The Study on the Relationship Between Management Skills of Managers and Organizational Learning in Rah-Shahr International Corporation

[1]Gholamreza Jandaghi, [1]Hasan Zarei Matin, [1]Hosein Khanifar and [2]Hoori Kiaei
[1]Faculty of Management, Qom College, Iran
[2]Graduating in Executive Management, Rah-Shahr International Group, Iran

Abstract: Organizational Learning means acquisition and application of knowledge and skills and recording them in the organizational memory. In the past decades, numerous researches have been accomplished in this regard and the factors which pave the way for facilitation of Organizational Learning are taken into account. The goal of this research is perusing the relationship between management skills and Organizational Learning based on the conceptual model, presented in Katz and Marquardt Theories. The type of this research is correlation and it is applied with regard to the target. Statistic population and the sample in this research are 39 senior and middle rank managers of Rah Shahr Co. and all of them have been taken into census. The data of this research is based on the responses recorded in two questionnaires, which are regulated based on Cronbach's Alfa and have appropriate reliability. In addition, the content validity of the two questionnaires is also confirmed by experts. Using the statistic methods of Pierson and Partial correlation, hypotheses of this research have been tested. Findings of this research show that Organizational Learning variable among the managers of company is partly desirable. On the other hand, the outcomes of survey about human skills of the managers explain that this variable is ideal. The findings also show that among the triple skills, human skill has a more meaningful share in the process of Organizational Learning. At the end, it is necessary to remind that the findings of this research is discussed and concluded based on former results and applied proposals for research are offered accordingly.

Key words: Organizational learning, technical skill, human skill, conceptual skill, population, sample

INTRODUCTION

The concept of organizational learning has been expanding since 1990 and the emergence of learning organization concept has resulted in the great value placed upon organizational learning in the cycle of organizational functions. Market globalization in the business environment has brought along the high rate of changes and competitions. Therefore, it is impossible to rely on tangible assets as the main source of organizational capital. Now organizations should base their competitive advantage on intellectual assets and consider strategic role of knowledge and human skill. To meet the needs of organizational learning, managers provide the staff learning opportunities and growth of talents. Accordingly, the change of management paradigm fostering organizational learning prepare organizations to work in a real world business and provides them the means to achieve efficiency, sustainable competitive advantage and self adjusting (Marquardt, 1996).

Organizations develop professional employee along with encouraging innovation and providing opportunities for intellectual growth to respond to external new challenges and deal with the future. Undoubtedly, putting this theory in to practice has a close relationship with the role and effectiveness of managers and managerial skills and knowledge that is why some experts have titled the present period the age of management.

In the sweeping change of environment, considering the need for organizational learning and learning organization in order to survive, there is need for skillful managers, so the logical performance of managers would survive and leads to the expansion of organizations (Mahoney and Weitzel, 1969). Organizational learning is defined as enquiring and applying knowledge, skills, value and beliefs to survive and improve organizational growth (Guns and Andersen, 2001). This definition stresses on applied learning in that learning will not be fulfilled unless knowledge will be used by the employee. Learning is the main subsystem of a learning organization and it will occur at three levels namely the individual, the team and the organization. Five following key skills are needed to build and enhance organizational learning.

Corresponding Author: Gholamreza Jandaghi, Faculty of Management, Qom College, Iran

System thinking, mental models, self-directed learning, personal competency and dialogue (Marquardt, 1996).

System thinking is a conceptual framework, which helps to observe general pattern and facilitates learning and identifies and controls planned or unplanned changes.

Mental models refer to the perception of an event. Studying, exploring and recording inner perceptions, which are the basis of mental models.

Self-directed learning is an equipment by which an individual takes the responsibility of self-directed learning. Aware of individual learning style, evaluating self competencies and needs, relating business goals to learning requirements are the elements of self directed learning.

Personal competency refers to a high level of being professional in a particular field or skill. It requires long term commitment in learning and leads to professionalism in a specific skill or responsibility in organizations.

