

# Study of the Relationship between Organizational Learning and Empowerment Strategy for Staff Working at Education Administrations

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## ABSTRACT

This study was meant to research the relationship between organizational learning and empowerment strategy for staff working at education administrations of Golestan province that constitute the statistical population of the study. Using kristy-morgan table, a total number of 152 subjects were selected from among the population mentioned by random-hit the floor method. Descriptive-correlative method has been used to complete the research. Standard questionnaire for organizational learning and empowerment by Neefe and Speritzer, respectively, was used for data collection. Data collected were analyzed using Pearson correlation test. Results showed that there is a meaningful relationship between organizational learning and empowerment strategy for staff working at education administrations.

**KEYWORDS:** organizational learning, empowerment, learning, education administrations.

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## 1) INTRODUCTION

Nowadays large, complicated organizations developed some decades ago do not work as they would be comparable to dinosaurs incapable of being adapted to the environment and so are deemed to be extinct. Large organizations with traditional structures fail to cope with the changes in surrounding environment regarding the globalization issues particularly, and therefore have no way but to either change the structures or equip themselves with some tools to be able to overcome the global changes. At the threshold of the third millennium, organizations need more flexibility to respond to pressures and threats from outside and inside while managers need to rethink about their methods and behaviors in management (Atak & Erturgut,2010). Organizational learning and empowerment of human resources were identified as one of the strategies to keep the organization living and to improve the functionality against these threats. Today, management of human resources became so important that other management issues come under this priority; and developing suitable conditions to improve organizational learning remains a must requirement to raise them. That is why organizations whose staff all try to increase their sufficiency get improvement at this era, and it is up to the manager to prepare conditions encouraging this process. Organizational learning is a process and a combination of activities leading staff to learning and involves certain organizational behavior which is applied to the learning organization. Within such organizations, all conditions are available for members to learn and individuals constantly try to use what they learnt (Amichai & et al,2008) . The overall objective of the present study is investigated the relationship between Organizational learning and empowerment strategy for staff working at education administrations .

## 2) Theoretical Background of the Research

### 2.1. Organizational learning

Organizational learning was first used by Cyret and March (1963) during their initial study on behavioral aspects of organizational learning. From then on, research on organizational learning has been increasingly grown. Apart from exact date of its introduction, this subject had not been paid much attention to by late 1970's when some theorists focused their activities on organizational learning. Although, the research activities on the subject continued up to 1980's; at 1990's, it was simply one of the subjects discussed at different branches of management discipline such as production strategy and management(Khandehar & harma,2006). After this period, organizational learning came under new management discussions including those focused on learning organizations. It is commonly believed that organizational learning is a complex and multi-faceted concept which was studied under different disciplines. For being an interdisciplinary concept, organizational learning is hard to define in way that will be universally accepted, but, as Senge (1997) points out, almost all definitions of organizational learning produced cover two types of change including "cognitive" and "behavioral". Cognitive aspect of the change concerns with such concepts as acquisition of knowledge, understanding and new ideas; while behavioral aspect refers to a real or a potential change in the person learning(Susana & et al,2005).

Literature concerning organizational learning has drastically increased in recent years and, as a result, loads of definitions have been introduced( Huber,1991). Organizational learning is a complex process which results in new and potential learning to grow, changing individual and organizational behavior at work. Peter Senge (1998) defines it as such: organizational learning is a

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repeated test on one's experience and flow of his/her learning to the whole organization and to any individuals working at that organization. Using this learning, the organization will be able to move toward improving inside and outside processes. Organizational learning has been provided by different definitions in many fields to some of which we shall refer (Dajson, 2007).

As an approach, organizational learning helps managers and the staff have a better understanding of organizational environment via expansion of learning through the organization. As a process, it results in the development of learning and new ideas, takes potential effects on the staff's behavior, and make improvement to operations of organization. As a dynamic process which involves producing new learning, skills and behaviors, it enables the organization to cope with changes rapidly, being a key, at the same time, to developing work expertise and improving organizational efficiency (Falconer, 2006).

