SUPPORTIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT - A BASIC INGREDIENT OF LEARNING ORGANIZATION

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ABSTRACT

Learning of the organization entails the capacity to create and hold the picture of its future. This paper seeks to associates the supportive learning environment with psychological safety and value to new ideas by examining individual through their sensation about openness to recognition, flexibility and bareness to mistakes with in the organization. The Assessment of the sportive learning environment is empirically done in this paper. The survey in the course of questionnaire conducted for this study. Factor analysis implied to identify the most critical factors that were comfort to express and openness to new ideas that have maximum variation, refer to the basic ingredient of learning environment.

Key words: Learning organization, Openness to new ideas, AFAQ (Association for Academic Quality), Psychological safety, Value to new ideas.

1. INTRODUCTION

The practices of the business have been changed from very beginning. The dynamic environment and stiff competition pressure on organizations to hold the capacity to create its future. The continuous learning is required to adopt, develop, change and practice for thriving in the market place. It never happens overnight, the need for the learning organization is due to business becoming complex dynamic, and globally competitive, excelling in a dynamic business environment requires more understanding. Knowledge, preparation and agreement that one person expertise and experience over periods.

DEFINITION

According to Hornsby (2000) the OXFORD Advance Learner Dictionary the word learning is a noun which means knowledge gained by studying or skill by studying from experience, from being taught.

The basic ideas and theories of learning organization are contributed by three schools of thought presented by Edgar Schein, Christ Agyris and Peter Senge. Senge (1990) define LO that, "Learning organization are organization where people continually expand their capacity to create the results they truly desire, where new and expansive pasterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspiration is set free, and where people are continually learning to see the whole together". Senge (1990) adopts a broader approach and all of the other perspectives together. Senge tends to suggest a composite theoretical ideal.

Senge's understanding of LO has been proceeded by Pedlar (1991) the learning company has a vision of what might be possible. It can only happen as a result of learning at the whole organization level. A learning company is an organization that smoothes the progress of the learning of all it members and continuously transforms it self... The core values that are described for a learning organization include valuing difference of knowledge and learning styles, developing creative thinking, developing of leadership throughout organization, believe that every member in the organization has untapped human potential.

Watkins and Marsick, (1992) point up the learning organizations; are characterized by total employee involvement in a process of collaboratively conducted, collectively accountable change directed towards shared vision or principles. .The people who work in learning organization are "fully awakened". Who take risks in order to learn and understand how to solve enduring problems instead of quick fixes? It is possible through developing the ability to think critically and creatively. A learning organization is a no hostile, empowering culture where leadership, management, and the work force on continually development organization's competence. The purposes of learning organization are to Improve quality , sustain competitive advantage, focus customer relation, superior performance, avoid decline, understand risk and diversity more deeply, innovation, increase ability to manage change, energized work force, expand boundaries, independence and liberty. Campbell and Cairns (1994) and Burgoyne (1995) exemplify it as improving and transferring knowledge that improve individual learning Organizational learning is the intentional utilization of learning processes/ approaches at the levels of individual, group, and system to continuously transform the organization (Dixon, 1994).

LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

Deshpande and Webster (1989), differentiate the culture and climate by recounting the characteristics that contain the learning organization. Culture is the deeply rooted set of values and beliefs that provide norms for behavior in the organization (e.g., Deshpande and Webster 1989; Schein 1990). Climate refers to how culture, the structures and processes that smooth the progress of the achievement of the desired behaviors in the organization (e.g., Deshpande and Webster 1989; Schein 1990). It is important for the organization's culture and climate to be complementary, because it is difficult to develop and sustain appropriate behaviors if the corresponding organizational values are not in place and, conversely, values are difficult to sustain if the appropriate incentives and examples do not exist (Day 1994a; Schein 1990). The relationship among the elements of culture and climate that take advantage of learning and its benefits is synergistic.
The learning of the organization entails the sharing of knowledge, beliefs, and assumptions among individuals and groups of the organization (Argyris, 1999). A learning organization is supported by a culture in which people work together to nurture and sustain a knowledge creating system. Organizational culture refers to an organization's values, beliefs, practices, rituals, and customs; it helps out to shape behaviors and to fashion perceptions (Marquardt, 2002). According to Smircich (1983), culture in which members of organization decide their behaviors and, thus, are directed by their behaviors. Organizations can form the cultures that are focused on learning. Building learning organizations can be through the widely accepted strategy of making this attempt. (Smircich, 1983)

