

An investigation of the factors affecting the sustainability of organizational learning in civil registration organization of Markazi Province

Seyed Ali Akbar Ghaemmaghami

Department of Public Administration, Islamic Azad University, Arak Branch, Arak, Iran

ABSTRACT

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Correspondence:

ghaemmaghami_a@yahoo.com

This study is aimed at investigating the factors affecting the sustainability of organizational learning in Civil Registration Organization of Markazi Province. This study is applicable in terms of purpose and is a causal research. In order to study the proposed hypotheses and analyzing statistically field method has been conducted and to collect the data, questionnaire has been used. The statistical population of this study includes the employees of Civil Registration Organization of Markazi Province. Sampling has been implemented by means of available sampling method. However, due to the non-responsibility of some of the respondents and incompleteness of some of the questionnaires, 226 questionnaires have been completed. To test the hypotheses, the structural equations method and LISREL Software have been used. According to the data analysis, the results indicated that the individual's motive for learning, team dynamics, and organizational performance have a positive effect on the sustainability of organizational learning.

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Today, the world and especially the organizations are changing greatly and continually and all the dimensions of organizations from the inside to the outside and from human factors to non-human factors are rapidly transforming to other modes. Under such circumstances, organizations attempt to survive and in order to be stable in the surrounding tense environment, they attempt to be dynamic and move towards developing learning and creating a learning organization. The rapid changes happening within the organizations mean that their knowledge has become extinct and is not adapted to their abilities and capacities. Therefore, organizations must update and revive their knowledge continuously. The literature on this topic has highly highlighted the role of organizational learning in improving organizational performance. Since

learning facilitates the development of new products, services, and processes, it has become a crucial factor in the success of organizations (Kuo, 2011). A learning organization is an organization which is skilled in creating, applying, and transferring knowledge and can moderate its behavior to reflect new knowledge and viewpoints. The ability to learn and find appropriate changes and implement them is essential for today's organizations. In fact, learning ability is a key competitive advantage, which can be accomplished by developing organizational learning and applying it effectively. Due to the competition among institutions and businesses for having more market share and gaining customers' satisfaction, businesses search for better market place and customers search for better suppliers. Accomplishing these goals is connected with two concepts including the quality of services and organizational performance. Studying these concepts in service markets due to the special features of services is of great importance for service-offering organizations. Today, people live in an environment where is increasingly moving towards service-based economy. Delay in applying the techniques of quality in services as a fundamental principle in activities related to quality determination will have disastrous consequences. This weak performance in offering high-quality services will prevent from the competitiveness of units in the labour market and lead to bankruptcy (Chen, Liu, Sheu, & Yang, 2012).

Learning can be studied separately at different levels and according to different viewpoints in an organizational environment. Most researchers have considered learning in an organization at three levels, namely individual, team, and organizational level. Senge (1997) has differentiated between these three levels and has indicated their relationships for forming a chain of learning in the organizational system. In fact, learning at the individual level cannot be trained, since it is an innate ability and includes a change in the mind, which leads to recreation of people by themselves. Regarding the team learning, Senge has defined it as the development of team capacity for achieving the desired results. Three important dimensions of learning include the need to think thoroughly about complicated issues, the need for innovation and coordinated action, and finally the role of team members in other teams. Furthermore, Senge believes that if an organization intends to be a learning organization, it must adopt five main factors, namely system thought, personal mastery, mental models, creating common perspective, and team learning (Prugsamatz, 2012).

