

A STUDY OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF LEARNING SKILLS OF MANAGERS

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ABSTRACT: *In the light of globalization and modern business, the companies are exposed to the challenges posted by unpredictable and complex competitive environment. The companies are forced to innovate and develop new techniques for improving the quality and functionality of products, reduce costs and, of course, the answer to the increasingly sophisticated customers' demands in order to survive in the market. Learning organizations encourage self-organization, so that groups can come together to explore new ideas without being directed to do so by a manager outside that group. Organizations that could shed light on the future are those with learning capacity and enthusiasm, and are able to form and use valid and reliable information. It is essential for the staff of an institution to be open to innovation and learning, in order to increase service quality, and also bring the significance of being a learning organization to foreground. Thus, the study focuses on the development of learning skills of the managers.*

Keywords: *Environment, Innovation, Learning skills, Managers, Organizations, Training*

INTRODUCTION

During the last four decades, the concept of learning has become a dominant concept in theory and research about organizations. Learning organizations are not simply the most fashionable or current management trend, they can provide work environments that are open to creative thought, and embrace the concept that solutions to ongoing work-related problems are available inside each and every one of us. A learning organization is one that seeks to create its own future; that assumes learning is an ongoing and creative process for its members; and one that develops, adapts, and transforms itself in response to the needs and aspirations of people, both inside and outside itself.

In the light of globalization and modern business, the companies are exposed to the challenges posted by unpredictable and complex competitive environment. With the rapid pace of development, organizations face important challenges in training and retaining the intellectual capital of their workforce. First, due to the rapidly changing technologies there is a need for continuous adaptation and retraining of the employees. Second, the training has to address a wide range of people with different backgrounds and abilities, ranging spectrum of needs and availability of time to study, etc. Further, as these learners are adults with considerable experience and awareness of what they would like to learn, training methods need to evolve to meet the needs of a modern knowledge society (Minch & Tabor, 2003). In addition, organizations are facing a number of key changes that focus attention on efficiency in relation to delivery methods. New opportunities are being offered by information technology (IT) which could facilitate major changes in the delivery of training and provide greater flexibility for learning (Litteljohn & Watson, 2004).

According to Alipour and Karimi (2011), organizations need to focus on using information and continuous learning in order to increase their performance. In the Integrative Perspective, Watkins and Marsick (1993, 1996) provide an integrative model of a learning organization. They originally defined the concept of the learning organization as "one that learns continuously and transforms itself. Learning is a continuous, strategically used process—integrated with and running parallel to work". Companies are seeking to improve existing products and services (continuous improvement), and innovation (breakthrough strategies). This has resulted in a plethora of initiatives such as TQM (Total Quality Management) and BPR (Business Process Reengineering). But companies are finding that such programmes succeed or fail depending on human factors, such as skills, attitudes and organizational culture.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The learning organization perspective is perhaps the most popular within the management and business literature at the moment. Watkins and Marsick (1993, 1996) view the learning organization as an integrative model, where learning is a continuous process, used strategically, and is integrated with overall work processes. To measure an organization's learning culture, Watkins and Marsick (1996) developed the 'Dimensions of a Learning Organization Questionnaire' (DLOQ), an instrument that was also validated by relating it to organizational performance. Gomes and Wojahn (2017) study show that the learning organization capability influences the innovative performance of small and medium-sized enterprises, however, the influence of the learning capability in organizational performance was not significant.

Singh (2016) study found that the learning organization have a great impact on the Organizational effectiveness. An organization must follow in order to maintain a cordial learning environment within the organization is through the senior managers which should regulate data creation and data sharing among the employees within the organization, this will help in bringing the innovation capabilities, increasing the competitive advantage. The study also found that the employees should continuously adapt to and learn for the organization effectiveness. Dekoulou and Trivellas (2015) study have brought to light that learning-oriented operation is a crucial predictor of both employee job satisfaction and individual performance, while job satisfaction proved to be a mediator of the relationship between learning organization and job performance.

