

## Training for Innovative Behavior

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**Abstract:** The purpose of this research is to review literature and propose ways learning and development programs can influence employee innovative behavior in an organization. The research clearly demonstrates support for transformative and authentic leadership supporting employee innovative behavior. Not all employees will be motivated towards innovative behavior, but leadership and culture can help distinguish the employees who will be motivated. Organizational culture plays a large role in the ability for an organization to embrace an innovative program with the focus to innovate. Learning and development can use the skills they have for mitigating change as a tool to create employee innovative behavior is a novel idea and worthy of further investigation.

**Key words:** organizational culture, innovative behavior, training

**JEL codes:** L21, O33

### 1. Introduction

Redefining human resources and specifically learning and development in organizations into an innovative dynamic resource is a trend. Gone are the days of the paper pushing HR department that sole responsibility was for pay, benefits and contract negotiations. Today the HR department includes management that has the ear of top executives and contributes to budget discussions, strategy discussions as well as directing the culture of an organization. Falling under human resources are several developing areas that are process driven, contract driven, performance driven and even marketing driven. The days of the human resource office being a small office that only pushes pay stubs are long gone. The role of learning and development under the umbrella of Human Resource Management has moved from a new hire on boarding to a career path implementation tool and a tool for motivation, promotion, and reward. The question then is, what else can we do with the learning and development department that could contribute in other ways to the organization?

### 2. Literature Review

Historically organizations see the Human Resource Department as a necessary operational component of an organization with no contribution to innovation or competitive advantage. In fact, the department usually had minimal budget and was not considered a profit driver. Learning and development initiatives were measured by activity that was black and white. The focus has moved from activity alone to results after the activity (Phillips & Phillips, 2016). Single-session lecture-based training on its own has demonstrated to be ineffective (Nemec, 2018). Individual computer-based training has minimal advantage. Bringing employees together increases the overall

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benefit. Some organizations are using a decision-science approach to validating learning and development programs that reflects an organization's strategic goals and is based on hard data (Boudrea & Ramstad, 2005). The role of the human resource department has changed. The key is the involvement of human resource leadership in operational unit leadership to uncover areas that learning and development can be incorporated into based on an organization's strategy. Learning and development can then incorporate true learning objectives that can be evaluated for successful contribution to the unit's success (Phillips & Phillips, 2016).

An organization can benefit from human resources influence on performance by observing and analyzing the impact of learning on organizational performance (Hatch & Dyer, 2004). Much of the research done on human resources has focused on performance and less on sustained competitive advantage or innovation; further, much of it is too broad to demonstrate clear relevance (Guest, 2011). Even less research has included innovation or organizational innovative behavior. Most organizations are implementing a human resource strategy that includes three domains of business: business knowledge, human resource management functional business and management of change (Ulrich et al., 1995) The shift from being a strictly functional department to a dynamic department is adding value. Mitigating change is what has brought human resource management to the executive board room.

Human resources departments manage the organizational change. Mentioning the management of change helps tie in the Teese, Piscano, and Shuen (1997) dynamic capabilities to the value that human resources can bring to an organization. If one is to manage human capital through change, then understanding dynamic capabilities or the consistency of change is imperative. In addition, change management is a positive organizational process. Human resource leaders participating in leadership efforts can focus on the behavior development to meet an organization's strategic plan (Tharenou, Saks, & Moore, 2007). Many organizations recognize that attention to strategy for employees helps drive both their engagement and their innovative behavior (Slatten and Mehmetoglu, 2011) Training completed on a micro-level changes behavior that improve macro-level performance (Kozlowski et al, 2000). Learning and development is a human resource tool used to introduce change in individual employees' routines that are necessary for job performance and organizational development. Each organizational strategy is supported through the information exchange and lessons taught by the learning and development department.

