

Adoption of Knowledge in Organizations - An Examination of the Theories of Self- Efficacy and Expectancy in the Context of Knowledge Assimilation in Learning Organization / Talia Feld-Marcus

Abstract

This research paper is based on the understanding that success and survival of modern learning organizations is dependent, to a large degree, on their ability to manage their organizational knowledge in an effective and correct manner. The management of organizational knowledge refers to the different stages in which knowledge flows through an organization from the time of receipt of the knowledge, and through the time it is shared, assimilated into the organization and transformed into a portion of the organization's intellectual capital. Each stage presents challenges that the organization will encounter.

This paper focuses on the stage of learning and assimilation of the organizational knowledge among the employees – a stage that is necessary for creating the organization's intellectual capital and collective organizational knowledge. Despite the trend over the last few years to invest monetary and organizational resources in technologies dealing with knowledge management, this study specifically addresses the human element of assimilating knowledge. Accordingly, the assumptions of this study dealt with the expected relationship between different personality variables, which have been identified in various previous studies as having a potential impact on the successful assimilation of knowledge.

In this research, eight variables were examined, which are comprised of five independent variables and three dependent variables. The first independent

variable – employees' level of commitment to the organization – is not connected directly to the conveyed knowledge.

The second independent variable – the employees' perception of the organizational culture with respect to the knowledge being assimilated – is connected both to the organization and the knowledge in question. The remaining three independent variables – the employees' perception of the benefit embodied in the information (expectancy), the employees' self efficacy, and the employees' motivation to assimilate the information in question – all relate to the specific field of knowledge which was the focus of the knowledge in the organization. The three dependent variables were tested – self-evaluation of the employees' knowledge of the subject, objective testing of the employees' knowledge, and self reports of the subject regarding his implementation of the knowledge – relate to the learning and assimilation of the knowledge itself.

At the outset of our research, we had assumed that the independent variables would have an effect on the extent of the knowledge assimilation.

Another assumption was that motivation will act as a mediator between the other four independent variables and knowledge assimilation.

The research was conducted in the form of a case study, which focused on one organization with many branches throughout Israel, and it related to one knowledge topic only, i.e. security and safety procedures, which the subjects were required to assimilate. The study involved 319 subjects, most of whom were young people who worked in the organization as camp instructors or directors. The subjects were asked to fill out a questionnaire relating to each of the variables dealt with.

The results of the study support, almost fully, those assumptions relating to the connection between the five independent variable and the assimilation of knowledge. It was found that the most significant variables relating to the assimilation of knowledge, as demonstrated by the "Person Test" for testing the correlation between variables, and from regression tests designed to explain the

variance between the dependent variables, were those concerning the conveyed knowledge directly (i.e., self efficacy and the perception of the benefit which the knowledge confers), as well as the hybrid variable, which deals with the perception of the organizational culture with regard to the information. The external variable – the level of commitment to the organization – had the smallest contribution, relative to the other independent variables. As the regression tests show, the variables explained a considerable portion of the variance (27%-37%) regarding each of the three dependent variables.

Our assumption regarding the significant role of motivation as a mediator between these variables and the assimilation of knowledge was supported only partially. Although we can see that motivation is connected to both the dependent and independent variables, it does not appear to be the direct mediator between all of the independent variables and the assimilation. An analysis of the proposed path model indicates that motivation serves as a mediator between two of the variables (organizational culture and organizational commitment) and two other variables that were examined (self efficacy, perception of benefit and assimilation), but does not act as a direct mediator between any of the variables and the assimilation of knowledge. In fact, self efficacy and the perception of benefit were found to act as mediators between the rest of the variables and knowledge assimilation. Therefore, it appears that the position and role of motivation in the organizational knowledge assimilation process are more complex than we originally had expected.

The full results of the study, including a model that displays the correspondence path of the variables, are shown in this paper.

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