

Faculty's Self-Leadership and Organizational Identification in Promoting Universities as Learning Organizations

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Doi:10.5901/mjss.2015.v6n1s1p35

Abstract

The area of learning organization has significantly drawn the attention of research scholars in the last two decades. The present paper conceptually examines the role of two critical factors (Self-Leadership and Organizational identification) that are expected to promote learning in Universities. Universities are supposed to be knowledge intensive institutions which in present scenario are falling short of meeting this requirement. Faculties working in the universities and its affiliated colleges are the frontline knowledge banks and their role can't be ignored. They are the key players in learning and delivering knowledge to the students. To lead the students from the front, faculties are expected to cultivate the quality of Self-Leadership. This quality of self-leadership is often triggered by a socializing variable (construct), which is known as Organizational Identification. Thus the present conceptual paper brings forth the role of Self-Leadership and Organizational identification of faculty members in making universities as Learning Organizations. Success of the universities in reaching out to the students depend on the Organizational Identification of the faculty and their Self-Leadership traits. Hence universities are expected to be Learning Organizations in order to remain viable, containing the progress, maintaining the synergy of learning among the faculty and students.

Keywords: Learning Organization (LO), Organizational Learning (OL), Organizational Identification (OI), Self-Leadership (SL).

1. Introduction

Universities are the shrines of education that delivers the knowledge and instills wisdom in students. Students of the universities tend to get matured as a citizen in terms of knowledge and gain maturity socially. Over time we could see a growth in number of universities and growth in students enrolling into universities. This has led to heavy competition making the environment complex. Conventionally universities are seen as organizations for learning but they are not learning organizations. The scholar fraternity continue to voice out that universities should be learning organizations in order to contain their progress and sustain in the complex competitive environment. Knowledge tend to be obsolete if it is not upgraded. Faculties of the universities are major stake holders in upgrading and delivering knowledge to the students and keep them on par with the academic improvements. Sadler-Smith and Batcher (1999) stated that organizations have begun to accept that need for learning and held that there is a paucity in empirical studies that has addressed these shortcomings in educational institutions. Lewis *et al.* (2008) stated that for continuous learning to happen, Universities are expected to practice and tackle Senge's five disciplines of Learning Organization which are team learning, shared vision, mental models, personal mastery and systems thinking. On similar lines, Voolaid and Ehrlich (2012) through his empirical research, stressed upon the need for business schools to cultivate the quality of organizational learning to sustain and retain in global competition. On the flip side, it can be noticed that universities and educational institutions follow the basic tenets of learning organization on a superficial note (White and Weathersby, 2005). So for the universities to qualify as learning organizations, management of the universities is expected to persuade its faculty members. A successful persuasion always requires a blend of monetary and non-monetary incentives. Thus we build our present research from a stand point that views organizational identification as a social dimension that invariably carries both monetary and non-monetary incentives within, thereby triggering many positive and productive organizational behaviors and outcomes as well. Thus in our present research we try to interpret the role of organizational identification in enhancing self-leadership there by making university a better learning place. The conceptual model is as follows

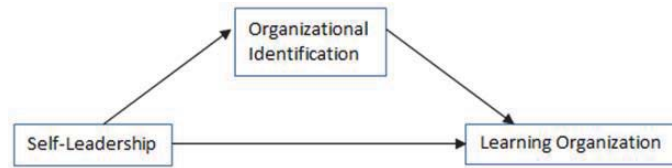


Figure 1. Model

1.1 Objective

The present work brings forth the key predictors of learning organization which are Self-Leadership, Organizational Identification. This study also provides a strong literature backup substantiating the essentiality proposed by indomitable constructs in making Universities as learning organizations. The Current research encapsulates two main objectives within. The primary objective is to conceptually portray self-leadership as an essential construct of learning organization among the faculty members. Followed by secondary objective which examines the mediating role of organizational identification in strengthening the relationship between Self-Leadership and Learning Organization amongst the faculty members from theoretical stand point. The relationship between the proposed variables assumes significance because there are very limited studies that has addressed the relationship between the variables proposed.

