Leadership That Reinforces Learning: A Case of A Textile Sector Organization of Pakistan

Muhammad Atiq

Department of Management Sciences, Virtual University of Pakistan, 54-Lawrence Road, Lahore

Submitted: Sep 5, 2013; Accepted: Nov 4, 2013; Published: Nov 12, 2013

Abstract: The objective of the research is to assess the impact that an effective leadership has towards transforming an organization to a learning organization. The research is a case based research in a textile sector organization of Pakistan. The leadership that reinforces learning was measured on the basis of three factors which further have 12 variables in them. The data for the research was collected by using a [1] Questionnaire. A total of 200 respondents participated in this research. SPSS was used to analyze the data. Arithmetic mean, Correlation analysis and reliability tests were used for this purpose. The research revealed that the leadership of the organization under study is playing a reasonable role in transforming this organization towards a learning organization. A positive correlation showed that all the variables are correlated to each other and are important in creating an effective leadership that can turn an organization to learning organization.

Key words: Learning organization, Textile sector, Effective leadership towards learning, Organizational learning

INTRODUCTION

The concept of agility and change is of prime importance now a days and organizations are facing a severe competition within businesses. In such a condition, only those organizations that are adaptive to changing environment and are agile in nature can succeed in such a cut throat competition. The today's organizations are more focusing on learning within organizations to assure their long term success and survival. Such organizations are termed as learning organizations and it was a much discussed topic during the last decade. Many significant research contributions have been made in this field to refine this concept. The other terms associated with this concept are organizational learning, organizational development and knowledge management. The organizational learning involves generating knowledge from new ideas and practices applying this knowledge for improvement of the organization. The organizational development involves improvement within the organization for assuring agility and success within an organization. Knowledge management is about successfully converting gained knowledge of ideas and its practical utilization for betterment of the organization. [1] identified the three building blocks for a learning organization. He stated that for an organization to be a learning organization, it must fulfill the criteria for defined building blocks. The three building blocks were identified as supportive learning environment, concrete learning processes and practices and leadership that reinforce learning by [1]. All of these blocks should be fulfilled for an organization to meet the criteria for a learning organization.

The mangers play a very critical role in devising policies for the organization and in putting an organization on the path of organizational learning and continuous improvement which are the most important factors in turning an organization to be a learning organization. So, the role of a visionary and effective leadership is of crucial importance towards building a learning organization as it is leadership that turns an organization on the way of success through improvement in its services, products and processes.

Review of the Literature: The concept of learning organization and the role of effective leadership towards transforming an organization towards a learning organization is not new and it has been developed and modified by many scholars and researchers.
[2] defined the concept of the learning organization as a place where all the employees work together for learning and solving problems and creating new and innovative ideas. [1] suggested the three building blocks for learning organization and devised the method through which an organization can measure its capability of learning. The three building blocks suggested were supportive learning environment, Concrete learning processes and practices and Leadership that reinforce learning. [1] said that for an organization to be a learning organization, it must fulfill all the building blocks. The third block was about leadership that reinforces learning which is characterized by the leadership role towards learning. It is measured by higher management/ leadership response towards friendly environment for new ideas, training and skill development, transfer of information and employee empowerment. [3] stated that leadership is a strategic choice and it’s not a function of personality. He suggested that the leaders must adopt leadership styles that suits in prevailing situation rather than choosing styles that match their temperaments. The researcher identified six different styles of leadership with different kinds of emotional intelligence attached to them for good and effective leadership decisions. The writer suggests that effective leaders do not stick to any one leadership style rather they use different leadership styles to get results under different situations. [4] in their study interviewed 160 CEO’s and found the six leadership styles that were effective in making leadership effective i.e. everyone with emphasis on strategy, people, expertise, controls or change as an effective tool in making the concerned decisions and choosing the appropriate strategies. [5] emphasized that doing extra important activities like holding meeting on little issue can be of great help for managers to effectively lead and manage various activities. He urged the managers to hold meeting on various issues and agendas to get ideas from a diverse group of people to effectively and efficiently manage strategic issues within organizations. [6] reviewed the social scientific study of leadership and its impacts on the prevailing leadership theories and suggested that new horizons in leadership have emerged which also needs to be considered for a leadership to be an effective one. [7] Presented a Conceptual Foundation” and conducted research on contribution of schools towards building of American youth and their families. They concluded that leadership plays an important role in building and development of the education system. The system should be modified to flourish the effective leadership for the school systems which will ultimately lead to the improvement of education system in broader context. [8] identified the ten most important leadership functions for enhancement of organizational performance and to promote collective work in teams and organizations. [8] devised a ten step process for leaders to follow while playing their part as effective leaders. [9] measured the effect of director’s efficacy in transforming an organization towards a learning organization. The author concluded that manager’s efficacy and learning within an organization are connected to each other. [10] identified the Role of Transformational Leadership and Leader's Emotional Quotient in Organizational Learning” determined the relationship that emotional quotient and transformational leadership have towards learning within the organization. The data from 250 respondents were measured and analyzed. The results of the data showed that emotional quotient and transformational leadership were highly significant in learning within the organization. [11] conducted research on six leadership competencies and their relationship to the most effective leadership styles. The results showed that most of the competencies were positively related to leadership styles like resource management, collaboration, higher education advocacy and professionalism. The two competencies that were found to be not related to effective leadership styles were organizational strategy and communication. The researcher suggested that systematic and effective leadership development plans should be conducted within different universities in Malaysia. [12] measured the effectiveness of leadership of schools and for this purpose conducted open interviews from various school leaders i.e. Principals. The research explored that most of the leaders were not innovative enough because they thought that innovation is merely a problem solving technique that requires technological advancements and computers.