## 2.2. Empowerment

The term 'empowerment' has a multi-faceted meaning that lives in discussions of psychology, sociology, ideology and management. Empowerment is an ideology that is rooted in social, economical, and psychological theories lack of which equals to meaning opposite to power. Parallel with this, the basic element remains in providing opportunities to achieve positive results at individual and social levels (Skerlava & HoonSong, 2010). In Oxford abridged dictionary, 'empowerment' was defined as 'going powerful', 'giving authorization', 'exercising power', 'being enabled'. Empowerment is assumed to be the power injected to the staff reinforcing them and giving them a feeling of being self-powered. That is a concept that connects individual power with individual skills so that the person has an active behavior in his/her team, and creates self-confidence so that the staff's power to take decisions is recovered, as they will be given more autonomy to accomplish tasks (Hankool & et al, 2006).

## 2.3. Aspects of Thomas and Velthouse Empowerment

Thomas and Velthouse (1990) extended the general approach developed by Conger and Kanungo in 1981 and proposed that it is better for empowerment to be considered as a multi-faceted structure. In their conceptual model of empowerment of the staff, they dealt with the four aspects of empowerment including feeling of sufficiency, determination (independence), effectiveness and meaningfulness of occupation (Thomas & Velthouse, 1990).

**Feeling of Sufficiency (self-effectiveness):** This aspect is defined as the person's challenging mentality to face with the problems and his/her preference to accomplish the task. If the person has the ability, skill, knowledge and training necessary to do the task, this feeling will be deepened (Ergenli & et al, 2007).

**Feeling of Self-organizing (feeling of determination power or independence):** Feeling of independence means that the person feels that he/she has control over his/her task. In other words, this right involves: the person's feeling of independence to initiate and continue working behavior and processes, and to make decision on the methods, activities and efforts needed to perform the task (Hsien Kuo & et al, 2009).

**Feeling of Effectiveness:** It stands for the extent the person can be effective on strategic, administrative, or operational outcomes of his/her working (Littrell, 2007).

**Feeling of Meaningfulness:** Meaningfulness of occupation is defined as the value assigned to occupational or working objectives which is judged according to the person's standards and ideals (Uden-Kraan & Drossaer, 2009).

## 3) MATERIALS AND METHODS

The current research is described as functional in terms of nature and objectives, and descriptive-correlative in terms of methodology and the method used for data collection. Staff working for education administrations of Gulistan province constitute the statistical population of the research which include 152 people selected by random-hit the floor method using kristy-morgan table. Standard questionnaire for organizational learning and empowerment by Neefe and Speritzer, respectively, was used for data collection. Validity of both questionnaires were confirmed by expert opinions while Cronbach's alpha test was used to ensure the reliability of the questionnaires. Final coefficient obtained for organizational learning and empowerment questionnaire was 0.931 and 0.942, respectively. Also, inferential statistics obtained from Pearson correlation test by means of SPSS 18 were used for data analysis regarding the subject and the hypotheses put forward.

## 4) FINDINGS

### 4.1. First hypothesis is proposed as follows:

There is a significant correlation between organizational learning and feeling of sufficiency at work among the staff of education administrations of Golestan province.

To examine this hypothesis, Pearson correlation test was used and forms of hypotheses are as follow:

$H_0$ : There is not a significant correlation between organizational learning and feeling of sufficiency at work among the staff.

$H_1$ : There is a significant correlation between organizational learning and feeling of sufficiency at work among the staff.

**Table 1-** Correlation between Organizational learning and feeling of sufficiency

Correlations				
			Organizational learning	feeling of sufficiency
Spearman's rho	Organizational learning	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.566*
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	152	152
	feeling of sufficiency	Correlation Coefficient	.566*	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	152	152

\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 1 defines  $R$  by 0.566, i.e.  $R = 0.566$ ; and since level of significance equal to 0.000, that is,  $sig = 0.000$ , is less than  $\alpha=0.05$ ,  $H_0$  hypothesis is rejected and  $H_1$  hypothesis accepted. Accordingly, there is a significant correlation between organizational learning and feeling of sufficiency at work among the staff.

**4.2. Second hypothesis is proposed as follows:**

There is a significant correlation between organizational learning and feeling of independence at work among the staff of education administrations of Golestan province.

To examine this hypothesis, Pearson correlation test was used and forms of hypotheses are as follow:

$H_0$ : There is not a significant correlation between organizational learning and feeling of independence at work among the staff.