David A. Garvin (2004), explain it on a culture which shared learning from experience. The important component is the requirement that change in the way work get done and have been successful in creating knowledge and transferring it. It is a life long program of study process and practice. It never happen overnight, and the next question is why we need the LO in our culture. The need for the learning organization is due to business becoming complex dynamic, and globally competitive .excelling in a dynamic business environment requires more understanding. Knowledge, preparation and agreement that one person expertise and experience over periods (David A. Garvin 2004).

Organizations can cultivate more accurate, effective learning through creation of supportive, stimulating environments. Psychological safety, openness the recognition and acceptance of differences, acceptance of errors, mistakes, and flexibility are essentials if learning is to flourish.
This paper associates learning environment with psychological safety and openness to new ideas.   The assessment of the learning environment can be observed by employing many methods. To asses learning environment with in the organization, through sportive learning environment which has some

characteristics, two from it, are Psychological safety and Openness to new ideas. *Psychological safety* is to learn, employees can not fear being belittled or with peer or authority figures, ask mistakes presenting a minority view point. Instead they must be comfortable expressing their thoughts about the work at hand. Openness to new ideas is another one. Learning is not simply about correcting mistakes, and solving problems, it also about crafting novel approaches. Employees should be encouraged to take risks and explore the untested and unknown. (David A. Garvin, Amy C. Edmondson, and Francesca Gino 2004).

2. THE SURVEY

Precincts & Methodology

2.1 OBJECTIVES

The survey is conducted to asses the supportive learning environment of the organizations in education industry in Pakistan, and used the toolkit developed by David A. Garvin. There have been used the first block of the questionnaire that focuses on "Supportive learning environment" (Garvin; Edmondson & Gino, 2008). Through it, tried to identify the most critical factors which are relevant to the "supportive learning environment" that is basic ingredient of learning organization.

2.2 TARGET POPULATION

The survey is conducted in *AFAQ (*association for academic quality), Based in Pakistan. Its head office in Lahore and regional offices in Karachi, Islamabad, Peshawar, Quetta and Lahore. AFAQ is an independent, and not for profit organization established with a view to promote education and uplift educational institutions in Pakistan. AFAQ is a collaborative venture of six major not for profit organizations/trusts working in education sector. There are several departments in AFAQ. The details of departments are as below:

AFAQ's Research Division is responsible for developing a comprehensive curriculum that must incorporate knowledge with AFAQ's curriculum is being taught in thousands of schools countrywide. On the other hand, AFAQ's Research Division is reviewing the curriculum to improve its standard as well as a committee has been formed which is responsible to create a more comprehensive and effective curriculum to meet the challenges of the dynamic world of knowledge and education. **AFAQ's Training Division** has also acquired the services of notable, well-reputed educationists and trainers to develop and implement effective training programs and training materials. AFAQ's Training Division has been working since 2001, during its tenure of services it has successfully created and implemented a vast array of training programs and has successfully trained more than 10000 teachers countrywide. *MSDP* (Model School Development Program)*:* MSDP offer its services for opening a new school or development of schools.