### **3. Human Capital**

If you ask organizational leaders to identify the most important asset is to their organization, they will reply without question it is the employees. This is not because they have proof of this fact, but more because this is what they are conditioned to say; in other words, human capital is the most important asset contributing to competitive advantage. Wright, McMahan, and McWilliams (1994) differentiate human capital as all employees in an organization and that human resource management involves activities related to managing and developing human capital to meet an organizations mission, vision and business goals. Human resource management manages the competitive value. Organizations that are effective at hiring, developing and integrating new employees and additionally developing employees to enhance performance are ultimately successful (Hatch & Dyer, 2004). The skills, expertise, and motivation of human capital provide competitive advantage for an organization (Hewitt-Dundas, 2006).

Ployhart, Weekly, and Ramsey (2009) discuss service units in place of capabilities, finding that human capital is an aggregation of knowledge, skills and abilities utilized by the unit to affect superior service. In addition, observing the service unit demonstrates the ebb and flow of service. This ebb and flow in a successful unit is difficult

to imitate. The service level decreases over time, thus making it imperative to continuously develop and motivate individuals. The Job Demands-Resources Model (JD-R) by Bakker and Demerouti (2007, 2008, 2014) is the most widely cited theory on work engagement. The authors state that job resources require autonomy, manager and employee feedback, and supervisor support. To be successful, employee personal resources require self-efficiency, optimism, and resilience. These employee personal resources directly influence work engagement. Engagement can be source of innovation. Further, engagement facilitation involves coaching and learning. Schaufeli and Salanova (2008) suggest that allowing employees to learn and develop throughout their careers is key to keeping employees engaged. Systemic focus on training needs, training delivery, training transfer and training effectiveness should be a major focus of performance management and development (Albrecht et al, 2015). Three interventions needed to create employee work engagement are: correct mix of demanding job characteristics and resources, provide training for additional resources, and encourage employees to innovate.

Making human capital a source of innovation means hiring the right people, managing them effectively, organizing a system of contribution/innovation and retaining the resource (Lawler, 2009). This is much more difficult than it sounds. Creating an operational system that encourages innovation with managerial support requires specific behaviors and organizational design (Lawler, 2009). Lawler (2009) coined the term “human capital centric” (HC-centric). A key component of an HC-centric organization is human resources being involved in leadership meetings, thus reporting the state of the resource as a focus item on every agenda and leadership development opportunities.

Proposition 1: Transformative and Authentic leaders are by definition supportive of employees and will encourage Employee Innovative Behavior.

A human capital centric organization must possess human capital that has the correct capabilities to differentiate the organization from competing organizations (Lawler, 2009). These employees should be encouraged to work together and innovate to maintain an organization’s competitive edge (Lawler, 2009). In the service industries, capabilities are often referred to as “new service development” (NSD) and organizational learning is referred to as “operational improvement competence” (OIC) (Yang, Lee, & Cheng, 2016). Employee creativity/innovative behavior and OIC together are key components of NSD and competitive advantage (Yang, Lee, & Cheng, 2016). Management must ensure that employees are led, trained and developed in a way that creates valuable capabilities and competencies (Lawler, 2009). Measuring this ensures that focus remains on human resources (Lawler, 2009). Over the past century, organizations have moved toward understanding the employee as a valuable resource that should be developed, and the talent that each individual brings should be developed. Organizations recognize that training the whole person, including areas that are not directly related to job performance, improves the commitment to the organization and improves results (Leigh, 2009).

Proposition 2: Employees that exhibit Employee Innovative Behavior are motivated employees

Proposition 3: Organizations create a culture of positive change when they embrace Employee Innovation

#### **4. Learning and Development**

Learning and development have evolved greatly over the past century. Various terms are used to describe the professional training, learning, and employee development. “Human performance improvement” or “technology” is a term coined by Gilbert (1992), which is often used to describe the human resource personnel involved specifically in employee development (Gilbert, 1992). “Performance consultant” as a descriptive term was coined

by Robinson and Robinson (1995). Performance improvement is the results-based approach to help organizations reach their performance goals through individual employee work (Willmore, 2008). It is important to recognize key terms used when discussing workplace learning. Systems theory, for example, is a thorough study of an organization and identifying relationships and patterns to understand the function. OD or organizational development studies the organization and the process of change in the organization. There is a distinct difference between training, which is instruction of information, and learning, which is adaptation of the information for behavior change. The terms are often used interchangeably, but they are actually two parts of the development process (Bailey, 2008).

