

A Survey of the Organizational Learning of Employees of Main Office of Railway of Isfahan Province

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Abstract

The present study aimed to evaluate the organizational learning in main office of Railway in Isfahan province in 2012 by descriptive-survey method. The study population is all the employees of main office of Railway in Isfahan province in 2012 as 92 people. They were selected by random convenient sampling method and sample size was determined by Cochran's formula as 75 people in various job positions from Railway stations of Zarinshahr, Hassanabad, Diziche. The study measure is 14-item standard questionnaire of Chiva (2007). The organizational learning of main office of Railway was evaluated in four components of management commitment, systematic view, using open space and experimentation and transferring and integration of knowledge. The face validity of questionnaire was supported by some of employees of main office of Railway of Isfahan province in an initial performance. The reliability of questionnaire by Cronbach's alpha was 0.81. The data analysis was performed in two levels of descriptive and inference (t test and single t-test). The results of the study showed that organizational learning was not effective above average. The management commitment, systematic view, transfer and knowledge integration were not effective above average and the amount of using open space and experimentation were effective above average.

Keywords: Organizational learning, Management commitment, Systematic view, Open space experimentation, Transfer and knowledge integration, Main office of railway of Isfahan.

Introduction

In the current business environment, rapid changes occur. The organizations in global business environment competition are required to have good reaction or be eliminated to the continual changes. To be superior to other organizations, an organization should develop human resources and increase the information and available knowledge. Organizational learning is a set of organizational actions as achieving information distribution knowledge, information interoperation and memory affecting organizational positive changes as consciously or unconsciously. Although wide researches have been conducted regarding organizational learning, various aspects of it are studied. On one hand, this idea is accepted widely that organizational learning is a necessary element for success in competition in global markets but there are a few empirical researches in this regard (Banisi, Esmaili Lahme, 2010). Despite the deep studies regarding inherent

complexity of organizational learning structure, to generalize the theories, organizational learning is measured and they are proved by empirical tests. Gassamorani et al., defined organizational learning as the firm capability to improve performance based on previous experiences and this capability is achieving tacit and explicit knowledge and knowledge sharing and using knowledge in organization. Today, with increasing emphasis on knowledge-based organizations, instead of production-based organizations, knowledge is one of the important factors in organizations. Having update knowledge and information is turned into an unavoidable necessity to continue in organization. Thus, the organizations management should be based on the best wisdom, taking logical decisions in important issues and knowledge-based performance improvement. Despite the various researches on conceptualization, management, development and using organizational learning, there is no general agreement about concept, definition and theories of

organizational learning (Abernathy, 2003). This disagreement is based on three reasons, first due to multidisciplinary nature of organizational learning, specialists of some fields including sociology, psychology, management and industrial economy developed the concepts and theories of organizational learning based on their field. Second, organizational application in various fields like information processing, product innovation, organizational change, organizational culture and strategic implementation diversified concepts in organizational learning. A deep study regarding inherent complexity of organizational learning structure is used to generalize the theories and it should measure organizational learning and prove them by empirical tests. Garsamorani et al., defined organizational learning as the firm capability to improve performance based on previous experiences and this capability is achieving tacit and explicit knowledge and knowledge sharing and using knowledge in organization. Today, with increasing emphasis on knowledge-based organizations, instead of production-based organizations, knowledge is one of the important factors in organizations. Having update knowledge and information is turned into an unavoidable necessity to continue in organization. Thus, the organizations management should be based on the best wisdom, taking logical decisions in important issues and knowledge-based performance improvement (Kriner, 2002). Despite the various researches on conceptualization, management, development and using organizational learning, there is no general agreement about concept, definition and theories of organizational learning. This disagreement is based on three reasons, first due to multidisciplinary nature of organizational learning, specialists of some fields including sociology, psychology, management and industrial economy developed the concepts and theories of organizational learning based on their field. Second, organizational application in various fields like information processing, product innovation, organizational change, organizational culture and strategic implementation diversified concepts in organizational learning and third, multi-level analysis of learning concept from individual to organizational level caused this variety. Despite the history of organizational learning, this issue didn't receive

