Learning School and Readiness for Change

Mohammad Niroo*, Mahmoud Haghani**, Gholamreza Haji HosseinNejhad***

Abstract

This research was conducted to survey the relationship between learning school and readiness for change in one of the non-profit educational complexes in Tehran. Learning school, that is derived from learning organization concept, consists of two aspects based on Bowen’s et al. definition, and readiness for change is defined in three aspects using the concept by Dunham et al. Measuring tools in this research include two of Bowen’s et al. SSP-LO (School Success Profile-Learning Organization) questionnaires, and Dunham’s readiness for change questionnaire whose reliability based on Cronbach's Alpha index was calculated to be 0.94 and 0.87, respectively. To test the research hypotheses, parametric individual T-test and pearson’s correlation coefficient were used in addition to descriptive statistics. The research results showed that 1) there is a meaningful relationship between learning school and readiness for change; 2) a significant relationship was found between actions of learning school and readiness for change; and 3) no meaningful relationship was determined between feelings of learning school and readiness for change.

Keywords: Aspects of learning school; Readiness for change; Actions; Feelings.

* PhD candidate, Kharazmi University, Tehran, Iran (Corresponding author).
E-mail address: mniroo.sobhan@gmail.com
** Assistant professor, Power & Water University of Technology (PWUT), Tehran, Iran.
***Associate Professor, Kharazmi University, Tehran, Iran.
1. Introduction

Today, environmental severe changes have become inseparable part of life of organizations. Survival and development of organizations involve the ability to react quickly and on time, and to change suitably against the current changing world. In such conditions, change phenomenon, as a main and essential challenge, which affects people, groups and organizations, has always been posed and considered by different researches. Educational organizations face the most difficulty according to social and conservative nature, as well as, formal functions in this encounter. One of the undeniable necessities to succeed in making these changes is readiness for an organization.

Schools have a strong need to become harmonized with social, cultural upheavals, and quick environmental changes. These changes must be taken into account in relation to the relationship between the learning school and the readiness for change. In this study, it has been supposed that learning school is ready to change. Why? because in the conceived change theory, it shows that the key factor to change is learning. As a result, learning acts as a key to reduce resistance against change [1].

Learning school is one which facilitates learning process for all members including managerial, educational, administrative and supportive staff as well as students and their parents. It evolves and changes itself continuously. A learning school usually learns to change and makes its functions reasonable all the time. The main aim of a learning school is learning. That is, presenting an education through which people’s behaviors and thoughts (attitude and deed) get changed [2].

2. Literature Review

Peter Singe, developer of learning organization, defines school as an organization in which people continuously increase their abilities to gain expected results [3].

Learning school is one in which people continuously, meaningfully and systematically improve their capacities that are basically intended to be realized. A learning school is skillfully established in the field of creativeness, achieving the altered knowledge, and changing behaviors to reflect new knowledge and insights. According to Ron Brandt (2003), we need to examine the following features as general elements to determine whether a certain school is in fact a learning organization:

1. A learning school has a motivator structure;
2. A learning school has difficult, but actualizing common goals;
3. A learning school has members who are able to recognize the developing stages exactly;
4. In schools, people are different, so they learn in different ways;
5. Learning schools have a scientific, formal foundation and use sciences to produce new and creative ideas, and to strengthen their knowledge base;
6. Learning schools are in constant exchange of information with proper exterior sources;
7. Learning schools regularly strengthen their basic processes [4].

The essential characteristics of a learning school are as follows:

- It understands its situation as a whole in the body of wholeness or further wholeness;
- It chooses promoting the level educational quality and its effectiveness as its goal;
- It focuses on organizational learning treatment and improving human resources as its guideline;
- Group learning through interaction and feedback is encouraged and promoted.

The Modes of Learning Schools. Gary Bowen, Roderick Rose & William Ware [5], three professors who are familiar with education and its issues, designed SSP-LO (School Success Profile-Learning Organization) which is a special instrument to measure schools and modes and components of a Learning organization, and included the differences of school organization from industrial organizations, and dealt with the validity and reliability of the instruments.

Bowen’s et al. believe a learning school is one in which there are two aspects of actions and feelings, each of which possesses six components, and all staff members’ opinions are considered.

Actions Aspect. The actions are taken based on behaviors, and mutually functional patterns of members in a learning school, which provide opportunities to educate, to explain divided assigned responsibilities, and collective attempts to manage the organizational objectives. The components of this aspect are the following:
1) Team orientation 2) Innovation 3) Cooperation 4) Information circulation 5) Error sustainability 6) Result-based

Feelings Aspect. The feelings of a learning school are defined collective modes including positive respect, positive sensations, and attitude among members of the organization which appear through their acts and interpersonal relationships. The components of this aspect are:
1) Common goal 2) Respect 3) Solidarity 4) Confidence 5) Mutual protection 6) Optimism

Readiness for Change. Drew & Smith (1995) interpret tendency and ability in the direction of change as recognizing and awareness of potential change, tendency of the organization to consider this evolution, and ability to take advantage from and resist against change. Both authors know the role of patterning, practical learning, organizational environment, committing to protect contiguous learning and creativity. Consequently, they propose a learning approach to recognize needs, reorganizing learning and compiling measures to increase the capacities of organization against evolution. Dunham states the complexity of attitudes is more understandable, distinguishing the fact that an attitude has three different, distinct parts of cognition, sensing, and behaving. Each of these parts can cause one to support or not to support the changes in the organizational environment [6].

