

The Relationship between Learning and Organizational Performance

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ABSTRACT

This article aims to investigate the relationship between learning levels and organizational performance among state Tabriz University, Islamic Azad universities and high education institutes in 2012. Three hundred and forty one individuals were selected randomly by using Morgan formula and table. The data were collected by interview, observation and Marsik and Witkines questionnaire. The validity of the questionnaire was confirmed by nominal validity and its reliability was achieved 0.89 by Cronbach alpha test. Multiple regression tests were employed in order to respond to the research questions and Spearman correlation coefficient was used for test of the research hypotheses. Following results were obtained: According to the first question, all individual level components do not affect on group learning level except continuous learning. Other components impact on individual, group and organization learning levels. In the second question, all components affect on learning levels except individuals components. Based on the third question, personal, group and organizational learning levels impact on organizational performance. According to hypothesis one, there is a positive and significant relationship between learning individual dimension and learning level. Concerning to hypothesis two, there is a significant relationship between components and learning levels excepts separated systems components and personal learning level without positive and significant relationship. According to hypothesis three, there is no relationship between learning levels and organization performance. The results show that continuous learning, dialogue and team learning affect significantly on learning levels. It can be said that there is a significant relationship between learning leadership and learning levels in organization and there is a significant relationship between organization connection with environment and learning levels. There is no relationship between separated systems components and personal learning levels and there is a significant relationship between separated systems components and team and organizational learning.

KEYWORDS: organizational learning, personal learning level, group learning level, organizational learning, organization performance

INTRODUCTION

Today, rapid changes in environmental factors have been led to ambiguity and complexity and challenges in management of organizations. In such conditions, in order to preserve competitive advantages encountering to challenges, new form of organizations is expanding that called learning organization. In these organizations, learning processes are analyzed, observed, developed and managed with innovation and improvement goals. Perspective, strategy, leadership, values, structures, systems, processes and performance of such organizations accelerate individual learning and organization level. From characteristics of learning organizations, it can be referred to information flow leading to enhancement of knowledge and improvement of management of human force in the organization. By promotion of personnel knowledge, organizations intelligence and productivity are increased. Identification of root of problems based on interaction of systems components is considered as an organization systemic intellectual subset.

Productivity is a main element of learning organization. In order to survival of the companies in the competitive world, companies try to promote their knowledge and power and pay attention to education of the stuff. According to review of literature, the study of the relationship between organizational performance and learning components has been less considered. This subject is considered by organizational chief managers in addition to theoretic background. Low performance of learning organization and identification of performance components are defined in this research. In order to investigate the relationship between learning dimensions and their effects on organizational performance and rational analysis, two individual and structural dimensions are considered and their effects on organizational performance with learning levels interference are investigated. Learning is a broad concept

established by forms like new attitude, problem solving method and knowledge application. In other words, learning is a process that individuals' behavior and thoughts are changed. Scholars investigated the learning concept and manner of facilitation of learning. The importance of this concept is rooted in this fact that comprehension of learning methods leads to prediction and direction of the individuals' behavior (Robinse, 2006:161). In other hand, comprehension and manner of remembering and identification of individuals are changed in learning scope. Learning organization follows this definition so that the organization learns and changes its functions by passing of time. Every society success depends on power of learners involving permanent learning process. By study the learning history and theories, we found that learning was one of the main motivators of human beings during centuries. Several scholars have investigated learning concept and manner of facilitation of learning proposed theories in this relation. It is probable that the importance of learning is resulted from this fact that understanding of learning method leads to prediction of the individuals behavior (Robinse,2006:161). Learning can be defined as achieving knowledge and new ideas, different habits and skills and different methods of problems solving. Also, learning is defined as acquisition of good or bad behavior and actions (Seif,2001:30). Kimble (1961) defines learning as relatively stable change in behavior or behavior power and it can be attributed to temporary states resulted from illness, fatigue and consumption of drugs.

