

# Studying the Influence of Effective Factors of Organizational Learning on Human Resource Productivity The Case of Western Educational Organizations of Isfahan

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## Abstract

The purpose of this research was to study the impact of effective factors of organizational learning on human resource productivity of western educational organizations in the city of Isfahan in Iran. Based on research objective, the following hypotheses were considered: Analyzing the impact of continual training on manpower productivity, analyzing the impact of knowledge production and employees' cooperation of practical decision on manpower productivity, analyzing the impact of supporting and encouraging employees by managers on manpower productivity, analyzing the impact to being flexible and experimental morale of personnel on manpower productivity. Research methodology was descriptive survey in which 25 questions were distributed among the employee of the organizations by using cluster sampling. The statistical population of the research included all of the western educational organizational employees in which 208 samples were selected according to the cluster sampling. Descriptive analysis and student t test were applied for analyses of data. The

research results indicated that employees continued training, supporting and encouraging by the managers, and having flexible and experimental morale have positive effects on manpower productivity, but knowledge production and employees cooperation in job decisions have not had that much impact on manpower productivity.

**Keywords:** Organizational learning, Knowledge production, Productivity, Flexibility

## 1. Introduction

Today organizations try to move towards optimal consumption of resources and saving energy by directing their reduction of resources and energy. The most important issue in this regard is productivity that manpower productivity is placed at the top of it. If the individuals in the organizations believe in productivity, they will lead their organization towards general productivity and can compete with other organizations. Traditional organizations may achieve their organizational and productivity objectives by applying and implementing of learning in their organization. They can obtain comprehensive and optimal objectives, by productivity across the whole or all over organization through learning implementation. Meanwhile, most of them have not been able to implement learning process in their organizations because of the current hierarchy and disability or lack of innovative and active employees facing new ideas in the organizations. If managers and authorities establish an attractive, challengeable, dynamic, creative and knowledge-based environment in the organization, proper individuals will be attracted to it and they won't think about leaving the organization. Nowadays, most managers have understood that employees' manner of thoughts and behaviors must be changed in order to create and have an updated productive, dynamic and changeable organization.

In viewpoint of management scholars a successful organization is the one which permanently seeks to promote productivity. Manpower productivity in their view is the most important factor in total productivity of the organization. Objective of productivity is that it continuously tries to improve current situation. It is believed that today we can perform works better than yesterday and tomorrow better than today. Eventually, productivity is a firm confidence of human beings' improvement. Organizations should arm themselves with productivity in order to maintain and improve their resources themselves.

The first objective of research is to study performance of effective factors of organizational learning on manpower productivity in the educational organizations of western Isfahan in Iran. Another objective is to study the effect of continual learning on manpower productivity level. The third objective is to study the effect of support and encouragement of employees' learning by senior management on manpower productivity. The fourth objective is to study the effect of knowledge production and participation of personnel in job decision-making on manpower productivity; and finally the fifth objective is to study the effect of flexible and experimental morale of employees on manpower productivity.

## 2. Different definitions of learning organizations

Generally a learner organization is the one that is capable of creating, acquiring and transferring of knowledge and operates towards changing and adjusting of its behaviors by aid of new acquired perceptions. Knowledge creation, being innovative and creative forms a basic element in this definition of learner organization. But knowledge creation and acquisition are not sufficient to consider an organization as a learning organization, rather it must have the capability to apply that knowledge to its behaviors and performances and makes improving and adjusting of its activities possible by it (Alvani, 2008, p 328).

On the other hand, a learning organization develops a permanent capacity in itself so that it could accept and adapt innovations and is changed continuously. Learning organization phenomenon has been developed and proposed from beginning of 1990's. Theories and changes in organizations' environments prior to this decade are reasons for appearing of such organizations.

Recently, some authors believe that learning organizations have replaced some of the previous management thoughts as managerial thoughts such as: Management by objective, strategic planning, various Japanese actions, theories like total quality cycle and total quality management (Yeung, 1990:27).

Regarding close relationship between manpower productivity and organizational learning, human resources management must establish a learner environment through creating of challenging environment, changing of current perceptions and specification models, altering of thinking habits, and allowing separation and differentiation in production. (Hong, 1999).

In fact, organizational learning is a procedure which refers to learning of required skills and knowledge for self continual improvement which will eventually results in organizational productivity. Therefore, In addition to necessary training of organizational manpower, it must be tried to enhance intellect and thought characteristics. This means to provide a favorable environment for enhancing and growing of individuals' mentality, thought, personality and so on. Therefore, subject of the organization's manpower education must be planned and executed carefully. An organization could not compete with multi-national or international corporations and companies in a dynamic, flexible and international competitive environment without a comprehensive and up-to-date education for the personnel.

