



www.aassjournal.com

ISSN (Online): 2322-4479

AASSJournal

Short Communication

Received: 15/12/2012

Accepted: 05/02/2013

Annals of Applied Sport Science 1(1): 19 – 22, 2013

The Relationship between Organizational Learning and Readiness for Change in the Staffs of Physical Education Offices

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to study the relationship between organizational learning and readiness for change in the staff of Physical Education departments of Guilan, Mazandaran and Golestan provinces. Number of 161 employees from all employees of Physical Education Offices of Golestan, Mazandaran and Guilan province were considered as the sample (all numbers). Research tools were two questionnaires: organizational learning (41-question in five components) and readiness for change (18-question in three dimensions); that their reliability was confirmed and validity of these was calculated 0.843 and 0.816, respectively. The analysis showed that there is a direct and significant relationship between organizational learning and readiness for change ($p=0.005$, $r=0.219$). A direct and significant relationship was also observed between mental models ($p=0.001$, $r=0.323$), shared vision ($p=0.001$, $r=0.280$), and system thinking ($p=0.026$, $r=0.175$) with readiness for change. The results also showed that there is no significant relationship between individual mastery and group learning with readiness for change.

Keywords: mental models, shared vision, system thinking, individual mastery, group learning.

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Introduction

Currently, our surrounding environment is changing faster than organizations and this is a challenge that is essential to be taken into account (1). Due to the large changes in the current situation, change is an important issue for the survival of organizations. Manpower is the most important factor in the success or failure of organizational change process. So, factors that affect the attitude of persons about change should be considered (2). Peach, Jimmieson, and White (2005) defined the preparation for a positive change of attitude in the staff about the need to change and also their belief in that such a change could have positive implications for them and an organization (3). Preparation and attitude for a change among members of an organization is known as a key factor for a successful attempt for change. Senge (1999) and Sugarman (2001) compared the process of change in organizations with principles running the growth of organisms and raised the approach of change based on learning (1, 4). Kontoghiorghes (2005) in a study found that dimensions of learner organization are the strongest predictors of quick adaptation to changes (5). Haque (2007) and Rowden (2001) stated that establishment of a leaner organization has a direct relationship with preparation for change (6, 7).

Physical Education Offices in provinces have significant role in promoting health and sports, sustainable development, national pride, etc. Like other organizations, these Offices need continuous learning at all working levels against the changes inside and outside of the organization. Due to rapid growth of changes in organizations especially in the sporting ones, competitiveness of sport in terms of professional, competitive, public, and educational aspects, getting out of one-dimensional state and gaining political, social, and cultural aspects, and shortage of informational resources in this field in Physical Education departments make it essential to review the attitude of the staff to change and its relationship with organizational learning in Physical Education departments as the reference of sport in each province.

Materials and Methods

Research method, according to the research subject and objectives, was descriptive and correlation. Data were collected in the field. In terms of the use of results, this study is an applied one.

Sample. Statistical population of this study was included all employees of Physical Education departments in Golestan, Mazandaran, Guilan provinces. The number of employees of Physical Education departments of Mazandaran, Guilan, and Golestan was 67, 55, and 53 respectively. So, statistical population was totally included 173

persons. Due to the limited number of statistical population, statistical sample was equal to available statistical population. From 176 employees of Physical Education departments of Mazandaran, Guilan, and Golestan provinces, 161 questionnaires (reversibility of questionnaires was 92%) were used to be analyzed.

Tools. Three kinds of questionnaire were used in this study to obtain data:

- Demography questionnaire: It contained 6 questions measuring demographic features such as age, gender, education, field of study, work experience, and employment status.

- Organizational learning questionnaire: The standard questionnaire of Neefe (2001) was used to measure organizational learning in the studied population. This questionnaire contains 41 seven-choice questions and the scoring of choices was based on Likert scale. This 41-question questionnaire is divided into 5 parts; individual mastery with 6 questions, mental models with 7 questions, group learning with 10 questions, shared vision with 10 questions, and system thinking with 8 questions.

