

Learning the Only Way of Survival: Comparative Study of Technical & Non- Technical Departments at PTCL

Raja Yasir Ali, Muhammad Faisal Rasheed, Mubeen Ahmed, and Salman Javed

Author(s) Biography

Raja Yasir Ali is MS Scholar at National University of Modern Languages, Faisalabad.

Muhammad Faisal Rasheed is MS Scholar at National University of Modern Languages, Faisalabad

Mubeen Ahmed is MS Scholar at National University of Modern Languages, Faisalabad

Salman Javed is MS Scholar at National University of Modern Languages, Faisalabad

ABSTRACT: *The purpose of this research paper is to compare the level of learning between different departments of a telecom company. For this purpose two major departments technical & non-technical of PTCL has been selected. David A Garvin's tool kit has been used to measure the learning level in three different composites. The results then matched with already set benchmarked scores of Garvin. The result shows significance difference of learning between technical & non-technical department. The level of learning at non-technical department is on higher side when compared to the technical department.*

Keywords: Building blocks, Supportive learning environment, concrete learning process and practices, Leadership that reinforces learning

By learning, foolish become wise and without learning, wise become foolish. The above mentioned quote clearly describes the importance of learning for the human beings. Similar to humans, learning is also necessary for the organizations. It actually decides about the survival of any organization in long run. In current complex business environment every organization needs to have up to date knowledge about their customers, customer preferences, product range, suppliers, competitors, technology, capabilities and resources of the competitors.

Many learning organization researchers proved through various researches that how a learning organization is better than an old, autocratic type organization. Learning become even more crucial for huge telecom/IT related organizations just like PTCL which consists of different versatile departments like Technical, Finance, HR, and Revenue and expands over a wide geographical area. In this research paper I will try to find that the level of learning is the function of job done by a particular employee or it should be same for all. For that purpose, I have divided employees of PTCL in two broader categories; one is technical people and other in the non-technical.

I will draw a comparison of training needs for both these categories and further explore the reasons behind different level of learning in these two categories of a same organization. To have sustainable competitive advantage, organizations must learn continually and rapidly as compared to other firms in the industry (Senge 2006). Many authors describe different dimensions in order to measure the level of learning in any organization.

Literature Review

A learning organization is an organization where all its employees continually learn and transform its learning into their routine matter, into their performance, into their practices and into the organization as a whole. Learning organizations are proactive to the changes in their surroundings. These organizations are less vulnerable to the external factors that affect the company's survival in long run. These organizations are more open to new ideas, new practices and are better able to opt change quickly.

For the growth and success of any organization learning has an important role. Members of the organization must learn the ability to solve problems efficiently. Learning is necessary not only to continually improve current process adopted by an organization but also very important to adopt changes happening in the market that

is necessary for survival (Khaliq Ur Rehman Cheema, 2012; Ketelhohn, 1994; Levitt and March, 1995; Wheatley, 1992).

The pioneer concept of learning organizations is based on learning individuals. For organizations, in order to continually learn and change their individual members must learn individually & collectively to make their parent organizations learn (Cyert & March, 1963; March & Simon, 1958).

Initially quite a few earlier authors in the field of learning organization argued that learning occurs through individuals and that organizations themselves do not learn (Dodgson, 1993).

(Elkjaer 2004) Learning is not just to know the available knowledge and resolve problems on set patrons. But it's a process to, a way, a technique to move forward from things you know to the something that are unknown to you. Learning means developing, creating, discovering new paths of doing things rather than just focusing and moving on the older ones. When learning is done through participation it actually becomes an activity that is carried out by whole society. Learning is treated as a social activity.

Organization that aims to learn from a development project needs to create a social world in which everyone is will and participate to learn at its level (Elkader 2003). Later on many Learning Organizations scholars claimed that organizational learning is different from individual learning. The learning required by an organization cannot be determined by its individual members (Tsoukas, 1996).

(Gilbert, 1992) explains the prerequisites for survival in a telecommunication company. According to him organization that have informational tools and suitable telecommunication facilities in accordance with the current market scenario along with learning employees are having better chances for survival.

To have sustainable competitive advantage, organizations must learn continually and rapidly as compared to other firms in the industry (Senge 2006). David A Garvin the pioneer researcher in the field of learning organization describes LO as: "A learning organization is the one where its employees first create new knowledge, obtain already available knowledge and then finally distribute and transfer that knowledge and then change the behavior of its people on continuous basis" (Garvin 1993).

Different tools are used in order to measure the diverse learning aspects in different organizations. One of the

most wide-ranged toolkit that covers maximum learning dimensions and to give better results to managers and researchers is David A Garvin's tool which he used in his article "is yours a learning organization". (Garvin, Edmondson et al. 2008) we are now living in the era of technological advancement that cause preferences of customers to be changed a lot, this change has made our previous policies failed. But for organizations to survive their employees must be skilled at creating knowledge, acquiring knowledge and transferring knowledge.

