DIMENSIONS OF ORGANIZATIONAL LEARNING PRACTICES FOR INNOVATION AND PERFORMANCE

CMA Dr. M Sheik Mohammed[*]
Dr. Abdul Wahid Farooqi[**]

ABSTRACT

The growing body of Organizational Learning (OL) research introduces a perspective learning is not only the capability of individuals; learning can also happen on a group level and is facilitated by an organizational climate that provides the conditions and motivation for learning This perspective challenges educators to accept a broad definition of individual learning and also challenges as to understand learning as a group and organizational level phenomenon. The paper includes an extensive theoretical discussion of OL and the analysts of results from applying an instrument that can help diagnose perceptions of existing learning patterns and beliefs about learning in organizations. The theoretical discussion an were highly suggestive that OL is more than the learning that individual demand that the OL research provides valuable insights for educators The ability to measure perceptions of learning patterns provides data that can add to our understanding of how to invest resources to improve organizational effectiveness through improved learning patterns.

KEYWORDS: Organizational Learning, Individual Learning, Learning Patterns. Learning Organization.
_____

Introduction

Within the last decade, corporate educators have been introduced to the idea of facilitating and managing organizational learning (OL) as one way to help their organizations remain competitive. Business writers talk about an organization's ability lo learn as a key requirement for innovation and strategic renewal. The growing body of OL research introduces a perspective that learning is not only the capability of individual; learning can also happen on a group level and is facilitated by an organizational climate that provides the conditions and motivation for learning. This perspective challenges educators to accept a broad definition of individual learning and also challenges us to understand learning as a group and organizational level phenomenon. We normally think of learning and work as separate activities learning is frequently a pan of the task Most jobs now require interpreting, analysing and synthesizing information, tasks that were formerly petted only of managers .The terms interpretation, analysis and synthesis', which are thus to describe the new work, are aspects of learning; thus learning and work have become synonymous terms. Rather than learn in preparation for work, employees must learn their way out of the work problems they address. ... the behaviours that define learning and the behavioural that define being productive are one and the same.

Some of the questions the instrument helps to answer are:

- How well developed is each level of learning in the organization?
- Are the current patterns of learning bringing the results we heed?
- Do our employees believe that our organizational culture facilitates learning?
- Is new knowledge institutionalized!
- Are systemic organizational elements seen to be blocking thelearning of individuals and groups?
- How can we leverage the resources available to enhance ourorganizational learning?

[*]   Director, Aiman College of Arts & Science for Women, Tiruchirapalli, Tamilnadu, India.
[**]   Assistant Professor, Department of Commerce, Zakir Husain Delhi College, University of Delhi, Delhi, India.

Definitions of Organizational Learning

Organizational Learning means the process of improving actions through better knowledge and understanding. Organizations are seen as learning by encoding inferences from history into routines that guide behaviour. Organizational Learning is a process by which knowledge about action outcome relationships between the organization and the environment is developed. Huber describes the effect on learning of the four sub constructs of information Interpretation The extent of shared interpretation of new information is affected by:

- The uniformity of prior cognitive maps possessed by the organizational units.
- The uniformity of the hinted the information as it is communicated.
- The richness of the media used to convey the information,
- The information load on the interpreting units.
- The amount of unlearning that might be necessary before a new interpretation code degenerated.

Organizational Memory Influences Learning in Four primary Ways

- To demonstrate or use learning, that which has been learned must be Stored in memory and then brought forth from memory: both the Demonstrability and usability of learning depend on the effectiveness of the organization's memory.
- Information acquisition depends in many instances on attention, which is directed by previous learning retained in memory.
- Information distribution is affected by organizational decisions made using information contained in memory.
- Information interpretation is greatly affected by cognitive maps or kames of reference, which are indefinable except in term of memory Information is stored in many places; the human brain, manuals, paper tiles, and computer files Accurate recording of information, accurate and complete recall of information, and interpretation of the information at the time of storage all impact learning. The strength of organizational memory is dependent on a number of factors
    - Knowledge Acquisition: the development of skills, insights, relationships.
    - Knowledge Sharing: the dissemination of what's been teamed
    - Knowledge Utilization: the integration of learning so n is broadly available can be generalized to new situations.