Pemberton, Stonehouse and Yarrow (2001) discuss learning culture as well. A learning culture is when an organization fosters individual and organizational learning to advance a shared vision. In order to achieve a learning culture, the organization must rely on internal culture, structure and communication. An organizations culture, structure, and infrastructure are elements that nurture learning (Pemberton & Stonehouse, 2000).

Specific learning models are used based on the type of training needed, types of learners affected, and the budgetary needs. Technological advances have made it possible to provide training and development on different formats to many people. The following details basic types of learning, i.e., the behaviorist view focuses on observable behavior, learning happens when the relationship between stimulus and response are strengthened, and trainers use learning objectives, objective-based testing, and information chunking (Sink, 2008)

Cognitivism is otherwise known as knowledge acquisition theory. Cognitivism recognizes that learning happens when information is added to long-term memory (Sink, 2008). Gagne's nine events of instruction is an expansion on this theory, which break down the learner's cognitive learning process. The nine events are as follows: gain attention; set objectives with learners; review previous learning to engage cognitive learning; present new data; re-enforce new data; practice using new data; assess learning and give feedback; final assessment of learning with feedback; re-enforce learning in practice (Kruse, 2010).

Constructivist view theory states that learning builds on previous learning and stress active learning (Sink, 2008). Using coaching as a model should be relationship based. Learning happens as the relationship develops. Skills should include listening, feedback, data analysis, and negation (Finnerty, 1996). Finnerty described three types of coaching as behavior, ontological, and appreciative. Behavior coaching clearly defines the desired performance along with outcomes. Ontological recognizes learners' perceptions and the use of perceptions to create success. Appreciative coaching uses open-ended questioning to help the learner move him or herself toward outcomes (Finnerty, 1996). The move away from large lecture-long learning activities toward smaller two- or single-day activities comes from the learner's ability to retain only smaller amounts of information at a time (Little, 2014).

Research suggests that training can be used to increase employee work engagement (Luthans et al., 2010). Learning and development play dynamic roles in an organization. Trainers evaluate the programs regularly and adapt them based on the outcomes necessary and the employees' learning. As learning and development is engaging change, it too is constantly changing and evolving to meet the needs of the organization and the individual employee. Evaluation tools are used to review the program during training and after training. Effective training is defined as training that supports the employee by giving knowledge that is relevant to the job the employee is tasked to complete and the confidence necessary to utilize the information (Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick, 2016). This description is lacking for our purposes in this discussion as the goal for learning and development discussion of this research is the expansion to innovative behavior which is most often in addition to an employee's scope of work. Simply being effective in development is not enough. The organizations want proof-points that show measurable results on job performance and overall organizational benefit. Training effectiveness is the measured accountability or end results

of training on the specific job performance. The individual benefit is then rolled up to the value proposition to the organization as a whole. Demonstrating value is understanding how the improved individual performer is part of the organizational improved performance. (Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick, 2016). A tool or form of measure is needed to move beyond the measure of increased performance or adaptive skills in order to measure the increase in innovative behavior generated by learning and development.

The most widely reference model for learning and development came from Kirkpatrick and later versions include an ROI component from Phillips (Phillips, 1997) Though this is the mostly cited version of a learning and development program, there have been efforts to adapt these to meet the current or evolving needs of organizations. There have been several other renditions, but the basic format of learning and development Kirkpatrick/Phillips model are still the most recognized. It is important to note that successful learning and development programs are very individualized to meet the organizational needs. There is little benefit to shopping for learning in a broad sense because the most impactful development comes from internal development and recognition of needs based on the specific organizational strategy.

