International Conference on Education and Educational Psychology (ICEEPSY 2011)

A Feasibility Study on Developing the Faculty of Management and Economics at Tehran Science and Research Branch of the Islamic Azad University into a Learning Organization

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Abstract

Nowadays Modern organizations need to be able to operate in the face of ongoing changes. These organizations have to acquire a new understanding of their operational environment to develop into a Learning Organization. This research aims at evaluating the possibility of developing the Faculty of Management & Economics at Tehran Science and Research Branch of the Islamic Azad University into a Learning Organization. The research population consisted of 269 faculty members including both the lecturers and staff. The result shows that faculty of Management & Economics at Tehran Science & Research Branch of the Islamic Azad University is not a learning organization.

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Keywords: Learning Organization; Group Learning; Systematical Thought

1. Introduction

In the modern world technological and economical environment which is subject to dramatic changes, organizations have to be flexible in many respects. In 21st century IT boom only those organizations keep their competitive edge which has access to the latest information required. So learning plays a crucial role in achieving organizational and personal objectives. It is believed that the organizations must remove learning drawbacks and integrate the learning process in the managerial procedures to develop into a Learning Organization (Sobhani nejad et al., 2006). In a Learning Organization all members of staff are involved in distinguishing and...
solving problems; therefore, the employees have the opportunity of improving their professional skills by going through new experiments almost on daily basis (Daft, 1999).

2. Statement of the problem

In the modern human societies which are subject to transitions in almost every area of science and technology within the framework of dynamic environments, only those organizations and academic institutions can survive which show a high degree of compatibility by keeping a dynamic balance with their surroundings. Peter Deraker believes that in the course of 3 decades the well-established universities would be nothing but historical monuments as high education faces real crisis all around the world (Freedman, 2005). Therefore, the vital and most important question posed to the universities in Iran is how to adapt to this new environment of change.

Learning Organization is a well structured body which responds promptly to changes. In a Learning faculty the process of learning is facilitated through goal-oriented team work. This practice leads to knowledge generation and more flexibility in the face of environmental changes. Unfortunately, this is not the case in the academic settings of Iran at the present. the process of learning is not by any means a life-long process. Lecturers almost never perform the liabilities of those in position of knowledge generation and distribution which motivates students to become involved in a meaningful learning process.

3. Significance of the Study

In the modern era, known as “The age of Knowledge”, organizations have encountered dynamic and challenges in almost every front. The organizations that do not modify their structures and stick to traditional and inflexible practices have a very slight chance to survive in the face of their rivals. In order to survive the modern organizations need to accustom themselves with an ever changing environment (Sobhani nejad, 2006). Therefore, universities have to modify their structural features to develop into Learning Organizations. Garvin. D, (1993) believes that the principle of Learning Organization must be a guideline in the restructuring process of the universities. Garcia, (2003) believes that the integration of life-long learning as a educational policy is the main challenge to the traditional organizations. The existing literature does not provide a detailed body of information on the factors that develop universities into Learning Organizations. The significance of the present study on the main factors which develop the faculty of management and economics at Tehran Science and Research Branch of the Islamic Azad University into a Learning Organization lies in the fact that it provides a comprehensive overview of this issue.

4. Purpose of the Study

The recognition of the factors which develop the faculty of management and economics at Tehran Science and Research Branch of the Islamic Azad University into a Learning Organization.

5. Study Questions

What are the effective communicative factors at the faculty of management and economics as a Learning Organization?
What are the effective technological factors at the faculty of management and economics as a Learning Organization?
What are the effective knowledge management factors at the faculty of management and economics as a Learning Organization?
6. Theoretical and Conceptual Background of the Research Model

The Learning Organizations are designed based on the following infrastructures: Knowledge Management; Technology; Communication;

Knowledge management sub-system consists of: Staff; Back Ground ; Culture; Process ; Technology;

6.1. Staff: Knowledge management major emphasis falls on organizational culture, team work and application expertise in a pragmatic manner. Knowledge management requires the upgrading of staff skills through collecting information.

6.2. Background: Knowledge consists of staff experience, skills, abilities, use of data, thoughts, attitude, professional procedures and concepts. It is manifested in the routine working processes of the organizations (Sarraf zadeh & Hazeri, 2005).

6.3. Culture: The modification of the organizational culture in order to make it compatible with the requirements of knowledge management is the main challenge faced by managers in modern organizations. The success in this regard depends on staff motivation and willingness to cooperate within a shared framework.