- School Management System Development

- Expert opinion in the light of latest research in Education

- Application of latest practices of Quality Schools in accordance with our culture

- Benefits from the most rich faculty of curriculum designing and evaluation

- MSDP has the expertise of implementing modern management systems, like ISO 9001: 2001 & Z1.11, in educational institutions. **AFAQ's Marketing** and Sales Division has established a network of more than 50 dealers countrywide for easy availability of the books. These dealers ensure the availability of books at your doorstep. AFAQ has established a marketing department at Lahore with its regional offices at Karachi, and Peshawar. A team of dynamic personnel mostly

MBA's is developed to work in the field, to create awareness about AFAQ, and about its unique services. Marketing personnel will cover the whole Pakistan and facilitate schools owners to get benefits from AFAQ's unique Teachers Training programs, guidance and counseling, and provide sample of books as and when required. *HR &admin* there are 129 current employees whose are working for AFAQ.

2.3 SAMPLE COMPOSITION &DESIGN

Using the results of a pilot survey conducted on the employees of AFAQ, the optimal sample size turn to be 61. Accepting the head office Lahore most of the data gathered from there. Capturing all the departments in AFAQ, the sample design is Simple Random sampling for this organization.

Organization			AFAQ(Association for Academic Quality)			
Total no of employees		129		Sample size		61
Departments	*Marketing*	*Research*	*Training*	*Sales*	*MSDP*	*HR*
Frequency	14	23	11	4	3	6
Age	20-30	30-35	35-40	40-45	45-60	
Frequency	30	12	17	1	1	
Education	*Intermediate*	*Graduation*	*Master*	*M.phil*	*PhD*	
Frequency	4	28	24	4	1	
Male	56			Female		5

DEPARTMENT

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	marketing	13	21.3	21.7	21.7
	research	23	37.7	38.3	60.0
	training	11	18.0	18.3	78.3
	sales	4	6.6	6.7	85.0
	msdp	3	4.9	5.0	90.0
	hr &admin	6	9.8	10.0	100.0
	Total	60	98.4	100.0	
Missing	System	1	1.6		
Total		61	100.0		

AGE

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	20-30	30	49.2	49.2	49.2
	30-35	12	19.7	19.7	68.9
	35-40	17	27.9	27.9	96.7
	40-45	1	1.6	1.6	98.4
	45-60	1	1.6	1.6	100.0
	Total	61	100.0	100.0	

EDUCATION

|		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	inter	4	6.6	6.6	6.6
	Gradution	28	45.9	45.9	52.5
	master	24	39.3	39.3	91.8
	m.phil	4	6.6	6.6	98.4
	Ph.d	1	1.6	1.6	100.0
	Total	61	100.0	100.0	

QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONSE

The sixty one questionnaires have been filled by the respondents; statistical technique has been applied Factor Analysis to evaluate the responses and identify the most important factors.

2.5 FACTOR ANALYSIS

By using the Factor Analysis method in SPSS (version 16), this has been identified that 73.13% variance is caused by the three factors mentioned below, in other words we can say that according to the majority of the participants of the departments understudy suggest that the following factors have prime importance in the learning process.

