



## Learning Organization and Readiness for Change in Iran Islamic Azad University branches of Gilan province

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### Abstract

*Investigation of the relationship between the dimensions of the Learning Organization and readiness for change in Islamic Azad universities branches of district 17 of Iran, is the purpose of the research. The current research method is descriptive survey and is applied in terms of target. The population of this research is faculty members and staff of Islamic Azad University of district 17 which their number is 1774 in 2013. Using Cochran formula, the sample was computed as 251 ones which have been chosen by a stratified random sampling. In order to studying the hypothesis, SPSS and LISREL software used and statistical meaningful relations for overall statistical hypothesis were obtained. Findings showed a positive and significant relation between dimensions of learning organization and readiness for change. Findings also showed that, the managers of universities have the capabilities to increase the potentials of readiness for change and establishing learning based institution.*

**Keywords:** Dimensions of learning organization, organizational change, readiness for change, higher education management.

### Introduction

Organizational change because of forces and pressure such as political shift and move toward Neoliberalism, has converted to a pervasive phenomenon in human services and business organizations<sup>1</sup>. All of the dynamics of global competition, technological developments, restructure of organization and unstable economical position are changes that have covered trade and have explained them more significant than the others<sup>2</sup>.

Change phenomenon, has been always proposed as a major and fundamental challenge which influence on people, groups and organizations and has been considered by various researchers. In order to provide successful changes, the organizations have invested by reengineering, pervasive quality management, miniaturization, integration and ownership, cultural changes, restructure, and reorganization, software development, technology development, and other interventions in the organs<sup>3</sup>. for increasing the potential capabilities of an organization in order to achieve success, it is essential to be active and the organization and its leader and staff should be active and join to change and accept it willingly and benefit it creatively to advance their prospect, mission and target<sup>4</sup>. According to new trends, conventional management approaches such as control, specialization and efficacy has led to provide dysfunctional and multi-sectional institutions<sup>5</sup>. The center of new paradigm and motivator of change ground is learning<sup>6</sup>. The researchers have frequently mentioned that learning is cause of success in organizational change process. Learning has potentials to led individual toward satisfaction<sup>7</sup>. Shin believes that the organizations which learn faster are able to adapt themselves to

change. Learning is essential condition of impressive programming and management of change. Not only it increases the chance of organization survival but also is it provides a sustainable competitive advantage<sup>8</sup>.

However, the learning based organization and organizational learning- related frameworks have been proposed and have had an increasing growth. Learning organization is a phenomenon that was introduced by start of 90<sup>th</sup> decade. the cause of the emergence of such organizations is conditions, theories and evolution in organizational environments prior to this decade; in such a way that all of the organs had launched a wide attempt for their survival and for maintaining keep themselves in turbulent environment, they had to exit from unstable frames and transform toward learning organization, i.e. providing deep mutation in their structure and base<sup>9</sup>.

Despite enhancement of need to perceive and observe the institutional transformations, it has been showed that the most attempts for organizational change of universities, does not achieve expected results or does not promote supported change<sup>1</sup>. For this reason, performing successful evolution in organs is one of the most challenging management activities<sup>10</sup>.

One of the most undeniable essences for success in providing these changes, is readiness for change that most of the times is not considered sufficiently<sup>3</sup>. Proper perception of readiness for change is essential for understanding the change process<sup>4</sup>. The success and resistance rate of operational changes influence highly on change readiness from the side of work force, cooperation opportunity and development of related

qualifications for maintaining possible implementation. The readiness for change happens when environment, structure and attitude of organ's members is ready for accepting happened change<sup>8</sup>. Attitudes and beliefs that positively formed towards the change, predict the acceptance of change and formation of organizational change<sup>10</sup>. Learning organization is a motivator for providing and continuation of attitude to change. The organs which seek for their survival and keep their market share, not only should monitor environmental changes but also it is necessary to provide essential conditions.

