

## A STUDY OF ORGANIZATIONAL AGILITY AT SHAHID CHAMRAN UNIVERSITY INAHWAZ FROM PERSPECTIVE OF FACULTY DIRECTORS

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Published online: 15 May 2016

### ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine the organizational agility from perspective of faculty directors in Shahid Chamran University of Ahwaz. The methodology of study was combination of concurrent kind. Survey method used for quantitative part and content analysis method used for qualitative part. Participants included managers, deputies of faculties and heads of departments of Shahid Chamran University of Ahwaz including 92 subjects. The tools in this study were questionnaires and interviews and in quantitative part, two researcher-made questionnaires of agility capabilities and agility enablers distributed among the statistical samples. The reliability of both questionnaires measured using Cronbach Alpha and the value was 0.92 and 0.74. In qualitative part, purposive sampling used and a semi-structured interview done by eight subjects including managers, deputies of faculties and head of departments of Ahwaz Shahid Chamran University. The interviews were analyzed using qualitative content analysis. The findings showed that the average of respondents about status of capabilities and enablers in all elements was less than expected and information technology of enabler's elements is in desirable status. According to qualitative findings, variables of capabilities and enablers are not in desirable status. Agility stimulus the same change identified in the university. Changes of technology, student's requirements, complex completion of environment and financial constraints had realized in four parts. The necessity of agility in education, communication, structure and human parts had approved based on stimulus identification in the university.

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doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.4314/jfas.v8i2s.274>



The necessity of agility in education, communication, structure and human departments have approved based on identifying the stimulus in the university. Finally, the factors leading to agility in the university identified in four departments of management, technology, motivational and financial factors.

**Keywords:** Organizational Agility, Capabilities, Enablers, Stimulus

## 1. INTRODUCTION AND PROBLEM STATEMENT

In the current condition, business environments face competition and change. Businesses face new developments and employees in each position exposed to the influx of technology and automated tools. Increasing economic and social developments around the world, the jobs require new skills. Customers' requirements are changing and enhancing. Customer satisfaction guarantees survive and thrive in the workplace. In order to meet the needs of customer that changed day by day, they should be flexible and respond fast to these needs than their competitors (Zayen Abadi and Parand, 2013: 135). In such situation, in order to survive, organizations should develop and create abilities to produce all kinds of services and products based on the needs and expectation of customers in shortest time and lowest price by improving quality of product and services and innovation (Heidari, Siadat, Hoveida, Shahin, 2014: 22). Today, organizations should monitor their internal affairs for survival and creating the potentials required by competitive power and increase the success in the general chain working in it by creating organized, dynamic and empowered relationship (Teimouri, 47: 1998). Therefore, organizations have different shapes to survive and there is no solution to move from a traditional organization toward a pioneer organization except passing a long and difficult way. Today, there are more theories to save organizations to fail and achieve to success, one of the most important theories is organizational agility. For this purpose, some changes have been required in attitudes, objectives, procedures and management and challenged the current procedures. Organizational agility applied for the first time in 1997 by Iacocca Institute. In a report by this institute, agility introduced as a main possibility for new products (Nagle & Dove, 1991). However, there is no shared definition about organizational agility due to newly concept. Sharifi and Zhang (1999) defined agility as an ability in each organization to feel, understand and predict the changes in the work climate. Such organization can recognize the environmental changes and find them as growth factors. According to Sharifi and Zhang (2001), agility includes three main parts:

1- Agility stimulus: in fact, agility stimulus is same as changes occurred in the business environment and conduct organizations to obtain new opportunities and competitive

advantages. Agility stimulus needs to be agile, design a strategy to be agile and agility strategies.

2- Agility capabilities: provide the power needed to respond the changes. Agility capabilities include responsiveness, competence, speed and flexibility. The main feature of agile organizations is to deal with changes properly.

3- Agility enablers: are tools to achieve the needed capabilities. Agility enablers obtained by four elements such as structure, technology, human resource and innovation. Agility does not obtained without integrating these four elements.