Permanent change and growth of manpower depends on a continual and up-to-date education. Executing of such plan will ultimately lead to increasing of productivity, i.e. development, growing and improvement of organization and the country (Alvani, 2003, p 53).

Another feature that causes improvement of manpower and enhancement of productivity is empowerment and granting independence to the personnel of the organization. Delegation of authority leads to personnel empowerment and empowerment is led to advancement and growth and finally productivity enhancement. Today, granting authority and freedom of action to individuals for solving their own and their organizational problems is a necessity. If they are empowered, they can permanently enhance their individual and organizational

competencies and achieve grades of growth and promotion.

Various theoreticians have described characteristics of learner organizations. Among them we can refer to Peter Sang, Adelson, Gephardt and Marsik, Bent and Evirayan.

Peter Sang has summarized a learner organization in five important principals: 1- system-oriented thought, 2- personal competency, 3- mental models, 4- common perspective, 5- systematic learning (Sang, 2006, p 59).

Learning organizations have the following characteristics in Gephardt and Marsik viewpoint:

A) Continual learning on systems' level

Individuals constitute their learning in a way to be able to learn by help of transferred knowledge in the organization and by completion of learning towards organizational activities and affairs.

B) Knowledge production and participation in it

Knowledge production emphasizes dynamic and creative knowledge that individuals have access to it and use in a quick and easy manner.

C) Learning culture

In order to establish a stable culture of organizational learning, creativity and learning must be encouraged, supported and promoted from the top through various performance systems.

D) Flexible and experimental morale

Individuals are free to accept risk, experience and create new ideas and to perform new working processes.

### 3. Research methodology

Elements of learner organizations according to the research hypotheses are as of the following in which theoretical framework of hypotheses has been organized based on theory of Gephardt and Marsik.

- 1- Continual learning is the cause of increase in manpower productivity of the organization.
- 2- Knowledge production and employees' participation in job decision-making are the cause of increase in manpower productivity of the organization.
- 3- Support and encouragement of organizational learning by senior managers are the cause of increase in manpower productivity of the organization.
- 4- Existence of flexible and experimental morale in employees is the cause of increase in manpower productivity of the organization.

Referring to all of the educational organizations of western Isfahan and by means of cluster

sampling method from each section of these organizations three individuals received the questionnaire. Totally, two-hundred eight (208) individuals received the questionnaires among which two-hundred (200) of them returned the questionnaires. In addition to justification actions which were done verbally and any kind of ambiguity was explained at the distribution phase of the questionnaire, so any ambiguities were removed before responding. It appeared that such actions had been effective and all of the respondents answered to the questions with a complete dominance and without any ambiguity. Unreturned questionnaires were related to those who were on leave or who were on organizational missions. All of the two-hundred (200) answered questionnaires were analyzed, meantime, most of the employees answered to the open question as well.

Statistical methods in this research were performed on two descriptive and inferential levels. Answers were studied on descriptive levels such as: Frequency, mean, standard deviation, standard error and representing of tables. Student t-test was used for significance level on inferential level. If the obtained t was larger than t of table, it shows significance of that hypothesis which was used given its critical amount on 95% level. By statistical population in this research we mean all of the administrative employees of the educational organizations of western Isfahan who were working in these organizations at the time of distribution of questionnaire. Number of employees of such organizations at the present time was about 850 who were serving in the various cities in western Isfahan. Since statistical population is extensive and so dispersed, we have selected a number of individuals through cluster sampling method from each township as a sample. The total number of sample population is 208 among whom 157 were men and 51 were women.

#### **4. Findings**

Hypothesis 1: Continual learning is the cause of increase in manpower productivity of the organization.

Questions related to hypothesis 1:

- 1- I like to represent new ideas and solutions to achieve a more favorable result in work.
- 2- Employees like to discuss about better performing of affairs and obtaining better results.
- 3- I receive feedback from my work's result.
- 4- Employees will be aware of group working results and performance evaluation.
- 5- Employees of each section consider a common purpose in order to obtain a more favorable result.
- 6- Your purposes harmonize and match with purposes of other sections.
- 7- Employees cooperate to obtain more favorable results in the organization.
- 8- Increasing of employees' proficiency and skills depends on amount of their conversation

and discussion about their work in the organization.

Table 1. Analyzing the influence of continual learning on organizational productivity

Hypothesis 1	$\bar{X}$	Standard deviation	t	Degree of freedom	Standard error
Continual learning is the cause of increase in manpower productivity of the organization.	3.84	0.36	32.83	199	0.25

Given the point that calculated  $t=32.83$  is larger than  $t$  of the table with degree of freedom 199, error level of 5% and confidence level of 95%, this research hypothesis is confirmed and hypothesis zero is rejected. Therefore, continual learning is the cause of increase in manpower productivity of the organization in employees' viewpoint.