**Literature Review:** The studies suggest that when the superior management accepts change, the interests of staff like inferior managers and principles should be taken to account for making the change executive and they should be convinced to change. Most of the barriers for change derive from readiness for change acceptance. Psychologically these barriers such as management barriers could be explained to people by insecurity and fear of negative results<sup>11</sup>. The staff would not support the change but if they want themselves<sup>12</sup>.

The readiness of staff for change reflects positive attitudes and beliefs about need to organizational change, manifesting the decision for supporting process of change and serious belief that changes suggestions in organ and benefits for all involved sides can be performed successfully<sup>10</sup>. Weber and Weber and also Madsen et al considered effective factors for essence of providing readiness for change and mentioned in their researches and articles that readiness for change is an essence<sup>3</sup>. So to speak, the supporter of organized change, have proposed the successful modification of organized change attempts by providing readiness for change<sup>12</sup>. The concept of readiness for change is compatible with Levin thoughts about exit from congelation and indicates individual attitudes which emerge during change process<sup>3</sup>. The researchers know exit from congelation as same as providing readiness for change<sup>13</sup>. Most of researchers have supposed that most of the attempts related to change have not achieved due to lack of a process of an effective leaving congelation and for this reason, they emphasize on readiness for change prior to any kind of attempts to implement and manage of change<sup>3</sup>. As a pioneer researcher in the field of change activities analysis, Levin (1947) believes that the change is occurred in three stages: leaving congelation, manner change, regulation or establishment<sup>13</sup>. Leaving congelation is made by providing new information which refer to disproportion of current condition or by decreasing importance and power of common values, and attitudes and manners<sup>14</sup>. As the first step, leaving congelation is destroying intruder forces which cause inertia or maintaining current position by naturalization of stimulus forces of change. Levin knows leaving congelation as a central sequence and critical step for achieving change. He believes that leaving congelation seeks for new learning<sup>13</sup>. On the other hand, learning and preparedness for change has positive relationship with each other<sup>3</sup>. Learning is considered a fundamental attempt for providing change<sup>4</sup>. As an introduction for readiness for change learning organization provides new and deep perception from

change process<sup>8</sup> and also there is a causal effect between them<sup>15</sup>. The learning organization can be considered as an organization which has valuable, active, futuristic, strategic, live and adoptive goals<sup>16</sup>. Also learning organization provides some systems which increase total capacity of organization for consistent growth and learning<sup>8</sup>. Learning organization eliminates structural barriers, provides empowering structures and enables learning and development evaluation. Such an organization relies on leader who helps people to find their target, eliminate barriers, and makes facilitator structures and gives feedback to them and indicates resulted benefits. Thus learning organization creates and provides activities which develop organizational learning process. Effective learning includes gradual, intensive, immediate and functional features<sup>3</sup>. Learning organization should react to suggested new ideas, evaluate them and decline methods which are not appropriate. The organizations which have such an attitude are ready to change. It should be considered that a learning organization is the one which interact with its environment consistently; and replies to the environment in which it acts<sup>17</sup>. Senge describes learning organization as the organs where individual seek for developing their capacity in order to achieve some results that actually look for, where the new patterns of thinking grows, a place in which group desires and trends are achieved and eventually a collection in which individuals constantly learn to learn with each other<sup>18</sup>. According to Watkins and Marsick a learning organization is realized by constant learning, active improvement and capacity for change. They suggest seven important features and phases as the aspects learning organization which help significantly to measurable capability of this theory and could be considered an important step in organizational researches. These seven features include: Create continuous learning opportunities: it refers to organization activities in order to create learning spaces for personnel. Promote curious spirit and dialogue based behaviors: Attempts of organization toward provide question and answer culture, feedback reception and examine the experiences in the organization. Motivate cooperation and team based learning: organizational attempt to provide spirit of cooperation, sympathy and accompaniment of individuals in the organization. Establish systems to pick up and distribution of learning: in order to success for achieving ideas and attitudes of individuals and also transferring data and knowledge to them, organization implement especial structures. Empowerment actions for producing a collective insight: it refers to organizational process of creation and sharing common prospect and taking staff comments and opinions about the distance between current and new trends. Create the environmental awareness for organization: Attempts based on interaction with internal and external environment, encouraging people to have an open thought and vast perspective and thinking comprehensive and pervasive. Provide strategic management for learning: provide leaders to strategic thinking based on use of learning process and knowledge for providing changes in organizations and directing it toward improvement and development<sup>19</sup>.