## **2. IMPORTANCE AND NECESSITY OF STUDY**

Shahid Chamran is a main university and has 13 faculties. This university annually accepts lot of students and having 2000 employees and 567 faculty members and being active in different levels such as BA, MA and Ph.D. is in good level in the region. The geographical situation of university and neighborhood to countries such as Iraq, Emirate etc... make the university more considerable than other universities. Given this special feature, agility helps to absorb the students of other countries. If, the level of agility is high in university, the effectiveness is more than other universities and annually, foreign students select this university to continue their lessons. Agility is important to distinguish a university in the region to compete other superior universities. Given the importance of agility in the organization, unfortunately organizational agility did not studied in Shahid Chamran University. This highlights the importance of this study. Therefore, the researcher tries to examine the agility factors in Shahid Chamran University. This study is importance for several aspects for Ahwaz Shahid Chamran University: first, agility helps the university to achieve the pre-determined objectives quicker. About service to students and being responsiveness to client's needs, reaction should be high, employees were satisfied, their skills were increased, and finally the effectiveness of university increased in the region. In today's rapidly changing world, agility is important for university to compete other universities and service to students. Due to rapid changes in technology and work in today's competitive world, organizations need to be agile.

### **Hypotheses**

1-Shahid Chamran University enjoys agility capabilities from perspective of faculties' managers.

2-status of responsiveness of Shahid Chamran University is desirable from perspective of faculties' managers.

## Literature Review

In a turbulent environment (uncertain and changing) that our organizations are working on it, one of the most important factors to survive and thrive is agility. The basic characteristics of this environment is change and uncertainty. Organizations how to operate in this environment to keep their self and to gain maximum benefit from the changes and progress. Agility is a new solution to deal with this challenge.

In second section of this study, the objective and history of study explained. In this section, environmental changing, needs to agility and history and emergence of agility explained and later, the elements of agility and agility models explained. Then, different aspects of organizational agility explained and finally, conceptual model of study provided.

### Environmental Changing, the Main Factor to Need Agility

It seems, change is one of main features in organizations in new competitive world. Any organization has experienced changes in the environment in period of three to six months or even a year. Given the situation of business, organizations are obliged to change attitude, knowledge, approaches, events and procedures. Sharifi and Zhange (1999) classified the changes in the business environment as following:

Market instability caused by growth of a small part of market, providing new products and loss of life cycle of product.

Intensive competition created due to rapid changes, increase cost pressure, increasing competition and short-term development of new products in the market.

Changes in customers' needs by order demand, increasing qualitative expectation and rapid delivery.

Rapid changes of technology resulted by introducing efficient and new production, integration of software and hardware systems.

Changes of social factors emerged to protect environment, human force expectation and legal pressure.

The causes of business evolution are increasing accessibility to technology, intensive competition on technology development, market globalization and commercial competition, rapid growth of technology access, changing in salary and job skills, environmental responsibility and resource limitation and the most important one is increasing the customers' expectations (St. John, Cannon and Pouders, 2001)

### History and Conducted Studies

The concept of "agile system" introduced first by Peter Drucker. He compared the structure of manufacturing companies to heavy carriers from integration in the nature. He explained

that just smaller carriers could replace a big carrier and modular organizations equipped by nature of structure to increase flexibility and responsiveness. It is clear that, the purpose of dracker is to explain the willingness of organizations toward flexible structures such as borderless and virtual organizations (Jafar Nejad and Shahaei, 2010). Agility term means “rapid, agile and active movement”, “ability to move rapidly and easily” and ability to think smartly. Being agile is a new pattern to enable organizations to react against unpredicted changes. In other words, agility is ability to respond unpredicted changes. Agility is a necessity to deal with changes and evolutions (Bazyar, 2003). Today's, society is an organizational society and organizations play an important role in individual life. In other hand, today's environment is a “strategic environment” and full of change, dynamism, ambiguity and uncertainty, which require strategic responds. In such situation, organizations are obliged to be consistent and show internal and external respond to survive (Torkzadeh, 2009). In the current age, the responsibility of manger is to create a learner organization. In organizations in which the members have higher learning abilities compared to other competitors, the speed of learning is more and the competitive advantages are increased. For this reason, most of organizations try to establish new plans and convert organization to learner organizations (Daft, Translated by Parsian and Erabi, 2010). The learner organization terms is rooted in 1920s. However, extensive researches in this area started from 1980. Learner organizations are organizations in which individuals increase their abilities continuously to achieve their objectives to promote group thoughts and people learn how to learn (Alvani, 2010).