Kurt Levin developed the following three-stage model for programmed change that shows how to start, manage and stabilize the change process. From Levin’s viewpoint, succeeding in encountering the change phenomena requires organizations to leave out their current status, called refreezing. Then, it would get changed and take a new status, and once again it freezes. Levin defined this process refreezing. When it gets changed, a normal, stable status will form [7].
The Approach of Learning-based Change. Many active researchers in the realm of organizational change have hypothesized in their studies that organizations need to create an environment in which required context for organizational change can be formed [8]. According to Senge, most change attempts followed an increasing pattern of growth at first [3].

3. Problem Description
Understanding the relationship between learning school and readiness for change is important both theoretically and operationally. On the other hand, schools are the most important centers for training managers, experts and specialists of the future. And students internalize practical experiences of social life of school rather than applying learned theories in schools. They learn more from their teachers and school staff’s behaviors than their teachings and speeches.

Other authors also have paid attention to the necessity of creating readiness for change, and cited that readiness for change is a mandate [9].

This study was done along with previously conducted researches examining the relationship between the structure of Learning School and readiness for change. The research questions are as follows:
1. How much has the study educational complex acquired from learning school aspects and readiness for change?
2. Is there any meaningful relationship between learning school and readiness for change?
3. Is there any significant relationship between actions of learning school and readiness for change?
4. Is there any meaningful relationship between feelings of learning school and readiness for change?

4. Methodology
Since this research deals with developing applied knowledge in the area of learning school and readiness for change, it is an applied one approaching its aim. On the other hand, it is descriptive in nature and correlative in procedure, since it involves surveying the relationship between learning school and readiness for change.

The study population is one of the non-profit educational boys’ complexes in educational district 3 of Tehran with 73 staff members. This educational complex consists of three units at the level of secondary and high schools. Since there is no need to have a huge sample for correlative studies, 59 members consisting 82% of total staff were sufficiently involved. Number of samples in this research was determined according to the sample size determination table [10]. The samples were randomly selected using relatively stratified random-sampling method in academic year 2011-12.

Research Measurement tools. To measure research variables, first SSP-LO (School Success Profile-Learning Organization) questionnaire was used to determine the size of utilization of the study schools from the aspects of learning schools. This questionnaire was designed by Bowen’s et al. [5].

According to the compilers’ report, the validity of this questionnaire was calculated to be 0.96 and 0.97 for actions and feelings aspects, respectively, using
alpha- Cronbach index. In addition, other researchers previously applied it in their studies and approved its validity [4].

In the present research, the coefficient of Cronbach's Alpha indicates a high validity. The above questionnaire contains 36 questions, each of which was answered by respondents using five-point Likert scale from very low to very high. Accordingly, a score from 1 to 5 is allocated. In this questionnaire both aspects; actions and feelings, in the forms of six components, each with three questions, are measured.

The level of readiness for change by the staff members of these schools was measured and surveyed using a 18-question questionnaire designed by Dunham's that was used by other authors before [11].

Readiness for change can be provided by creating a desired attitude. The coefficient of Cronbach's Alpha for readiness for change was reported by Dunham's, which was approved by other researcher's studies, in a range from 0.77 to 0.98 [11]. At the same time, this statistic was determined 0.87, and for its cognitive, sensitive, and behavioral aspects, it was determined as 0.84, 0.72, and 0.81, respectively; which indicates the validity of this tool in this research.

5. Results and Discussion

The first research question examines the size of utilization of the aspects of learning school by the educational complex, which is defined based on actions and feelings, each with its own six components planned by Bowen’s et al. The limits of different groups for the mean of each of the aspects based on five-point Likert scale varying from very low (1) to very high (5) are shown in Table I. The mean of both aspects of learning school is 3.63 in the high level. Here, “team orientation” component with mean of 3.59 acquired the maximum size, and “cooperation” component with the mean of 3.17 acquired the minimum size in “action” aspect. In “feelings” aspect, “common goal” component with the mean of 3.84 acquired the maximum size, and “solidarity” component with the mean of 3.10 acquired the least size. The scores of other components of learning school in the educational complex are shown in Diagram 1 and Tables 2.

To complete the first question, surveying the size of utilization of readiness for change by the complex planned by Dunham's et al. was dealt with, which includes cognitive, sensitive and behavioral aspects. Mean of the questions of each of these aspects which varies from “absolutely disagreed” (1) to “absolutely agreed” (5) is adjustable to table I. In the present research, mean of each of aspects (cognitive, sensitive and behavioral) is 2.30, 3.65, and 3.90, respectively. Therefore, it can be admitted that the level of readiness for change is assessed as the medium having a mean of 3.28.
Mean of all components including actions and feelings is above the median, i.e., 3. In order to examine whether the indicated values in all aspects and components have a meaningful distance or not, an individual t-test was used. This possibility for this is realized because numbers of samples are more than 30. Moreover, scores are normally distributed. In Table II, mean of scores of the aspects of learning school plus their components, as well as, the aspects of readiness for change from the viewpoint of staff of the educational complex, and finally the results of individual t-test for each are seen.