In learning organizations, single people are not trained for doing their tasks; they rather are instructed for creativity and group activities and identity, personality and independence are considered their emphasized features in these organizations<sup>20</sup>. Learning organization is considered as a base for a developing countries and its major advantage is the capability to improve knowledge, skills and capacity for making decision<sup>21</sup>. The university is a critical organ in development process of each nation and economical, social, political, and cultural development are facilitated by these effects. Instructional organizations generally and also universities and colleges are not immune from environmental changes and are forced to adopt themselves with their environment for their survival, growth and development. the encountered challenges by institutions of higher education such as decreasing of employment rate of learners, increasing the number of students , demand for more effectiveness of instructions, globalization and consequently increasing competition and market-orienting , provides a strong sense for establishment new behaviors of institutions especially readiness for change<sup>22</sup> and the property of learning , adoptive improvement and dynamism is a reply to this strong feel. According to mentioned subjects, the investigation of relationship between learning organization and change oriented readiness, especially in the higher education area, seems essential.

**Conceptual model of research:** Regarding subject of research about the relationship between aspects of learning organization and readiness for change, the purpose of learning organization is an organ which has features and dimensions of Watkins and Marsick model (1996). Also readiness for change will be

assessed by studying the attitudes of people toward change. The following conceptual model is effective in understanding this concept.

## Methodology

**Methodology of research:** Present study is descriptive and causative-correlation. It's descriptive, since describes and interpret everything which exists and regards available conditions and relations, common beliefs, current processes, obvious effects or developing processes<sup>23</sup>. And also it has correlation because it analyze the relationship between independent and dependent variable i.e. aspects of learning organization and readiness for change according to the goal of research. Because there is a correlative relation when the changes of a variable is associated by another variable<sup>24</sup>. Present study has been described in applied model based on the goal.

**The hypothesis of research includes:** Learning organization will be meaningfully related to readiness for change. Creation of frequent learning opportunities will be meaningfully related to readiness for change. Improvement of inquiry and discussion will be meaningfully related to readiness for change. Cooperation and group learning will be meaningfully related to and readiness for change. Business systems and share learning will be meaningfully related to and readiness for change. Empowering people for collective insight will be meaningfully related to readiness for change. Environmental awareness in the organization will be meaningfully related to and readiness for change. Strategic management will be meaningfully related to readiness for change.