$H_1$ : There is a significant correlation between organizational learning and feeling of independence at work among the staff.

**Table 2-** Correlation between Organizational learning and feeling of independence

Correlations				
			Organizational learning	feeling of independence
Spearman's rho	Organizational learning	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.671*
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	152	152
	feeling of independence	Correlation Coefficient	.671*	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	152	152

\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 2 defines  $R$  by 0.671, i.e.  $R = 0.671$ ; and since level of significance equal to 0.000, that is,  $sig = 0.000$ , is less than  $\alpha=0.05$ ,  $H_0$  hypothesis is rejected and  $H_1$  hypothesis accepted. Accordingly, there is a significant correlation between organizational learning and feeling of independence at work among the staff.

**4.3. Third hypothesis is proposed as follows:**

There is a significant correlation between organizational learning and feeling of effectiveness at work among the staff of education administrations of Golestan province.

To examine this hypothesis, Pearson correlation test was used and forms of hypotheses are as follow:

$H_0$ : There is not a significant correlation between organizational learning and feeling of effectiveness at work among the staff.

$H_1$ : There is a significant correlation between organizational learning and feeling of effectiveness at work among the staff.

**Table 3-** Correlation between Organizational learning and feeling of effectiveness

Correlations				
			Organizational learning	feeling of effectiveness
Spearman's rho	Organizational learning	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.496*
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	152	152
	feeling of effectiveness	Correlation Coefficient	.496*	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	152	152

\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 3 defines  $R$  by 0.496, i.e.  $R = 0.496$ ; and since level of significance equal to 0.000, that is,  $sig = 0.000$ , is less than  $\alpha=0.05$ ,  $H_0$  hypothesis is rejected and  $H_1$  hypothesis accepted. Accordingly, there is a significant correlation between organizational learning and feeling of effectiveness at work among the staff.

**4.4. Fourth hypothesis is proposed as follows:**

There is a significant correlation between organizational learning and feeling of meaningfulness at work among the staff of education administrations of Golestan province.

To examine this hypothesis, Pearson correlation test was used and forms of hypotheses are as follow:

$H_0$ : There is not a significant correlation between organizational learning and feeling of meaningfulness at work among the staff.

$H_1$ : There is a significant correlation between organizational learning and feeling of meaningfulness at work among the staff.

**Table 4-** Correlation between Organizational learning and feeling of meaningfulness

Correlations			Organizational learning	feeling of meaningfulness
Spearman's rho	Organizational learning	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.514*
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	152	152
	feeling of meaningfulness	Correlation Coefficient	.514*	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	152	152

\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 4 defines  $R$  by 0.514, i.e.  $R = 0.514$ ; and since level of significance equal to 0.000, that is,  $sig = 0.000$ , is less than  $\alpha=0.05$ ,  $H_0$  hypothesis is rejected and  $H_1$  hypothesis accepted. Accordingly, there is a significant correlation between organizational learning and feeling of meaningfulness at work among the staff.

**5) RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

As there is a positive and significant correlation between organizational learning and empowerment strategy, Given the significant findings on the relationship between organizational learning and a feeling of sufficiency, with results in gnaji (2010) in their study titled treasure the relationship between organizational learning and organizational function results can be consistent.it is suggested, based on the results obtained from the hypotheses of the study, that education administrations of Golestan province canonically invest on full development of organizational learning, and design and activate learning substructures such as libraries, learning sites, human and computerized interactive networks, research centers and learning-based system for the organization. Education administrations should, therefore, grant more freedom and determination to the staff for trying new ideas, i.e. organizational learning, fearlessly in the real world so that this new learning as produced by the staff themselves permeates other people within the organization, meaning that they feel being effective by their own work. Also, some budget of education organization of Golestan province should be devoted to operations and research projects to be performed by the staff under research groups which gives them a feeling of meaningfulness at work and turn them into empowered staff. A structure promoting knowledge and learning and how it would be used will lead to empowerment of its members because learning can be one of the requirements for empowerment; and the policy supporting knowledge and information would act as the deriver thereof. Establishment of organizational learning at organization may lead to empowerment of the staff; and when the staff are empowered, the organization will be able to enjoy all their commitment and power to modify their behavior in favor of flexibility so as to exercise positive impact on the potentials of organization defying the changes.

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