- Questionnaire of readiness for organizational change: Readiness for organizational change was measured using an 18-question proposed by Denham *et al* (1989). This tool is formed of three sub-indices including cognitive, affective, and behavioral tendencies. Each index contains 6 questions. The average score for each index indicates of the sub-index. The average of all questions investigates the attitude to organizational change and higher scores show a more positive attitude to organizational change. In this questionnaire, the questions 1 to 6 (emotional aspect) are scored reversely and the questions 7 to 18 (cognitive and behavioral aspects) are scored directly. Additionally, choices are classified in 7-choice Likert scale including from completely disagree (choice 1) to completely agree (choice 7). Reliability of the questionnaires was confirmed using the comments of ten masters of sports management. Cronbach alpha coefficient was also used to confirm the validity of these questionnaires in a pilot study. Validity of the questionnaire of readiness for organizational change and the questionnaire of organizational learning was calculated 0.843 and 0.816, respectively.

Statistical Analysis. Statistical methods are chosen based on the research objectives and hypotheses. Descriptive statistics such as average, minimum, maximum, frequency, percentage, and standard deviation were used to describe the variables in the studied population. Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was also used to determine the normality of data. Given the significance level of Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, Spearman correlation coefficient was used to test the research hypotheses

at a significance level of 0.05. Each of the research hypotheses were tested using deductive statistical methods by SPSS 15 software.

Results

Deductive analysis showed that there is a direct and significant relationship between organizational learning and readiness for change in the staff of Physical Education departments ($p=0.005$, $r=0.219$). In the evaluation of the relationship

between the dimensions of organizational learning and components of readiness for change, a direct and significant relationship was observed between mental models ($p=0.001$, $r=0.323$), shared vision ($p=0.001$, $r=0.280$), and system thinking ($p=0.026$, $r=0.175$) with readiness for change (Table 1). The results also showed that there is no significant relationship between individual mastery and group learning with readiness for change.

Table 1: The relationship between readiness for change with organizational learning and its dimensions

Component	r	p
Organizational learning	0.219	0.005**
System thinking	0.175	0.026*
Group learning	0.138	0.082
Mental model	0.323	0.001**
Shared vision	0.28	0.001**
Individual mastery	0.144	0.069

*: Significance in 0.05 levels. **: Significance in 0.05 levels

Discussion and Conclusion

In terms of the relationship between organizational learning and readiness for change, the results of the present study are consistent with the findings of Aghdasi and Khakzar (2009), Templeton (2002), and Haque (2008) (6, 8, 9). Additionally, Sugarman (2001) stated that supporting people in learning is one of the effective factors in the process of organizational change (4). Application and role of learning in the process of change has been mentioned in many studies. Senge (1999) states that the process of change in the organizations is a dynamic process which is a function of learning capability development (1). Yeung *et al.* (1999) state that an organization will have the initiative for change if it has a high level of learning capability (10). Beer (2000) proposed patterns for change and organizational learning that changes should be implemented from the top levels of the organization and then spread to lower levels (11). Organization requires some capabilities for a successful change in this pattern. According to these models, transmission of changes from top to the body of organization and then the acceptance of

changes in whole organization are necessary. This necessity itself requires organizational learning. Finally, this point should be noted that success in change is not only due to the content and nature of change, but it is also because of processes, procedures, and practical solutions that are pursued before and during the implementation of change. Application and pursuit of practical solutions of change management and organizational learning approach during the implementation of change can facilitate the organizational process. Given the relationship between organizational learning and readiness for change in Physical Education departments, the following recommendations can be presented as useful solutions: a) Training of the staff of Physical Education departments on the concepts of organizational learning; b) Establishment of personnel database to record their skills and also other information needed for the cooperation of the staff in the process of organizational development; c) Paying more attention to organizational learning by managers and facilitating the learning process at individual, group, and organizational levels.

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