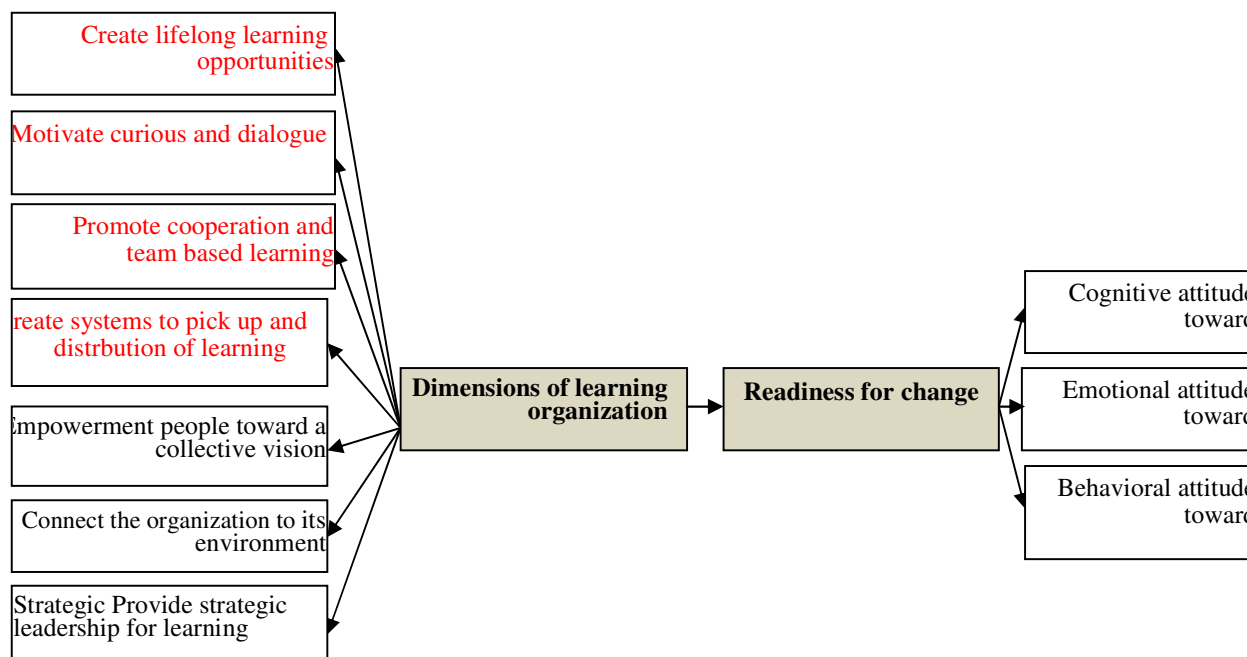


Figure -1  
Conceptual model

**Population and statistical sample of research:** Population of current research is faculty members and staff of Islamic Azad University of district 17 who are totally 1774 in 2013, according to the report of secretariat of district 17 of Islamic Azad University. The sample size was considered 251 people using Cochran formula and sampling was done by a stratified random sampling proportional to sample size. Table 1 suggests descriptive statistic of 251 people.

**Table-2**  
**Descriptive Statistics**

Item	Description	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	174	69.3%
	Female	7	30.7%
Age	Below 30	27	10.8%
	31-50	191	76%
	Above 50	33	13.2%
Educational level	STP	33	13.1%
	Bachelor	93	37.1%
	Master and above	125	49.8%

**Research tools:** In this research, standard questionnaire of leaning organization of Watkins and Marsick was used to collect data about enjoyment of learning organization features in physical education organization. Basic questionnaire constitutes seven aspects and 43 six grade questions in Likert scale. These tools were used by at least 200 organs and its validity in all of them was higher than 70%<sup>19</sup>. In this research summarized form of these tools which includes 21 questions, has been used. This questionnaire in seven aspects has three questions for every phase of learning organization and totally has 21 questions. Applied tools for evaluating readiness of staff

and faculty members of Islamic Azad University of district 17 for change, is 18 questions standard questionnaire toward change of Donham et al<sup>25</sup>. This tool is a combination of three elements: cognitive, emotional and behavioral components.

**Reliability and validity of applied tools:** The standard questionnaire was used in this research but in order to increase the reliability of questionnaire from specialized professor's point of view, this course and also offered ideas have been evaluated and effective guidelines were applied. Also in order to determine stability of questionnaires, at first 30 people from population were chosen and were given questionnaire and then Cronbach's alpha method was used for determining stability of questionnaire in where the measure of alpha for questionnaire of learning organization questionnaire was 0/961 and for tendency toward change questionnaire was 0/955 which can be said the questionnaire enjoys from acceptable stability and reliability.

## Results and Discussion

**Research findings:** Ensuring normality of assessment, at first Kolmogrov-Smirnov test was used and then because of normality of population data, Pierson correlation coefficient was used for determination of variables. This test illustrates positive, meaningful and direct relation between two main variables of research ( $R=0.285$ ). From a hand determination coefficient between two variables of learning organization and readiness for change equals 0.081 which suggests learning organization variable (independent variable) is able to anticipate the variable of readiness for change (dependent variable) in the rate of 8.1%. Table-1 shows interactive correlation between seven dimension of independent variable and readiness for change.