Main characteristics of this learning definition:

- Change
- Relatively stable change
- Relatively stable change in behavior power
- Relatively stable change in behavior power because of experience (Seif,2000:19)

At first, learning is considered as change in behavior. In other words, the results of learning should be transferred to observable behavior. Secondly, change in behavior is relatively stable and permanent phenomenon. Thirdly, change in behavior is not necessary after learning. Although, potential power of different action is created, this capability is not appeared immediately in behavior. Fourth, behavior change is resulted from experience and practice. Fifth, this experience should be empowered (Seif,2000:19). According to different levels of organization, personal and group learning is divided into followings:

1-personal learning: personal learning indicates change in skills, attitudes and believes revolution in personal knowledge and value by study and education based on technology by observation and new methods of learning knowledge. Personal learning is a process that knowledge is obtained by transfer of experience. According to Senge, organization learns from individuals. Of course, personal learning does not assure organization learning but organization learning is not achieved without it. According to John Reding(1994), personal learning is necessary for revolution in organization and development of basic capabilities and preparing individuals for vague future. Individuals' commitment to learning and learning capability is necessary for organization. Personal progress plan is one of the main elements of personal learning assuring not only organization benefits but also personnel working future. Human resources management plays an important role in this relation.

2- Group learning: According to Senge and et al, group learning is a second learning level. It means that team can be considered as a unit and it can be creative. Group learning acts like a bridge for transferring of personnel knowledge to organizational knowledge.

3- organizational learning: the third level is organizational learning obtained by sharing wisdom, knowledge, experience and subjective models of organization members. Monako(1995) believes that organization learning is achieved by repetition of internalization and externalization processes; externalization is done when personnel knowledge is considered as explicit knowledge and by changing this knowledge to implicit knowledge, internalization is done. Thus organization learning is achieved by explicit and implicit knowledge combination by interaction between stuff and different parts of an organization (Sobhani Nejad, 2006:71).

Learning theories

Different theories have been offered about learning. Approximately, one hundred years age learning issue was dominated by philosophical theories. Aristotle and Plato philosophy and research methodology in natural sciences examined by Ebbinghouse and Paul were used in learning issues. Based on scientific documents obtained in psychology laboratories in different parts of world, comprehensive theories and principles were proposed.

During progress of learning issue, two schools were shaped:

- 1- Behavioral theory: Watson established this school based on experimental ideology in 1913. He believes that experience is only resource of knowledge and learning. For behavioral psychologists, the main subject is cohort behavior and they explain behavior with conditioning processes. These psychologists emphasize on the importance of empowerment and closeness to learning environment.

- 2- Cognitive theory: concurrent to proposition of behavioral theory, small group of psychologists emphasized on the importance of personal attitude and comprehension and generally on inner factors in learning. Theories of Gestalt, Piaget and Levin are learning cognitive theories. In recent years, some psychologists have found behavioral and cognitive school by emphasize on the internal and external factors. It can be referred to learning physiologic nervous theory and reporting theory. Generally, learning theory involves set of rules of learning .Learning theories investigate learning process. These theories try to study learning process and its effective factors. For achieving this goal, scholars investigated this issue from different aspects leading to proposing different theories in learning. Today, two popular theories of factor conditioning and social learning have been proposed related to learning.

Learning organization

Learning organization concept was proposed several years ago. But by publishing the first book of “the fifth method” by Peter Senge, the art and skill of learning organization were promoted. In general, learning organization can be explained as an organization that seeks its future and considers learning as a creative process for its members. Such an organization changes in respond to needs and desire of the members inside and outside of the organization. Learning organization is a phenomenon begun in 1990. Conditioning, theories and changes in organizational environment in this decade are the reasons for establishing these organizations; so that all organizations tried to survive. For doing so, organizations should leave unstable structure and act like learning organizations and change their structures(Shafai and Shafai,2006).learning organizations approach was reformed by theories like Richard Cybert, Jamse March and Herbert Simon. According to the researchers, learning organization concept has been considered by scholars. Publishing of Peter Senge book is one of the main trend of “fifth principle: art and action of learning organization”(Shahabi,2007).Different definitions have been proposed for learning organization. Senge defines learning organizations that individuals improve their capabilities continuously in order to achieve goals, so new paradigms of collective and team collaboration is developed. According to Gephart and Marsick learning organization increase its learning, conformation and change capacity. In such an organization learning process is analyzed; observed and expanded and it is managed related to innovation and improvement of goals.Perspective,strategies,leadership,values,structures,systems,processes and performance of this organization facilitate learning. Some scholars proposed concepts like laboratory learning, organization producing knowledge and etc. Choo believed that clarity of mission and perspective, leadership commitment and authority, practical experience and rewarding, effective transmission of knowledge and experiences, team work and collective problem solving are main elements of learning organization(Rowley and Gibbs,2008).Learning organization involves skill and capability in creation, obtaining and transferring knowledge and improvement of behavior for reflection of new knowledge and attitude (Garvin,1993).Goffart(1996)defines learning organization as set of capability of accepting new patterns, revolution and ideas and this organization manages these patterns and employs them. Such an organization could change its performance, structures and working environment. Goffart believes that there are five differences between learning organization and organizational learning (Nafukho,2009).In learning organization all elements are related so that Peter Draker compares it with musicians that obey orchestra leader. The result is a harmonic music. Learning organization works with personnel from different cultures.