Fathian (2009) in a study titled “proposing a model for agility development in organizations” founded that agility is an important factor to promote today's organizations. Agile organizations are able to provide various services given the environmental situation.

Ebrahim Nejad and Emami (2009) in a study titled “agility measurement of manufacturing organizations in fuzzy environments” founded some uncertainty and multi-criteria concepts in agility definition. Fuzzy logic and verbal variables are suitable solutions to measure the agility.

Rajab Zadeh and Shahaei (2009) in a study titled “proposing an evaluation model of agility on public organizations” founded that, agility increases productivity, employees and customer's satisfaction and quality of products and services.

Hamidi et al (2009) in a study titled “role of human resource management in organizational agility” founded that, access to success in today's dynamic environment require consistency to evolutions and agility in the organization.

The model used in this study is Sharifi and Zhange Model. This model comprises three main parts including agility enablers, agility capabilities and agility stimulus. In this study, agility capabilities, enablers and stimulus examined in the university. Sharifi and Zhange introduced four aspects of agility production such as agility stimulus, strategic enablers, agility enablers and agility capabilities. Agility stimulus indicates the features of external business environment in term of turbulence and impossibility of changes prediction. According to theoretical literature, agility stimulus make the organization to review current policies of organization, accept the necessity of being agile and select an agility strategy. Strategic abilities such as responsiveness, speed, competence and flexibility are main features of an agile organization, which facilitate access to environmental changing. Agility capabilities could be obtained through agility enablers. These enablers caused by four areas including structure of organization, technology, employees and innovation that explained earlier.

### 3. METHODOLOGY OF STUDY

In this study, the methodology of study explained. Statistical population and sampling method presented and after explaining about tools of data gathering, the validity and reliability of questionnaire, interview and data analysis method in descriptive and deductive statistical level explained.

#### Hypothesis Testing

##### First Hypothesis

What is the extent of the agility capabilities in Shahid Chamran University from faculties' managers' perspective?

**Table 1.** Comparison of Average of current condition of Agility Capabilities Elements with The Intended Average of Criteria: 3

Variables	Number	Average	Standard deviance	T	Freedom degree	Significant level
Agility capabilities	85	1.93	0.70	14.03	84	0.0001

According to table (1), average of agility capabilities from perspective of directors of Shahid Chamran University is less than average of criterion (3) and there is significant difference between these two averages in level of 0.0001. According to the obtained results, Ahwaz

Shahid Chamran University is not in desirable level in term of agility capabilities from faculties' managers.

### Second Hypothesis

1. Is the responsiveness status of Shahid Chamran University in desirable level from faculties' managers' perspective?
- 2.

**Table 2.** Comparison of Average of Current condition of Responsiveness Elements with The Intended Average of Criteria: 3

Variables	Number	Average	Standard deviance	T	Freedom degree	Significant level
Responsiveness	85	2.36	0.79	7.32	84	0.0001

According to table (2), average of responsiveness from perspective of directors of Shahid Chamran University is less than average of criterion (3) and there is significant difference between these two averages in level of 0.0001. According to the obtained results, Ahwaz Shahid Chamran University is not in desirable level in term of responsiveness from faculties' managers.

## 4. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The main purpose of current study was to examine the organizational agility in Ahwaz Shahid Chamran University. Combined method (qualitative and quantitative) was used which requires some tools such as questionnaire and interviews. Statistical population of study included all managers, deputies and department head of Ahwaz Shahid Chamran University. In the quantitative part of study, all managers, deputies and department heads (total 95 subjects) answered to the questionnaire and 85 questionnaires fulfilled. Reliability of the questionnaires obtained by Cronbach Alpha (0.74, 0.92). Validity of the questionnaires approved by professors of education science department. In the quantitative part, t single test used. In the qualitative part of study, 8 subjects were interviewed and the researcher founded a theoretical saturation.

Open coding used to analyze qualitative data. In this chapter, results of data analysis summarized and attempt done to answer research questions by discussion and analysis. At the end, conclusion and limitations of scientific and practical suggestions presented

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**How to cite this article:**

Mirzaei M. A study of organizational agility at shahid chamran university inahwaz from perspective of faculty directors. J. Fundam. Appl. Sci., 2016, 8(3S), 1258-1264.