At present, there are some challenges in non-profit organizations, which include decreasing and increasing the costs, discussing the profitability issue of non-profit section as the providers of social services, keeping and expanding plans as well as the lack of capacity in guaranteeing high-quality services, increasing the difficulty of changing ideas into effective results, increasing the protection of the environment, and the lack of mutual trust and relationship. Due to all these items, non-profit organizations search for more effective learning to face the mentioned challenges. These organizations need strategic thought to change their insights into effective strategies and develop important logic to accept and implement the selected strategies. Therefore, organizational learning is considered as a necessary need to equip non-profit organizations with facing these challenges. In our country, Civil Registration Organization, as the oldest governmental organization, is one of the non-profit organizations, which organizes the registration of vital events and the storage of identity documents and publishes human statistics. This organization also identifies the identity of people, cancels fictitious, duplicate,

and usurped identity cards, invalidates replicas, accelerates the executive affairs to offer services as welfare and social programs, helps to coordinate the informatics plans of the country, helps to create tax systems, national medicine, military service, employment etc., controls and protects identity and nationality documents, renews, secures, and reforms the system, and finally keeps the validity of identity documents. Civil Registration Organization plays an effective role in the demographic and social relationships and the registration of people's identities.

Civil Registration Organization registers birth and death, issues identity card and death certificate, exchanges people's identity cards, registers marriage and divorce, issues birth certificate for foreign nationals, arranges the registration books, and collects human statistics and publishes them.

The Literature Review

People have a small image of their organization. Through this image, we can identify the changes in the mental models of the organization, common values, and memory. Learning is necessary for the organization, but it is not enough. When people increase their capacities for learning, they can collectively enhance the total capacity of the organization for learning. However, this accomplishes if the organization accepts their attempts to learn and supports and rewards them (Mehrabi, Jadidi, Allameh Haery, & Alemzadeh, 2013).

When reviewing the structure of organizational learning, two items are emphasized. First, since the emphasis is on individual learning, there is only one main similarity between individual learning and collective learning. Second, although organizational learning and learning organization are used instead of one another, they are not the same in practice. The concept of learning organization about building and designing learning, the ability to create knowledge, and empowerment is the effective aspect of this knowledge all over the organization. In fact, learning organization is the result of a vital combination of internal change mechanisms related to the structure, process, and ability of human, which is gradually integrated with the environment and acts with the aim of keeping the performance at the current level or improving it. On the other hand, organizational learning can be easily defined as the ability or processes of reaching that product or result. Although individual, team, and organizational learning are related to one another, organizational learning is greater than the sum of individual and collective learning. Although organizational learning is accomplished through people and groups, the process of learning is influenced by social, political, and structural variables. This process includes knowledge sharing and the beliefs and assumptions of people and groups (Borujerdi Alavi & Ghamsarian, 2014).

Organizational learning means the process of identification and the correction of mistakes. In this process, stable fundamental policies and assumptions are single loop learning. However, in two loop learning, policies, assumptions, and norms are being questioned. Sherivastava (1983) studies organizational learning from different aspects of individual learning, adaptation to the environment, development of organizational knowledge, and productivity and searches for its typology. Cohen and Levinthal (1990) define absorptive capacity as the ability to perceive, absorb, and apply new information in the organization. The development of organizational knowledge is one of the approaches of organizational learning. Nonaka (1994)

defines the dynamic of knowledge creation as a spiral model. Nonaka's spiral model in the interaction between explicit and tacit knowledge goes through individual, group, organizational, and interorganizational levels. Kim (1998) (as cited in Mashayekhi & Askari Nejad Amiri, 2010) determines the importance of modernization to organizational learning through the concept of adoptive capacity and Nonaka's spiral model.

The relationship between individual learning and organizational learning is one of the basic topics in organizational learning. It is believed that individual learning is the necessity of organizational learning. However, it is not sufficient for accomplishing organizational learning. Kim (1993) made a comprehensive model based on various studies he had done before. In this model, he considered individual and organizational learning and their relationships. Huber (1991) (as cited in Borujerdi Alavi & Ghamsarian, 2014) identified the information mechanisms of organizational learning as its processes and sub-processes through comprehensively reviewing the literature of organizational learning.

