Investigation of Managers' Perception about Employees' Learning Aptitude

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Abstract--- *Corporate sector is facing a cut throat competition these days. This competitive environment gives very less time to managers and supervisors to train their employees and make them learnt to meet their job requirements. Secondly business world is changing every day; people observe new technology, new products, fluctuation in demand, globalization, diverse work force and competent colleagues in their organizations. Employees have to take self-initiative for learning technology, systems, procedures and behaviors to meet the challenges of this competitive corporate environment. That shows a dire need of learning aptitude in employees of corporate sector. Managers have different perceptions about employees' learning aptitude. The study is conducted on corporate sector of three cities in Sultanate of Oman. Findings revealed that corporate managers of this region of the country have not positive perception about employees' learning aptitude. Data analysis concluded that many managers have an ample disagreement or they are neutral that employees have learning aptitude. The lack of learning aptitude is a constraint to organizational performance. A large number of employees are not interested in learning by self initiative. That causes a hurdle in their career growth and a decreasing trend in their job performance. A social awareness and use of active learning methods in colleges and universities are desirable to create a better learning aptitude in employees.*

Keywords--- *Corporate Sector, Learning Aptitude, Job performance, Managers' Perception*

I. INTRODUCTION

Organizational performance is dependent upon employees' individual performance and their learning abilities and aptitude. Corporate sector is business focused and the employees working in this sector always strive to achieve their targets and consume their maximum time in task accomplishments. For this reason employees have not much time to spend on incumbents training or to make other employees learn about different procedures and systems. Another essential factor is that if there are some efforts from managers to make people learn then a learning aptitude is required from employees.

Contrast to traditional learning that was only receiving information from instructor by listening, active learning

emphasis more on class participation, problem solving, collaborative and cooperative learning, synthesis, evaluation and assessment of topics, team work, communication within and outside groups, decision making about case studies and developing positive attitude in class for learning more and more. Corporate sector is very much demanding and challenging for its employees. Due to intensive competition and professional environment, corporate sector search for those incumbents who have some special skills of communication, team work, positive attitude, problem solving, self-initiative for learning, interpersonal and social skills and decision making. Organizations cannot spend an ample amount of money and time to train its incumbents for these skills or to wait for their learning through experience. More often organizations evaluate these skills during interviews because these skills are associated with behavioral aspects those can't be measured from degrees and certificates but can be evaluated in face to face interviews.

If employees possess learning aptitude, they will not have to wait for some person to teach them or training them, rather he can get that learning by self initiative. That can lead to a learning culture in the department. If department will perform better then obviously organizational performance will also be enhanced. Without learning attitude, employees cannot learn as corporate sector is not a training institute but a place to work in. Employees need to create an aptitude towards learning that can help digest advance level technology and modern skills easily. Otherwise if a good manager tries to transfer some leanings to other employees even then he cannot be successful until people have strong learning aptitude. This study is conducted to investigate managers' perception about employees learning aptitude in corporate sector of three cities (Ibri, Dank, Yanqul) of Sultanate of Oman. This is a quantitative research. A survey was developed by taking questions from papers published in Journals. 74 surveys were distributed among managers and supervisors of different banks, insurance companies and electricity supply companies. The scope of corporate sector is limited in this region and it was considered to cover maximum types of companies to have a fair representation of corporate sector under this study. A comprehensive literature was reviewed and given with full references in this paper. Literature also reveals that active learning skills and an aptitude of employees is essentials for their learning. Data was collected carefully and analyzed by using statistical tools. This study presents that a substantial number of employees are not carrying aptitude for learning. This weakness in learning aptitude effects on organizational performance. So a learning aptitude will have to be created in people so they can become an asset to their organizations.

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II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Aptitude is a capacity or ability to do something. Different psychological aspects are involved in creating an aptitude for something. Learning means to acquire or update knowledge, skills, values, processes or behaviors and then synthesis different kinds of information. Learning makes curves after a passage of time. Learning is not always compulsory; it is due to some need or due to some motive to achieve something in future as a result of that learning. Learning cannot be built at once. Sometimes learning is shaped up on the existing knowledge that people already know and sometimes it's all together new that a person comes across first time. Researchers conclude that learning is a process and not transmissions of factual and procedural knowledge in one go. Active learning is a factor that shows aptitude of learning in students.

Chickering and Gamson [8] explored active learning does not mean that people listen to lecturer or a trainer and there would be a one-way information transfer but active learning has broader scope. Learners must have an aptitude to seek knowledge by self initiative and they must write, read and use their cognitive thinking and trainers should give more emphasis on problem solving skills, execution of knowledge, case studies and high level mental capabilities. Most of the studies show that students and learners like active learning than the methods of traditional learning. Active learning procedures help students to improve their decision making, problem solving and evaluation skills. They become capable to solve case studies and sort out a variety of situational problems [2].