much attention in the late 1970s but later some of the theorists started their activities in this regard (Sobhaninejad, Yuzbashi, 2006). Considering the activities of organization and its learning method is considered much in recent years. In 21th century, organizations are encountered with change continually. In order to empower them to effective competition in competitive markets, the important point is how to learn and produce new knowledge. The survival and growth of organizations in the present changing world requires the ability for timely reaction to the continual environmental changes. Only, those organizations can predict necessities and environmental changes timely and continue their survival in the changing environment focusing on organizational learning (Weber, 2000). As many years are passed from the establishment of the railway in Iran and as for some reasons, this big organization couldn't be consistent with the growth in other economic sectors of country and development of railway all over the world. Also, it is not developed in all aspects namely achieving required knowledge and information. As main office of Isfahan is one of the most important and main regions of railway in Iran, it seems the present study should be conducted regarding the learning in main office of Isfahan railway.

A study has been conducted by Asgari and Farokhnejad (2006) as "relationship between organizational learning components and knowledge management in regional electricity offices of Hormozgan province. They found that as organizational learning score and knowledge management is weak among the employees and we observed rapid changes in various science and technology fields, the relevant managers should have some plans to create learning, knowledge and its dissemination in organization. The mentioned results are considered as there is a significant association between organizational learning and knowledge management of employees.

In another study conducted by Aghdasi and Khakzar Befruyi (2007) regarding "evaluation of organizational learning capabilities in hospitals", the results showed that organizational learning is measured by four dimensions and managers can

improve management commitment capability, systematic view, open space, experimentation, transfer and integration of organizational learning knowledge by this tool. Also, transfer and knowledge integration had the highest mean and management commitment capability had the lowest mean. The comparison of the results of the study with previous researches showed that human-based service industries improve transfer and integration of knowledge and systematic view.

In a study by Nadi (2008), “the distinguishing of Islamic Azad Universities of region 4 by quality management inventory, learner organization and knowledge management”, it is shown that there is a significant association between knowledge management and learner organization in Islamic Azad Universities of region 4. Knowledge management is the pre-requirement of creating a learning organization and learning organization fields have no association with age group and academic level and creating knowledge is one of the supporting processes of organizational learning. Finally, based on low scores of systematic view, it is required to think about required solutions from the managers of Islamic Azad universities of region 4 to improve it.

In a study done by Yaghubi, Karimi, Javadi and Nikbakht (2009), regarding “the relationship between organizational learning components and knowledge management among the employees of selected hospitals of Isfahan city” and found that there is a significant association between organizational learning and knowledge management of employees. Finally, they found that as the score of organizational learning and knowledge management are weak among the employees, we observed rapid changes in various technological and science fields. The managers of studied hospitals should have some plans to create learning, knowledge and its disseminating in organization. In another study conducted by Alame and Moghadami (2009), “the relationship between organizational learning and organizational performance in driving force unit of Iran Khodro Company, it was found that organizational learning has significant association with organization performance but the effect of organizational learning on organization performance

is its effect reason on competition and innovation of organization. The data showed that there is no significant association between organizational learning and financial results/economic of organization and it can be said the managers of organizations by improving learning level in organization considerably can improve the competition power and capability and creativity and innovation of organization and in the second level, it can improve organization performance and competitive power.

In a study done by Khanalizade, Kordnaeech, Fani and Moshabaki (2010) regarding “the relationship between empowerment and organizational learning in Tarbiat Modarres University” found that there is a significant association between learning on empowerment and strong impact of learning on empowerment, it was found that in University, five dimensions of empowerment include competence, autonomy, significance of meaningfulness and trust among the employees. However, among 7 dimensions of organizational learning, three dimensions of team learning and work, knowledge sharing and participative leadership were less than average and four dimensions of shared vision, learning culture, systematic thinking and development of employees competence were above average.

In a study done by Cullen (1999) regarding “socialized learning: interpretation of organizational learning concept”, it was found that today, organizations are obliged to have stable innovation in management to create innovation principles via knowledge sharing among employees and customers.

In a study performed by Mishra & Bhaskar (2010) regarding “required features of educational organizations”, it was found that there is a clear and significant association between transformational leadership and knowledge management in organizations. Also, they found that committed leadership is effective on creating and knowledge dissemination at individual and group levels and it was found that management commitment for organizational learning is associated with knowledge management and the higher the commitment of

managers and leaders, the better the establishment of knowledge management.

According to a study by Reynolds & Ablett (2000) regarding “turning organizational learning motto to organizational learning reality”, it was found that some concepts as knowledge management, organizational learning and learner organization are like the rings of a chain associated with each other and relationship of these rings make the goal of improving organizational productivity as necessary.