Different viewpoints on learning organizations

Different viewpoints have been offered about learning organizations. Following table summarizes these view points.

Table 1: Different viewpoints on learning organizations

serial	View point	Characteristics/components of learning organization
1	Pedler and et al	Learning to strategy approach-participation policy-announcement-responsible taking and control-inner exchange –flexibility in rewarding-supervision-inner organization learning powerful structure-learning environment
2	Peter Senge	Personal skill-subjective paradigm-common perspective-team learning-systemic thinking
3	Gervin	Capability of creation, acquisition and transfer of knowledge
4	Michel Jee Markowart	capability of collective learning-permanent change for organization success
5	Jeffart and Marsik	Continuous learning-production and participation in knowledge-critical and systemic thinking-learning culture-flexibility and experimentalism mentality-stuff oriented
6	Watkinese and Marsik	Continuous learning-promotion of research and dialogue-encouragement of collaboration and group learning-empowerment of stuff-participation of stuff in learning-systemic relationship-strategic leadership
7	Arjiris and Showen	Shaped by learning and organizational learning theories
8	Mamford	Environment for functions and behavior for continuous development
9	Herison	Learning culture-collaborative learning process-systemic thinking

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Persikel(1994) believes that the reason for unsuccessful organization in learning is unsuccessful promotion of stuff and organizational learning. Heofferd a model for employing ideas in establishing of learning organization and emphasized on role of examiners in offering new definition of organizational learning and role of specialists in development of human resources in improvement and success of organization. If(2001) investigated the role of educational centers and universities in making wealth and knowledge oriented economic in Europe. He believes that educational centers need to information technology and communication and he concluded that these centers and universities could employ information technology by involving learning organization characteristics. Wang(2004) in a study on learning organization dimensions in Hong Gong education centers showed that efforts of authors in establishing common vision among professors and stuff relative to educational goals led to positive attitude toward these centers. Shankar (2005) in US studied all intellectual property and organizational performance variables and concluded that there is a relationship among variables in less than average .E.Chon.Hang(2010) investigated the effect of social, human and structural capital on production of knowledge and technical knowledge diversity. He achieved following results: at first, intellectual capital is a phenomenon resulted from relations. Secondly, diversity of technical knowledge is result of moderation .Finally, all aspects of intellectual capital is positive and being affected by production of knowledge. Dosi yavora(2005) suggests that knowledge management by organizational learning enhances performance of universities. Sun Chon Kang (2005) believes that researchers and managers are interested in following manner of learning and concurrently investigate knowledge scopes. In order to create background for bilateral learning human resources methods should be considered that it affects on human, social and organizational capital. A research was conducted in University of Shahid Beheshti in order offer an intellectual capital structural model based on organizational learning. The statistical population involved all stuff of Shahid Beheshti university with studies of Dploma and higher than Diploma. The results of analysis of route show that there is a significant relationship between organizational learning aspects and intellectual capital. Learning has direct effect on intellectual capital and human capital is the important indicator of intercultural capital in this model. Davarzani(2006) believes that learning ability can be measured by by management commitment, common subjective models, systemic thinking, team work and personal capabilities and knowledge management. Management commitment affects significantly on learning capacity and knowledge management is in the second position Shafaei(2001)suggests followings as important barriers of organizational learning in Iran: mangers and stuff incorrect believes on power of manger and attitude of mangers to preserving of power and explosive and non competitive environment ,think about particulars and rationalism. Hydari(2008)concluded that there is a direct and significant relationship between relational capital and knowledge management. Hovida(2007) concluded that implementation of learning organization components could lead to improvement of quality of education directly .Shahriyari(2007) concluded that there is a significant relationship between customer capital and structural capital and there is a significant relationship between customer capital and organizational performance and also there is a significant relationship between structural capital and organizational performance. The results of Amiri research show that organizational learning influences positively on companies intellectual capital. In addition, personal learning affects positively on human capital; team learning impacts on customer capital and organizational learning affects on structural capital. This research aims to investigate the relationship between learning and organizational performance among professors of state universities and Islamic Azad University and nongovernmental higher education institutes in Tabriz

