Higher Education Institutions in Latin America. The protocol adheres to PRISMA-ScR guidelines and has been reviewed by academic advisors.

Keywords Organisational Learning, Higher Education Institutions, Organisational Culture, Knowledge Management, Organisational Performance.

Dissemination plans The findings of this scoping review will be disseminated through multiple channels to reach both academic and professional audiences. The results will be submitted for publication in a peer-reviewed international journal and presented at relevant academic conferences focused on organizational learning and higher education. Additionally, summaries of the key findings will be shared through institutional repositories and professional networks, including social media and academic platforms such as ResearchGate and Academia.edu. Where appropriate, findings will be translated into policy briefs or practice-oriented materials to inform decision-makers in higher education institutions.

Contributions of each author
Author 1 - Olarte Moyano Juan Carlos - Author 1 drafted the manuscript and coordinated the development of the scoping review protocol.
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