In a study done by Popper & Lipshitz(2000) regarding “organizational learning: mechanism, culture and feasibility” showed that to improve organizational knowledge level, a combination of knowledge management and organizational learning is required. Based on the results of the study, security as the goal of knowledge management is creating continual integration between internal and environmental knowledge to solve the existing problems and innovation in business development. Thus, to study such functions, the organization should provide the learning environment to improve its human resources.

Study questions

- 1- How is the application of organizational learning in main office of Isfahan Railway (Railway stations of Zarinshahr, Hassanabad and Diziche)?
- 2- How is the management comittment in main office of Isfahan Railway (Railway stations of Zarinshahr, Hassanabad and Diziche)?
- 3- How is the application of open space and experimentation in main office of Isfahan

- Railway (Railway stations of Zarinshahr, Hassanabad and Diziche)?
- 4- How is the transfer and knowledge integration in main office of Isfahan Railway (Railway stations of Zarinshahr, Hassanabad and Diziche)?

Study method

The study method is descriptive-survey. The study population is all employees of main office of Isfahan railway in 2012 as 92 people. 75 people were selected by random convenient sampling method and Cochran’s formula in various job positions from Zarinshahr, Hassanabad, Diziche railway stations to be included in the study. The study measure is standard 14-item inventory of Chiva organizational learning (2007) and evaluated organizational learning of main office of Railway in four dimensions of management commitment, systematic view, using open space and experimentation, transfer and knowledge integration. The face validity of the inventory is supported by some of the employees of main office of Railway of Isfahan province in an initial test. The reliability of questionnaire is estimated by Cronbach’s alpha coefficient as 0.81.

Study findings

First question: How is the application of organizational learning in main office of Isfahan Railway (Railway stations of Zarinshahr, Hassanabad and Diziche)?

Table 1 Comparison of the mean of scores of using organizational learning in main office of Isfahan Railway office (Zarinshahr, Hassanabad, Diziche stations) in terms of employees with criterion score 3

Significance level	Mean SDtDegree of freedom	Application of organizational learning
0.645	2.890.850-0.47113	

P < 0/001

Regarding organizational learning application, all 14 questions are considered. Based on the findings of Table 1, the mean of scores of employees responses to this field was 2.89 and standard deviation 0.850. As the observed t is not bigger as -0.471 at level $P < 0.001$ of critical value of Table, application of organizational learning is not effective above average in terms of the view

of employees of main office of Isfahan Railway of Zarinshahr, Hassanabad and Diziche railway stations.

Second question: How is the management comittment in main office of Isfahan Railway (Railway stations of Zarinshahr, Hassanabad and Diziche)?

Table 2 Comparison of management comittment in main office of Isfahan Railway office (Zarinshahr, Hassanabad, Diziche stations) in terms of employees with criterion score 3

Significance level	Mean SDtDegree of freedom	Management comittment
0.90	2.891.26-0.1422	

$P < 0/001$

Regarding management commitment, 3 questions are considered. Based on the findings of Table 2, the mean of scores of employees' responses to this field was 2.89 and standard deviation 1.26. As the observed t is not bigger as -0.142 at level $P < 0.001$ of critical value of Table, management commitment is not effective above

average in terms of the view of employees of main office of Isfahan Railway of Zarinshahr, Hassanabad and Diziche railway stations.

Third question: How is the systematic view in main office of Isfahan Railway (Railway stations of Zarinshahr, Hassanabad and Diziche)?

Table 3 Comparison of systematic view in main office of Isfahan Railway office (Zarinshahr, Hassanabad, Diziche stations) in terms of employees with criterion score 3

Significance level	Mean SDtDegree of freedom	Systematic veiw
0.890	2.890.184-0.01562	

$P < 0/001$

Regarding systematic view, 3 questions are considered. Based on the findings of Table 3, the mean of scores of employees' responses to this field was 2.89 and standard deviation 0.184. As the observed t is not bigger as -0.156 at level $P < 0.001$ of critical value of Table, systematic view is not effective above average in terms of the view of employees of main office of Isfahan

Railway of Zarinshahr, Hassanabad and Diziche railway stations.

Fourth question: How is the application of open space and experimentation in main office of Isfahan Railway (Railway stations of Zarinshahr, Hassanabad and Diziche)?