**Table - 3**  
**Correlations between the seven dimensions of learning organizational readiness for change**

Variables	Numbers	Correlation coefficient (R)	Determination coefficient (R <sup>2</sup> )	Meaningfulness coefficient	Results
Learning organization and readiness for change	251	0.285	0.081	0.000	Confirm
Creation of continuous learning opportunities and readiness for change	251	0.168	0.028	0.008	Confirm
Improvement of inquiry and discussion and readiness for change	251	0.125	0.015	0.048	Confirm
Encouragement of cooperation and group learning and readiness for change	251	0.140	0.019	0.026	Confirm
Providing business and share systems	251	0.164	0.026	0.009	Confirm
Empowering people for achieving group insight and readiness for change	251	0.214	0.045	0.009	Confirm
Relation with environment and readiness for change	251	0.226	0.051	0.000	Confirm
Strategic leadership for learning and readiness for change	251	0.388	0.150	0.000	Confirm

It can be observed that all of the learning organizations' dimensions related meaningfully with each other. For seven dimensions of learning organization, Pierson coefficient in the range of 0/140 - 0.388 was obtained. The lowest coefficient was for the phase of improvement of inquiry and discussion and the highest one was related to strategic leadership for learning. Regarding obtained results, all of the relations have been confirmed by 90% confidence and there is a meaningful relationship. Also regarding existed resources and data in the field of the effect of learning organization phases on readiness for change, this model was analyzed for the elements. Using this mode (diagram 1), it is possible to realize the intensity of the

relation between two hidden variable in the model and opine upon the effect of variables on each other.

Using this mode the meaningful relationship between two hidden variable in the model can be realized and to discuss about confirm or rejection of research hypothesis. about meaningfulness of numbers , it should be said that as in this research we seek for testing hypotheses by 95% -confidence or 0.05 error , for the t test , the numbers would be meaningful which are out of the range of -1.96\_ 1.96 means that if in T test there is a number between 1,96 and -1.96 , it will be meaningless .