1.2 Self-Leadership

Self-leadership has its origin since late 20th century. The Self-Leadership was popularized by the work of Manz (1986) who has conceptualized work of Self-leadership for the very first time. He quote's that self-leadership encapsulates a self-influence perspective which will consciously and consistently motivates one's self towards better performance at the consent of their own self. Self-leadership strategies can be broadly classified into three main categories three primary categories which are 1) Behavior-focused strategies 2) Natural reward strategies, and 3) Constructive thought pattern strategies (Manz & Neck, 1999; Prussia *et al.*, 1998). The Self-Leadership plays a crucial role in Universities and seeks more attention in the present competitive landscape. Prussia *et al.* (1998), Hauschildt and Konradt (2012) in their empirical study revealed that self-leadership has positive impact on performance and job-satisfaction (Robert and Foti, 1998 and Javadi *et al.* 2013). Organizations are expected to bring-in effective Self-Leadership interventions in order to percolate Self-Leadership across the institutions and it can also be held that Job autonomy (Ho *et al.*, 2014) and personality traits (Williams, 1997) trait will always moderate the process of penetration. It has been empirically proved that there is a significant relationship between Self-Leadership strategies and component of quantum organizations at universities (Aghababaei, 2013). Elloy and Patil (2014) through their exploratory study examined the relationship between Self Leadership and Burnout stated that high levels of Self-Leadership will lead to low emotional exhaustion (which is a component of Burnout) and vice-versa. Hernandez (2012) in his qualitative research has put forth that Use of mental imagery and Self-Leadership will enhance the performance in sports athletes. Self-Leadership is mediated by self-efficacy effecting performance outcomes (Prussia *et al.*, 1998) and teacher's Organizational citizenship behavior (2013). Self-Leadership moderates the effects of entrepreneurial demands and resources reducing entrepreneurial exhaustion and exit intentions and increases engagement in entrepreneurs (Neck *et al.* 2013). Therefore it is essential for the present day universities to recognize the importance of the self-leadership and take necessary measures which will enhance the faculty self-leadership traits benefiting the student community for greater good.

1.3 Learning Organization

In line with many researchers who have made their attempt to study about transforming an organization to a learning organization by imbibing the Argyris (1978) and Schon (1996)organizational learning practices and adopting Senge's (1992) learning organization disciplines, there is always gap noticed in Universities while adopting and channeling the learning process towards faculty members who lead from the front. Adopting, channeling and imbibing requires welcoming the learning process without inhibitions. This scenario is inevitable in the context of Universities because knowledge in the academic landscape is expected to reach students through faculties and industrial experts. This task involves complexity within. Furthered and built upon the pillars laid by the then researchers namely John Dewey (1938) on his work about learning from experience and Kurt Lewin (1935) who quotes "people tend to modify their behavior on

interaction with their proximal environment". Argyris(1978) and Schon (1996) developed concept of Organizational Learning and defined it as the " detection and correction of errors" and also identified that learning takes place in three forms which are "single-loop, double loop and deuterio learning". For the process continuous transformations of universities to happen, individual learning is considered to be very important (Pedler *et al.*, 1990). Senge (1990) in his book "The Fifth Discipline" has strongly put forth his argument of five core disciplines necessary for a learning organization: personal mastery, mental models, shared visions, team learning, and systems thinking. The crux of organizational learning and learning organization at their very core is to trade-off and convert the latest information into organizational accomplishment via individual, team and organizational wide learning processes. From the available literature learning organization derives its identity by its very action orientation and its inherent capability of bringing in the diagnostic and evaluative and methodological tools. These tools can recognize, promote and evaluate the excellence of learning processes inside the organizations (Easterby-Smith, 1999; Tsang, 1997).

Over time universities have accustomed to a culture which is subjugated by blame, fright and defensiveness, which has obstructed communication flow. This calls for immediate attention to sort out and eliminate the barriers obstructing the communication flow. This goes in line with the Plaskoff (2003) statement who quotes.

—Building communities and organizational learning for that matter is more about removing barriers instituted by the organization that prohibit employees' natural tendencies to socially construct knowledge, negotiate meaning and internalize cultural enablers than creating specialized learning programs or processes to codify and distribute all organizational knowledge (Plaskoff, 2003:181-182).