Eison [2] explained that active learning is to motivate students for getting learning initiative and to introduce some valuable learning activities in class room. Active learning is contradictory to traditional learning in which learners just listen to trainer or teacher and pass through a lecturing process. Students with learning aptitude also demonstrate collaborative learning. This collaborative learning is all about learning in forms of groups towards a common learning objective. This activity increases a spirit of team work in the members of learning groups. Some researchers consider cooperative learning and collaborative learning as a one and the same thing. But few researchers consider collaborative learning different from cooperative learning. Researchers described cooperative learning as a structured group of learners who do activities for common learning goals but an individual assessment is being done for their evaluation [5].

Learning aptitude needs more interaction among students and teacher or trainer, self assessment of teams' performances and better interpersonal skills. Here core element in not creating competition among group members but to provide incentive for cooperation in team to promote learning. Problem based learning is also helpful for active learning and creating learning aptitude in employees. Problem based learning reflects a mode of instruction in which a trainer explains a relevant problem to trainees and encourages them to explore different learning points in it and at the end they resolve the problem under trainer's guidance.

Sometimes problem based learning is not collaborative or cooperative but it seems to be a self directed learning process. This type of learning is useful to increase analytical skills as well as problem solving skills of trainees by a habit of taking self initiative for achieving goals. Instructors must encourage students' engagement in the class which is an important component of active learning [13]. Active learning attracts students for thoughtful process about the topic and to synthesis the results thereon. This process persuades students to think what they are learning in the class [9].

Many researchers proved the significance of active learning in students and trainees. Active learning and its type cooperative learning both are essential to boost trainees' team work skills, communication skills and interpersonal skills. [3] Johnson et al. concluded trainees have to be trained for conducting an effective cooperative learning in the forms of groups. Learning is a motive to do work in teams in contrast of traditional learning in which all students do individual efforts to learn in the class. Social skills of the students increased when they interact in groups for common goals and mutual learning [4].

Terenzini et al. [7] also conclude in their research that cooperative learning is a useful tool to develop interpersonal skills and team skills among the students. Active learning is also valuable to develop problem solving skills in the students. Because burden of learning in on students so they strive for problem solving more than that of traditional learning. Problem solving skills have another advantage that it produces a positive attitude in the students [11]. A research on medical programmers conducted from 1970 to 1992 shows remarkable results that problem solving is also creating a positive attitude. Students as well as faculty members select the problem solving approach for an affective learning process [1]. Problem-based learning also provides a suitable environment of learning that supports more challenging, motivating, enthusiastic and enjoyable approach for the students to learn more and more [6]. Research disclosed that when problem based learning is there then it reflects positive results for the students. Many researchers have concluded same results about problem-based learning. A practice is desirable to evaluate problem solving skills [12].

2.1 Data Collection and Research Design

Al Dhahirah region of Sultanate of Oman was selected for data collection. Different banks, insurance companies and electricity supply companies were selected for the study. Researcher collected the data from three cities through random sampling method. Respondents were managers or supervisors who filled questionnaires to give feedback about learning initiative taken by their subordinates. Out of 80 questionnaires there were 74 questionnaires those were filled properly and completed in all aspects. An interval scale of three was used as agree, neutral and disagree.

2.2 Validity and Reliability of the Data

The questionnaire is developed by taking questions from the surveys which had already been used in this kind of study and comprehensive validity tests were also conducted in those studies to verify the relevance and validity of the survey.

However, Cronbach's Alpha test is run in this study to verify reliability of the data. Below table reveals that Cronbach's alpha has a good value that is 0.973 which shows high level of reliability of the data for further analysis and findings.

Case Processing Summary			
		N	%
Cases	Valid	74	100
	Excluded ^a	0	0
	Total	74	100

a. List Wise Deletion based on all Variables in the Procedure

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
0.973	15

III. STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

For statistical analysis of the data, researchers used percentage and average method (*table -1*). Data was further analyzed to verify the deviations and for this purpose average deviation and standard deviation were applied (*table -2*). Here *table- 1* is showing the distribution of surveys taken from different banks.

