Is Environment Facilitating Learning at GCUF?

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ABSTRACT: In continuous changing work environments, an employee's knowledge and skills become obsolete very quickly. For the existence of an organization in a highly competitive environment, organizations have to compel its employees for continuous learning. In this paper, we have reviewed the practice in an organization on interrelated areas: is organizational environment creates learning environment or facilitating for learning. Garvin et al. (2008) has described the tool kit that tool kit is used to test the supportive learning environment in GCUF. Likert five scales has been used for getting the response in the questionnaire and result score has been compared with the benchmarked score given by Garvin in his article "Is yours a learning organization?" GCUF is fitting in second quartile which is less than median quartile's value which shows that environment's support for learning is low.

Keywords: Learning Organization, Supportive Learning Environment, Facilitation
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Technological advancement, changing customer demands, increasing domestic as well as foreign product's competition, globalization and technological influence on academic environment are the factors which compel the organizations to produce the organizational environment more turbulent and volatile than ever before (Parry & Proctor – Thompson, 2003, P.377). The above said factors are the reason for increasing attention in the human resources development (HRM) and organization development (OD) and it can only be attained through learning. Organizations moved towards the learning organizations by adopting some or the entire feature of the learning organization (Slater & Narver, 1995).

The aim of the study is to evaluate the environment of GCUF in different aspect to check whether it is facilitating organizational learning or not? Organizations are depending on its environment for its survival. Organizational skills and abundant resources motivate organizations to cash external opportunity through resources and skills organization possesses. Organizations depend on external environment for getting the benefit from external opportunity through exploiting the skills and internal resources and get the financial benefits (Heffron, 1989). Learning is processes through which knowledge is created or acquired that knowledge become the cause of positive change in human behavior.

Organizations learn along with experience or learning-curve involuntarily (Leavitt and March, 1988). Leavitt and March (1988) further explain that organizations can learn directly from their experience or from the experiences of others. The former is through trial-and-error technique and indirect experience is like imitating the best practices of the other organizations.

According to Daft and Weik, (1984) Organizational learning is a process of getting knowledge of doing actions in an external environment. Tsang (1997) explains that the organizational learning is a process which is comprised on certain types of activities that happen in an organization. Organizations learn through past history by making improvements in the previously taken actions (Fioland Lyles, 1985). According to Hult et al., (2001) organizational learning is the knowledge and the capacity to develop knowledge within the organization.

Literature Review

Learning organization is an emerging concept now-a-days. It is the key for the survival as well as become the competitive edge for an organization being worked to become a learning organization.

Naim Kapucu has described that class room learning is very much dependent on the relationship of students with each other. Those activities which enhance the collaboration among the student results in facilitate learning.

Moradi (2011) has conducted his research on the relationship of organizational learning culture and job satisfaction in private universities academic staff. Data was collected through two questioners. One questionnaire was related to job satisfaction analysis and second was organizational learning survey (DLOQ). Total 323 questionnaires were circulated through simple random sampling method. Correlation analysis was applied on the data. Results showed the positive high correlation between organizational learning and job satisfaction.

Extensive effort has been made to find the research articles which are directly related to the supportive learning environment facilitate learning in universities but could not find even a single article in this regard.

Garvin et al. (2008) in his article "Is yours a learning organizational?" has developed the tool kit for assessing organizational learning in different perspective. It includes supportive learning environment, learning processes and reinforcing learning through leadership. In this article main focus is on supportive learning environment for organizational learning and rest of the building blocks will not be used.

According to Peter Senge (1990) learning organizations are those organizations where people continually expand their capacity to create the results they truly desire, where new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspiration is set free, and where people are continually learning to see the whole together.

In his book fifth discipline, he has described the features for a learning organization which are as follows:

Personal mastery: it is a discipline of continuously reviewing extending our vision on the basis of new acquired skills and improving our behaviour and making our goals more realistic.

Mental models: are the norms, believes, assumptions and perception about world how ones understand and respond to the world.