The primary aim of organizational learning is to increase the quality and quantity of performance, which allows the company to improve and increase the amount of sales, get more support, and create, keep, and develop new customers. In addition, organizations learning faster, increase strategic abilities and enable the company to reinforce a competitive advantage situation and improve the results. These attitudes, behavior, and strategies of organizational learning are the instructions for long-term performance of the organizations (Garcia-Morales, Jimenez-Barrionuevo, & Gutierrez-Gutierrez, 2012).

Motivation is the foundation of human behavior. Learning is the basis of every person's behavior and it is not limited to particular age. In fact, all people must learn new skills continually to survive. The issue of learning is the issue of behavior technology or behavior engineering, i.e. how behavior can be changed. The ultimate goal of any educational activity is to create desired changes in learners' behavior and experience. In fact, learning means changes. The ability to learn means that learning develops ability. Learning can be defined in various ways. For example, learning is the process of getting new information and thoughts, different habits, various skills and ways of solving a problem. According to the most well-known definition, learning is the process of permanent change in the behavior influenced by experience.

Kimble (1961) (as cited in Bijani, Moradi, & Karami, 2011) defined learning as a relatively permanent change in the potential behavior reinforcing as a result of practice. According to Kimble's definition, learning leads to a relatively permanent change.

In learning opportunities, after environmental factors and heredity, the most important reason in learning performance is related to motivation and motive. In fact, motivation can increase learning, thus it is considered as one of the issues in management, educational psychology, and social psychology. While related factors to heredity cannot be changed, the environmental factors can be improved partially as well. Motivation as an abstract concept has a strong relationship with determination, independent thought, and person's nature and character. In psychology, motivation and excitement are used together, since it is not obvious that what unconscious factors create behavior. Accepting social changes, active participation in learning, taking individual and social responsibilities, participating in rural and national

development plans, applying true management, success in production, and generally success in any act and behavior greatly depend on human's motivation (Bijani, Moradi, & Karami, 2011).

Team dynamics is a research field concerning human's knowledge about groups, their rules, and the mutual relationships of groups with people and other groups. According to some old researchers, group occurs when members gather, while new researchers believe that groups are beyond the members, since the characteristics of groups are different from the characteristics of members (Haghighifard, Moradi, Khalilzadeh, & Nobakht Sahroud Kalae, 2008).

Stable teams consisting of members who have learned how to work together can be powerful components. However, today, due to the speed of changes, competition in the market, and customers' unpredictable needs, there is no sufficient time to make these teams. Moreover, in order to make teams, organizations must gather not only their employees from different fields and sections, but also from outside experts and beneficiaries. After accomplishing the goal of the team, organizations must entirely disband the team. Team-making helps people to get knowledge and skill and create communication network and allows companies to react to new opportunities and accelerate products and services delivery. Team-making is the simultaneous implementation and learning. In complicated and uncertain situations and those situations which are full of unexpected events and need rapid changes, team-making is essential. Not any two projects are the same, thus people must continually get the latest knowledge and information about new topics. In fact, members of a team can be gathered from any section of the organization. When identifying skills and knowledge is not possible beforehand, leader's emphasis must change from making and managing teams to making and developing dynamic teams. On the other hand, globalization, increase in competition, the development of information technology, attention to the quality of goods and services, customer orientation, and governments' inefficiency have posed serious challenges to the office of public sector affairs around the world. Organizational innovation is one of the effective solutions to these challenges. Therefore, the experience of advanced countries from 1980s until now indicates their full attention to innovation. In service organization, team-making can bring great achievements. According to the experience of great and successful companies, dynamic team-making increases the performance of members and improves their mutual activities and increases innovation, creativity, and flexibility. These factors, due to the current complicated environment, will increase the efficiency of organizations (Maharati, Khorakan, & Fakhri Fakhrabadi, 2013).

The survival of organizations and institutions depends on their employees' performance. In any organization, the role of labour force is considered important in all activities, thus humans are the most important component of activities and work, since they adopt decisions, then implement them and predict the future activities based on these decisions. According to empirical evidence, when employees' performance is weak, big problems will arise in organizations and offices. Therefore, sometimes the person can describe their job priorities without changing their job routes according to the opportunities (Ahmadian & Ghorbani, 2014).