Table 4 Comparison of open space and experimentation in main office of Isfahan Railway office (Zarinshahr, Hassanabad, Diziche stations) in terms of employees with criterion score 3

Significance level	Mean SDtDegree of freedom	Using open space and experimentation
0.011	2.100.316-5.06903	

$P < 0/001$

Regarding open space and experimentation, 4 questions are considered. Based on the findings of Table 4, the mean of scores of employees' responses to this field was 2.10 and standard deviation 0.316. As the observed t is not bigger as -5.690 at level $P < 0.001$ of critical value of Table, open space and experimentation is effective above average in terms of the view of employees of main office of Isfahan Railway of Zarinshahr, Hassanabad and Diziche railway stations.

Fifth question: How is the knowledge transfer and integration in main office of Isfahan Railway (Railway stations of Zarinshahr, Hassanabad and Diziche)?

Table 5 Comparison of knowledge transfer and integration in main office of Isfahan Railway office (Zarinshahr, Hassanabad, Diziche stations) in terms of employees with criterion score 3

Significance level	Mean SDtDegree of freedom	knowledge transfer and integration
0.152	3.610.36431.9123	

$P < 0/001$

Regarding knowledge transfer and integration, 4 questions are considered. Based on the findings of Table 5, the mean of scores of employees' responses to this field was 3.61 and standard deviation 0.643. As the observed t is not bigger as 1.912 at level $P < 0.001$ of critical value of Table, knowledge transfer and integration is not effective above average in terms of the view of employees of main office of Isfahan Railway of Zarinshahr, Hassanabad and Diziche railway stations.

experimentation were effective above average. Based on the mean of achieved scores of employees responses (application of organizational learning), it can be said, organizational learning application is not effective above average in terms of the view of employees in main office of Isfahan Railway office (Zarinshahr, Hassanabad, Diziche stations). The results of the study are in line with the study of Yaghubi, Karimi, Javadi and Nikbakht (2009). Based on the mean of achieved scores of the responses of employees to (management commitment), it can be said, organizational learning application is not effective above average in terms of the view of employees in main office of Isfahan Railway office (Zarinshahr, Hassanabad, Diziche stations). The results of the study are in line with the study of Allame and Moghadami (2009) and Aghdasi and Khakzarbefruyi (2007). Based on the mean of achieved scores of the responses of employees to

Discussion and Conclusion

The findings showed that organizational learning is not effective above average, management commitment, systematic view and transfer and integration of knowledge are not effective above average and the application of open space and

(systematic view), it can be said, organizational learning application is not effective above average in terms of the view of employees in main office of Isfahan Railway office (Zarinshahr, Hassanabad, Diziche stations). The results of the study are in line with the study of Nadi (2008). Based on the mean of achieved scores of the responses of employees to (open space and experimentation), it can be said, organizational learning application is effective above average in terms of the view of employees in main office of Isfahan Railway office (Zarinshahr, Hassanabad, Diziche stations). The results of the study are in line with the study of Aghdasi and Khakzad Befruyi (2007), Khanalizade Kordatich, Fafi and Moshabaki (2010).

Based on the mean of achieved scores of the responses of employees to (transfer and knowledge integration), it can be said, organizational learning application is not effective above average in terms of the view of employees in main office of Isfahan Railway office (Zarinshahr, Hassanabad, Diziche stations). The results of the study are in line with the study of Yaghubi, Karimi, Javadi and Nikbakht (2009) and Asgari and Farokhnejad (2006). Based on the results of the study, it is proposed to the organizations, having a systematic view and open space of learning in organizations improve trust and responsibility among the organization people and this responsibility lead to the increase and improvement of performance. Giving importance to people capabilities and from the top managers of organizations and increasing capabilities of employees provide the environment in which people can create creativity and solve the problems. Having a shared goal in organization gives more comfort to employees and managers and personal goals are combined with organizational goals. The systematic view in organization gives a new view to managers and increases the needs and communication between the units, the problems between the sectors is comfortable, responsibility and commitment are increased. The learner nature of organization increases moving to increasing effectiveness and efficiency of works and create more dynamics in organization finally providing conditions and opportunities of group and organizational learning, knowledge exchange, experiences and skills are

improved via team groups, development of group skills, forming work groups and improving the team morale among the employees and managers and development of information and communication in organization increases organization performance.

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