Kumar (2015) identified that the success of the universities in reaching out to the students depends on the Organizational Identification of the faculty and their Self-Leadership traits. Hence, universities are expected to be Learning Organizations in order to remain viable, containing the progress, maintaining the synergy of learning among the faculty and students. Abu-Shanab, Haddad and Knight (2014) indicated that there is a significant positive relationship between knowledge sharing practices and ongoing learning organisation. Firms need to emphasize the role of learning organisation in sustaining competitive advantage and furnish needed tools to encourage knowledge management practices. Dekoulou and Trivellas (2014) have brought to light that learning-oriented operation strengthens a company's

capacity for improvement through development and innovation, increases effectiveness of organizational processes, enhances relationships with customers, and finally, elevates financial performance.

Greiling and Halachm (2013) study found that accountability in learning organizations working to improve learning organisation in the long term. Ongoing accountability means next government reports to make sure that the institution is working the right way. Service-tasks must take into consideration when designing organizations focusing on social responsibility in the long run. García-Morales, *et al.* (2012) study reveal that transformational leadership influences organizational performance positively through learning organisation and innovation; learning organisation influences organizational performance positively, both directly and indirectly through organizational innovation; and organizational innovation influences organizational performance positively. Jiménez-Jiménez and Sanz-Valle (2011) analyzed the impact of Innovation, learning organisation, and performance in Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs). The results of the study reveal that in smaller enterprises the effects of learning organisation on innovation and performance were more significant than in larger companies. The lack of organizational routine that some smaller organizations have makes the efforts of learning organisation on innovation are more intense.

Harrim (2010) identified six core dimensions of learning organization were identified: systems thinking, shared vision, teamwork and collaboration, leadership and empowerment, organizational culture, and learning environment. For organizational performance, four scales were identified: financial performance, customer service, internal processes and learning/ growth/ innovation. The findings of the study indicated a strong positive relationship between learning organization and performance and between each of the learning organization dimensions and each scale of organizational performance. Aydin and Ceylan (2009) study ascertained the impact of learning organisation capacity (OLC) on organizational effectiveness. The study found that a company that features high level of learning organization could have higher level of worker satisfaction which can successively improve the money and growth performance of a company resulting in positive effectiveness within the organization.

NEED FOR THE STUDY

The real world problem from which the study takes its cue is the challenges faced by big central public sector organizations, like the case of HPCL, that include high employee turnover due to increased employee mobility, a lack of free knowledge flow within the organization as the knowledge possessed by organizational members is highly 'tacit,' and a lack of systems and inefficiencies in capturing and sharing knowledge within the organization. These challenges require some form of learning organisation to be solved. The research problem is that theories of learning are often far removed from the management interventions and policies designed to encourage learning. The study takes aim at the gap between theories about Learning organisation and frameworks for establishing Learning Organizations.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The specific research objective of the study is to study the learning organization characteristics influencing at different levels of the organization and analyze the influence of development of learning skills of regional managers.

RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

For the purpose of the study the following hypotheses related to the influence of demographic factors on development of learning skills of regional managers is framed:

H₀: The demographic factors (age, gender, and salary grade) do not have significant relation with development of learning skills of regional managers (traits, skills and competencies).

H_A: The demographic factors (age, gender, and salary grade) have significant relation with development of learning skills of regional managers (traits, skills, and competencies).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

To pursue the objectives, data from both primary and secondary sources are necessary. The secondary data were collected from the records of Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Limited (HPCL), Journals, magazines and from the company websites. The present study depends mostly on primary data sources. The information related to the opinion of the employees towards learning organization have been collected and analyzed. To study the influence of learning organization on the employees of the company, survey method is used to collect information from employees. Online data collection method will be adopted by designing a comprehensive questionnaire. The sample size is determined based on the formula by Krejcie and Morgan, (1970). To analyze the influence of learning organization on development of learning skills of regional managers, a sample of 572 is considered for the study. The questionnaire for the influence of learning organization on development of learning skills of regional managers cover the following variables viz., Traits, Skills and Competencies. To analyze the collected data mean, frequency, Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), and Regression analysis were used. IBM SPSS software version 22.0 is used for the statistical analysis.

DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF THE RESPONDENTS

The demographic profile of the respondents such as Age, Gender, and Salary Grade are discussed in the study.

Table.1: Age wise classification of the Respondents

Age	Frequency	Percent
21-24 Years	29	5.1
25-34 Years	149	26
35-44 Years	127	22.2
45-54 Years	230	40.2

55-60 Years	37	6.5
Total	572	100

Table.1 shows the age wise classification of the respondents. As shown in the table, 40.2 per cent of the respondents are in the age group of 45-54 years. There are 26 per cent of respondents who are in the age group of 25-34 years and 22.2 per cent of respondents are in the age group of 35-44 years. However, 6.5 per cent of respondents are in age group of 55-60 years and only 5.1 per cent are in the age group of 21-24 years. The majority of respondents representing 88.4 per cent are in the age group of 25-54 years.

Table.2: Gender of the Respondents

Gender	Frequency	Percent
Female	36	6.1
Male	536	93.7
Total	572	100

Table.2 shows the gender wise classification of respondents. Out of the total, 93.7 per cent are males and only 6.1 per cent are females.

Table.3: Respondents Salary Grade

Grade	Frequency	Percent
A - B	201	35.1
C - D	214	37.4
E - F	134	23.4
G	17	3
H	6	1
Total	572	100

Table.3 shows the salary grade of the respondents. As shown in the table, 37.4 per cent of the respondents are in the salary grade of C - D. There are 35.1 per cent of the respondents are in the salary grade of A - B, 23.4 per cent respondents are in the salary grade of E - F, 3 per cent in the salary grade of G, and only 1 per cent of respondents are in the salary grade of H. The majority of respondents representing 72.5 per cent of respondents are in the salary grade of A-D.

STATISTICAL DATA ANALYSIS

The data analysis related to the three identified attributes Skills, Traits and Competencies are discussed in the study.

Table.4: Traits-Descriptive Statistics (n=572)

Sl. No.	Variables	Mean
1	In my organization, people openly discuss mistakes in order to learn from them.	3.72
2	In my organization, people help each other learn.	3.48
3	In my organization, people give open and honest feedback to each other.	3.65
4	In my organization, people listen to others' views before speaking.	3.50
5	In my organization, people are encouraged to ask "why" regardless of rank.	3.42

6	In my organization, whenever people state their view, they also ask what others think.	3.66
7	In my organization, people treat each other with respect.	3.00
8	In my organization, people spend time building trust with each other.	3.53
9	In my organization, teams/groups treat members as equals, regardless of rank, culture, or other differences.	3.24
10	In my organization, teams/groups revise their thinking as a result of group discussions or information collected.	3.41
11	My organization enables people to get needed information at any time quickly and easily.	3.13
12	My organization considers the impact of decisions on employee morale.	3.44
13	In my organization, leaders empower others to help carry out the organization's vision.	3.42
14	In my organization, leaders ensure that the organization's actions are consistent with its values.	3.14
Total		3.39

Source: Primary Data

The descriptive statistics reveals that the total mean value of all variables is 3.39 which indicate that the factor traits have positive influence on employees' efficiency. Among the referred fourteen variables 'in my organization, people openly discuss mistakes in order to learn from them' secured highest rating with a mean value of 3.72. The variables 'in my organization, whenever people state their view, they also ask what others think ($\mu=3.66$)', and 'in my organization, people give open and honest feedback to each other ($\mu=3.65$)' scored second the third highest ratings. It is pertinent to note that all the fourteen variables related to the factor traits have significant positive ratings by the respondents as the mean values of each variable is greater than 3.

Table.5: Traits-ANOVA^a

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	1.169	6	0.195	0.381	.021 ^b
Residual	288.968	565	0.511		
Total	290.137	571			

a. Dependent Variable: Traits

b. Predictors: (Constant), Salary Grade, Gender, Age

The results of the ANOVA test shown in table.5 indicates that the dependent variable traits ($F=0.381$, $p=0.021<0.05$) show a significant relation with the independent variables Salary Grade, Gender, and Age.