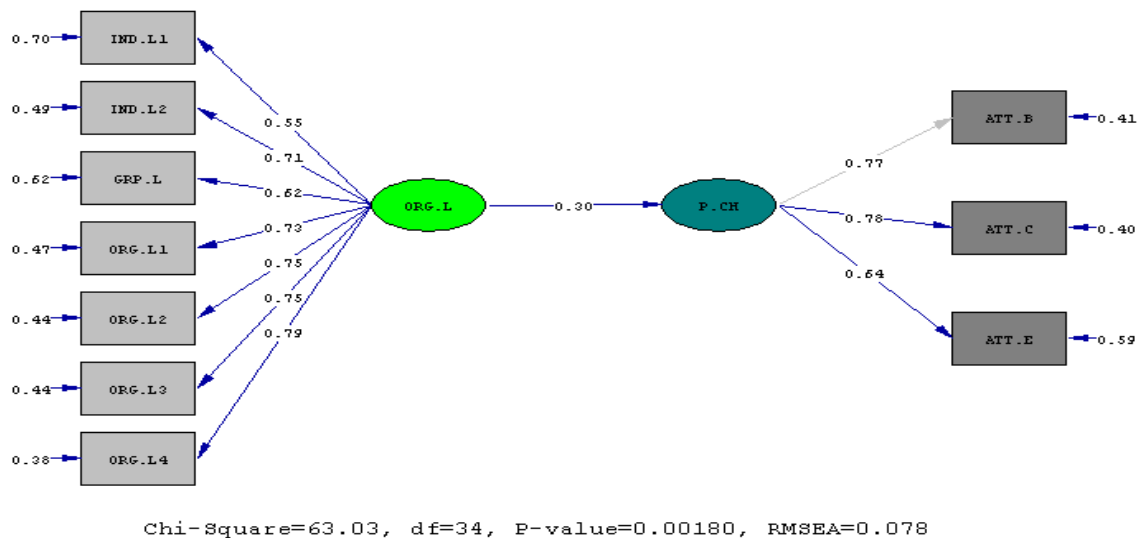


Figure -2  
Structural Equation Model

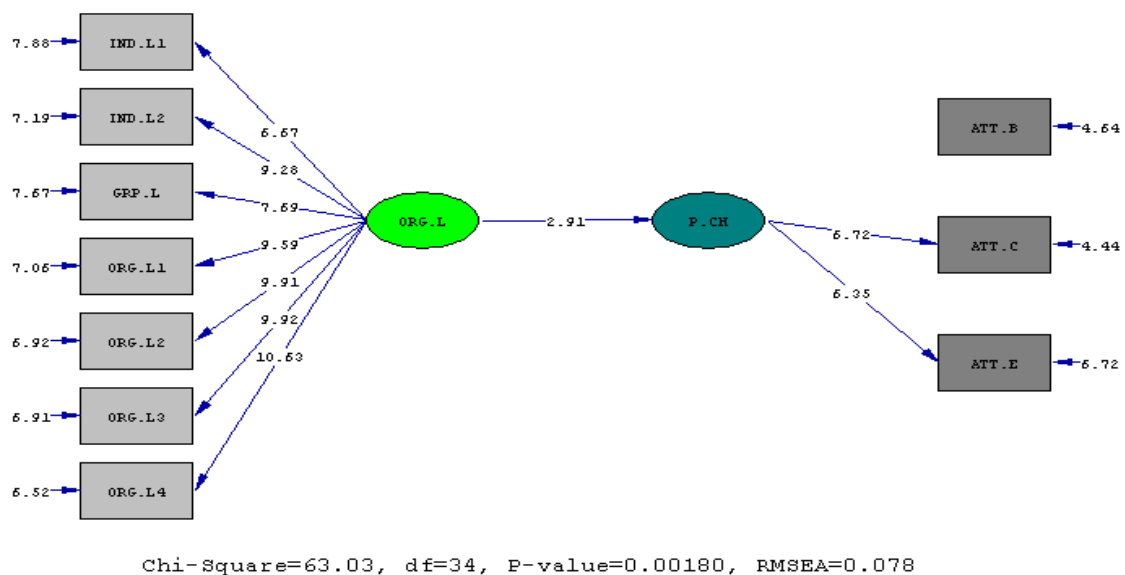


Figure-3  
Value Model of Research

According to base model of research in the meaningful mode the rate of statistic t is 2.91 and as it is out of range of [-1.96-1.96] , this hypothesis is confirmed . Also regarding standard coefficient, it can be said that the intensity of relationship between two main variables of research is 30%.

## Conclusion

The goal of this research is to what extend higher education institution as a learning organization and its dimensions will be related to readiness for changing staff and faculty members. The results of this study can help organizations to adopt proper programs and policies for providing the elements of learning organization. According to basic hypothesis of research, we observed that learning organization dimensions can predict and influence universities capabilities for change preparing. Pierson correlation coefficient suggests a positive and meaningful relation between these two variables which expresses a direct relation between two variables of learning organization and readiness for change. On the one hand determination coefficient (effect intensity) between two variables of learning organization and readiness for change equals 0.081 which suggests that learning organization variable (independent variable) is able to predict the variable of readiness for change (dependent variable) about 8.1% .Organizational correspondence of university with requirements of learning organization is in contrast with stability , concentration and inflexibility and leads to dexterity of this organ and at the same time proactive behaviors with environmental elements and beneficiaries in order to obtain highest and the most valuable material and immaterial values . Therefore, the organizations should prepare themselves for broad evolutions of environment by development of learning organization aspects which have the most coordination with readiness for change. One of the most important limitations of this research was analyzing different analysis levels which were assessed in the individual level regarding existing limitations. Also in this study, the ideas of managers and faculty members were not analyzed in detail.

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