Research conceptual model

	Learning level	Organization performance
Continuous learning	Personal level	
Dialogue		
Team learning	Group level	
Leadership for learning		
Organization connection with environment	Organizational level	
Separated systems		
Independent variables		Dependent variables

Figure 1: Research conceptual model

METHODOLOGY

The statistical population is the main population and it involves all real and assumed members that the results of research are generalized (Delavar,1995:147).In recent research the statistical population involves professors of state universities and Islamic Azad university and nongovernmental higher education institutes in Tabriz. The small sample was selected for analysis (Hassan Zadeh,2006:99-100). The sampling method is simple random method and 341 individuals were selected by Morgan table. The data were collected by interview, observation and Marsik and Watkinese questionnaire. The validity questionnaire was confirmed by nominal validity and reliability was obtained 0.89 by Cronbach alpha test.

Findings and discussion

Analysis means categorization, regulation, process and summary of the data for respond to research questions. The goal of the analysis is to reduction of the data as comprehensible and interpretative way; so that different variables relationships are investigated (Khaki,2004:325).In this part at first the general status of professors is investigated and then hypotheses are tested.

Table 2: individuals' frequency distribution based on age

Age	Frequency	Frequency percentage	Validity percentage	Collective percentage
Under 30 years	6	18	18	18
Up to 30 to 35 years	87	25.5	25.5	27.3
Up to 35 to 40 years	171	50.1	50.1	77.4
Up 40 years	77	22.6	22.6	100.0
total	341	100.0	100.0	

According to above results it can be concluded that from total sample %18 of individuals is fewer than 30, %25.5 of them is up to 30 to 35, %50.1 is in group of upper 35 to 40 years and %22.6 is upper 40 years. It can be said that most of the respondents are in group upper than 35 to 40 years.

Table 3: individuals' frequency distribution based on activity record

Activity record	Frequency	Frequency percentage	Validity percentage	Collective percentage
Under 5 years	99	29.0	29.0	29.0
5 -10 years	195	57.2	57.2	86.2
Up to 10 -15 years	22	6.5	6.5	92.7
Up 15 years	25	7.3	7.3	100.0
total	341	100.0	100.0	

According to above table it can concluded that from total respondents %29 is has record less than 5 years, %57.2 has 5-10 years record, %6.5 has record upper than 10-15 years and %7.3 has record upper than 15 years. According to above table it can be concluded that most of the respondents have 5-10 years record.

Table 4: individuals' frequency distribution based on activity record

Gender	Frequency	Frequency percentage	Validity percentage	Collective percentage
Female	16	4.7	4.7	4.7
Male	325	95.3	95.3	100.0
Total	341	100.0	100.0	

According to table 4 it can be said that %4.7 of the respondents is female and %95.3 is male and among 341 respondents men responded more than women.

Table 5: individuals' frequency distribution based on scientific grade

scientific grade	Frequency	Frequency percentage	Validity percentage	Collective percentage
Instructor	206	60.4	60.4	60.4
Assistant professor	123	36.1	36.1	96.5
Associate professor	11	3.2	3.2	99.7
Professor	1	0.3	0.3	100.0
total	341	100.0	100.0	

According to table 5 it can be said that %60.4 of the respondents is instructor, %36.1 is assistant professor, %3.2 is associate professor and %0.3 is professor. Among 341 respondents instructors responded more than other groups.

Hypotheses test

Hypotheses

- 1-There is a significant and positive relationship between learning individual dimension and learning levels.
- 2-There is a significant and positive relationship between structural dimension and learning levels.