As it is seen in Table 1, there is a meaningful level less than 0.05 in all aspects and components, except for the cooperation in action aspect, and solidarity in feelings aspect. Thus, it indicates a significant difference of means with a median value of 3. At the same time, it can be assumed that just for this one item, the level of evaluation of aspects and components of both research variables are significantly less than medium at a low level regarding the mean of cognitive aspect of readiness for change, and significance level of T-test.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>aspects &amp; components</th>
<th>mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>t-test</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>significance level</th>
<th>confidence interval</th>
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<tbody>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>lower level</td>
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<tr>
<td>team orientation</td>
<td>3.38</td>
<td>0.85</td>
<td>5.183</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>0.000</td>
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<td>innovation</td>
<td>3.35</td>
<td>0.79</td>
<td>3.262</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>0.002</td>
<td>0.1331</td>
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<tr>
<td>cooperation</td>
<td>3.18</td>
<td>0.91</td>
<td>1.466</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>0.148</td>
<td>-0.0641</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>information circulation</td>
<td>3.56</td>
<td>0.84</td>
<td>5.049</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.3364</td>
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<td>error sustainability</td>
<td>3.29</td>
<td>0.86</td>
<td>2.533</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>0.014</td>
<td>0.0862</td>
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<td>result-based</td>
<td>3.41</td>
<td>0.79</td>
<td>3.995</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.1983</td>
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<td>actions aspect</td>
<td>3.39</td>
<td>0.65</td>
<td>4.54</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.2189</td>
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<td>common goal</td>
<td>3.84</td>
<td>0.91</td>
<td>6.992</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.5988</td>
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<td>respect</td>
<td>3.73</td>
<td>0.84</td>
<td>6.625</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.5113</td>
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<td>solidarity</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>0.82</td>
<td>0.901</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>0.371</td>
<td>-0.1195</td>
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<td>confidence</td>
<td>3.78</td>
<td>1.01</td>
<td>5.859</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.5145</td>
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<td>mutual protection</td>
<td>3.61</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td>5.229</td>
<td>58</td>
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<td>0.3777</td>
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<td>optimum</td>
<td>3.74</td>
<td>0.79</td>
<td>6.249</td>
<td>58</td>
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<td>0.5019</td>
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<td>feelings aspect</td>
<td>3.63</td>
<td>0.76</td>
<td>6.278</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.4315</td>
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<td>all aspects of learning school</td>
<td>3.51</td>
<td>0.67</td>
<td>5.78</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.335</td>
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<td>cognitive aspect</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>0.54</td>
<td>5.941</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>-0.8413</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sensitive aspect</td>
<td>3.65</td>
<td>0.57</td>
<td>8.606</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.4958</td>
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<tr>
<td>behavioral aspect</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>0.63</td>
<td>10.863</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.7328</td>
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<tr>
<td>all aspects of readiness for change</td>
<td>3.28</td>
<td>0.54</td>
<td>6.287</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.1918</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
The next questions of the research deal with surveying the relationship between learning school and its aspects with readiness for change. In other words, it finds a correlation between the aspects of learning school and readiness for change among the staff members. For this purpose, Pearson coefficient correlation was used. Table 2 shows mutual correlation between the aspects of learning school and readiness for change.

**Table 2. Two-variable mutual correlation coefficients between the aspects of learning school and readiness for change**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspects of learning School</th>
<th>correlation coefficients</th>
<th>significance level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Action aspect</td>
<td>0.281*</td>
<td>0.033</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feelings aspect</td>
<td>0.219</td>
<td>0.099</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total aspects</td>
<td>0.261*</td>
<td>0.048</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* correlation coefficients is meaningful at the level of error, 0.05

Considering Table 2, it can be seen that the “actions” aspect of learning school and readiness for changes have a positive meaningful relationship. But, this relationship was not observed between the “feelings” aspect and readiness for change. On the other hand, there has been a significant relationship between all aspects of learning school and readiness for change with a level of error, 0.05.

6. Conclusion and Future Works

The main aim of this study was to survey the relationship between aspects of learning school and readiness for change by the staff of educational complex. The findings of this research show that there is a positive and significant relationship between these two variables. This relationship is mainly attributable to “action aspect” of learning school. In spite of a higher mean in feelings aspect, it was not meaningful. This finding is in agreement with the Madsen’s (2003) results in relation to a continuous need to test the predictors of readiness for change [9].

Managers, at all organizational levels and positions, including schools, basically play their important roles in this field. In fact, their roles and behaviors are very influentially significant in creating a suitable setting for learning and cultural change. In order to make a school a learning organization, a manager must be apparently loyal to creating changes and innovations, and continuously gathering information, and he must be committed to do so. Finally, it is proposed that long-term studies and surveys are to be conducted qualitatively to further understand the relationships, and achieving more detailed data about this issue.
References


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