Dialogue expresses a high level of communication and dialogue among employees. It is a vital instrument to create and coordinate learning and practice in organizational environment. Dialogue promotes thinking and collaborative interaction and enables organization to exploit social intelligence.

Learning organizations focus on systems, norms and routines of organizations and as a whole body learn and produce collectively, but organizational learning studies, how learning occurs and it is one aspect of learning organization (Marquardt, 1996).

Learning process cycle: Hober refers to a systematic four step approach:

- Acquire learning, learning occurs while acquiring knowledge of organization and the knowledge is achieved along with controlling environment, using information systems to memorize and recycle data, research implementation, training and the like
- Dissemination refers to a process through which information is shared. Knowledge is recorded and disseminated in form of skills, formal and informal notes, studies and reports
- Interpretation, information is analyzed and interpreted before sharing, through this step organization has a shared understanding of information
- Organizational memory refers to a center where the knowledge will be memorized and has a vital role in organizational learning

Management skills: In 1955, Harvard Business Review published a study by Katz (1955) entitled Skills of an Effective Administrator Katz argue that what a manager
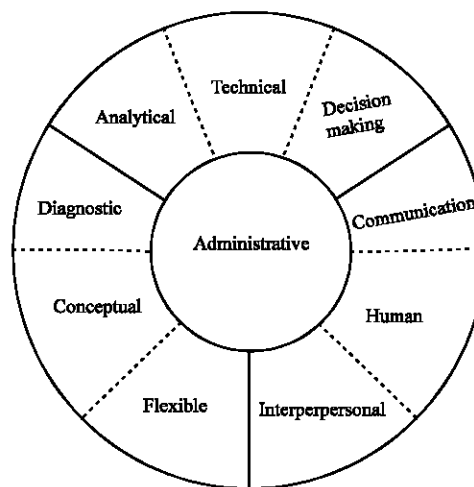

Fig. 1: Management triple skills (Katz, 1955)

accomplishes is based on the skills that he possesses and these skills include technical skill, human skill, conceptual skill. Technical skill is defined as the understanding of, or proficiency in, specific activities that require the use of special tools, methods, processes, procedure and is thought of as the specific skills an individual needs to perform some specialized task (Katz, 1955) (Fig. 1). Human skills are defined as the ability to work cooperatively with others, to communicate effectively, to resolve conflict (Katz, 1955). Finally, conceptual skill is defined as the ability to see the organization as a whole or to have a systematic viewpoint (Mintzberg, 1973). The ability to recognize different duties and changes in every unique. Understanding every change leads to changes throughout organization. Kuntz (1988) claims another skill titled problem solving. The ability to solve problems to achieve organizational benefits (Kuntz, 1988). Managers analyze problems they identify complex situation and related factors and exploit new conditions. Diagnosing skill is the ability of managers to study and investigate the signs of problems (Woodman *et al.*, 1993).

