

Exploring the indirect effects of organizational learning: The link between learning values and structures and extra-role behavior

Anit Somech

Faculty of Education
University of Haifa
Haifa 31905
Israel

Phone: 972-4-8240090

Fax: 972-4-8260211

anits@construct.haifa.ac.il

Anat Drach-Zahavy

Faculty of Health and Welfare
University of Haifa
Haifa 31905
Israel

972-4-8240090

anatdz@construct.haifa.ac.il

Track: Academic

Abstract

Accumulating empirical evidence consistently emphasizes the contribution of organizational learning to in-role performance quality and quantity. The present study takes this line of research a step further by exploring the link between organizational learning and organizational extra-role behavior (ERB).

Organizational learning is “a relative property of organizations” that denotes the extent to which “an organization’s members actively use data to guide behavior as to promote the ongoing adaptation of the organization” (Edmondson & Moingeon, 1998, p. 9). Organizational learning demands the adoption of new structural mechanisms (institutionalized structural and procedural arrangements that allow organizations to accumulate knowledge), and cultural values (valid information, transparency, issue orientation, and accountability), that foster continuous inquiry.

Organizational learning and ERB.

ERB is defined as behavior that benefits and/or is intended to benefit the organization, is discretionary, goes beyond existing role expectations, and is directed at individuals (ERBI) or at the organization as a whole (ERBO) (Van Dyne, 1993).

We suggest that organizational learning eventually fosters ERBO and ERBI by changing the viewpoint and the role of the individual in the organization in two main aspects. (a) Organizational learning creates environments in which people expand the focus from the immediate outcomes of their performance to continuous learning of the organization as a whole. This process fosters strategic thinking, develops an organizational system approach, and expands people's perspective beyond formal job requirements (Argyris, 1992), hence might enhance ERBO. (b) Establishing collaborative organizational goals for continuous learning creates interdependence in tasks and processes, which encourage individuals to cooperate, share, and help in order to attain those goals (ERBI) (Knutson & Miranda, 2000). Accordingly, we hypothesized that organizational learning (structures and learning values) will be positively related to ERBOs and ERBIs,

Method

A total of 450 staff members comprising 31 educational organizations, were covered by the survey. Data were collected through two questionnaires: the organizational learning (structures and values) questionnaire was distributed to subordinates, whereas the ERB questionnaire was completed by their direct superiors.

Results

The hypotheses identified the organization as the unit of analysis, so all variables were aggregates of individual responses to the organizational level of analysis. Justification for aggregation was provided by a within-group similarity index (r_{wg}), and within- and between-entities analysis (WABA).

Results from Hierarchical Regression analyses showed that organizational learning distinctively predicted the two dimensions of ERB: Structural mechanisms and cultural values were positively related to ERBO (accounting for 45 percent of the explained variance in ERBO), whereas ERBI was positively related only to structural mechanisms (accounting for 22 percent in ERBI).

Conclusion

The present results highlighted the indirect consequences of organizational learning by demonstrating that developing learning structures and values promotes not only direct benefits of in-role performance but also enhanced ERB. Organizations that develop adequate structural and procedural arrangements to accumulate learning, also encourage employees to engage in ERBI. However, to promote ERBO's organizations

should not only emphasize institutionalized structures, but also assimilate learning values such as issue orientation and accountability.

References

Argyris, C. (1992). On organizational learning. Cambridge, MA: Blackwell.

Edmondson, A., & Moingeon, B. (1998). From organizational learning to the learning organization. Management Learning, 29, 5-20.

Van Dyne, L. (1993). In- role and extra-role behaviors: Cross-level and longitudinal effects of individual similarity to other group members. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, MN.

Knutson, K.A., & Miranda, A. O. (2000). Leadership characteristics, social interest, and learning organizations. The Journal of Individual Psychology, 56, 205-213.