Table.6: Traits-Coefficients^a

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	3.276	0.184		17.792	0
Age	-0.051	0.066	-0.076	-0.782	0.034
Gender	0.112	0.106	0.046	1.05	0.024
Salary Grade	0.032	0.049	0.04	0.656	0.012

a. Dependent Variable: Traits

The calculation of coefficients shown in table.6 reveals that the independent variable age ($t=-0.782$, $p=0.034$) show significant negative relation with dependent variable traits. The variables gender ($t=1.05$, $p=0.024$) and salary grade ($t=0.656$, $p=0.012$) show positive significant coefficients with the dependent variable traits. Thus, the regression analysis results presented in the above tables provide a support for the rejection of the null hypothesis relating to the relationships between independent variables age, gender, and salary grade with the dependent variable traits.

Table.7: Skills-Descriptive Statistics (n=572)

Sl. No.	Variables	Mean
1	In my organization, people identify skills they need for future work tasks.	3.68
2	In my organization, people are given time to support learning.	3.52
3	In my organization, teams/groups have the freedom to adapt their goals as needed.	3.57
4	In my organization, teams/groups are confident that the organization will act on their recommendations.	3.72
5	My organization uses two-way communication on a regular basis, such as suggestion systems, electronic bulletin boards, or town hall/open meetings.	3.28
6	My organization maintains an up-to-date data base of employee skills.	3.01
7	My organization makes its lessons learned available to all employees.	3.37
8	My organization gives people choices in their work assignments.	3.49
9	My organization invites people to contribute to the organization's vision.	3.19
10	My organization gives people control over the resources they need to accomplish their work.	3.41
11	My organization supports employees who take calculated risks	3.57

12	My organization encourages people to get answers from across the organization when solving problems.	3.43
13	In my organization, leaders generally support requests for learning opportunities and training.	3.31
14	In my organization, leaders continually look for opportunities to learn.	3.27
Total		3.42

Source: Primary Data

The descriptive statistics reveals that the total mean value of all variables is 3.42 which indicate that the factor skills have positive influence on the employees' efficiency. Among the fourteen variables 'in my organization, teams/groups are confident that the organization will act on their recommendations' secured highest rating with a mean value of 3.72 followed by the variables 'in my organization, people identify skills they need for future work tasks ($\mu=3.68$)', 'my organization supports employees who take calculated risks ($\mu=3.57$)', and 'in my organization, teams/groups have the freedom to adapt their goals as needed ($\mu=3.57$)'. It is pertinent to note that all the fourteen variables related to the factor skills have significant positive ratings by the respondents as the mean values of each variable is greater than 3.

Table.8: Skills-ANOVA^a

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	1.127	6	0.188	0.394	.043 ^b
Residual	269.199	565	0.476		
Total	270.326	571			

a. Dependent Variable: Skill

b. Predictors: (Constant), Salary Grade, Gender, Age

The results of the ANOVA test shown in table.8 indicates that the dependent variable skills ($F=0.394$, $p=0.043<0.05$) show a significant relation with the independent variables Salary Grade, Gender, and Age.

Table.9: Skills-Coefficients^a

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	3.405	0.178		19.16	0
Age	-0.09	0.063	-0.138	-1.424	0.015
Gender	0.048	0.103	0.02	0.465	0.042
Salary Grade	0.023	0.047	0.03	0.483	0.63

a. Dependent Variable: Skill

The calculation of coefficients shown in table.9 reveals that the independent variable age ($t=-1.424$, $p=0.015$) show significant negative relation with dependent variable skills. The variables gender ($t=0.465$, $p=0.042$) show positive significant coefficients with the dependent variable skills. However, the independent variable salary grade ($t=0.483$, $p=0.63$) do not show significant relation with the dependent variable traits. Thus, the regression analysis results presented in the above tables provide a support for the rejection of the null hypothesis relating to the relationships between independent variables age and gender with the dependent variable skills.