To measure the level of learning in an organization different authors provide different measurement tools. There is a possibility that the results measured from one tool may be different from the other tool. According to David Garvin learning in any organization can be done first through meaning, second through better management and lastly through measurement tools (Garvin 1993).

(Prewitt 2003) classify, it has been proved through various researchers that the role of leader in very important in determining the future of the learning organization. The leadership's role in education and manufacturing sector of Pakistan is significantly lacking. The strong and deep rooted autocratic culture is not allowing these sectors to flourish (Ummar, Lodhi et al.).

(Mahmood and Amir 2013) in their article used the same tool in order to measure the level of learning in leading telecom company of Pakistan. Significant and major improvements are needed badly in telecom sector as the learning level assessed in this organization is at bottom level when compared to benchmark scores. Quite a few comparative studies were also conducted using Garvin's toolkit. Similar kind of comparison were made in Service & manufacturing industry of Pakistan. The learning environment at service sector is more supportive in service sector as compared to manufacturing sector (Majeed, Naveed et al 2013).

Objectives of the Study

- Understanding & observing the learning level in two different departments.
- Comparing & assessing the need of learning in these two departments.
- Acceptance towards learning in these two departments.
- Level of learning at various cadres.

Methodology

Data will be collected from PTCL offices located in Faisalabad through simple random sampling technique.

This research study will try to understand & observe the learning level in two different departments of the company. It further compares & assesses the need of learning in these two all together different departments. The respondents for this research were top managers, middle managers and the front line staff of the company. The Garvin's questionnaire tool has been used for this research.

The 36 questions of this tool kit were further divided into three broader constructs/building blocks (1) Supportive learning environment, (2) concrete learning process and (3) leadership that reinforces learning". This questionnaire was selected for this research because it covers different dimensions of learning in any organization. The questions asked from respondents covered all three above mentioned dimensions. The above mentioned three constructs were further divided into ten categories in order to dig out the exact point at which learning falls against each department and at each level of employee. The Supportive Learning Environment was further categorized into following variables:

- Psychological Safety
- Appreciation of Differences
- Openness to New ideas and
- Time for Reflection

Similarly Concrete Learning Process and Leadership were also categorizing into below mentioned variables:

- Experimentation
- Information collection
- Analysis
- Education and Training
- Information Transfer and
- Leadership that reinforce learning

The toolkit used in this research study has already been tested by many researchers in different types of organization. In this article the same questions were asked from technical and non-technical departments and evaluate the score to assess the level of learning in these two departments. This research paper will further used to evaluate the learning in the organization and then compares the score with the already set benchmarked scores.

Questionnaires were get filled from lower staff in the presence of researcher and clarification were also given to them for their understanding and to get accurate answers. High levels of efforts were made during data collection to make this research more accurate and worthwhile. In order to ensure the reliability of whole research and the data, Cronbach's alpha was calculated.

		N	%
Cases	Valid	60	100.0
	Excluded	0	0.0
	Total	60	100.0

List wise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.832	48

Results and Discussion

Building Blocks Variables	Scaled Scores				
	Bottom Quartile	Second Quartile	Median	Third Quartile	Top Quartile
Supportive Learning Environment					
Psychological Safety	31-66	67-75	76	77-86	87-100
Appreciation of Differences	14-56	57-63	64	65-79	80-100
Openness to New ideas	30-80	81-89	90	91-95	96-100
Time for Reflection	14-35	36-49	50	51-64	65-100
Learning environment	31-61	62-70	71	72-79	80-90
Concrete Learning Processes and Practices					
Experimentation	18-53	54-70	71	72-82	83-100
Information Collection	23-70	71-79	80	81-89	90-100
Analysis	19-56	57-70	71	72-86	87-100
Education and Training	26-68	69-79	80	81-89	90-100
Information Transfer	34-60	61-70	71	72-84	85-100
Concrete Learning Process	31-62	63-73	74	75-82	83-97
Leadership That Reinforce Learning					
	33-66	67-75	76	77-82	83-100

The above displayed Table No. II shows the benchmark score of different learning composites provided by David A Garvin in his article "Is yours a learning organization". The score was separated in five different categories ranging from bottom quartile, second quartile, median, third quartile and top quartile, exhibiting different level of learning. The organization that falls under bottom quartiles are those organizations where learning is at very initial level. It demonstrates that serious efforts are to be made to make these organizations a true learning one.

The organizations that have learning environment composite score that fall under bottom quartile shows

that employees in these organizations feel a lesser physiology safety and new ideas and different opinions are not much encouraged in these organizations, but the top quartile shows the vice versa position for these variables. Similarly Concrete Learning Process Composite and Leadership That Reinforce Learning Composite score falls in first quarter shows least level of learning but as we move from bottom to top quartile the level of learning also increase.