Table 1

S.N	Questions	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
1	Initiative for learning different procedures	0.46	0.33	0.20
2	Keen to get knowledge of business products	0.43	0.37	0.20
3	Curious to know the vision, mission and goals of organization	0.43	0.31	0.26
5	Communication is excellent to learn the tasks	0.46	0.33	0.20
5	Participation in group discussions in the department	0.48	0.35	0.17
6	The level of interaction is good to exchange the relevant information quickly	0.59	0.33	0.07
7	Do collaborative effort to give innovative ideas	0.63	0.04	0.33
8	Positive participation by them for learning policies, manuals and code of conduct	0.65	0.30	0.06
9	Try themselves to learn useful skills needed to perform their job in a better way	0.61	0.35	0.04
10	Take responsibility of learning any change in their work area	0.56	0.37	0.07
11	Take initiative in taking customer feedback to learn about business perception in customer's mind	0.35	0.35	0.30
12	Take part in decision making processes in the department	0.37	0.43	0.20
13	Take supervisor's feedback on their own to improve their performance in future	0.43	0.33	0.24
14	show self interest in contributing for success of the company	0.52	0.35	0.13
15	Usually do a collaborative effort to resolve problems	0.30	0.33	0.37
	Average	0.48	0.33	0.20

Table 2

Type of Analysis	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
Average Deviation	0.0869	0.0432	0.0795
Standard Deviation	0.1062	0.0844	0.1015
Skewness	-0.8303	-2.9467	0.5665
Median	0.3700	0.3300	0.2000

Table 3

Questions		
	t	Sig. (2-tailed)
Q1	16.1	0
Q2	15.162	0
Q3	17.529	0
Q4	16.781	0
Q5	14.417	0
Q6	12.722	0
Q7	14.691	0
Q8	15.337	0
Q9	14.236	0
Q10	12.244	0
Q11	14.788	0
Q12	13.942	0
Q13	14.053	0
Q14	15.586	0
Q15	15.927	0

Table-3 contains a t-test analysis of the data. Level of significance is satisfactory. The values of t for all questions are also showing acceptable ranges. Most of the questions have average values between 16 and 16 that show positive results of the study.

3.1 Findings of the Data:

Data analysis helped researchers to draw following findings:-

After analyzing the data it should be highlighted that the respondents rated Q7, Q8, Q9 the highest rating. That shows respondents are little satisfied with collaborative learning and will of participation of incumbents for professional tasks. It also reflects that students have good learning skills when they are working together for seeking knowledge.

While Q15 is the lowest that leads to a very low level of problem solving skills in incumbents. Special focused should be given to build these skills in educational institution so that students will be able to use these skills in their profession. Q3 has also low rating, because candidate are not taking self-initiatives for getting now how and so they are also ignorant from vision and mission of organization. Q11 and Q13 are carrying high level of disagreement. Researchers found that incumbents were careless about taking feedbacks from

customers as well as from their managers. That leads to a matter that they must not be taught about importance of taking feedbacks in their studentship that is much important to increase level of performance when they were students as well as when they were becoming employees in an organization.

It is worth mentioning that although Q7 has the highest agreement (63%) on incumbents do collaborative effort to give innovative ideas, many of them are still not agreeing (33%). While almost negligible percentage of respondents gave neutral answer. Researchers found that there must be few groups who are striving for new ideas collectively and rest of incumbents even not struggle for it. So the respondents who faced candidate of first category, they gave high ranking and the other respondents have a negative point of view about it. t test analysis also concluded favorable results for this research model.

Level of significance for all questions is acceptable. T values are also reasonably good and reflecting a synchronization and logical theme in the data. Findings evaluate that overall level of active learning skills is not up to the expectations of management in the organizations.

IV. CONCLUSION

The study concluded that managers (Respondents) hold a perception that corporate employees of Al Dhahirah region (Sultanate of Oman) have a low level of learning aptitude in their jobs. On the other hand few managers reported that their employees have some learning aptitude but these employees are in minority. Statistical analysis elaborated that in current situation 54% employees do not reflect aptitude towards learning skills and systems in their organizations. Managers perceive that their employees do not take self initiative to learn new skills, processes and methods of work at workplace.

A learning aptitude can be observed if employees carry active learning skills that put more burden of learning on employees rather than on bosses or supervisors. These active learning skills are lacking in corporate sector of Al Dhahirah region. The reason can be lack of active learning skills in colleges and educational institutes of this region. As this region is not so much advanced so as a whole learning aptitude is low due to social factors and local cultural dynamics. This lacking in learning aptitude is not a good sign for the organizations and also harmful for employees professional careers.

Managers and supervisors are very busy in coping with the corporate challenges and they have no extra time and resources to train their subordinates and to make them learnt each time. Secondly management has limited resources and it is difficult to find financial support from companies to train employees and give them learning for every new process and required skill. So employees remain with low level of skills and partially trained and they are not able to perform according to management expectations. This becomes troublesome also for managers because they perceive that employees have less learning aptitude so managers are reluctant to delegate few sensitive and complex tasks to their subordinates. So it is concluded that managers have not a favorable perception about employees' learning aptitude in Al Dhahirah region and that depict a weak human capital in the corporate sector of this region.

It is recommended that a collective effort is desirable from corporate managers and educators in this region to motivate people for active learning skills so that people demonstrate self initiative for learning that can develop an aptitude of learning in employees to get more job knowledge and skills to perform better.

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