According to the researches, there is a close relationship between organizational learning and management knowledge and skills. Trim and Yang-Im (2007) studied the role of managers in implementing organizational learning as one of the strategic objectives. For this aim managers create a new viewpoint revise their expectations of group members according to new requirements in organization and prepare situations to gain the latest knowledge. Amy (2008) claims learning leaders have several distinct characteristics and skills, but the participant gave the most emphasis to emotionally intelligent communication. When the leaders communicate appropriately the process of learning occurs. Costanzo and Tzoumpa (2008) found there is a
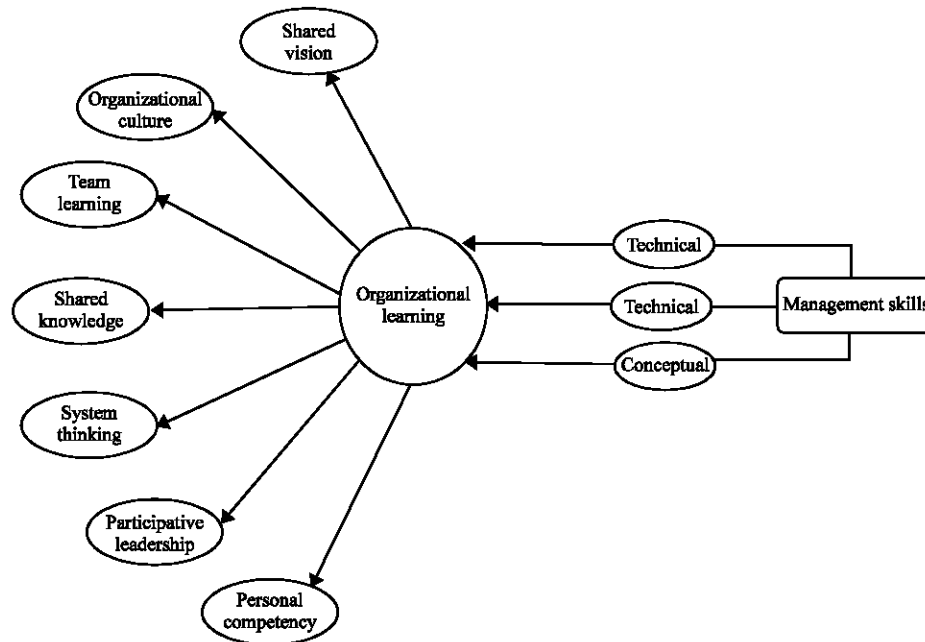
Fig. 2: Relationship between management skills and organizational learning

gap as to how knowledge integration and transfer occur within teams and referring to the Janczak's three specific managerial processes are relevant in that middle managers can employ them to facilitate knowledge transfer and integration. They claim managers facilitate applying knowledge by management processes and exploring new knowledge.

Simons *et al.* (2003) focused on comprehensive program of HRD managers' role. They have come to eight rules to change organization into a learning organization which overall consist of training and supporting managers as trainers. It requires managers to be supported to help their employee with learning process. Loon (2008) stresses on managers' role to improve organizational learning and determine how organization focuses on various organizational activities. Managers also influence employee's behavior. Organizational activities are acquiring and disseminating market knowledge through organization, the signals sent by managers would provide guidance to employee with the understanding of howto operate in the external and internal environment. Yeo (2008) claims that there is an intimate relationship between leadership and organizational learning. In order to expect employees to learn, leaders provide vision and take the future. A leader institutionalizes learning through the system. Training the managers is beyond a new role, but a new sight to management. Simons *et al.* (2003), there is a definite relationship between organizational learning and management effectiveness and this is related to managerial knowledge and skills.

Collinson (2008) refers core assumption of organizational learning along with a figure detailing

components of organizational capacity and a figure summarizing intellectual, ethical, social and political skills and values that allow members and leaders to build organization's capacity, develop leadership and influence an environment hospitable to collective learning. Through, learning process individual's views, ideas and behaviors will change with latest requirements. Managers enhance organizational learning with acquiring skills consist of problem facing, decision making, collective processes and mutual relationship. This study aims to provide theoretically based set of management skills and its relationship with organizational learning. This research tries to examine the following hypothesis:

- There is a relationship between organizational learning and technical skill of managers
- There is a relationship between organizational learning and human skill of managers
- There is a relationship between organizational learning and conceptual skill of managers

Conceptual framework: In the suggested model of this research, Marqurdt and Katz theories are used. Referring to Marquardt model organizational learning consists of seven elements, shared vision, organizational culture, team learning and working, shared knowledge, system thinking, participative leadership and personal competency. By Katz' theory, there are three managerial skills, technical skill, human skill, conceptual skill. This model refers to the relationship between organizational learning and management skills (Fig. 2).