Table.10: Competencies-Descriptive Statistics (n=572)

Sl. No.	Variables	Mean
1	In my organization, people can get money and other resources to support their learning.	3.43

2	In my organization, people view problems in their work as an opportunity to learn.	3.63
3	In my organization, people are rewarded for learning.	3.49
4	In my organization, teams/groups focus both on the group's task and on how well the group is working.	3.29
5	In my organization, teams/groups are rewarded for their achievements as a team/group.	3.32
6	My organization creates systems to measure gaps between current and expected performance.	3.28
7	My organization measures the results of the time and resources spent on training.	3.33
8	My organization recognizes people for taking initiative.	3.37
9	My organization builds alignment of visions across different levels and work groups.	3.38
10	My organization helps employees balance work and family.	3.31
11	My organization encourages people to think from a global perspective.	3.46
12	My organization encourages everyone to bring the customers' views into the decision making process.	3.42
13	My organization works together with the outside community to meet mutual needs.	3.55
14	In my organization, leaders share up to date information with employees about competitors, industry trends, and organizational directions.	3.23
15	In my organization, leaders mentor and coach those they lead.	3.35
Total		3.39

Source: Primary Data

The descriptive statistics reveals that the total mean value of all variables is 3.39 which indicate that the factor competencies have positive influence on the employees' efficiency. Among the referred fifteen variables 'in my organization, people view problems in their work as an opportunity to learn' secured highest rating with a mean value of 3.63. The variables 'my organization, works together with the outside community to meet mutual needs ($\mu=3.55$)', and 'in my organization, people are rewarded for learning ($\mu=3.49$)' are second the third highest rated by the respondents. It is pertinent to note that all the fifteen variables related to the factor competencies have significant positive ratings by the respondents as the mean values of each variable is greater than 3.

Table.11: Competencies-ANOVA^a

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	1.331	6	0.222	0.41	.042 ^b
Residual	305.445	565	0.541		
Total	306.775	571			

a. Dependent Variable: Competencies

b. Predictors: (Constant), Salary Grade, Gender, Age

The results of the ANOVA test shown in table.11 indicates that the dependent variable competencies ($F=0.41$, $p=0.042<0.05$) show a significant relation with the independent variables Salary Grade, Gender, and Age.

Table.12: Competencies-Coefficients^a

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	3.37	0.189		17.806	0
Age	-0.102	0.068	-0.146	-1.508	0.032
Gender	0.049	0.109	0.02	0.451	0.042
Salary Grade	0.026	0.05	0.031	0.51	0.041

a. Dependent Variable: Competencies

The calculation of coefficients shown in table-7.23 reveals that the independent variable age ($t=-1.508$, $p=0.032$) show significant negative relation with dependent variable competencies. The variables gender ($t=0.451$, $p=0.042$), and salary grade ($t=0.51$, $p=0.041$) show positive significant coefficients with the dependent variable competencies. Thus, the regression analysis results presented in the above tables provide a support for the rejection of the null hypothesis relating to the relationships between independent variables age, gender and salary grade with the dependent variable competencies.

CONCLUSION

The study focuses on how an organization can enhance the understanding and practice of responsible leadership by developing regional managers who have the competencies for integrating social and environmental considerations into business decision making processes. The study identified three attributes such as skills, traits and competencies that play a quintessential role in defining the characteristics of an ideal Regional Manager. With regard to the five motivational factors, promotion scored the top rank followed by challenging assignment, choice placement, monetary reward, and felicitation. With regard to the five challenges or hurdles at work place, non-availability of time is rated as the top challenge faced by the respondents followed by implementing procedures, lack of technical expertise or guidance, lack of encouragement from peers/seniors, and no appreciation and rewards.

With reference to the five contributions by the employees, Value Addition scored highest rank followed by more authority & responsibility (approvals/ financial), participate in task force / committee in addition to current role, participate in R&D / Innovation, and assume trainer/mentor responsibility. Thus, the results show that all the identified factors traits, skills and competencies shows significant relation with the respondents' age, gender and salary grade.

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