6.4. Process: Knowledge management is regarded a technological process .The application of information technology facilitates the flow of knowledge in the organizations and makes the team work a routine practice. (Norouzian, 2005).

6.5. Sub-technological system (Technology): Sub-Technological system includes the support networks and informational tools which enables the staff to exchanging the acquired information. This micro system is made up of the technical processes, coordination, administration and other learning skills as well as virtual learning methods such as simulation and online computer conferences (Michael & Markovat, 2002).

6.6. Communication systems: A Learning Organization must devise an open access information network as a pathway to strategic information and relevant business, while facilitating the distribution of information in the suitable organizational areas which support and strengthen the organizational processes.

7. Data Collection Method

The main data collection method applied in this study was an expert- designed questionnaire that included 70 questions on the factors that affect the development of the faculty of management and economics at Tehran Science and Research Branch of the Islamic Azad University into a Learning Organization. The reliability of questionnaire was tested through the application of Alpha Chronbach (= 0.91). The validity was assessed by experts view.

8. Research Method

This research is descriptive because aims at determination of an optimal situation. The findings of the study facilitate the process of decision making in organizations. (Kezaz .A, 2003).
9. Sampling Method

The statistic population consisted of 264 faculty members who included both lecturers and the staff. Morgan Table and Random Sampling were applied in sample selection.

10. Data Analysis Methods

The data collected through questionnaires were analyzed through the application of the SPS software. The descriptive statistics and interpretive statistics were used in data analysis.

11. Findings

The study shows that the factors which develop the faculty of management and economics into a Learning Organization are as follows:

1- Communication  2- Technology  3- Knowledge Management

**Question 1**- Is there really a need for Knowledge Management?

Table (1) indicates that there is a meaningful difference in distribution when $P \leq 0.01$ and confidence level is 0.99. The $H_1$ hypothesis is confirmed and $H_0$ hypothesis is not acceptable.

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<th>Remainder</th>
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<th>Experimental Frequency</th>
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$X^2=19.70$  d.f=1  $p<0.01$

**Question 2**- Is there really a need for Optimized Communication?

Table 2. Communication

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$X^2=21.40$  d.f=1  $p<0.01$
Table 2 indicates that there is a meaningful difference in distribution when $P \leq 0.01$ and confidence level is 0.99. The H1 hypothesis is confirmed and H0 hypothesis is not acceptable.

**Question3-** Is there really a need for application of modern Technology?

Table 3 indicates that there is a meaningful difference in the distribution when $P \leq 0.01$ and confidence level is 0.95. The H1 hypothesis is confirmed and H0 hypothesis is not acceptable.

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Table 3. Technology

$X^2=21/40$  
d.f=1  
p< 0/01

In the modern era, known as “The age of Knowledge”, organizations have encountered dynamic and challenges in almost every front. The organizations that do not modify their structures and stick to traditional and inflexible practices have a very slight chance to survive in the face of their rivals. In order to survive the modern organizations need to accustom themselves with an ever changing environment. Therefore, universities have to modify their structural features to develop into Learning Organizations.
12. Conclusion

The present study aims at evaluating and recognition of the factors which develop the faculty of management and economics at Tehran Science and Research Branch of the Islamic Azad University into a Learning Organization. The findings of the study showed that this faculty does not have the characteristics of a Learning Organization. It is obvious that the development into a Learning Organization is an urgent need. The process of learning does not lead to Knowledge generation and both lecturers and student show little or no motivation in the development of a setting which makes life-long learning a natural outcome of the academic activities. There are also many unresolved issues concerning the use of technology in form of educational aids. It can be said that under the present circumstance this faculty cannot be regarded as a Learning Organization.

Here is a list of recommendations to resolve the current issues:

- Facilitating the flow of information and proper feedback
- Establishing organizational relationship in all levels
- Sharing the new Knowledge
- Facilitating interpersonal and organizational communication
- Facilitating virtual learning
- Designing data banks
- Providing the required data
- Improving computer skills
- Supporting academic projects
- Establishing research and development committees
- Sharing the information

These practices are also recommended:
1) Workshops on computer technology
2) Establishing a common ground for organizational culture through sharing experience
3) Meetings between decision-makers and lecturers
4) Rewarding the active learners
5) Financial support of projects that lead to Knowledge generation
6) Researching into problem solving strategies and policies
7) Establishing research and development committees
8) Coordinating lecturers’ activities
9) Motivating the academic staff to generate knowledge
10) Establishing information and knowledge banks
11) Sharing knowledge through application of new technology

References