Building shared vision It is a process of aligning the individual goals and vision with the organizational goals and vision. When individual goals will be achieved organizational goals will automatically be achieved.

Team learning: Team work provides the platform of working with the people. Research has proved that individual learning is very fast in team working. Each member in a team learns and suspends his previous assumptions and improves his behavior after getting the knowledge and skills.

Systems thinking: System thinking is a core discipline of Senge's work. The things are not in isolation. Every think has its impact. Elements are interconnected with each other. Solution of problems should be based on system thinking approach.

Learning organization is an organization skilled at creating, acquiring, and transferring knowledge, and at modifying its behavior to reflect new knowledge and insights (Garvin, 1993).

According to Garvin (1993) Learning organizations have to achieve five main activities: systematic problem solving, experimentation with new approaches, learning from their own experience and past history, learning from the experiences and best practices of others, and transferring knowledge quickly and efficiently throughout the organization.

Garvin (2008) has also described the three building blocks for being a learning organization which is supportive learning environment; concrete learning processes and reinforces learning through leadership.

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Methodology

Target population is taken from the Govt. College University, Faisalabad (GCUF). GCUF is a well reputed university in general degree program and ranked at fifth position in HEC university ranking. Data has been collected from 34 respondents selected on random based sampling method. Questionnaire has been developed from the tool kit of Garvin et al. research's article titled "Is yours a learning organization". They have described three building blocks in the article which are supportive learning environment, learning process and reinforce learning through leadership. I have selected the first learning block for my study.

The main focus of this article is to understand whether the environment of GCUF facilitates learning or not. I have just selected the building block of supportive learning environment and other building blocks have not been used. Supportive learning environment is further divided into four different areas for understanding the construct of supportive learning environment. Four areas are psychological safety, appreciation of differences, openness to new ideas and time for reflection. These factors have been used in questionnaire for getting the responses.

Measuring Tool

The study has been taken place on the supportive learning environment to understand whether environment in GCUF is supportive for learning or not. Supportive learning environment is sub divided into four different areas for developing the questionnaire to measure the supportive learning environment which are as follows:

- Psychological Safety
- Appreciation of differences
- Openness to new ideas
- Time for reflection

Eighteen questions were developed in the questionnaire on the basis of above said points. SPSS software was used to compute the analysis. Mean is being calculated for getting the answer about learning. Garvin et al. (2008) has given the benchmark table of building blocks of learning organization which is given below:

Table 1

Building Block	Bottom Quartile	Scaled Score 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	38–80	81–89	90	91–95	96–100
Time for reflection	14–35	36–49	50	51–64	65–100
Learning environment composite	31–61	62–70	71	72–79	80–90

Results

Garvin et al. (2008) has given the benchmark table which shows the mean of the variables. SPSS 20th version is used to compute the mean of all variables. After conducting the analysis, descriptive statistics table is found. The desired value is mean value which is equal to 2.7729. Likert five scales were used in questionnaire to get the responses. Before comparing the mean value with the Garvin's benchmarked score. Mean value will be multiplied with 100 and divided by 5 (Likert five scale). That value will be compared with benchmark table (Garvin et al., 2008).

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Supportive Learning Environment	34	2.06	3.22	2.772	.27298
Valid N	34				

Calculated comparable value is 55.458 (2.7729*100/5 = 55.458). This value fit in second quartile. This shows that learning is there.

Conclusion

From the results, it is conclude that environment's support for learning is very minute. Environment support is insufficient for learning. GCUF's environment support for learning is low. It is less than the moderating value and higher than the bottom quartile value only. Top management's role is very crucial for developing the supportive learning environment. They should give serious attention for developing the learning environment which is the key towards learning organization.

Recommendations for Future Researchers

In this article only one building block is being tested. The rest of the building blocks can be tested individually or collective particularly in education sector in Pakistan. Literature is lacking in this type of research in university level not only in Pakistan but also in world. It is a pilot study. Data is gathered only from a single university. Future researchers can check whether universities in Pakistan are learning organization or not by selecting the universities from the whole country.

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