Figure 2

Scree Plot
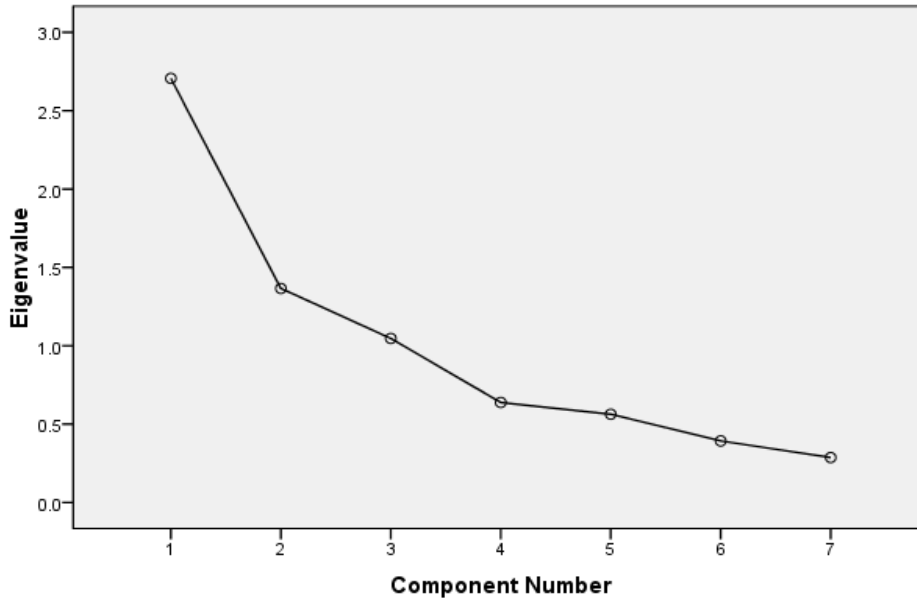
The seven variables to observe the sportive learning environment of AFAQ (association for academic quality a small size organization serves in education sector in Pakistan. The variables to assess it are openness to communicate, Bareness to mistake, comfort ness to express, information sharing, value to new ideas, flexibility. Conducting survey through questionnaire, sixty one (61) respondent from research, marketing, MSDP, HR and admin, and training. The table 2-1 shows the seven variables that have been taken to assess the supportive learning environment are openness to communicate, Bareness to mistake, comfort ness to express, Information Sharing, Value to new ideas and Flexibility.

The table2-2 and 2-3, according to the tables, the three factors have 73.13% variation within the data which has been taken, we can say that according to the majority of the participants of the departments understudy suggest that the following factors have prime importance in the learning process (*see* table 2-2,able 3). The three factors have 73.13% variation are

1. Comfort ness to express

2. Flexibility

3. Openness to communicate

According to the analysis, the above three factors have the maximum importance and it shows that in AFAQ (Association for Academic Quality), employees feel psychological safety to express their thinking, and communicate.

CONCLUSION

Learning organization is a continuous and life long process. This is not new and has been in many early writings on organizational development and change. The literature on the learning organization has not stop the flow of it in which is extensive and expanding rapidly. Presently as a concept and must be the organization vision, it is located somewhere on the path from invention to innovation. Learning is a commitment of all the organization's members.

At the practitioner level there remains the issue of whether it is possible to create a learning organization. More useful to consider the learning organization in terms of organizational values processes that adopt learning –based approach than in terms of specific learning structures and interventions. However the detail study should be done to analyze the level of supportive learning environment in the AFAQ. Many of the issues raised by the learning organization are equally relevant in the context of the management of change and the introduction of continuous improvement and others quality initiatives. Looking at the highlighted factors in the survey brings up the idea that the major component of the supportive learning environment these factors are pointing towards the importance of psychological safety in supportive learning environment. All the dimensions that are included in the survey are related to the learning environment. The reason has been relating with the learning environment above identified factors is that the All the above factors strongly recommend that the management should be willing to give the opportunities to use their intellectual capabilities and participate in the decision making process with their inputs. If learning is to occur, individuals must feel comfortable talking on the status quo. There should be encouraged and supported, especially when events do not turn out as planned. Mistakes and errors are humbling, but they are also extraordinarily effective teachers. The old saying goes: "Good decisions come from wisdom, knowledge, and experience". And wisdom, knowledge, and experience come from bad decisions."(David, A. Garvin 2004)

Becoming a Learning Organization requires a cultural change for most organizations. To be successful, agencies should work with all staff members to:

- Create and communicate a shared vision for the organization.
- Make information in the organization accessible to all.
- Help employees manage change by anticipating change and creating the types of change desired by the organization.
- Empower employees to act.
- Acknowledge and support the need to take risks.

Learn to manage the organization's knowledge by:

- Keeping information current.
- Maintaining historical knowledge.
- Addressing increasing volumes of information.