Having realized the potential of a continuous learning, one may argue that Universities will have to strive for a collective recognition and need to create a new culture. The cognitive learning of an individual occurs at a social level and is mediated by strong social factor (Vygotsky, 1978) and we consider organizational identification socializes faculty members within a university and outside the university. Thus necessitating need for culture trademarked by Organizational Identification, Self-Leadership, and greater transparency within and across universities. The present study conceptually investigates the impact of these dimensions in making universities as learning organizations.

1.4 Organizational Identification Literature review:

Organizational identification has its origin in early 20th century. Chester Barnard (1938/1968: 281) says willingness and conviction in the members can be seen if the organization practices to maintain the coalescence between employees and itself, which can be achieved by providing employees with organizational identification. Identified employees do not hesitate to put extra effort and devote themselves in attaining organizational goals. This was the era where the scholars of organizational behavior haven't seen organizational identification as separate construct. Frederick Taylor (1911) has stated that common interests of organizations and its employees lead to improved productivity, cooperation and the intimacy prevails between the two entities. It was Simon (1947) who portrayed the theory behind the organizational identification followed by Simon and March (1958) together has put forth the antecedents, outcomes and has formally introduced the construct Organizational identification. A decade later Brown (1969) has held that 1. Attraction to the organization 2. Congruence of goals between the organization and individual 3. Reference of self to organizational membership are the basic predictors of organizational identification. The existing perspectives has its underpinnings in the ideology of Foote (1951) who came up with the theory of motivation based upon an individual identification with the organization

The credit goes to Foote (1951) who came up with the theory of motivation. He quotes that the individual's social categorization can help form commitment which in turn motivates and help modify person's behavior. Albert & Whetten (1985) reinstated the significance of organizational identification and has quoted that "When employees view their identity in an organization as distinctive, central, and enduring, they merge their self-concept into the organization and thus develop strong identification with the organization". Organizational identification should answer the question "Who am I in relation to the organization?" (Pratt, 1998).

1.5 Behavioral Organizational Outcomes of OI

Organizational identification has spread over the arena of organizational behavior and its presence has contributed a fair share in realizing its importance in organizational development. The past and the present prevailing literature has always backed the existence of organizational identification in the domain of organizational behavior. The organizational

identification has its gravity within the social identity theory and social categorization theory as well. There are many organizational outcomes which always had a significant impact on the overall organizational functioning. Many positive organizational outcomes were found underpinning the organizational identification. There are two fold outcomes as a result of faculties' being positively identified with the organization. One at the individual level and other at the organizational level. The individual level outcomes comprises of faculties taking pride and self-esteem (Bergami & Bagozzi, 2000), safety, security and sense of belongingness (Ashforth, 2008). Second at the organizational level outcomes include employees showing increased co-operation (Dukerich *et al.* 2002) with the system, improved task performance (van Knippenberg, 2000) in stipulated time with reduced turn over intentions (van Dick *et al.*, 2004), cultivating organizational citizenship behaviours (Dutton *et al.*, 1994). Riketta (2005) observed that there is a correlation (0.35 $p < 0.01$) between OI and "extra-role" behaviours.

Organizational Identification is studied as a vital construct in the literature of Organizational Behavior, affecting the contentment of the individual and organizational effectiveness. (Brown 1969; Patchen, 1970; Schneider & Nygren 1970; Rotondi, 1975; O' Reilly & Chatman, 1986). Burke (1966) has stated that organizational identification initiates unconscious persuasion in employees to be a part of organization. Taking this from the work of Burke, Cheney & Tompkins (1987) stated that OI is created and replicated by organizational members through conversation of shared interests. Cognitive approaches roots its-self from social identity theory which implies that we define our self by associating with and being a part of social categories to which we belong (Tajfel & Turner, 1979).