The performance of a company is a multi-dimensional concept, which considers the state of the company in comparison to competitors. A comprehensive viewpoint of the performance of

the company considers both financial (profit, growth) and non-financial (efficiency, creativity, customer's satisfaction) dimensions (Lopez-Nicolas & Merono-Cerdan, 2011).

Today, in the competitive atmosphere, businesses attempt to create permanent competitive advantage through promoting organizational performance in order to burgeon and adapt to changes. Most previous studies were on organizational performance based on financial performance, however, financial indices do not correlate with long-term goals of a business and cannot create advantage for organization in competitive conditions. Therefore, in 2015, American Institute of Certified Accountants suggested that performance indices include non-financial information. This information can reflect intellectual capital and social responsiveness and increase organizational knowledge. To recognize the different aspects of measuring organizational performance thoroughly, different methods of performance should be analyzed. Traditional indices of performance such as return on investment and turnover were financial indices (Akhavan & Yazdi Moghaddam, 2014).

The efficient performance in the organization has attracted the attention of managers and experts due to its productivity and efficiency. Now, it is considered as an independent field in organizational studies. The performance of an organization indicates its survival in the environment and the emphasis of management on the role of employees in improving performance shows its importance, which can occur as infrastructural investment in human resources section. Under such circumstances, good performance of the organization is expected, since organizations must focus the main part of their attempts on processes and functions playing a fundamental role in improving their performance (Abbaspour & Baroutian, 2010).

Abdollahi and Rezaee (2014) concluded that sale employees, who need for cognition, self-enhancement motive, and learning orientation, would show more creativity than other sale employees would. Prugsamatz (2010) studied the factors that influence organization learning sustainability in non-profit organizations. In this research, quantitative and qualitative methods including interview and questionnaire have been used. The gathered information was studied through qualitative analysis, Pearson Correlation, and Multiple Regression Analysis. According to the findings, there is a significant relationship between individual's motive for learning, team dynamics, and the cultural activities of the organization and learning sustainability in non-profit organizations.

Rahimi (2015) studied the factors and dimensions of organizational learning and the effect of organizational learning on other organizational variables. The results indicated that organizational learning has effect on most organizational components such as organizational culture, knowledge management, organizational innovation, quality and competitiveness, and empowerment. Organizations can apply these results and win the competition, so that their survival will be guaranteed. In the study of Mohammad Hosseini, Amin Bidokhti, and Jamshidi (2013) organizational learning had a positive, direct, and significant effect on the performance of innovation and could play an effective role in increasing innovative performance.

Honari, Afshari, and Karegar (2012) found that there is a significant relationship between the components of organizational learning. According to the findings of the analysis of organizational learning components, organizational culture received the highest priority from the viewpoint of sport management experts. In fact, using, creating, and establishing

organizational learning and its components especially culture, will increase the efficiency and productivity in Physical Education Organization. Prieto and Revilla (2006) in their study indicated that there is a positive relationship between learning ability and financial and non-financial performance. Following this, the results of the study conducted by Chen et al. (2012) indicated the positive effect of perceived services quality on organizational learning.

The Study

Learning can be measured by means of these five factors including management commitment, common mental models, system thought, teamwork and personal abilities, and knowledge management. Among these factors, the effect of management commitment on learning is higher than other factors. After that, knowledge management has the second rate. The most important obstacles to organizational learning in Iran are managers and employees' false beliefs about the manager's authority, managers' tendency to maintain their authority, the exclusive and non-competitive atmosphere of the organization, narrow thought, and narrow-mindedness. Organizational learning is an effective way for strategic modernization. It can improve the process of identification and implementation of new opportunities. It can also reinforce the ability of a company to identify the opportunities and effectively equip these abilities to implement new opportunities. Researchers introduce organizational learning as the mastery of the organization over its related knowledge. According to them, the process of knowledge mastery (organizational learning) includes three stages of knowledge acquisition (identifying and gathering useful information), knowledge application (practical use of knowledge), and knowledge transfer (distributing knowledge to the organization). There is a significant relationship between individual's motive for learning, team dynamics, and the cultural activities of the organization and learning sustainability in non-profit organizations (Prugsamatz, 2010). The strategies of human resource management enhance organizational learning, organizational innovation, knowledge management ability, and finally organizational performance (Kuo, 2011).