The ten facilitating factors that expedite learning information gathering practices in the internal and external environmental Awareness of predominance gaps to motivate learning. Effort spent on measuring key hectors that determine needs for and outcomes of learning support for experimental Climate of openers Continuous Education Variety of methods, procedures and systems chat allows adaptation Multiple advocates at all levels to advance new ideas Involved leadership independence of organizational units which leads to wides spread Accountability Systematic Problem Solving. A consistent process for problem solving must earning from experience and history. Activities to reflect on the past, review success and failures and record learning in a format, that is open and accessible. Learning from the best practices of others:

Processes for on-going bench marking activities that ensure the best industry practices are uncovered, analysed, adopted and implemented. Transferring knowledge quickly and efficiently: A common vocabulary is required to minimize time and effort spent on interpretation. Activities to achieve this competency include personnel rotation, education and training, centrally produced communications, and standardization programs.

- **Communication and Co-operation:** A learning- friendly organizational culture is characterised by open and free communication trust and mutual support. Information flows horizontally, upwards, downwards and across functional areas
- **Learning from Error:** The culture's tolerance for experimentation and viewing failures as learning opportunities will impact learning. Companies drat tolerate errors wall be better able to detect errors, prevent and reduce error rates.
- **Reward and Recognition:** An organizational reward system which favours innovative and creative behaviour promotes learning.

- **Innovation:** Prevailing attitudes toward innovation are an important dimension of the culture to measure Does the culture value diverse perspectives experiences, risk taking and experimentation or is the emphasis put on conforming with existing rules, beliefs and norms?
- **Decision Making:** The degree of autonomy of decision making and participation in important organizational decisions. Are employees responsible for the decisions they make? Employees are more likely to learn from their mistakes if they feel responsible for their actions and arc involved in important decisions.
- **Ability to "Unlearn":** Hedberg defines "unlearning as making room for new ideas and cognitive he works in order to foster new knowledge Unlearning is very difficult not impossible because people cannot easily abandon on old ways of thinking and adopt new ones Organizations cannot easily forget their history and discard old values and norms. To operationalize the concept of unlearning it is important to consider if people are able to articulate underlying assumptions, set counterproductive ways of thinking aside, and allow new ways of thinking to influence action

Organization Level of Learning

The process of institutionalizing is the locus of items related to chis cell . As described earlier, this cell is most easily conceptualized as being "non human elements of organizational learning. The items are designed to capture perceptions about the store house of knowledge in organizational structure, culture, vision strategies and systems of the organization. The willingness of the culture to accept risk-taking and experimentation is captured in the words 'trust' and "innovation" The items address the ability of systems to capture and store information* Respondents are asked if the performance indicators are perceived to be relevant as they cart drive the behaviours of individuals and groups.

Leadership

Leadership and management practices greatly influence learning on all three levels. Analysis of the perceptions of management as a catalyst for Learning on the individual, group and organization levels is done using the scores (or items in three categories, leadershipfeed- forward, leadership group and leadership.

Improve the Balance of Flows of Learning

The primary blockages indicated by the results are how individual learning a fleets organizational change and how the organizational systems and procedures support individual learning. Managers can play a bigger role to improve the Iced-forward of learning by-supporting individuals with good ideas to bring the ideas forward and help the process of institutionalization of goods ideas the knowledge of particularly effective individuals could be captured in documentation available to anyone who requires it. A mentoring program would help to share the knowledge and skills of exceptional employees with others and embed then-knowledge at the group and organization levels. A primary leverage point to improve the feedback (low of learning could be through the creation of an Electronic Performance Support System. Such a system could be designed to capture and store important information mid be available on-line to those who need it, when they need it other opportunities to improve feed-back flows maybe uncovered by the organizational audit. Programs can he designed and implemented to help managers develop abilities to identify when embedded learning is impeding learning and facilitate the removal of blockages. Managers can aid information (low by disseminating information to people who can benefit from it getting the right people working on the right issues, and understanding and supporting communities of practice