Department Analysis

Technical Vs Non Technical	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Score	Avg. Score
Technical	psychological Safety	30	1.67	3.33	2.7557	55
	Appreciation of Difference	30	2.00	4.00	3.0903	62
	Openness to New Ideas	30	2.50	3.75	3.2417	65
	Time for Reflection	30	2.00	4.50	3.1167	62
	Experimentation	30	2.00	4.00	2.6887	54
	Information Collection	30	2.00	4.00	2.8333	57
	Analysis	30	2.00	4.00	3.1333	63
	Education and Training	30	2.00	4.67	3.4550	69
	Information Transfer	30	2.75	4.00	3.4250	69
	Leadership that reinforce learning	30	2.88	3.75	3.2697	65
Valid N	30					
Non-Technical	Psychological Safety	30	2.67	4.67	3.9457	79
	Appreciation of Difference	30	2.67	4.00	3.4680	69
	Openness to New Ideas	30	3.50	4.00	3.6500	73
	Time for Reflection	30	2.00	4.50	3.2500	65
	Experimentation	30	2.67	4.33	3.7977	76
	Information Collection	30	2.50	4.50	3.6000	72
	Analysis	30	2.75	4.00	3.3333	67
	Education and Training	30	3.33	4.67	3.8433	77
	Information Transfer	30	3.50	4.00	3.6083	72
	Leadership that reinforce learning	30	3.00	3.75	3.3417	67
Valid N	30					

In this research paper the responses received from different respondents are first split with respect to two broader categories using SPSS software 20th version i.e. Technical and Non-Technical. From the above table (Table III) it is clearly observed that the score of all three composites of technical department falls under bottom quartile while the score of non-technical department is on higher side when compared to technical department's score.

It is observed that environment for learning in both these departments are conducive for learning but non-technical department scores 72 (third quartile) shows

that this department's employees feel more physiological safety, new ideas are appreciated and difference of opinions are encouraged in this department. On the other hand in technical department this composite has only score of 61 which means that the learning environment in this department is not as much conducive for learning as in the other department. We see a one directional learning level in all three composites in these two departments.

Both these departments are of a same organization but different scores shows that the environment and the leadership has different styles in these departments because of the nature of work done in these departments. Similarly Concrete Learning Process Composite and Leadership That Reinforce Learning Composite in non-technical departments falls under second quartiles with a score of 73 & 67 respectively, a much higher than the technical department which have a score of 62 & 65.

The data is further splited with respect to employee's cadre in the organizations in order to dig out the actual level of learning at different employees levels in both these departments. From the table IV shown above it is observed that the middle level managers of technical department has a higher score in all three components as compare to top and first line staff. They have a learning score of 61, 70 & 67 in learning environment, concrete learning process and leadership that reinforce learning composites respectively. While the score of front line staff of technical department are lesser as compare to other cadre's employees of this department.

On the other side when we see and compare the cadre wise score of non-technical department (table V), it demonstrates following attributes:

- The supportive learning environment composite score of front line staff is the highest when compare to other two cadres of the same department. It means that the environment is conducive for learning at lower level but the same environment is needed to be adopted at upperlevel.
- Score of concrete learning process of top managers and front line staff is at the higher side. When compared to the benchmark score both of this fall under third quartile. While significant improvements are to be made at middle level as there score is far too less.
- The third composite score i.e. leadership composite of front line staff is more when compared to other two cadres of same department. The same leadership style and environment is needed in other two departments.

Conclusion

This research is carried out by utilizing Garvin's questionnaire and the respondent's responses have been calculated via SPSS software. The score calculated from SPSS software were then compared with the benchmark scores. From the research results and on the basis of imperially tested data it can easily assess that the learning level in all three composites i.e. (1) supportive learning environment, (2)concrete learning process and (3) leadership that reinforce learning in non-technical department of PTCL is more when compare to technical department. This difference of learning level in different departments of the same organization may be because of the nature of work done in these two departments.

In technical department, the employees at all levels especially at front line are asked to strictly follow the SOPs and already developed ways of doing thing. Their environment is not as supportive to learning as they are asked to follow the set patterns and new ideas of doing things are less appreciated there. On the other hand, the employees and nature of work at non-technical department demands more situation based solutions of problems. New ideas are appreciated as well as difference of opinions. It promotes learning at all levels and make environment supportive for learning. Similarly, the leadership style of non-technical department is more towards learning.

Limitations

There are few limitations in this study, which can be removed in order to find out the more accurate results. PTCL is a large organization that expands over a wide geographical area. Only 60 respondents from one city have been chosen in this research. Future researcher may enhance the number of respondents as well as data can be gathered from different cities as well. The path for further research is open by comparing the learning in different telecom companies as well.

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