These factors strongly claim the management should develop and promote the environment where employees feel comfort to discuss, express their views, create the environment where employees adopt and use the new and untried approaches to continuously creating the results which they are desired. . The reason has been relating with the learning environment above identified factors is that the empowering employees to comfortably express their thoughts does not only mean delegating authority down the line, but it means more than that. It is not only merely sharing of power but it is described as the process of implementing various managerial interventions that develop the managerial skills in the followers and they become able to make decisions and solve the problems by active participation, and not with the passive approach of looking towards the top for help and doing only the assigned tasks (Choi, 2006; Spreitzer, 1996). The research on AFAQ are referring that the environment where reduce the unwillingness to change behavior and provide the incentives that encourage new approaches, the creation of space for learning , developing a

sense of psychological safety through eliminating unnecessary, obsolete work when new tasks are added, accepting of mistakes due to system problems, un anticipating events, or inexperience.

APPENDIX

Survey form:

Organization *AFAQ* **Department……………………………**

1. Gender

    Male   **female**

2. Age

20-30 . 30-35 . 35-40 . 40-45 45 -60

3. Education

Intermediate Graduation . Master . M.Phil PhD

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4. I am allowed to express my ideas in organization.

Strongly Agree Agree . Undecided . Disagree . Strongly Disagree

5. My mistakes are usually perceived as a worst by the management.

Strongly Agree Agree . Undecided . Disagree Strongly Disagree

6. In our department people held high opinion about new ideas.

Strongly Agree Agree . Undecided . Disagree Strongly Disagree

7. People in our organization usually feel comfortable, discussing about problems and disagreements.

Strongly Agree Agree . Undecided . Disagree . Strongly Disagree

8. I have all information about what does and does not work

Strongly Agree Agree . Undecided . Disagree . Strongly Disagree

9. My colleagues desire to use advance, new means to do work.

Strongly Agree . Agree . Undecided . Disagree . Strongly Disagree

10. I like to perform unique tasks in dynamic situations.

Strongly Agree Agree Undecided Disagree Strongly Disagree

11. I am free to discuss problems, its solutions or options to solve them in my deptt

Strongly Agree Agree Undecided Disagree Strongly Disagree

12. Usually I share information which can benefit my department.

Strongly Agree Agree Undecided Disagree Strongly Disagree

13. my colleagues are interested in better ways of doing work

Strongly Agree Agree Undecided Disagree Strongly Disagree

14. my colleagues often appreciate new approaches

Strongly Agree Agree Undecided Disagree Strongly Disagree

15. I am often resist untried approaches.

Strongly Agree Agree Undecided Disagree Strongly Disagree

16. If I make mistake in my department, it is often against me.

Strongly Agree Agree Undecided Disagree Strongly Disagree

17. My colleagues value new ideas.

Strongly Agree Agree Undecided Disagree Strongly Disagree
18. I am appreciated by management to do work in unique ways.

Strongly Agree Agree Undecided Disagree Strongly Disagree

Table 2-1

Communalities

	Initial	Extraction
openness to comunicate	1.000	.766
Bearness to mistake	1.000	.793
comfortness to express	1.000	.705
Information Sharing	1.000	.742
Value to new ideas	1.000	.567
uniqueness	1.000	.786
Flexibility	1.000	.761

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

The above table 2-1 shows the seven variables that have been taken to assess the supportive learning environment

Table 2-2

Total Variance Explained

Compo nent	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	2.707	38.666	38.666	2.707	38.666	38.666
2	1.366	19.513	58.179	1.366	19.513	58.179
3	1.047	14.955	73.134	1.047	14.955	73.134
4	.638	9.117	82.250			
5	.563	8.047	90.297			
6	.393	5.608	95.904			
7	.287	4.096	100.000			

Extraction Method: Principal Component
Analysis.

Table 2-3

Component Matrix

	Component		
	1	2	3
openness to communicate	.478	-.303	**.668**
Bareness to mistake	-.494	.667	.323
comfort ness to express	*.835*	-.042	.076
Information Sharing	.779	.335	-.148
Value to new ideas	.624	.054	.418
uniqueness	.702	.043	-.540
Flexibility	.219	**.843**	.048

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

a. 3 components extracted.

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