Research Design and Methodology: The research is based on the study of [1] in which the researcher identified the three building blocks for a learning organization. In order to focus on measuring the effective role of leadership in Hussain Textile Mills in transforming this organization into a learning organization, the other two blocks have been ignored and the effect of leadership on learning of an organization was focused. The following variables were measured to determine the effect of a supportive leadership towards learning.
Friendly leadership towards new ideas.
Training and Skill development.
Transfer of information.
Employee empowerment

The leadership role towards new ideas is considered as the most important factor towards learning within the organization. The leadership within every organization must ensure an environment where it is easy for employees to share and discuss new ideas with their superiors. Such ideas should be given acceptance and appreciation for continuous improvement within the organization. The second variable i.e. training and skill development also plays an important role in professional grooming and development of the employees. The leadership should ensure that employees are spared for training and skill development and also that sufficient resources are allocated for this purpose. The trained and skilled workforce can bring revolution within organization with regard to processes improvement and efficiency. The third variable is the transfer of information which means that there should be a proper mechanism within an organization for handling of information and its smooth and efficient flow among various departments. The fourth variable which is employee empowerment is about giving the employees power to make their decisions about their job and nature of work. By ensuring employee empowerment, the employees become more productive and efficient in performing their tasks.

Description of the Instrument: The target population for this study was comprised of a textile sector organization of Pakistan i.e. Hussain textile mills. The questionnaire developed by [1] was used as a tool for data collection. [1] designed the questionnaire for measuring three building blocks for learning organization but to keep our study focused, the questionnaire related to the third building block i.e. leadership that reinforce learning was taken. The other two building blocks identified by [1] i.e. concrete learning processes and practices and friendly learning environment were ignored in order to keep the research focused on measuring the desired aspects. Likert scale was used for the purpose of measuring respondent’s response. The five responses were measured ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The reliability and validity of the questionnaire was measured by crone back alpha. The data from 30 respondents was taken and was put in SPSS software to measure crone back alpha which was measured to be "0.867" as shown in Table 1 which proves the validity and reliability of the instrument as it exceeds the cutoff point of 0.70 as recommended by [13].

Study of Demographics of Respondents: A total of 245 questionnaires were distributed out of which 221 were returned thus making a response rate of 90%. Out of these 221 returned questionnaire, 21 were rejected on the basis of incomplete or ambiguous responses. Thus 200 questionnaires were used for the purpose of the analysis.

The above demographics of the respondent showed that 63.5% percent of the total respondents were male whereas 36.5% were females. The 61.5% of the respondents were of age less than 25 whereas 38.5% were of greater age greater than 25. The 33.5% of the total respondents were of graduation level qualification whereas 60.5% were masters level and a very minor percentage i.e. 6% was of higher level qualification [14-16].

Analysis
Instrument for Data Analysis: SPSS was used for the purpose of analyzing the data. Crone back alpha, arithmetic means and correlation figures were calculated through use of this software.
Results of the Research: The following table shows the mean values of the various variables used for research purpose. The benchmark scores that were computed by [1] are given in the table.

The scores of the Hussain textile Mills Limited shown in Table 6 shows that the organization falls in second quartile. The result shows that the organization is at an average level to be a learning organization. The data further revealed that the organization is paying attention to the empowerment of employees and towards the training and skill development within the organization but it still needs to be improved. The organization is also observed at moderate level when measured for transfer of information within the organization as compared with other variables in study.

Correlation Analysis: The results of correlation for study shown in Table 7 shows that all the variables are positively and significantly Co-related to each other and are important in developing an effective leadership that reinforce learning within organization. All the variables are interdependent on each other.

Limitations of this Study: The scope of the research is specific in nature which pertains to medium level textile sector organizations operating in developing countries only and it may not be generalized for textile sector organizations working in developed countries due to difference of capacity issues and human resources skills.

Future Scope for Research: The future scope of the research lies in conducting same research in other sectors as investigation of significant variables for effective leadership towards learning requires longitudinal studies in order to verify instrument, methodology and results.
CONCLUSION

The organization was found at an average level when measured for "effective leadership role towards organizational learning and in its transformation motives towards a learning organization. The organization needs further improvements and advancement in all areas to be a learning organization. The leadership at Hussain textile Mills Limited needs to be more responsive towards new ideas. It should welcome probing questions and should focus on new ideas and research. It needs to improve not only its ability of developing new and innovative products but also focus on its existing processes and procedures in order to gain a competitive edge over its competitors. The training and skill development of the human resource plays a critical role in the development of any organization. The Hussain Textile Mills Limited needs to develop and launch rigorous training programs for its employees to equip them with the latest and effective skills that will help them in bringing new ideas and innovations in products and processes which will assure the long term success of the organization. The coordination and cooperation between the various departments at Hussain Textile Mills Limited to facilitate the process of transfer of information needs to be further improved. The leadership needs to focus on developing effective means and ways of coordination between various departments for transfer of information. The smooth and effective flow of information within various departments must be assured. Employee empowerment gives the employee confidence to make decisions about their job and nature of work and to take the responsibility of their work.

The organization also falls in second quartile when measured for empowerment of employees within the organization which needs to be further improved.

REFERENCES

8. Yulk, G., Leadership In Organizations Fag: Organisation.