Figure 1 displays the conceptual model of the research.

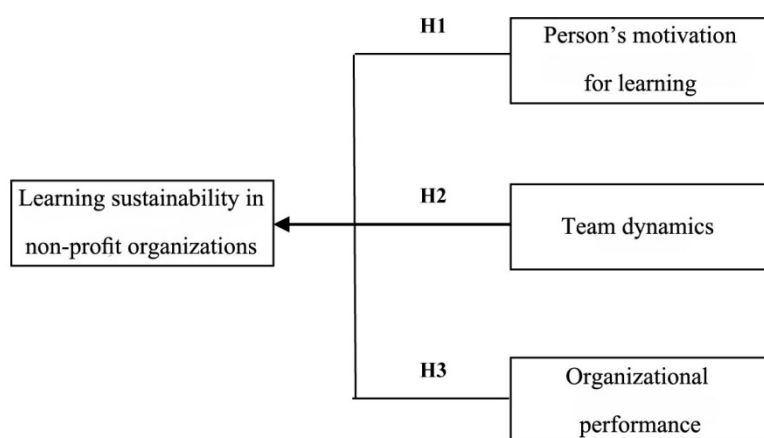


Figure 1. The conceptual model of the research (Prugsamatz, 2010)

Research Hypotheses

The following research hypotheses guided the study:

H₁: Individual's motive for learning has a positive effect on the sustainability of organizational learning.

H₂: Team dynamics has a positive effect on the sustainability of organizational learning.

H₃: Organizational performance has a positive effect on the sustainability of organizational learning.

Method

This research is applicable in terms of objective and causal in terms of nature and methodology. In this study, in order to collect the data in line with the hypotheses, field method was applied and the data was collected through the questionnaire.

In order to investigate the reliability of the questionnaire, 30 questionnaires were distributed. SPSS Software was used to determine the reliability of the questionnaire. Cronbach's alpha for the questionnaire was equal to 0.90 and since this value is higher than 0.7, the reliability of this questionnaire was confirmed.

In order to investigate the validity by means of content validity, first, the initial questionnaire was designed and distributed among related professors and experts. After editing the initial questionnaire, 30 edited questionnaires were distributed among the statistical population and the answers were collected. Finally, the final questionnaire was distributed on a large scale.

The statistical population of the present study includes the employees of Civil Registration Organization of Markazi Province. Since structural equations technique was applied to data analysis, the sample size was determined through the following formula: $5q \leq n \leq 15q$

Since the number of questions in the questionnaire is 15, the minimum sample must be between 75 and 225. After distributing the questionnaires through convenience sampling, 226 questionnaires were completed. The hypotheses were studied by means of structural equations model and LISREL Software.

Results

According to the descriptive findings, 33.2 percent of samples were women and 66.8 percent were men. In terms of age, 4.9% were younger than 30, 52.2% were between 30 to 40 years old, 32.3% were between 40 to 50, and 10.6% were older than 50. Moreover, 4.9 percent of respondents had high school diploma, 8.8 percent had associate degree, 70.8 percent had BA, and 15.5 percent had MA. In terms of work experience, 14.2% had less than 10 years, 47.4% between 10 to 15 years, 29.6% between 15 to 20 years, and 8.8% had more than 20 years of experience.