MATERIALS AND METHODS

According to the report of human resources management, the number of company staff is 450 out of which 50 are senior, middle and executive managers. This number represents the statistical society of the research. With regard to the fact that evaluation of organizational learning variable necessitates at least one year of recording, it becomes obvious that 39 managers have >1 year of working experience, so they were chosen as samples. It should also be mentioned that a sample of >30 is desirable for correlation research studies. (Sarmad *et al.*, 1993).

Data collection procedure: In this research, two methods are used for collection of information: library studies and field studies. Library studies consisted of related books and articles on surveying, which were later used in the research on record and field studies and questionnaires are used to collect related information regarding statistical input and hypothesis testing.

Instrumentation: In this research, two kinds of questionnaires were used: Marquadrt (2003) organizational learning and manager's skills.

Manager's skills questionnaire: This scale is a test, containing 31 questions. All questions are prepared based on Likert's 5-points scale. Questions number 1-8 are related to technical skills, 9-20 are about human skills and 20-31 are related to conceptual skills Shipper (2004). In order to delineate the validity of questionnaires, the content validity method was used. To achieve this goal and in the meantime to complete the questionnaire and remove the undesirable items, the expert's questionnaires were also used. In addition, the Cronbach's Alfa method was used to establish the reliability of the questionnaire. The assessment of the managers skill showed technical skill 81%, human skills 78% and finally the conceptual skills was estimated 725%. This statistics shows desirable level of reliability.

Organizational learning questionnaire: Marquadrt (2003)'s questionnaire about organizational learning is a standard questionnaire, which includes 31 questions in 7-points scale and is adjusted from very low to very high and includes 7 items, namely: shared vision, sharing of knowledge, participative leadership, organizational culture, team working, system thinking and personal competency. This type of questionnaire is completely valid and its authenticity is proven in other researches. The Cronbach's Alfa test is also used and the evaluation results was equal to 9%. This shows that the existing questions in questionnaire have high degree of correlation.

In order to prepare the questionnaire, a letter of introduction was issued for the researcher after coordination with the human resources manager. Afterwards the researcher interviewed the staff individually at the company filled out the questionnaires. After coordination with related managers and setting time for meetings, the researcher attended the meetings and briefed the managers about the subject and objectives of the research. Then, the managers were asked to read the preface of the research and answer the questions. Totally, during 1 week, 39 questionnaires were completed.

In order to analyze the results of this research and studying the existing relation between managerial triple skills and organizational learning (hypothesis no. 1-3), the Pearson correlation coefficient and multiple regression are used. In surveying the existing relation between technical, human and conceptual skills in one hand and organizational learning on the other hand, the partial correlation coefficient was used to control the variables and their impacts on the organizational learning variable.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Correlation between managers triple skills and organizational learning is shown in Table 1. The Pearson correlation coefficient is used for hypothesis testing and analyzing the input. Regarding the results, the correlation

Table 1: Model summary correlation between managers triple skills and organizational learning

Variables	(r)	Sig.	(n)
Technical skill	0.068	0.341	39
Human skill	0.326	0.021	39
Conceptual skill	0.256	0.058	39

Table 2: Regression model summary

Variable	R	R2	F	Sig.
Human skill	0.326	0.107	4.14	0.043

Table 3: Regression coefficient of human skill model

Variables	b	β	t	Sig.
Intercept value	73.21	-	2.217	0.033
Human skill	1.514	0.326	2.101	0.043

Table 4: Partial correlation coefficient between human skill and organizational

Correlation	Scale	Sig.
Partial	0.337	0.038
Partial	0.233	0.159

Table 5: Correlation coefficients between managerial skills and organizational learning

Variables (r)	Personal competency	Participative leadership	System thinking	Knowledge sharing	Learning and team working	Organizational culture	Shared vision
Technical skill	0.267	0.151	0.110	0.117	-0.078	-0.155	0.246
Human skill	0.191	0.372*	0.228	0.246	0.167	0.111	0.484*
Conceptual skill	0.314	0.422*	0.170	-0.036	0.071	0.096	0.387*

between managers technical skill is not significant when it is at the level of 0.05. ($p>0.05$, n = 39, r = 0.068). The result of correlation coefficient test between manager's human skill and organizational learning is significant. ($p<0.05$, n = 39, r = 0.326). The results of the third hypothesis testing analysis with regard to correlation coefficient between the managers conceptual skills and organizational learning indicated ($p>0.05$, n = 39, r = 0.326) which isn't significant.