Hypothesis 2: Knowledge production and employees' participation in job decision-making are the cause of increase in manpower productivity of the organization.

Questions related to hypothesis 2:

- 1- Each section of the organization or the whole organization interacts with its exterior environment in the field of learning and solving of organizational problems.
- 2- You study and gather data for solving your job problems.
- 3- You try to explore and unstand aspects of a problem.
- 4- You exchange information with your colleagues in the job field.
- 5- Employees' power of sympathy in various sections is through information exchange.
- 6- You are being participated in the job decision-making.

Table 2. Analyzing the knowledge production and employee's participation in decision making and its influence on manpower productivity

Hypothesis 2	$\bar{X}$	Standard deviation	t	Degree of freedom	Standard error
Knowledge production and employees' participation in working decision-making are the cause of increase in manpower productivity of the organization.	2.97	0.65	0.63	199	0.46

Given the point that calculated  $t=.63$  is lower than  $t$  of the table with degree of freedom 199, error level of 5% and confidence level of 95%, this research hypothesis is rejected and zero hypothesis is confirmed. Therefore, it could be said that knowledge production and employees' participation in decision making are not the cause of increase in manpower productivity of the organization from employees' viewpoint.

Hypothesis 3: Support and encouragement of organizational learning by senior managers are the cause of increase of manpower productivity in the organization.

Questions related to hypothesis 3:

- 1- I have freedom of action for decision making on my job.
- 2- Those employees who try to represent new strategies for solving of problems and issues are encouraged by organization.
- 3- Investment is done in the organization in the field of research and development in order to solve problems of the organization.
- 4- You are enjoyed from the current benefits of work results' improvement.
- 5- Employees can have contact with organization managers about job issues.
- 6- Employees' physical and spiritual desires and needs are important in the organization.

Table 3. Analyzing the influence of support and encouragement of employees' learning on manpower productivity

Hypothesis 3	X	Standard deviation	t	Degree of freedom	Standard error
Support and encouragement of organizational learning by senior managers is the cause of increase in manpower productivity of the organization.	3.48	0.48	14.42	199	0.33

Given the point that calculated  $t=14.42$  is larger than  $t$  of table with degree of freedom 199, error level of 5% and confidence level of 95%, this research hypothesis is confirmed and zero hypothesis is rejected. Therefore, it could be said that support and encouragement of employees' learning by senior managers are the cause of increase of manpower productivity of the organization.

Hypothesis 4: Existence of flexible and experimental morale in employees are the cause of increase in manpower productivity of the organization.

Questions related to hypothesis 4:

- 1- The organization intends to attract creative and innovative employees.

- 2- I can apply innovative methods in order to do my work better.
- 3- I want to learn new subjects about my work.
- 4- My perception of a subject in my work is effective on decision making about work.
- 5- My perception of a subject could be effective on others' decision making.

Table 4. Analyzing the influence of employees' flexible and experimental morale on manpower productivity

Hypothesis 4	X	Standard deviation	t	Degree of freedom	Standard error
Existence of flexible and experimental morale in employees is the cause of increase in manpower productivity of the organization.	3.67	0.67	14.25	199	0.47

Given the point that calculated  $t = 14.25$  is larger than  $t$  of table with degree of freedom 199, error level of 5% and confidence level of 95%, this research hypothesis is confirmed and hypothesis zero is rejected. Therefore, it could be said that in employees' viewpoint flexible and experimental morale of employees is the cause of increase in manpower productivity of the organization.

## 5. Discussion and Conclusions

Regarding obtained conclusions from data analysis of statistical sample, it is revealed that results of hypotheses 1, 3 and 4 are confirmed, but hypothesis 2 is rejected. By paying attention to important elements of hypothesis 2 which have a close relation with subject of organizational learning and on the other hand with improving of productivity, the organization must be flexible so that it could apply employees' knowledge within their working area and have confidence in employees' decision making.

Various sections of the organization must have close interaction with similar sections in other organizations in terms of job knowledge and eliminate their deficiencies and problems with regards to strength and weakness points of themselves. On the other hand, the organization can send on duty prominent and interested employees to collect information and solve job problems of the organization. Also it should consider risk acceptance culture and try to strengthening of employees' sympathy.

Conclusions obtained from the open question of research are that many young and active employees of the organization have lost their motivation for improvement of productivity due

to lack of confidence in job future. We should eliminate such thought in them as "in an organization in which there exists no retention hope, how is it possible to think about progress?"

Complex and ineffective rules must be omitted from working phases as much as possible and direct the organization towards execution of new and recent ideas.

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