3-There is a significant and positive relationship between learning levels and organizational performance.

Table 6: results of hypnosis of positive and significant relationship between learning personal dimension and learning levels

Hypothesis	Personal dimension components	Component	Correlation coefficient	Significant level	Number of respondents	Result
H1	Continuous learning	Personal level learning	0.184	0.001	341	Accepted
		Group learning level	0.130	0.016	341	Accepted
		Organizational learning	0.166	0.002	341	Accepted
	Dialogue	Personal level learning	0.166	0.003	341	Accepted
		Group learning level	0.140	0.10	341	Accepted
		Organizational learning	0.140	0.10	341	Accepted
	Team learning	Personal level learning	0.289	0.00	341	Accepted
		Group learning level	0.170	0.002	341	Accepted
		Organizational learning	0.131	0.015	341	Accepted

According to positive correlation coefficient significant level is less than 0.05. It can be said that H1 can be accepted by confidence level of 0.95.

Table 7: results of hypnosis of positive and significant relationship between learning structural dimension and learning levels

Hypothesis	Structural dimension components	Component	Correlation coefficient	Significant level	Number of respondents	Result
H2	learning leadership	Personal level learning	0.191	0.000	341	Accepted
		Group learning level	0.135	0.13	341	Accepted
		Organizational learning	0.133	0.013	341	Accepted
	Organization connection with environment	Personal level learning	0.120	0.027	341	Accepted
		Group learning level	0.155	0.004	341	Accepted
		Organizational learning	0.150	0.005	341	Accepted
	Separated System	Personal level learning	0.102	0.059	341	rejected
		Group learning level	0.198	0.000	341	Accepted
		Organizational learning	0.174	0.001	341	Accepted

According to significant level of above table, it can be said significant level for leadership for learning and connection of organization with environment and learning levels is less than 0.05. So it can be said that there is a positive and significant relationship between both components and learning level. Also, there is a positive and significant relationship among separated system components, group learning level and organizational learning level. There is no significant relationship with personal learning level.

Table 8: results of hypnosis of positive and significant relationship between learning levels and organizational performance

Hypothesis	Personal dimension components	Component	Correlation coefficient	Significant level	Number of respondents	Result
H3	Personal level	Organizational performance	0.119	0.028	341	Accepted
	Group level	Organizational performance	0.306	0.000	341	Accepted
	Organizational learning level	Organizational performance	0.380	0.000	341	Accepted

According to significant level in above table it can be said that there is a positive and significant relationship between learning level and organizational performance.

RESULTS

According to the results of tables 6, 7 and 8 it can be said that there is a positive and significant relationship between personal components and learning levels. There is a positive and significant relationship structural level components involving learning for learning, connection of organization with environment and separated system and leadership components and organization connection with environment .There is no relationship between separated system components and personal level learning but there is a positive relationship between group learning and organizational learning. Also, there is a positive and significant relationship between learning levels and organizational performance. In order to organize organization learning process and establishment of its components it is recommended to facilitate information transfer and new ideas offered by establishing units for investigation of level of learning of organization and effective components for learning in different levels. It is obvious that promotion of learning depends on holding workshops and national and regional conferences for offering ideas and information. Using profiles in order to employ staff skills and professors achievements and scientific production seems necessary. So, establishing system for measuring organization performance and evaluation and improvement is obligatory. It is recommend selecting a leader for holding educational sessions and participation of members in organization decision making leading to increase of team learning and motivation of the staff and using researchers achievements. By creation of new organizational culture for hearing view points of different members organization productivity is increased. Encouragement culture for promotion of learning and valuation of individuals is necessary. In this relation common perspective between organization members and participation of the members is substantiated in organization, personal and group learning. The individuals should be encouraged for risk taking, creativity and innovation and the educational creative plans should be supported. By investigation of different barriers reporting of performance feedback seems necessary. By creating appropriate working relations and speech on elimination of problems and establishing free discussion and participation of members and establishing personal and organization perspectives a background is provided for new and innovative ideas. By compilation of defined strategic plan for training of individuals, groups and organizations for future and selection of appropriate strategy for improvement of learning and conformation of organization structure with strategic planning movement toward continuous improvement.

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