## 5. Innovation

The most common definition of Organizational innovation is the adaptation of ideas or behaviors that are new to an organization (Damanpour, 1988, 1991; Daft & Becker, 1978; Hage & Aiken, 1970; Zaltmato & O'Connor, 1992; Hage, 1999). Gallouj (1997) discussed service innovation as an ad hoc behavior providing novel solutions and services based on learned expertise. Innovation is critical for the survival of an organization (Cefis & Maesili, 2006). Traditional means of innovation are research and development departments that search out ideas by reviewing customer feedback, competitive activities, and internal suggestions. Innovation, evaluation, and exploitation of internal and external knowledge is critical for an organizations competitive advantage (Cohen & Levinthal, 1990). Schumpeter (1934) professed that innovation is engaging in new combinations of methods of production, new markets, sourcing new products, or establishing new industry. Innovation is an evolving, learning, and interactive process in organizations or between individuals (Schneider et al., 2010). A theme to several studies about the relationship between jobs and innovation is that the higher the complexity of the job the more innovative behavior is observed (Damanpour, 1991; Zammuto & O'Connor, 1992; Hage, 1999). The bottom line is that an innovative organization must also be a learning organization (Nooteboom, 1999). Since learning and development departments are the resource used to implement change why not investigate how these same people can help generate ideas that lead to change?

Proposition 4: Learning and Development can be used as a tool to create a culture of innovation and Employee Innovative Behavior

## 6. Leadership

Having more innovative ideas increases the innovative capacity of an organization and improve the competitive advantage and performance (Azar & Ciabuschi, 2017). Many leaders focus attention on idea scouting innovation and ignore the way the ideas mesh with the organizations mission and vision or the existing capabilities (Sorensen et al., 2013) This is a recipe for failure. Innovation is not simply the hunt for ideas. Innovation, in order to bring meaning to an organization, must have a path towards implementation. Leaders should recognize that there is a connection between idea generation and implementation for open innovation (Sorensen et al., 2013). Leadership

needs to understand the generation of ideas within the employees. In order to have a true employee-based innovative organization that is accepted by corporate entrepreneurs, you have to have supportive management with strategy that allows the organization to be self-governing (Sorensen et al., 2013) It is a natural path to incorporate learning and development as the mitigators of change in an organization to help in both innovative idea generation and path towards successful implementation.

Leadership influences the culture of an organization and motivation of employees. The style of leadership influences the way followers engage in work activities. Transformative leadership style developed by Burns (1978) influence the followers by pushing them as a coach would to achieve goals. Authentic Leadership style is a concept from Luthans and Avolio (2003) describes as a leader who understands the self and genuinely shares their morals and values gaining the trust of followers. The two styles, as they are called, are not equal but do share some qualities. Authentic leadership develops a relationship based on morals and values which in turn increases an individual's commitment to the culture of an organization (Walumbwa, 2008). Authentic leadership is a predictor of innovative behavior and creativity and encourage followers to openly express themselves (Rego et al., 2012). The focus of the transformative leader is on goal achievement which stimulates the individual followers' innovative abilities (Bass, 1985; Gumusluoglu & Ilsev, 2009; Wang et al., 2014). Authentic leaders build special bonds with followers based on the morals and values they share as their true selves. This relationship between follower and leader allows the follower to feel safe and trusted giving them the freedom to exhibit innovative behavior (Walumbwa et al., 2008). Authentic leaders can influence followers with more personal impact because the follower is taking action based on their morals and values not just the commitment to the organization (Schuckert et al., 2017). Wendelken et al. (2014) found that supervisor's encouragement to participate in learning activities that motivate towards innovative behavior is essential. It is important to recognize the stress of voluntary participation has on an employee completing their existing responsibilities (Wendelken et al., 2014). True transformative, authentic or a combination of styles could recognize the need for participation in additional engagements in the organization and allow some flexibility with workloads. Amabile et al. (2004) discussed the counter to leadership support for innovation such as over control and activities related to consistent mistrust of performance. This type of behavior had a negative effect on motivation and culture (Amabile et al., 2004) More positive activities such as frequent consultations, giving sufficient freedom with respect to processes as well as recognition for initiatives and effort will help the leader encourage innovative behavior (De Jong & Hartog, 2007).