To investigate the existing relation between manager's triple skills and organizational learning, multiple regression analysis with stepwise method was used. Technical, human and conceptual skills are regarded as independent variables and organizational learning as a dependent one. In this method, the independent variables applied in the regression equation and are analyzed based on the highest correlation level. The condition for applying the next variable is creation of meaningful and elucidated accounted variance in the equation. If this condition does not exist, the analysis will stop and quantities of coefficient will be calculated at a fixed level. In the Table 2, the amounts of R, R2, F and significant level related to each entry level of coefficients are mentioned. As shown in the Table 2, the human skill coefficient explains 10.7% of organizational changes. This figure is statistically significant. In this model, two variables of technical and conceptual skills are ignored because of the low contribution that they have in anticipating the organizational learning. So the regression coefficient is in Table 2.

So, according to the data of Table 3, the regression equation of human skill (X1) for anticipating the organizational learning scale (Y) is as follows:

$$Y = 73/21 + (1/512X1)$$

The results of Table 4 indicated the correlation between human skill and organizational learning, which was 0.326, has increased to 0.337 by controlling technical skill. However, it has reduced to 0.233 with the control of conceptual skill. Therefore, statistically technical skill in relation to human skill is significant but not to organizational learning. Moreover, conceptual skill has an effective role in relation between human skill and organizational learning.

Surveying the relation between organizational learning and human skill indicates participative leadership and shared vision, which is amongst the most important item in organizational learning and is noticed in the history of all of the existing researches, statistically is significant in relation to human skill. In other words, the correlation between participative leadership and human skill is 0.372 (p = 0.05). Also the correlation between shared vision and human skill is 0.484 (p = 0.05) (Table 5), so we can improve organizational learning through the development of human skill.

CONCLUSION

As a support and proof of the results of the statistical analysis, we can refer to the findings of similar existing researches. Most of other researches, including Colinson (2008), Trim and Yang-Im (2007), Loon (2008) and others, examined the role of human skill in improving the organizational learning process and this skill was focused by the researchers. The findings refer to human skill as facilitating and fostering the organizational learning. Therefore, it can be concluded that human skill has an effective role in communication development, implementation the participative leadership, improvement of dialogue, involving all the organizational groups and individuals. These are the values that could be used to fulfill the individual's social and legal needs. On the other hand, the organizational learning whose most important characteristic include conversation and discussion, shared vision, participative leadership and engagement of individuals in organization, leads to considerable results and is compatible with the result of other researches. Manager conceptual skill, especially the problem solving ability, anticipating and system thinking, which are of the most important elements of this skill, have a considerable role in organizational learning. The high degree of the existing correlation indicates the impact of conceptual skill in developing and improving the human skill and enhances organizational learning.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Considering the results, the following suggestions can be presented:

- Holding management learning workshop in the organization in order to improve the human skill and make the management aware of human relations, to create a successful relationship with group members in order to encourage and guide them. In this way, managers can reinforce their role as a facilitator and advisor of the group for leading them toward the organizational learning
- In the process of selecting the managers, we notice their human skill
- Assessment and reward-punishment system with the aim of improving management conceptual skill and achieving organizational learning should be taken in to consideration
- Managers and team leaders should be acquainted with participative management tactics in order to be converted to this
- Having in mind the role and impact of conceptual skill on the existing relation between human skill and organizational learning, the conceptual skill of the managers should be taken into account in order to reinforce their important elements such as problem solving, system thinking and anticipating

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