Management can be a primary leverage point for mowing the gap between cognition and behaviour relative to learning. Blockages to behaving in line with beliefs could be caused by employees w ho do not believe that the learning behavioural are highly valued. If actions such as challenging the assumptions of the group, experimentation and creativity are highly-valued by the organization then managers can encourage these behaviours by rewarding them. One solution may be that managers need to demonstrate putting the beliefs into action in order for people to practice the behaviours to greater degree. The analysis suggests that to improve overall learning patterns and impact performance, this organizations three leverage points:

- Improve the organization level as a storehouse for learning.
- Improve the balance of flows of learning with emphasis on strengthening the feed-backflows.
- Narrow the cognition/behaviour gaps.

The results give indications of where to focus to improve OL but we would need to do more investigation of the blockages to flows of learning and the details of learning impediments at the organizational level in order to develop programs to address the problem areas. There tire a number of resources available from many areas of management and business practice to help in the decisions about programs to improve the three areas. Some suggestions are listed here to illustrate the types of programs that may be considered and to contrast them with traditional education and training and development solutions. Improve the organization Level as a Storehouse for Learning Organizations with this developmental need might conduct an audit of disorganization level elements to determine their utility to capture and store knowledge and allow it to be easily removed. The audit would include an examination of compensation, reward and recognition and training policies, procedures, systems, culture, etc. to assess the impact of these elements on the flow' of learning. The auditor would require an understanding of the organization in terms of strategy, the industry in which the organization operates, and the roles of all staff to assess the elements and suggest improvements.

Training and development methodologies may need to build more on the awareness of the reasons for change. The limitations of methodologies directed towards "forced" or 'anticipatory" learning must be undemanding and avoided. With the perception that the culture is not nesting and docs not support important learning behaviours such as experimentation, making mistakes and learning from failures as well as success, there may be blockages to learning I be leadership can be instrumental in improving these cultural aspects through role modelling, reward systems and consistent, organization-wide communications about organizational values.

Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to assess whether educators can benefit from developing a pragmatic knowledge of organizational learning and whether a measurement instrument can help us understand how to improve organizational effectiveness through better learning processes and abilities. In particular, two research questions were examined. The opportunity for further exploration with the participating organization will give mea better the understanding of how to implement OL improvement programs. The organization wants to create specific programs and track their progress. The organization plans to start by educating managers to be more aware of their influence on the flow of learning. The organization will also look for ways to increase the trust and perceived acceptance for innovation and experimentation in their culture. The research has provided insights and given a starting point that educators in many types of organizations can use to broaden their understanding of learning, widen their span of potential influence and ultimately improve the learning processes and patterns in their organization.

References

~ Alam and Mohamed Fashiul (2009), Learning Organization and Development of Woman Managers in Pakistan. Human Resource Development International, 12,1 pp 105-114. doi:10.1080/1367886080638891,

~ Amidon (2005), Writing the Learning Organization: A Framework for Teaching and Research. Business Communication Quarterly, 68, 4, 406-428 doi:10.1177/1080569905281758,

~ Argyris, C. (1999), On organizational learning (2nd ed.) Oxford: Black-well Publishing.

~ Atak, K., & Erturgut, R. (2010), An empirical analysis of the relation between learning organization and organizational commitment. Procedia Social and Behavioural Sciences, 2, 3472-3476.

~ Birkner, L.R., & Birkner, R. (1996), Building a health and safety learning organization. Occupational Hazards, 58(8), 17. Retrieved from http://search.proquest.com/docview/213682406?accountid=62745.

~ Biswajeet Pattanayak and Vipin Gupta (2000), Creating Performing Organizations, International perspective for Indian Management, A division of Sage Publications, New Delhi.

~ Blair, P. (2001), Technical training tips, Retrieved January 17, 2002, from http://pages.prodigy.net/pblair/ttthome.htm.

~ Blum S. (2000), Creating a visual factory. Manufacturing Monitor. Retrieved January 17, 2002 from http:www.bshapiro.com/newsletters/manufacturing/september2000-2.html.

♦□♦