Review of literature aids Proposition 1: Transformative and Authentic leaders are by definition supportive of employees and will encourage Employee Innovative Behavior worthiness of further investigation.

## **7. Motivation**

Slatten and Mehmetoglu (2011) argue that employees are more motivated or engaged in innovation under two conditions. The first is that employees are more positive and have positive outlook towards work when they are valued to the organization (Slatten & Mehmetoglu, 2011). The second condition is the employee's positive emotions aid in their creative process (Slatten & Mehmetoglu, 2011). If extrinsic and intrinsic motivators are satisfied then a creative person will be self-motivated (Wong & Ladkin, 2008) Intrinsically motivated individuals are motivated because their activities bring a sense of satisfaction or fulfillment while extrinsic motivated individuals are motivated by a goal is satisfied (Amabile, 1988) Innovative people are usually more intrinsically motivated than extrinsically (Hennessy & Amabile, 1988) Motives matter because different motives have varying effects

(Sauermaun & Cohen, 2010) Slatten and Mehmetoglu (2011) showed in their research of service employee innovation, that positive employee engagement and motivation broadens an employee's mind driving further innovation. Innovative people are often energized by the challenge of creativity (Csikszentmihalyi, 1991). The importance of motivation can be very influential in the organization's pursuits of innovation and competitive advantage and should be considered in conjunction with profit incentives and workflow (Sauermaun & Cohen, 2010).

Sauermaun and Cohen (2010) discuss effects of motives. Their discussion suggests that motives can affect the number of hours an individual works or the activities such as prioritizing projects. They also suggest that the motives of an individual will impact the cognitive process with varying intensity. In addition, Wendelken et al. (2014) found that prior knowledge can be a motivator to participate in innovative learning programs because employees can openly share their knowledge.

Based on the research including Proposition 2: Employees that exhibit Employee Innovative Behavior are motivated employees warrants further investigation. A focus on the motivation to participate in innovation as well as motivation to broaden the employees' scope of work is expected especially when the employee has the leadership support.

## 8. Culture

Innovation comes in all sizes. Some organizations can implement a culture of innovative behavior more easily than others. The commitment must be broad in scope for the organization. Sorensen et al. (2013) discussed this in their study in a service industry. Teece (2007) presented that organizational culture influences the attitudes of employees which impacts the organizations innovative capabilities. The support for the front-line people from the management is imperative (Sorensen et al., 2013) The overall climate or culture of an organization affects job satisfaction and an innovation embracing culture is affected by empowering employees, autonomy, trust, support, and participation in decision making (Nsenduluka & Shee, 2009). Authentic leadership/followership can positively influence an organizations culture and aid all employees in employee innovative behavior (Schuckert et al., 2017) Giving individual employees freedom encourages an organizational culture (Judge et al., 1997). Wendelken et al. (2014) found that a strong motivator for employee innovative learning participation was for identification with the culture of the organization.

The culture or environment of the employee should encourage risk taking, idea generation, innovation and experimentation (De Jong & Hartog, 2007). Not discounting the need for managing performance as necessary, overly intense monitoring of activities decreases the employees trust in the organization (De Jong & Hartog, 2007). Employees join organizations initially as a financial exchange that later develops to a social exchange as they identify themselves with the mission and vision of the organization (Walumbwa et al., 2009). Innovation as a cultural component of an organization can be considered a contract or expected conduct between leadership and employees (Alasoini, 2013).