Therefore organizational identification can be defined as perceived essence of attachment with a balanced transaction and pride between the faculties and the universities by integrating and converging the one's self into the soul of organization. Balanced transaction involves services rendered by faculty members (at their cognitive will) and communicative benefits received, on the line of equilibrium. This definition goes in line with Edwards and Peccei (2007), who stated that organizational identification carries 1. Self-categorization and labeling 2. Values and goals, 3. Belongingness and membership. On similar note Organizational identification has constructive influence in bringing about employees creativity (Van Dick, & van Knippenberg, 2009; Madjar, Greenberg, & Chen, 2011). Empirical results indicate (Quijano *et al.*, 2007) that, affective commitment, and OI have a strong relationship. Organizational identification and organizational commitment was found to be correlated (0.53 $p < 0.01$), predicting different outcomes (Herrbach, 2006; Riketta, 2005). Organizational Identification is also studied to mediate between transformational leadership and follower outcomes (Shamir *et al.* 1998). Organizational identification also predicts OCB, and the major predictor of OI is transformational leadership (Epitropaki & Martin, 2005).

Hence it can be held that organization identification is one of the socializing construct that can elicit the learning behavior and University faculty. It will in turn facilitate organization learning process. When the formation of learning organization occurs through the social identity (Watkins and Marsick, 1993) organizational identification can help form learning organization (Simon Reese, 2014) where in individual tends to interpret their relationship with the organization. Organizational identification (OI) being the key construct for a learning organization there are very few research studies available on the impact of organizational identification on learning organization.

1.6 Organizational Identification and Learning Organization

Faculties in the universities need a strong motivational bond to encourage and incentivise learning. Organizational identification is one such construct that motivates the faculties and increases their involvement in process of learning. Motivation to learn and adapt is salient feature behind the success of any Universities that has met and exceeded the expectations of the faculty and student fraternity. Organizational identification enhances the job performance on one hand and learning from errors on the other hand and is a crucial aspect of organizational learning. This statement is corroborated by Aamir Ali Chughtai *et al.* (2009) who found that organizational identification has significant unique effects on in-role job performance and error communication. This construct carries a social and motivational perspective within. This was proved by many researchers in the recent past. For example literature speaks both empirically and conceptually that people who are strongly identified with an organization can step-up to put an extra effort on organization behalf (Mael and Ashforth, 1995). Nazem *et al.* (2013) has in their empirical studies has stated that organization social capital has direct effect on organizational learning in universities Thus Faculty members who are more positively identified with the organization tend to think creatively and share their ideas to top management and fellow fraternity which in-turn benefits the student community. The concept of organizational identification is so very powerful because it conveys essence and meaning of faculty's existence in an organization and making the identity in particular, very compelling because it attaches meaning to the personnel.

2. Methodology

The present conceptual model is thoroughly backed with the literature support that provides adequate evidence in support of the individual variables (With corresponding positive Organizational outcomes) proposed in the current conceptual framework. A regression analysis can be done in order to test the influence of Self-Leadership and Organizational Identification on Learning Organization. Followed by Confirmatory Factor Analysis to check if the model confirms the hypothesized conceptual frame work. Our future research will examine the proposed relationship between the variables on an empirical note.

3. Scope, Limitations and Future Research

The present model conceptually backs up the need for organizational identification to trigger Self-Leadership in faculty members who actually carry the potential to promote universities as learning organizations. This conceptual research assumes significance since there are very few studies that has propounded the relationship between Self-Leadership, Organizational Identification and Learning Organization. Size of students, faculty members and nature of university has also got to play a role in promoting universities as learning organizations. Our future research will test the model from empirical stand point.

4. Conclusion

The present paper has put forth the literature review of Self-Leadership, Organizational Identification Organizational Learning and Learning Organization. Any social institution that seeks stable relationship with a volatile and unpredictable environment face the prospect of failure, and Universities are no exception to it. To keep up with this dynamic environment, it is important for the Universities to continuously improve. But, in reality there is a cognizable rift between Learning and Delivering, thus we notice that universities are falling short of pace. Many past researches in this field have in fact proven it. This idea has blossomed from the basic fact that all the faculties possess the trait of self-leadership in varying degrees. All it needs is a strong motivational factor to trigger it. Having its roots from the Social identity Theory, it can be held that Organizational Identification is one such factor that brings out the quality of self-leadership by sub-consciously persuading the faculties, enabling them to learn and deliver thereby making their institutions as learning organizations.

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