When a model is theoretically supported, the proportion of this model to the data collected by the researcher should be studied. Therefore, some goodness-of-fit tests were applied to the model and data. Table 1 shows the results of model fit indices.

Table 1.

The Results of Model Fit Indices

Fit index	χ^2/df	RMSEA	RMR	NFI	NNFI	CFI	IFI	GFI	AGFI
The Standard Value	Less than 3	Less than 0.08			More than 0.9			More than 0.8	
The Research Value	1.51	0.04	0.05	0.92	0.96	0.97	0.97	0.93	0.90

According to the results of studied indices, it is concluded that the collected data are appropriate and the research model is of good fitting.

The hypotheses of the present research were tested by means of structural equations model. Structural model is a general and strong multi-variable analysis technique and a general linear model, which simultaneously tests a group of regression equations. In order to analyze the hypotheses of this study and according to the model regarding the effect of independent variables (individual's motive for learning, team dynamics, and organizational performance) on the dependent variable (the sustainability of organizational learning), structural equations were applied.

Figure 2 indicates t-value for the measuring model (t-value for the questions and their related variables) and the structural model (t-value for the routes in the model among variables).

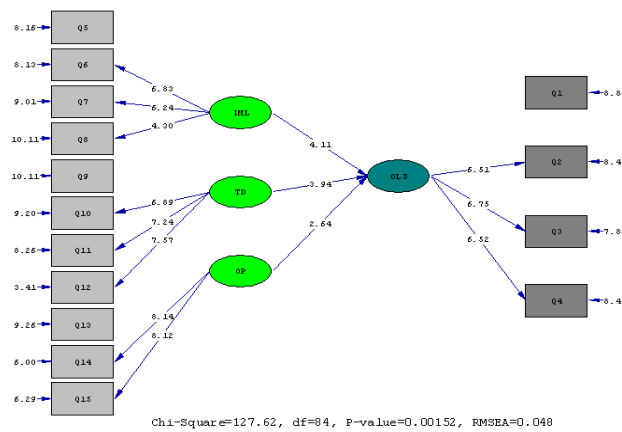


Figure 2. T-value for the structural and measuring model

Figure 3 exhibits the standard coefficients for the measuring model (t-value for the questions and their related variables) and the structural model (t-value for the routes in the model among variables). The route between all independent variables and dependent variables is introduced and named by Gamma route coefficient and the route between dependent variables and dependent variables is introduced and named by Beta route coefficient. Therefore, in this model, three Gamma routes are illustrated.

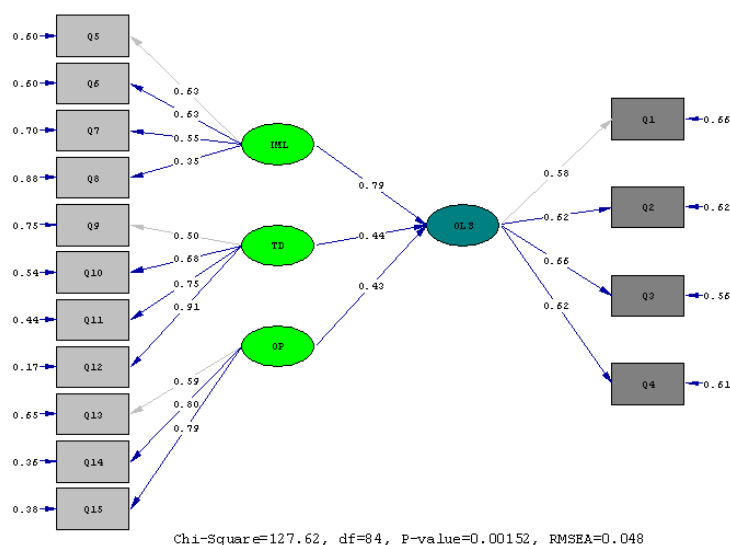


Figure 3. The standard coefficients of structural and measuring model

In Figure 3, the variables are abbreviated: IML for individual’s motive for learning, TD for team dynamics, OP for organizational performance, and OLS for organizational learning sustainability.