The influence of coworker leaders cannot be left out. Leaders among peers often hear the ideas around them and encourage individuals to speak out. The organizational climate that encourages peer communication also encourages innovative behavior (De Jong & Hartog, 2007). Self-identification, as defined by Schlenker (1986) is establishing oneself as a specific type of person. Self-verification is the activity associated with actively expressing the chosen identity of self (Walumbwa et al., 2009). Both self-identification and self-verification are necessary for

an individual to exceeding average contribute to an organization which improves job performance (Walumbwa et al., 2009)

Review of the literature demonstrates that Proposition 3: Organizations create a culture of positive change when they embrace Employee Innovation has been studied in some respects. Further studying with application from learning and development would be a benefit to the research that exists.

## 9. Learning and Development

It is necessary for management to encourage innovation by providing knowledge, training, support, and tools to followers (Slatten & Mehmetoglu, 2013). Intrinsic motivation can come from learning (Wendelken et al., 2014). Motivation from learning come from enhancing the individual expertise (Wasko & Faraj, 2000). Experiencing new things through learning can motivate (Dahl et al., 2011) Attitudes and behaviors can be mediated by learning behaviors (Walumbwa et al., 2009) Learning can meet the address the intrinsic motivation factors such as: altruism, community-related issues, organization-related issues, fun and entertainment, and task-related issues (Wendelken et al., 2014). Walumbwa et al. (2009) suggest that workers identify with the employer and this motivates the individual to seek out learning to contribute more to the organization.

Learning is usually identified as an outcome from experience or an organizational process (Walumbwa et al., 2009) For the purposes of this proposal, the focus is on the process of learning. The process includes the applications and individual uses to increase knowledge, increase skills and increase overall organizational contribution (Walumbwa et al., 2009).

Individuals that have leader-member exchange have more opportunities to receive mentoring, learning and additional assignments (Scandura & Schriesheim, 1994) The interaction with peers during learning activities helps create a connected culture. Employees exposed to peer's openness can influence their own openness to innovative behavior (Rangus & Cerne, 2017).

Alasoini (2013) involves learning and development in High-involvement innovation using the learning theories to implement a process of innovative behavior across an entire organization. Alasoini (2013) discusses using Bessant (2003) as a means of expanding the innovative process from small incremental innovations to radical innovations by using learning and development workshops to generate employee innovative behavior. This approach takes into account the leadership, motivation and culture of the previous propositions and integrates them into a model for using learning and development as a tool to increase innovation and ultimately competitive advantage of an organization.

Based on the research conducted Proposition 4: Learning and Development can be used as a tool to create a culture of innovation and Employee Innovative Behavior warrants further investigation as a promising contributor to the strategy of an organization in its quest to maintain competitive advantage. Finland has a unique focus on innovation and a study using learning and development as a tool to enhance employee innovative behavior was successful. Further studies are warranted.

## 10. Limitations

The limitations to this research paper as extensive as it is, there is more information that could help develop a model for future research. The scope of this paper was to propose the research. There is much literature surrounding components of this process but only one study was found that implemented a program for employee innovative



behavior through learning and development. Additional studies are necessary to validate the process.

## 11. Future Research

Future research should include varying cultures as well as data on application of a program. Long term studies should be performed as the idea generation is only the initiator of the process. Research in short term success and long-term success of idea generation through implementation would aid organizations and researchers supporting the new process.

## 12. Conclusion

The purpose of this research was to understand the possibilities of additional organizational support from a learning and development program in an organization. The propositions focus on support from leadership, employee motivation, organizational culture, and finally tying it all together to propose an innovation component to employee development. It is clear that transformative and authentic leaders create a culture in an organization that embraces employee empowerment. With leadership support employees are more motivated to contribute beyond basic job descriptions. In Finland where innovation is part of the country's doctrine, a small study showed promise engaging learning and development in a workshop setting with employees. It makes sense that the program specifically responsible for mitigating change would engage employees to create change through employee innovative behavior.

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