Table 2 shows the results of hypotheses test.

Table 2

The Results of Hypotheses Test

The Route of Hypothesis	Type of Route	t-Value	Standard Coefficient	Result
Individual’s Motive for Learning→The Sustainability of Organizational Learning	Gamma	4.11	0.79	Positive and Significant Effect
Team Dynamics →The Sustainability of Organizational Learning	Gamma	3.94	0.44	Positive and Significant Effect
Organizational Performance →The Sustainability of Organizational Learning	Gamma	2.64	0.43	Positive and Significant Effect

Discussion and Conclusion

According to the first hypothesis, the individual’s motive for learning has a positive effect on the sustainability of organizational learning. Regarding the results of this hypothesis, the individual’s motive for learning has a positive and significant effect on the sustainability of organizational learning in Civil Registration Organization of Markazi Province; thus, this hypothesis is confirmed. The results of this hypothesis are in line with the results of researches conducted by Abdollahi and Rezaee (2014) and Prugsamatz (2010). These researchers concluded that due to the individual’s motive or motivation for learning, employees would consider any problem as an opportunity for learning and enhancement of organizational knowledge. Therefore, they attempt to solve it and increase organizational learning.

In the second hypothesis, the effect of team dynamics on the sustainability of organizational learning was measured. According to the results of this hypothesis, team dynamics has a positive and significant effect on the sustainability of organizational learning in Civil

Registration Organization of Markazi Province; therefore, this hypothesis is confirmed. The results of this hypothesis are in line with the results of research conducted by Prugsamatz (2010). As a result of team dynamics, a team can cooperate effectively. In other words, the members show supportive behavior and try to solve the problems, so that they will be skilled gradually. Therefore, team works must be developed within the organization in order to cooperate with one another, try to solve the problems, and improve individual and organizational learning.

In the third hypothesis, the effect of organizational performance on the sustainability of organizational learning was measured. According to the results of this hypothesis, organizational performance has a positive and significant effect on the sustainability of organizational learning in Civil Registration Organization of Markazi Province; hence, this hypothesis is confirmed. The results of this hypothesis are in line with the results of researches conducted by Prugsamatz (2010) and Prieto and Revilla (2006). Today's organizations attempt to beat their competitors. They are obligated to react to continual changes and increase the available knowledge. In fact, learning is the main priority in the world of business. Changes in the market require more innovation and innovation requires establishing organizational learning. Therefore, it is mentioned that if Civil Registration Organization of Markazi Province tends to increase organizational learning, it should attempt to define the organizational goals, which are the reflection of beneficiaries' profits; so that the members will know what performance they must search for. As a result of that, they can overcome any obstacles, increase their knowledge and skill, and distribute them to increase organizational learning.

Regarding the first hypothesis, it is recommended that the managers of organization admire and reward their employees for their learning process, so that they will be motivated to learn more. Furthermore, employees' motive for learning should be increased through allowing them to express their opinions; to this end, they can increase their knowledge and be prepared to face the problems.

Regarding the second hypothesis, it is recommended to create team works and group works, so that the correlation and communication between the members will be increased and they can solve the problems easily and improve the learning. Moreover, through creating team works, old employees can be replaced with new employees; following this, newly arrived employees can use the skills and knowledge of older employees.

Regarding the third hypothesis, it is recommended that the missions and goals of the organizations should be defined thoroughly, so that the employees will know what they are searching for. For example, customer's satisfaction is one of the goals of the organization, thus, employees attempt to increase their skills and knowledge to properly offer services to customers and gain their attraction. It is also recommended that through seriously studying the goals of the organization, all the employees can be oriented towards increasing performance; to this end, the goals and process of learning and training will be accomplished. As a result of that, the problems will be removed, employees' skills and knowledge will increase, and finally organizational learning can be achieved.

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